# INTERTEXTUALITY, DIALOGISM AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF JOURNALISTIC DISCOURSE

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*Abstract*

Newspaper texts are informative, factitive, persuasive or seductive textual patterns, which become cardinal considering the fact that their message to the recipients may mark - from a decisional point of view - the evolution of social, economic or political aspects. Media has the capacity of both creating an event and introducing an actuality that is characteristic to media discourse, which parallels the objective reality of the day-to-day event.

This study attempts at revealing theoretical and methodological frames that allow us to emphasize features of the identity of a mold that is taking shape and gaining more and more authoritative conceptual linguistic landscape. To fully understand the undeniable effectiveness of the journalistic discourse, the relevance of language tools in the media must be noted which has become a means of synthesis, reflection and more or less sequential interpretation of the reality. The heteroglossic and dialogic approach helps us show how any meaning of the text appears in a social context that would have created a number of alternative contradictory meanings, and meaning and social significance arising from the convergent or divergent relations is found with those alternative meanings.

**Keywords: dialogism, discourse, heteroglossia, journalism, polyphony**

*Intertextuality* and *dialogism* are two fundamental concepts to the present work. Along with cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability and informativity, these concepts that are necessary for approaching journalistic texts derive implicitly from the linguistic phenomena related to the employment of language in the process of utterance and the relationship between the issuer and the recipient.

Based on the premise that any media text involves, builds and refers to previous texts (intertextuality), we shall appeal in our presentation to the contribution of M. Bakhtin[2] to the code and limits of linguistic competence. He shows that through dialogism, the enouncements of a text convey their meaning, and take on an ideological aspect, thanks to the relationships it establishes with other enouncements, more or less divergent, which are capitalized by/in the society at that moment. Thus, intertextuality is not confined to concrete, existing texts; the enouncements do not establish a heteroglossic relationship with alternative enouncements capitalized at the current moment only because they have been expressed in other texts, but because they could have been or could be expressed. That is why the recipient (the potential and present one) is a basic component of communication.

The concept of discourse is at the top of its theoretical career. Coming from highly different horizons (the distributionalism of Z. Harris, the theory of enunciation formulated by E. Benveniste, R. Jakobson's theory of the functions of the language), the

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[2] M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* University of Texas Press Slavic Serie No. 1, 1981.



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term *discourse* "knows a plurality of complementary and even contradictory meanings".[3] In *Analiza discursului. Ipoteze şi ipostaze*, Daniela Roventa-Frumusani conducts an analysis of the basic concepts, useful for defining the term discourse by means of delimitations towards these. Hence, the term *discourse* comes up against a series of oppositions in which it takes on definite semantic values[4].

In her intent to identify the common denominator of these perceptions on the discourse, Daniela Roventa-Frumusani highlights the event status of the discourse practice: "any enouncement involves a speaker and a public as well as the speaker's intention to influence the latter in a certain way"[5]. The discourse emerges from the social communication with a complex psychological and cultural content, which "leaves its mark on any particular token"[6] and the journalistic discourse, more than other specialized discourses, is structurally and functionally imprinted by social factors.

The discourse is the "profound structure of the text"[7], the left trace that ensures linearization, and the text is part of the social event, since the way in which people (inter)act during their social life is writing or reading. Therefore, the discourse is initially configured as part of the action. Roventa-Frumusani states that the media discourse operates as a "coherent social narration, which induces thematic issues and hierarchies".

A perspective that reflects the general-systemic hypotheses of the language and the use of the language is the one offered by the Russian linguist Mihail Bakhtin[8], who introduces the concepts of *heteroglossia*, *dialogism* and *polyphony* in the linguistic landscape and openly pleads for the need for typological classification. Bakhtin argues that every community is operating with multiple social realities (sometimes convergent, sometimes divergent), and this process of divergence/convergence is reflected at text level. The texts

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[3] Dominique Maingueneau, apud Daniela Roventa-Frumusani, *Analiza discursului, Ipoteze şi ipostaze*, Bucharest, Tritonic Publishing House, 2004, p.64.

[4] Daniela Roventa-Frumusani, *Analiza discursului, Ipoteze şi ipostaze*, Bucharest, Tritonic Publishing House, 2004, p. 64.

Discourse vs. phrase: The discourse is a succession of phrases (having the characteristic of syntactical and communication autonomy); contemporary researchers talk here about the text grammar or textual linguistics;

Discourse vs. enunciate. Beyond its character of linguistic unit (enunciate), the discourse represents a communication unit related to strictly determined generation requirements. In other words, the term is a determined type of discourse (for instance: media discourse, advertising discourse, news discourse etc.). From this point of view, discourse and enunciate have different meanings: the term "enouncement" covers the conceptual scope of the text in terms of structuring within the language, while discourse designates the linguistic study of the requirements for the production of this text.

Discourse vs. language: The language defined as a system of virtual values is opposed to discourse, that is to using the language in a specific context, which may restrict these values or it may generate other values. This last distinction is relevant especially for the field of the vocabulary. Therefore, the lexical neology belongs to the field of discourse. On the other hand, the language defined as a system used by the members of a linguistic community is opposed to discourse, considered as using a sequence of this system.

Discourse associated with a text and a context (a process associated with the product and the circumstances of its production). In this case, the communicational and thematic outlook generally coincide; for instance, in the case of written communication;

Discourse vs. narration or history as a form marked by operators pertaining to the threesome ego/hic/nunc, different from the past evocation, person III, in *illo tempore*.

[5] Emile Benveniste, *apud.* Daniela Roveta-Frumusani, op.cit.,p. 64.

[6] *Ibidem*

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 67

[8] M. Bakhtin, *op.cit.*.



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address those alternative realities and they are heteroglossias addressing/ calling directly to or identify implicitly a lot more or less divergent number of socio- semiotic realities. This perspective is very much like the conceptualization of a *locus* in which considerable centripetal and centrifugal forces that make up the discourse are nearing one another significantly.[9] From this point of view, the heteroglossic-text addresses the cyclic/regular realities as they were expressed in earlier texts, and as they are expected to be presented in future texts. Consequently, any denotation, any meaning of the text occurs in a social context that would have created a number of alternative or contradictory meanings, and meaning and social significance arising from the convergence or divergence relations it is found with those alternative meanings. Heteroglossic perspective has consequences that entail even the way in which the semantics of the speaker's participation is "shaped" and develops from the premise that the language is the raw material/ the key resource for the construction of the reality, and each community includes social realities or perspectives on the surrounding world that may sometimes be convergent, sometimes divergent.

One of the things inherited from Bakhtin is the concept of *interdiscourse*, as a "interaction and influence of discourse mechanisms"[10]. Bakhtin notes the dialogical orientation of any discourse in studies concerning structure and construction of artistic narrative prose, where polyphony is construed as the achievement of a theme on various different voices (thus, on a dialogue-based principle: "By discovering the omnipresence of the intertext, the textual heteroglossia, Bakhtin exorcizes the fear of Babel and turns to account the polyphony of woven voices and around any text"[11]. The discourse is never a monologue, but a dialogue, opened towards social universe.

Viewed from a dialogic point of view, the journalistic discourse develops a technique for evaluation as a semantic resource, using texts which give unilateral positioning, multiple text or inter-subjective in terms of intentionality, because there is a potential individual journalistic "meaning" sent by text or a group of journalistic texts. Thus, three voices of contemporary journalism stand out in such texts: the reporter's voice, the correspondent's voice and the columnist's voice (the term *voice* refers to the particular, interpersonal style or the orientation of these three types of journalistic voices). The distinctive rhetorical potential of the contemporary journalistic texts, also resides in the communicational qualities of the "voice" with which it is associated, (that of the reporter's in news items, the columnist's voice in opinion pieces, etc.).

All utterances expose a certain social attitude to risk and create a series of divergent or convergent relationships with a variety of alternative utterances, representing different social attitudes. Thus, we are allowed "a re-construction" of the semantics of "evidence", "the modality" or "the ambiguity" as well as the analysis of these re-constructions by encoding the acceptance of an alternative social attitude and its obvious inclusion into the discourse.

[9] Michael Holquist, *Bakhtin and his world*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 70
[10] Daniela Roventa-Frumusani, *op.cit.*, p. 75.
[11] *Ibidem*, p. 76.



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This heteroglossic orientation proves to be the antidote of the outlook according to which certain utterances are "neutral" from an interpersonal point of view, and consequently objective, while others show an interpersonal content and they are "doctrinal" (subjective).

From a functional systemic point of view, there is no utterance without interpersonal value, and the heteroglossic perspective reaffirms that even the most "objective" enouncement is laden with interpersonal tensions that develop due to an alternative set of contradictory enouncements. The degree of tension is generated by social factors and it is represented by the relation between the number and the social status of those alternative social and semiotic realities that were taken into account when the enouncement in question has been created. Therefore, we shall consider the following enunciations:

a. *Both the Minister of Education, Daniel Funeriu and Prime Minister Emil Boc notified him through intermediate persons that civil offices can be offered in exchange for voting against the motion of censure.* (*România Liberă*, 29.10. 2010)

*b. I believe that, both the minister of Education, Daniel Funeriu and Prime Minister Emil Boc notified him through intermediate persons that civil offices can be offered in exchange for voting against the motion of censure.*

We point out that the difference between them is not one of "fact" versus "opinion", but rather one depending on the extent to which the enouncement fits/accepts the intertextual or dialogical context in which it operates. In one story, all utterances put at risk a certain social attitude and create a series of diverging or converging relationships, with a variety of alternative sentences, representing different social attitudes. Thus, we allow a "reconstruction" of the semantics of "evidence," the modality" or "ambiguity" and analysis of these reconstructions by encoding alternative social attitudes and acceptance of inclusion was evident in the speech. Heteroglossic orientation concept proves to be the antidote that certain statements are "neutral" in terms of interpersonal value, and, therefore, objective, while others show an interpersonal load and are "doctrinal" (subjective).

The journalistic discourse is as much about the views (interpersonal values) and the "facts" (values related experience). Different types of news sources are placed in the same measure to express opinions, make assumptions, to warn claim and to react emotionally to make statements like "facts" about what he has X to Y. Therefore, to focus solely on "facts" and "truth" means to leave out at least half the story. Without a theory of interpersonal relationship, he can explore the hidden strategies by placing them on a text writer and the reader, both in terms of evaluative assumptions, expectations and beliefs, which it passes. Therefore the heteroglossic perspective has consequences that go far, as we saw, for the way semantics is modelled by the speakers commitment / dedication. Assuming that language is a resource for constructing social reality, a fundamental precept of functional approaches to language, and that every community will contain multiple realities or perspectives on the world, sometimes convergent, sometimes divergent, we



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note that all expressions subject social position to some risk and enter into relationships with a greater or lesser convergence / divergence, with a range of alternative expressions that represent different social positions.

This guidance strongly pars the heteroglossic notion of common sense, that certain expressions are interpersonally neutral in terms of and thus are "factual" or "objective", while others are interpersonally loaded in terms and are "presumptuous" or "attitudinal". In systemic functional perspectives, all expressions are analyzed as ideational and interpersonal, at the same time - there is no speech without interpersonal value. However, the influence of common-sense notion of "facts" is widespread and we might be tempted to see certain expressions as more popular than others. But the heteroglossic orientation reminds us that even the most "factual" expressions, structured to minimize the importance of interpersonal values, are loaded in terms of interpersonal relations; thus, they enter into tensed relations with a related set of alternative and contradictory expressions. The degree of this tension is determined socially. It is based on the number and social status of those socio-semiotic alternative realities in which the expression in question would be problematical. Consequently, the difference between the expression: "*The prime minister had seen the defamatory documents before they were presented to Parliament*" and the phrase "*In my opinion, it is possible that the Prime Minister has seen defamatory documents before they are submitted to Parliament*" is not one of "fact" versus "opinion", but of the degree to which expression is to recognize the intertextual or dialogic context in which it operates. Therefore, the distinction can be represented in terms of heteroglossic negotiation - the first expression reduces or minimizes the importance of heteroglossic diversity by virtue of its vocabulary and grammar, while the second is actively promoting this opportunity. Alternatively, we can say that the former denies or ignores the intertextual heterogeneity of operation, while the second one expresses it.

The basis of any enunciation is a "contract of communication"[12] which requires the existence of certain norms and conventions accepted by participants, the mutual recognition of the participants, of their role in the community and of the communication framework as well as the status of certain discourse genres within the situation of communication.

The production or reception of a journalistic discourse entails the action of three instances that contribute to building the meaning: the subject producer, the subject interlocutor and texts that are already organized in a filed corpus, which is available to be accessed, pointed out, rewritten, paraphrased and sent. We acknowledge expectations that are fuelled by the eagerness to read a daily paper and by the curiosity to enter the reality it opens up to us. "The information is like a question: it does not only refer to the past, but it also considers the future. Current facts put us before the event"[13]. In other words, the

[12] Patrick Charaudeau, *Le dialogue dans la modele de discourse*, in *Cahiers de linguistique francaise*, No.17, Geneve, 1995, apud. Dominique Maingueneau, Analiza textelor de comunicare,Iasi, the Institutul European Publishing House, 2007, p. 34.
[13] Maurice Mouillaud, Jean Francois Tetu, *Presa cotidiana*, Bucharest, Editorial Tritonic, 2003, p. 30.



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paper, the event and the reader are three instances that stick together inside the same presence.

Therefore, the texture of journalistic text becomes a whole of narrative "voices" and stylistic registers merged in a vast individualizing discourse whole, rooted in a text, which is by no means static, but it is being transformed/rephrased continuously, as a result of social changes.

This architext [14] has a specific orientation and it is subordinated to a previous (oral or written) text, built by another speaker. "In this cleavage (neither stable nor absolute) between the mass of founding discourses (the Bible, the Odyssey, the theory of relativity etc.) and that of the discourses that gloss and comment, the media discourse has an ambivalent position: on one hand, it talks about the world, but at the surface of the event, and on the other hand, like in an infinite Borgesian game, it comments the discourse on the world of an actor or social group.[…][15]

One of the forms that Bakhtin's dialogical principle takes, which is crucial to contemporary Romanian journalism, is the relationship "paper/author/text-reader"[16]. This relationship is considered, as a whole, a form of dialogue expression to the extent to which it ensures the diversity of the phrasal and trans-phrasal forms of representation and it develops rhetorical-pragmatic functions. Viewed from a dialogic perspective, the journalistic discourse develops a technique for evaluation as a semantic resource, using texts which give unilateral positioning, multiple text or inter-subjective in terms of intentionality, because there is a potential individual journalistic "meaning" sent by text or a group of journalistic texts. Distinctive expressive potential of contemporary news lies in the communicative qualities of "the voice" with which it is associated.

As Maria Cvasnâi-Cătănescu shows in *Retorică publicistică: de te paratext la text*, in the printed press, this dialogue relationship is suggested at different reference levels: the editorial peritext, the authorial peritext and the text, the text type and the internal organization of the text.

In order to illustrate dialogism at the level of the editorial peritext, we retain the injunctive enouncements that propose reception/reading lines, enouncements such as advertising slogans organized in cases placed in fixed positions and which, besides their purpose of individualizing the paper, also have the role of attracting the reader.

For instance, *Jurnalul Național* has perfected in time various strategies in order to entice and keep readers' interest through thematic issues or collection issues such as: *Encyclopedia Britannica* or *Bibilioteca pentru toți*; *Adevărul* newspaper contains peritextual sequences such as: *Today's Reading, the Expert Real-estate Supplement* or *Tomororw, The Literary Supplement* (30 June 2009). The *Săptămâna Financiară* newspaper (2 November 2009) heralds on its first page: "As of 9 November, your money will grow. Look for the Money Growing Guide, in the 9th November issue of the paper *Săptămâna Financiară*", an

[14] Ibidem, p. 140
[15] Daniela Roveta-Frumusani, *Analiza discursului*, Bucharest, Tritonic, 2004, p. 73.
[16] Maria Cvasnai Catanescu, *Retorică publicistică: de la paratext la text*, Bucharest, University of Bucharest Press, p. 60.



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invitation obviously targeted at readers interested in the financial problems who will purchase next week's issue.

The interactive relationship with readers is also kept through permanent columns such as: *What do we listen to, Where do we go, What do we read* (*Gândul*), *the Question of the Day (Evenimentul Zilei), We receive from readers,* and *Your opinion (Adevărul).*

At the level represented by the authorial peritext (title, overtitle, subtitle) and text, dialogue structures are heterogeneous and they are made up of a varied repertory of innovative strategies:

"How do you pretend it's all right when it's not?"

There is a Romanian saying that "all bad things happen for a good purpose", but it does not reveal only the consequences of certain experiences such as "you miss the plane, you get angry, you feel unhappy, but afterwards the plane crashes and you realize that fortune has smiled on you". In this case, all bad things happened for your own benefit! Deeper inside, the saying goes that nothing happens by accident, and on the other side, it invites us in a subtle manner to develop more optimistic perceptions of the world and life. Changing positively the course of your own mind in front of an unpleasant event, a problem, a destructive state or an unhappy situation is a way of succeeding in applying the essence of the proverb " all bad things happen for a good purpose", (*Jurnalul National*, 1 November 2010).

The relative pronoun at the opening of the title may be interpreted as a referential term for the entire text that represents the referential source, and the use of the singular number of second person is a rhetoric process for insinuating a dialogue with readers.

Journalistic discourse is not just a means of communicating ideas, but also contributes to their formation, since concepts are created in the communication process, even if not expressed. Thoughts are expressed in the language of each community, the linguistic act which is both a personal and a social fact: a personal fact because the speaker expresses in a unique way a unique intuition, which belongs exclusively to them, and social fact, because the individual does not create full expression, but rather, recreates one from previous models. Newspapers texts require a specific discourse in a fixed form, depend on the overall system of language and give a very clear example of the current language with structured social meanings. It is a special language designed and intended to inform readers, but also to induce opinions and attitudes, which involves interpretation of reality presented. It exists independently as an "information unit" written with deliberate informative function. Referentially dominant, it informs or discusses various thematic issues, using a denotative language, but having multiple elements of oral language, which as we know, implies natural, expressive, even aesthetic, valences. This is the signified and the signifier of a transcribed world contained in the current event.



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Roveta-Frumusani, Daniela, *Analiza discursului*, Bucharest, Tritonic, 2004, p. 73.



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