

A Culture-Contrastive Analysis Of The Communication Between Discourse Participants In European Editorials

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Abstract : Language is our main means of social interaction. News journalism, especially opinion discourse, holds a powerful position in this context. Editorials can be regarded as encounters of different, partially contradictory relationships between discourse participants constructed through the editorial voice. Their primary goal is to shape public opinion by commenting on events already addressed by other journalistic genres in the given newspaper. In doing so, the author tries to establish a consensus over the negotiated matter (i.e. the news event) with the reader. At the same time, he/she claims authority over the "correct" description and evaluation of an event. Yet, how can the relationship and the interaction between the discourse participants, i.e. the journalist, the reader and the news actors represented in the editorial, be best visualized and studied from a cross-cultural perspective? The present research project attempts to give insights into the role of (media) culture in British, Italian and German editorials. For this purpose the presenter will propose a basic framework: the so called "pyramid of discourse participants", comprising the author, the reader, two types of news actors and the semantic macro-structure (as meta-level of analysis). Based on this framework, the following questions will be addressed: • Which strategies does the author employ to persuade the reader and to prompt him to give his opinion (in the comment section)? • In which ways (and with which linguistic tools) is editorial opinion expressed? • Does the author use adjectives, adverbials and modal verbs to evaluate news actors, their actions and the current state of affairs or does he/she prefer nominal labels? • Which influence do language choice and the related media culture have on the representation of news events in editorials? • In how far does the social context of a given media culture influence the amount of criticism and the way it is mediated so that it is still culturally-acceptable? The following culture-contrastive study shall examine 45 editorials (i.e. 15 per media culture) from six national quality papers that are similar in distribution, importance and the kind of envisaged readership to make valuable conclusions about culturally-motivated similarities and differences in the coverage and assessment of news events. The thematic orientation of the editorials will be the NSA scandal and the reactions of various countries, as this topic was and still is relevant to each of the three media cultures. Starting out from the "pyramid of discourse participants" as underlying framework, eight different criteria will be assigned to the individual discourse participants in the micro-analysis of the editorials. For the purpose of illustration, a single criterion, referring to the salience of authorial opinion, will be selected to demonstrate how the pyramid of discourse participants can be applied as a basis for empirical analysis. Extracts from the corpus shall furthermore enhance the understanding.

Keywords : Micro-analysis of editorials, culture-contrastive research, media culture, interaction between discourse participants, evaluation

Conference Title : ICELMACC 2015 : International Conference on Education, Language, Media, Art and Cultural Communication

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : October 29-30, 2015