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INTRODUCTION

PREFACE

This book was prepared by linguists for teachers and university students of English, both of English language and literature and of English for the social sciences and for communication studies. It is our conviction that advanced learners of a language need analytical tools in order to be able to interpret, and at times to produce, complex texts of a variety of **genres**, tools which enable them to deconstruct and reconstruct text. **Discourse analysis**, which examines all kinds of naturally occurring language in a systematic and scientific way, provides the theoretical framework for the work presented here. It identifies, for example, the differences between spontaneous, face-to-face conversation and formal prose of an academic or specialistic nature. It studies the elements of **cohesion** and **coherence** that create text. It finds patterns in the apparently amorphous, unpredictable exchanges characteristic of ordinary speech.

The choice of texts presented here is intentionally non-literary and non-academic, and reflects a concern with the kinds of discourses which are most pervasive in the average person's daily life: media texts. Indeed, from newspapers and radio-television broadcasting to film and advertising, media texts influence our immediate personal worlds and our ideas of who we are, while at the same time giving us access to a world out there and creating an illusion of co-presence with distant others, both others who communicate with us through the media and imagined others who might be simultaneously part of the audience. It has been suggested that, unlike other kinds of reading, the consumption of media texts is a collective experience in that media texts invite us to participate in organized and institutionalized cultural practices. The materials in this book focus, therefore, not on learning *from* media texts, but on understanding *how* media texts actually work.

1. DISCOURSE, TEXT AND IDEOLOGY

It will be clear from the previous section that we use the terms *discourse* and *text* interchangeably. Not all scholars would agree that this was acceptable. Partly, this is because of the different histories the words have had, especially when they are found in the expressions *discourse analysis* and ***text grammar***. Text grammar is associated, mainly, with work done on the continent of Europe [1] by scholars who wanted to find the same kind of **syntactic rules** – that is rules for combining words – which were so easily identifiable at sentence level, in sequences of words above the level of the sentence.

At the level of the sentence we can write very clear rules to explain why:

(1) Romeo loves Juliet

is a grammatical sentence. These are the rules needed to write example (1):

S → NP + VP
VP → V + NP
V → Verb + tense
NP → N
N → Proper noun
(→ means rewrite as)

Grammarians would claim that the letters used in the rules stood for abstractions, but we might put them into simple English as: a sentence can be rewritten as a noun phrase plus a verb phrase; a verb phrase can be re-written as a verb plus a noun phrase; a noun, in the grammar needed to explain sentence (1), is a proper noun.

Text grammarians tried to find the same kind of rules to explain stretches of language like:

(2) Romeo loves Juliet.
Tybalt hates Romeo.

This is a much more difficult enterprise, a point to which we will return.

Discourse analysis was mainly associated with the scholars from Birmingham University in the United Kingdom [2] and originally dealt with spoken language. Like the text grammarians, discourse analysts were looking at stretches of language above the sentence and they were looking for rules. In discourse analysis the social element plays a much more important role: one of the first studies (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975) describes interaction in the classroom between teachers and pupils where, clearly, the positions the participants occupy in society to a large extent determine when who says what to whom: it is the teacher who initiates, guides and closes the discourse, often with an evaluatory comment.

There have been interesting attempts to systematize the difference between text and discourse. Widdowson (1978), for example, makes the following distinction based funda-

mentally on Chomsky's (1965) distinction between the language possessed by the ideal native speaker, **competence**, and that language when it is used in real life, **performance**. In the same way as a **sentence** is an ideal entity (a bit of competence), an **utterance** is a sentence when it is used in the real world (a bit of performance); at the level above that of the sentence/utterance a text is an ideal construction (a bit of competence) and a discourse is a text in use (a bit of performance). Van Dijk's (1977: 3) statement that «a text is the abstract theoretical construct underlying what is usually called a discourse» is very similar.

Other scholars, like Halliday (1976; 1984[2]), stand this approach on its head by defining the text as the realization of a set of underlying rules.

Perhaps because of confusions of this kind many scholars nowadays have abandoned the distinction between text and discourse; the authors of this book use the two terms interchangeably, though we have opted, quite arbitrarily, for *discourse* in our title. The important point is to define the object of our study. A text/discourse may be defined as a word or series of words, either written or spoken, which makes sense, is complete and appears in a context [3].

A text/discourse may consist of a single word provided it conveys a complete message. The word *Stop* written on the road conveys a complete message which makes sense to the driver of a car because it is read in the context of car driving and traffic signals. The same word written in the sky by a sky-writing aeroplane would leave us perplexed: we would not know what we had to stop doing. The word would also make sense if it were shouted to a car driver by a policeman, even though the context in this case would be slightly different.

In another sense the word *Stop* is not a complete message: it is not actually written on the road that we must arrest the forward motion of the car and not, for example, stop accelerating or even playing the car radio. This may seem a trivial thing to say, but only because the situation is so familiar to us that it is a matter of common sense. It is common sense, however, only because we have studied the *Highway Code* and have made thousands of car journeys. In other words, there is a gap to be filled before the message is complete and we fill it with the knowledge of the world, acquired in a myriad different ways, which we bring to the situation.

In our definition of text/discourse it is possible to substitute *a sign or series of signs* for *a word or series of words*. Saussure, who might claim to be the father of both modern linguistics and of semiotics, in his *Cours de linguistique générale* ([1916] 1974) defines a *sign* as an inseparable union of a **signified** and a **signifier**. The signified is a mental concept, for instance that of a cat, and in the case of language the signifier is the sounds that represent that concept, [kæt]. Clearly, the link between the two parts of the sign is arbitrary, as is demonstrated by the fact that for an Italian speaker the signifier is represented by the sounds [gatto]. The meaning of a sign, or its ***valeur*** as Saussure called it, is given by its difference from all other signs. In our minimal text, *Stop* has meaning because it is part of a system of traffic signs in which it contrasts with all other traffic signs such as *Slow* or *Left turn* etc. If we move away from language, we will find that in a visual text, the signifier is no longer a series of sounds, but an image. This image my be a literal picture of a cat, an

icon, or it may be something which stands as a **symbol** for a cat [4]. Some media, such as films or TV, will have linguistic texts, visual texts and sometimes musical texts as well.

If one word is the smallest text/discourse we can have, what is the biggest? Theoretically, there is no upper limit: English school boys are fond of asking the question, «How long is a piece of string?»; the more linguistically minded might ask with similar intent to mystify, «How long is a text?». A three volume novel by Dickens is clearly a text/discourse. But what about Homer's *Iliad*? It is divided into 24 books; does this mean that we have 24 texts/discourses or only one? The word *complete* in our definition of text/discourse needs clarification. A text/discourse is not complete in itself; it is complete for us, the reader or listener or co-creator. Book One of the *Iliad* may be a complete text or all 24 books may be a complete text, depending on what suits our purposes. This principle does not only apply to written texts – created products; if I leave the room and my friends continue the conversation – a process I have been helping to create, do I refer later to «The conversation I had with you» or to «That unfinished conversation we were having»? It depends, I suppose, on whether we feel we have said what we wanted to say. This is partly because we the reader are part of the context which gives meaning to the text/discourse.

This leads us to a further consideration. As we said, the early text linguists found it more difficult to explain why in example (2) *Tybalt hates Romeo* follows *Romeo loves Juliet* than why *loves* follows *Romeo* and *Juliet* follows *loves*. This is basically because the rules which govern, or to use Chomsky's word **generate**, the sentence in (1) *Romeo loves Juliet* are of a different nature from those which put *Tybalt hates Romeo* after *Romeo loves Juliet*.

Let us examine this difference more closely. We might rewrite (2) as:

(3) Romeo loves Juliet.
Tybalt, on the other hand, hates Romeo.

Here, we have introduced some kind of link between the two sentences. *On the other hand* tells us that the second sentence expresses a meaning which is in some way contrary to that of the first sentence; we are not talking about love any more, but its opposite – hate. We could, in fact, express this as one sentence containing two clauses.

(4) Romeo loves Juliet but Tybalt hates Romeo.

These links between clauses and sentences are very important and they help us understand the logical progression of the text. They are what we call **cohesive devices** and several pages of this book are devoted to analyzing them. However, while we can perfectly well write:

(2a) Tybalt hates Romeo.
Romeo loves Juliet.

(3a) Tybalt hates Romeo.
Romeo, on the other hand, loves Juliet.

(4a) Tybalt hates Romeo, but Romeo loves Juliet.

We cannot write:

(5) *Romeo Juliet loves.

It breaks the rules of English syntax [5].

Note that we are not saying that these examples have the same meanings as examples (2) (3) and (4). Example (2) might have the order it has because in our opinion this order reflects the importance of these two facts in the play: Romeo's love for Juliet is simply more important than Tybalt's hatred for Romeo. But clearly in this case we are not talking about grammatical rules; we are talking about the importance of the context. Remember, *we* are part of the context. We might say that we are talking about pragmatic rules, though perhaps we need another word instead of *rules*. What we are talking about, however, is coherence, which we might define as the way statements match our view of the world. Coherence is a very important concept. As we will see in Chapter One, text/discourse can be composed of perfectly grammatical sentences linked together by the tightest cohesive devices, but if it lacks coherence, as we have defined it, then the text/discourse is likely to be nonsense.

Returning to our text/discourse *Stop*, we said that to understand its message fully we needed, apart from a knowledge of the English language, knowledge of the world which includes knowledge of the system, the *Highway Code*, of which the text is a part. We referred to this knowledge of the world as **common sense**. In the case of the *Highway Code* everyone, except perhaps the odd sociopath, would accept that drawing on our common sense to observe the rules of the road correctly was a very positive thing to do. But is this always the case?

Let us consider the classical advertisement which appeared during the 1914-18 War. A man with a very worried expression on his face is sitting on an armchair; on his knee is his little daughter pointing to a book, while on the floor his young son plays with his toy soldiers. The little girl asks, *Daddy what did you do in the Great War*? The man looks worried because he can only say that he did not fight for his country and this will mean that his little girl will despise him and so, presumably, will all right thinking people because it is common sense that it is a good thing to do to fight for your country.

Here *common sense* is being used as Gramsci (1971) uses it. Fairclough, who develops the Gramscian concept in his linguistic analyses defines it this way:

> Ideological power, the power to project one's practices as universal and «common sense», is a significant complement to economic and political power, and of particular significance here because it is exercised in discourse.
>
> (Fairclough 1989: 33)

As with *Stop*, we have to fill a gap with common sense to understand this message: it is bad to be despised by your children and it is bad not to fight for your country. Presumably everyone agrees that it is bad to be despised by one's children. But would everyone agree that it is always bad not to fight for your country? Presumably, the thousands of young American men who burnt their draft cards during the Vietnam War did not think so; nor did the journalists and many thousands of British people who expressed doubts about the Falk-

lands/Malvinas war. By making it a matter of common sense that it is good to fight for one's country, the writer of the advertisement is exercising ideological power to maintain the *status quo*, that is the view of the ruling classes.

Let us consider a perfectly normal «non-political» advertisement, an advert for life insurance, *New York Life*. We are shown a picture of a man torn into two pieces and the text, which is distributed between the two pieces, says: *If you're torn between life insurance protection and competitive interest rates ... Get them both.* The common sense assumption we must make to interpret this ad is that both life insurance protection and competitive interests rates are a good thing. We might reject both these assumptions. We might eccentrically believe that it is better to invest one's money in gold bars and bury them in the garden; or, slightly less eccentrically, we may think that both life insurance and interest rates are aspects of a capitalist society which we totally reject. We may be wrong to hold these beliefs, that is not the point. The point is that the text and its common sense assumptions do not allow us even to contemplate the possibility of the existence of other beliefs.

You might be tempted to think that our analyses of the common sense assumptions behind these adverts is rather forced. A quotation from Fairclough may help.

> Ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible. If one becomes aware that a particular aspect of common sense is sustaining power inequalities at one's own expense, it ceases to *be* common sense, and may cease to have the capacity to sustain power inequalities, i.e. to function ideologically. And invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background assumptions which on the one hand lead the text producer to «textualize» the world in a particular way, and on the other lead the interpreter to interpret the text in a particular way. Texts do not typically spout ideology. They so position the interpreter through their clues that she brings ideologies to the interpretation of texts – and reproduces them in the process!
>
> (Fairclough 1988: 85)

This book is in no way written as a political tract – only Morley's chapter deals overtly with politics – but the four authors recognize that text/discourse cannot be analyzed as if it existed in a vacuum. The works of Foucault [6] and Bakhtin [7], among others, on discourse have crossbred with more mainstream linguistic ideas and leave us with an awareness of what Sara Mills calls:

> [G]roupings of utterances ... which are enacted within a social context, which are determined by that social context and which contribute to the way that social context continues its existence.
>
> (Mills 1997: 11)

All of the chapters in this book to a greater or lesser extent use a Hallidayan approach to language. This is because the Hallidayan system is based on language as social semiotic, or language used to construct and organize experience and thus, we would add, to understand society more profoundly. The purpose of the book is to provide tools to enable the Italian university student to use language better; but unless we are using language better to understand society better, it seems to us a sterile exercise.

2. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

In the first chapter, written by John Morley, the language of the most prestigious weekly business magazine written in English, the *Economist* is analyzed. The first part of the chapter (Sections 1-6) examines the linguistic and pragmatic means through which coherence is created in *Economist* articles. It will be seen that Halliday and Hasan's model, slightly revised, applies as pertinently to this discourse universe as to all others. The second part of the chapter (Section 7) tries to specify the genre of the articles. It asks whether the articles in the *Economist* are articles of comment or report. The problem is approached firstly by using a simplified version of Biber's statistical parameters and then by considering the nature of the metaphors – both lexical and grammatical – employed in the writing of the magazine and by examining some of the features of formal technical writing in general.

In the second chapter, written by Linda Lombardo, ads are examined as an extreme example of motivated discourse. The language choices involved in the making of this particular media genre are considered from the point of view of Hallidayan systemic-functional grammar, as well as that of critical discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics. In Section 1 the features of spoken language as identified by Halliday, Brown and Yule, and others are applied to advertising discourse to examine how and why today's printed ads try to imitate speech. In Section 2 creative tropes and other forms of linguistic expressivity are explored as extensions and refinements of a very ordinary natural ability. Examples are given of their effective use in both imaginative fiction/poetry and advertising texts. In both sections attention is paid to the hidden ideology of ads as reflections of dominant cultural values and ways of thinking and acting.

Chapter Three, written by Louann Haarman, focuses on the analysis of three familiar television genres: the news, morning shows and talk shows. It aims not only to describe the peculiar characteristics of the various genres and of the talk produced in them, but also to provide the reader with analytical tools useful for further independent research. Thus, the first part of the chapter sets out the main features of the analytical approaches drawn upon in the analyses proper, i.e. conversation analysis, semiotics and a cultural generic approach to the study of television texts; then each genre is considered in turn. In the section about television news, a news item reported on BBC and Channel Four evening news is compared by means of a close linguistic analysis and from a semiotic perspective. The morning show and talk show genres are approached instead chiefly with the tools of conversation analysis adapted to institutional broadcast talk and a cultural generic analytical framework which highlights the role of contextual constraints in their organizational, interactional and procedural characteristics. In the discussion of morning shows, a comparison is made between features of the BBC's *Good Morning* and ITV's *This Morning*. In the discussion of talk shows, distinctions are made between evening or «celebrity» talk shows, daytime talk shows centring on social issues in a personal perspective, and daytime «trash» talk shows.

Chapter Four, written by Christopher Taylor, begins by establishing the premise that even spontaneous, casual conversation obeys rules and can therefore be studied and ana-

lysed. An explanation of the basic differences between the written and spoken modes of language is followed by a consideration of the concept of «context of situation» thus reaffirming the notion that all language acts, including conversation, take place within a describable set of features (of time, of place, of accompanying circumstances, etc.). The various aspects of speech act theory are then discussed, leading to a more detailed study of what is known as Conversation Analysis. The main tenets of CA (different kinds of moves, turn-taking, the semantic features of talk) are then illustrated by example. Different kinds of conversation are identified and their typical features described. In particular, the rather broad genre of texts that are «written to be spoken» is singled out for discussion. Finally, and more specifically, the genre that forms the focus of this chapter, namely film scripts, which are «written to be spoken as if not written» are considered in detail. This particular genre is investigated with a view to establishing how successfully film script writers are able to transfer the characteristics of genuine spoken language to the artificial medium of the feature film, given the many attendant difficulties that surround this task. Many examples are used to illustrate the discussion and the conclusions reached point to a growing awareness of, and an at times admirable ability to capture, the rules that shape casual spoken language.

LL, LH, JM, CT
Monte San Pietro
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NOTES

[1] See, for example the work done by the *Konstanz Project* group in an attempt to provide the rules for the generation of the whole of a Brecht text, which is partly reported in Van Dijk *et al.* (1972). And see also van Dijk's own grammar which is a process-oriented model based on cognitive psychology (van Dijk 1977). Another fundamental model, also process orientated, is that of de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981). In the United States Katz and Fodor (1963) had suggested that a long text could be treated as a sentence with the full stops being regarded as conjunctions.

[2] Particularly important was the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). For overviews, see Coulthard (1985) and Brown and Yule (1983). The first mention of *discourse analysis* was by Zellig Harris (1952). His approach, however, was much more like that of the text analysts in that he was trying to extend sentence grammar above the sentence. With the publication of Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* in 1957, this approach found little favour in the USA.

[3] The importance of the context of situation was first stressed by the anthropologist Malinowski in 1923. His work was taken up and developed by Firth in London (1957). The context of situation is behind Halliday's concept of **register**, or language variation due to field, what we are talking about, tenor, the relationship between the participants and mode,

the means of communication we are using. The actual words we use – the text – form part of this context and are normally referred to as the **cotext** of the expression being examined.

[4] Talking of Icons, Indexes and Symbols, we move away from Saussure's semiotic system towards that of Peirce (1931-1958).

[5] We sometimes do, of course, break the rules of English grammar, but when we do so there is usually a good reason for it; we want, for instance, the words to grab our reader's or hearer's attention.

[6] For Foucault, see in particular his *The Order of Discourse* (1970); *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972); *The History of Sexuality* (1978). There is also a useful collection of his work edited by Paul Rabinow (1984). The best description of how Foucault's work has been integrated into linguistic text/discourse studies is Fairclough (1989).

[7] Bakhtin's work was developed in the Soviet Union from the 1920s to the 1940s and only became well-known to western scholars in the 1980s. See, in particular, his *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* ([1929] 1986) which was published under the name of Volosinov, a friend of his. Clark and Holquist (1984) is an introduction to some aspects of Bakhtin.

(segue)

7.2. The nature of the prose

We may be unsure whether the articles in the *Economist* are articles of comment or of reporting, but it will be clear even to a relatively casual reader of the journal that its language has a very individual and strange savour. Remember that the *Economist* is one of the most prestigious weekly magazines in the world dealing with subjects like economics, business and politics which are not normally considered frivolous; and yet the abiding feeling one is left with after reading the magazine is one of linguistic playfulness. Italian readers will bear me out that *Il Sole Ventiquattro Ore* is not written in the same playful tone, nor is the British daily *The Financial Times*. What is it, then, which gives the reader this sense of fun? The explanation may be connected with the use of metaphor in the articles.

7.2.1. *Metaphor*

We might define metaphor very simply as :

> a particular set of linguistic processes whereby aspects of one object are «carried over» or transferred to another object, so that the second object is spoken of as if it were the first.
>
> (Hawkes 1984: 1)

It is sometimes argued that most language is metaphorical. Lakoff and Johnson state:

> We have found ... that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of what we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.
>
> (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3)

There are, indeed, many metaphors of whose metaphorical nature we are totally unaware. Take for instance the following passage:

> (44) [Mr D'Alema's] list of ministers, drawn up this week, reflects moderation and continuity with the outgoing government of Romano Prodi.

Most of us would not think of the word *reflects* as metaphorical, but in its literal meaning it is only mirrors and shiny surfaces that reflect. What is clear, however, is that not all the words in the above sentence are metaphorical. We could say that there are more metaphors in language than we are aware of. This is because these expressions have lost their metaphorical force: they are what we call dead metaphors.

Sometimes metaphors turn into to technical language, in which case they are dead metaphors for members of that **discourse community** [54] but may retain some metaphorical qualities for those who are not members of the community. Partington points out (1998) that the non-expert can frequently identify metaphors that have become technical terms because they do not collocate in the normal way. *Cash-flow* is a fossilized metaphor for the writers of the *Economist*. We can tell it is fossilized because in the *Economist* when *cash-flow* is *under pressure*, it slows down; if this were a live metaphor from Physics, it would speed up under pressure.

Let us consider for a moment metaphor in its liveliest and most interesting form – the form in which we frequently find it in the *Economist*. Metaphor, under which we would include simile, metonymy and synecdoche, is the queen of all the rhetorical devices: most of the figures of speech we find in highly colourful texts, like poetry, are some kind of metaphor. We might reasonably enquire, then, if *Economist* articles are not a kind of poetry. Perhaps the «individual and strange savour» of the language of which I spoke derives from the fact that the language of the *Economist* has a good deal in common with the language of poetry. I would like to take this rather bizarre idea seriously for a moment. Consider this fragment of a poem by John Donne.

(45) O My America! my new-found-land,
My kingdom safeliest when with one man man'd.
My Myne of precious stones, my Emperie,
How blest am I in thus discovering thee!

The lines come from a poem called *To His Mistris [Mistress] Going to Bed* in which Donne is praising his mistress's charms. He does this by comparing her to the newly discovered Newfoundland with all its wealth, that is by using a metaphor. Remember Donne was writing during the great Elizabethan period of the opening up of the first British empire when the poets in London were excitedly using strange stories of unimaginable places to colour their poems: Shakespeare's *Tempest* is one of the best known examples of this.

Compare Donne's lines to the following quotation from the *Economist*.

(46) Driven partly by free-market zeal, partly by the governments' need to finance their budget deficits and partly by demands from the European Commission for politicians to meddle less in industry, the two countries have already sold, or are about to sell, some of their crown jewels

The article describes the way France and Italy are trying to finance their budget deficits by selling off state owned industries – *their crown jewels*. In both texts, aspects of one object *precious stones/crown jewels* are carried over to another object, the poet's mistress/nationalized industries. Or to put it another way, both metaphors come from the semantic fields

of precious objects used in trade. The exploits of the Elizabethan explorers and adventurers may seem, at this distance in time, more romantic than the doings of stock-market traders; but let us not forget, they were and are all in it for the money.

Does the use of metaphor, then, make the *Economist* article into a poem? Most of us would be reluctant to say Yes. Perhaps this is because the metaphor in Donne is more integrated into his poem. We start with *my America*, the new world which, although it was discovered by Columbus in 1492, is still being explored and exploited a century later. *America* becomes more precisely the *new-found-land*, a reference to Newfoundland which had become Britain's first colony in 1583; *America* in the poem then becomes a *kingdom*, a word which we might define as a country possessed by someone – a king or a queen. For the colonial powers like Britain and earlier Spain and Portugal, the New World was the legendary site of Eldorado, the land overflowing with gold and jewels. This idea is taken up in the poem with *my Myne[mine] of precious stones.*

In comparison, the *crown jewels* metaphor in the *Economist* article seems rather casually thrown in as a bit of colour. Even in the *Economist*, however, we can sometimes find extended metaphor.

(47) On June 2nd, which happened to be the 52nd birthday of the Italian republic, a bold attempt to rectify the worst failings of its political system was pronounced dead-or at any rate in a deep coma. This gloomy diagnosis followed the failure of an attempt at constitutional reform known as the bicamerale, after the parliamentary committee that struggled hard to reach agreement on some desirable changes. The collapse sends a lamentable message: none of the institutions or individuals involved in Italian politics seems prepared to sacrifice short-term interests for the country's political health.
The death certificate was issued by Silvio Berlusconi, the leader of the centre-right opposition. Failure was also acknowledged by Massimo D'Alema, leader of the newly renamed Democrats of the Left, the main branch of the ruling centre-left coalition, who was also the bicamerale's chairman.
The kiss of death was disagreement over the powers of the state president.

Notice in this passage the extended metaphor of sickness and death encoded in the words *pronounced dead, in a deep coma, gloomy diagnosis, collapse, health, death certificate, the kiss of death*. Are we, then, to consider this article a poem?

My answer would still be No. Not because the words do not have to regularity of rhythm or the rhyme which we find in poetry. This is an important consideration but *vers libre*, for instance, often has no trace of either metre or rhyme. My reasons would be that it was not the intention of the writer to produce poetry, nor is it the intention of the reader to read poetry. Writer and reader are collaborating in the production of a prestigious weekly magazine text about politics seen from an economic point of view.

A less philosophical question might be, «Are the producers of *Economist* texts trying to produce language that is in some way poetical?». It is more tempting to answer Yes to this question. Guy Cook (1992: 123) in a long chapter in which he discusses whether or not advertising can be considered poetry says, «The appellation *poetry* has become a value judgement». By this he says he means that poetry is to be considered serious, positive and,

preferably, iconoclastic. The *Economist* writers certainly would want to be considered serious, and probably they would prefer to be considered positive and iconoclastic; but I suspect that they do not wish their writing to be considered poetic.

What *Economist* articles and poetry have in common is that they are **deviant** in the Prague School sense of the word [55]. When we say that a text is deviant we mean that it contains a significantly greater number of certain of the elements which are found in all texts: in poetry we have, among other things, an abnormal amount of regularity produced by rhythm and rhyme; in *Economist* texts we have an abnormal amount of, what I shall call, colourfulness produced by metaphor. Poetry also contains this colourfulness, so the two genres do have something in common [56]. It must be obvious that extended lexical metaphor is a very powerful cohesive device.

Chapter Two

ADVERTISING AS MOTIVATED DISCOURSE

Linda Lombardo

INTRODUCTION: ADVERTISING AS A FORM OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

> ... in industrial societies in this century national consumer product advertising has become one of the great vehicles of social communication ...
>
> (Leiss, Kline and Jhally 1990: 1)

Readers may well ask themselves why anyone would want to study advertising as a form of media text. It is commonly believed that there is something base and unworthy, or at least trivial and banal, about any text that has a strictly commercial aim, namely, that of selling something. However, if we consider the important role that advertising plays in our society and the level of sophistication and artistic expression which some ads reach, we can begin to appreciate how ads can be a source of learning about effective communication and a discourse **genre** worthy of study in its own right.

To summarize the work of Leiss *et al.* in their influential book entitled *Social Communication in Advertising* (1990), advertising as a form of social communication has to some extent replaced the influence of more traditional forms of discourse – like religious rhetoric, political oratory and the precepts of older family members – in the everyday lives of ordinary people. People in contemporary culture are defined in some measure by their distinctive consumption patterns. They come together in lifestyle groupings or market segments. Their communications with others about their attitudes, expectations, and sense of identity are strongly associated with – and expressed through – patterns of preferences for consumer goods:

> Regarded individually and superficially, advertisements promote goods and services. Looked at in depth and as a whole, the ways in which messages are presented in advertising reach deeply into our most serious concerns: interpersonal and family relations, the sense of happiness and contentment, sex roles and stereotyping, the uses of affluence, the fading away of

> older cultural traditions, influences on younger generations, the role of business in society, persuasion and personal autonomy, and many others.
>
> (Leiss *et al.* 1990: 1)

All this is not necessarily a cause for concern. Anthropological studies tell us that goods have always functioned as communicators and for the elaboration of personal identity. In all human societies, material objects have served to convey meanings and messages about rank, status, privilege, roles, caste, sex, and class, and about social subgroups and the rules which determine how these groups behave toward one another. What is new is that this discourse through and about objects is now combined with the immense productive resources of modern industry, an impressive diversity of lifestyle models for personal satisfaction, and the special capabilities of today's mass communication technologies.

In addition to the fact that they are an integral part of modern culture, another reason for studying ads is that they make up the most consistent body of material in the mass media. They pervade our world, not only through our consumption of radio and television, newspapers and magazines, but also unsolicited via billboards, the daily mail, and the Internet. They are omnipresent, even in the most personal settings in our lives, at home and in leisure activities, the times and places in which we relax and have the opportunity for self-expression. They are expertly and sometimes brilliantly constructed. Public opinion surveys show that a high proportion of people enjoy ads as an art form, and there are national and international competitions where prizes are awarded for the most creative new ads. Indeed, this saturation by ads has turned us all into «knowing» consumers, and, as we shall see, modern advertising capitalizes on this sophistication by creating messages that require the complicity of an «expert» audience for their interpretation [1].

No matter what we think of advertising, and many of us are ambivalent about it, it is without doubt a discourse form to be reckoned with. This is attested to by the number of serious studies which have been done in which ads are taken as a focus of analysis. These range from Erving Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* ([1976] 1979), in which the body posture and gestures of female and male models in ads are shown to reflect and reinforce traditional patterns of sex-role expectations, to Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of a pasta ad in *Image, Music, Text* (1977) as an exemplification of the mythology of popular culture, to a wealth of more recent studies, some of which are indicated at the end of this chapter or in the bibliography at the end of the book.

The purpose of the present text is to explore how and why ads mean what they do and to evaluate to what extent they are successful through the application of appropriate discourse analytical tools. The general approach adopted is that of **social constructivism**, which holds that we understand the world around us via shared meanings that constitute our culture. This means that the way we make sense of our experiences depends on culturally specific codes and conventions [2]. To some extent, the theoretical linguistic framework is provided by Hallidayan **systemic-functional grammar**, which views language as the most important vehicle for constructing and communicating reality, and texts as a function of social context and use. Halliday's aim is to construct a grammar for analyzing texts, one which makes it possible to say useful things about any text, spoken or written. This grammar is systemic in that it considers language as a resource for making mean-

ing through a set of possible alternatives, with each option conditioning other options and influencing the meaning the message will have. For Halliday (1989: vii), the systemic linguistics theory

> ... is itself also a social theory, for it proposes firstly, that it is in the nature of human behaviour to build reality and/or experience through complex semiotic processes, and secondly, that the principal semiotic system available to humans is their language. In this sense, to study language is to explore some of the most important and pervasive of the processes by which human beings build their world.

This grammar is functional in that it is designed to account for how the language is used, with the understanding that the various uses to which language has been put have ultimately determined the organization of the system itself. In Halliday's (1994a: xiii) words:

> Every text – that is, everything that is said or written – unfolds in some context of use; furthermore, it is the uses of language that, over tens of thousands of generations, have shaped the system. Language has evolved to satisfy human needs; and the way it is organized is functional with respect to these needs – it is not arbitrary.

Hallidayan grammar is equally concerned with both the spoken and the written language. In Halliday's view (1994a: xxiii), the spoken language is extremely important, not because speech comes first in the history of the race and in the life of the individual (though that is certainly true), but because the potential of the language system, in terms of both semantic and grammatical variation, is «more richly developed, and more fully revealed, in speech». This goes against the commonly held belief, typical of a written culture, that spoken language is disorganized and without distinguishing features, while only writing shows a complex structure and pattern.

One of our main goals in analyzing the discourse of ads will be to use the tools which Halliday and other linguists provide to explore how and why modern ads consistently attempt to imitate the spoken language. The contribution of critical discourse analysis is also acknowledged. This sub-area of discourse analysis «argues that all linguistic usage encodes ideological positions, and studies how language mediates and represents the world from different points of view» (Stubbs 1996: 128). The purpose of critical discourse analysis is to bring the normally hidden ideology in discourse to the surface so that it can be noticed, examined and understood. In subtle ways ads tend to sustain the world view of those in power by presenting their values as assumed knowledge amounting to nothing more than common sense. So what is arbitrary and conventional is made to appear obvious and natural. Another important theoretical influence is that of cognitive linguistics, which views **metaphor** and **metonymy** as fundamental cognitive mechanisms, pervasive in human categorization and, as a result, in the semantics and grammar of human languages (G. Lakoff 1987; 1993). The use of novel metaphors in creative writing is thus seen as the extension and refinement of a very ordinary natural ability. The approach we will take in this chapter is pragmatic in that it focuses on how text interpretation is based on extralinguistic contextual information and the receiver's inferential abilities. The expressivity and iconicity of the language of ads is compared with that of poetry, where language forms are selected with great care (particularly in relation to the sound system) and mean-

ing is a function of a focus on form. Throughout, we will be concerned with how language choices are crucial to the creation of advertising texts, which both reflect and construct reality [3].

Chapter Three

TELEVISION TALK

Louann Haarman

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the analysis of selected television **genres**: television news, morning shows and talk shows. The specific genres have been chosen because they are highly recognisable types of programme, showing a variety of linguistic styles and reflecting a range of formats which are well known and popular among British and American audiences. In the presentation and analysis of examples of television **texts**, this chapter aims to illustrate the salient and peculiar characteristics of the genres discussed and of the talk produced therein, and to provide the reader with analytical tools useful for further, independent study.

Not surprisingly, the kind of tools brought to bear in the analysis of these texts is often substantially different from the kind of tools applicable to the analysis of other media texts in print form, such as those addressed in Chapters One (*The Economist*), Two (print publicity) and Four (film scripts). Television entails verbal and non-verbal acoustic elements (such as background noise, sound effects and music) as well as visual elements in the form of filmic material, still pictures, graphics and written words superimposed on the screen. So, while a close linguistic analysis of the verbal text remains an essential part of the overall analysis, the accompanying visuals and nonverbal acoustic material, along with other contextual aspects of the television text, such as format and targeted audience, cannot be ignored. Thus, while media studies in general are characteristically interdisciplinary, work on television is particularly so, aiming to recuperate through linguistic, **sociolinguistic** and **ethnomethodological** analysis not only *what* the text means and *how* that meaning is achieved, but also, in recent years, the highly complex matter of the audience's interpretation of the text.

There is of course more than one way to do this, according to the individual researcher's principal interests and objectives, and indeed diverse analytical approaches offer a range of different perspectives on media texts [1]. In the following section I shall briefly

set out the main features of the analytical approaches which inform my own analyses here. Although I describe the approaches singly, in the analyses proper all approaches are drawn upon in varying degrees [...].

(segue)

2. TELEVISION NEWS

I have chosen to lead off our panorama of television genres with a quite straightforward comparative analysis of two evening news programs, surely television's most familiar genre. In fact, as research in communications studies (Heinderyckx 1993) has shown, the structure of television news programmes is remarkably similar throughout Western Europe [8] and indeed even the segments of international news from more remote countries flashed occasionally on national news are easily recognized as such. The verbal and visual codes of television news are highly consolidated in a network of denotation and connotation which frames our very expectations and understanding of the news itself.

Consider for example the meanings invoked in the deployment of non-verbal signs in the opening title sequence of the evening news. Often, the news programme is immediately preceded by the image of a clock, ticking audibly while the second and minute hands reach the hour forecast for the evening news report, an image connoting precision and reliability. The theme music which accompanies the title sequence is generally emphatic and loud with much brass and percussion, suggesting the importance and urgency of the programme thus announced (the news). The music builds to a climax while the opening title graphics – often including a revolving globe (e.g. on BBC and RAI) to signify

immediate and complete *global* coverage of the news – fade to frame the studio where the newsreader is (usually) seated behind a desk, wearing sober, rather formal dress, connoting professional competence, authority and seriousness [9]. The studio itself may be either quite bare apart from the large desk, eventually with a single telephone or computer, connoting again professionalism, efficiency and possibly authority; or the newsreader may be seated at a desk with one or several functioning television screens behind him/her (as for a certain period on RAI 2), or with a fully active news room behind a glass wall at his/her back, with reporters speaking on the telephone, moving among the desks, consulting colleagues and computers, etc. (as for a certain period on RAI 3, and conventionally on global news programs like BBC World and CNN [10]). These latter backdrops tend to focus on technology and immediacy, suggesting that the television news programme is an ongoing, up-to-date work-in-progress which guarantees completeness and speed in the coverage of events. Whatever particular background is chosen, the semiotic thrust of the opening sequence [11] is to establish the professionalism, reliability, immediacy and authority of the news programme: these are values and popular myths which not only have a very high cultural valence, but are also closely associated with objective news reporting.

Of course, objectivity itself is perhaps the prime value and myth of news reporting, and certainly the most difficult to achieve. Indeed, from the very moment that news items are selected for broadcast, «constructed», and assigned a place in a chronological or hierarchical order of presentation, some items of news have necessarily been judged more newsworthy or important than others. But objectivity is a statutory requirement enforced by Parliament in Britain, and safeguarded by various governmental agencies throughout the Western world, both for public (State) and private (commercial) television. The requirement to be objective is generally understood by news operators as the need to display *impartiality*, or *par conditio*. Thus, in order to be impartial the text which is broadcast must «give equal time» to both or all sides of a reported event, «quoting or describing the responses of conflicting parties and interested groups to the news events narrated in news stories» (Bignell 1997: 118) [12]. Further, a number of news codes are commonly perceived as warranting objectivity, e.g. the non-accented, **RP** voice of the newsreader, whose calm direct gaze (straight into the viewer's eyes) and measured presentation aims to preclude any suspicion of emotion or bias. Similarly, **vox pop interviews,** interviews with experts (MP's, Cabinet members, trade union officials) and the television correspondent's own version of events also contribute to the impression of impartiality through the systematic accumulation of information from various sources, which is proffered to the viewer ostensibly so that s/he may formulate an independent opinion of the issue at hand.

As we shall see, however, there tends to emerge from the news report, from the delicate and complex interaction and juxtaposition of its verbal and visual signs, a «preferred reading» (Hall 1977): a between-the-lines, common-sense «interpretation» of the event in which cultural and ideological values pertinent to the news-giving source emerge [13]. This preferred reading is, Hartley (1982: 63) notes,

> *encoded* into the way a story is told. To dig out the preferred reading whilst watching the news can sometimes be hard, in the sense that what an event «means» so often seems to flow smoothly from the event itself, having nothing to do with the way it is told. To separate the

> event (referent) from the preferred reading you need to look at its news-construction in some detail. (my emphasis)

In the following section we shall begin by considering the overall format or structure of the news programme, then approach the analysis of the two evening news programmes in terms of what Hartley (1982: 118-119) calls the four «narrative moments or functions» of news stories: framing, focusing, realizing and closing.

7. FILM DIALOGUE

Film is a complex semiotic event, and as such is an ideal candidate for analysis within the framework of the recent interest in multimodal texts. The fact that it makes meaning through the use of words, gestures, sounds, music and pictures gives it an audio-visual textuality. But on the basis of the foregoing discussion of spoken language, conversation strategies and genre, it is the language employed in film dialogue that will now be focussed on. Dialogue is to be understood as including speech acts between two or more people, and even monologue if the latter features within a wider dialogic context. The essential point at issue remains to what extent this film dialogue can reflect reality; how close can it get to real spontaneous language use? Clearly no simple answer can be given in that huge differences exist along time and type axes. As mentioned above, many older films tended to be very stylised and artificial in this sense, and still today, hastily produced films, particularly those for television, pay little heed to the need for realism. On the other hand, the social realism that has become an important ingredient of many modern films, and the improvement in acting techniques pioneered by such institutions as the Actor's Studio in New York or RADA in London, have led to claims that the cinema really can become that mirror of reality that great art purports to be. However, certain initial observations are necessary to underline the complexity of the task of creating and reproducing genuine language in film, and how a number of factors work against the putting into practice of the theoretical knowledge described in the previous sections.

- In everyday conversation, much language use is in fact formulaic in nature, and much ordinary talk is humdrum and banal, whereas the time and space constraints of films, and the need to relate interesting, exciting or engaging stories, leads to an excess of highly pertinent, dramatic or intriguing exchanges. There are important reasons, however, why this should be so. Following Derrida (1978), language can be seen as representing one reality while simultaneously ignoring many others. In other words, what is talked or written about is to the exclusion of what was not talked or written about. There are gaps and absences that can be accounted for only by considering what alter-

natives there might have been to an actual communicative act, a sort of reading beyond the lines. As a film inevitably has to jump backwards and forwards in time and space, effecting a kind of visual and verbal ellipsis, it would be easy for the gaps to become wider and for the audience to lose track of the plot if, at times, the dialogue was not labouredly pertinent. The conversation of characters in TV soap operas, which attempt to reconstruct real life on a daily basis but are in fact restricted to several half hour episodes per week, often comes over as blatantly inauthentic and contrived for this reason.

- Actual conversation seems to the listener to be extremely garbled with people apparently speaking at the same time, making false starts and so on, while much film dialogue seems to be clearly separated, as actors take their cues with unerring accuracy. Carter *et al.* (1997: 285) show how a scripted dialogue which attempts to recreate real talk still looks «short, sharp and tight» in script form:

(17)

JEAN	Oh, by the way, before I forget, I changed your numbers.
MORRIS	Eh?
JEAN	I changed your numbers.
MORRIS	What for?
JEAN	Because they were wrong.
MORRIS	Wrong?
JEAN	Yeh.
MORRIS	Wrong?
JEAN	Yes!
MORRIS	How can my numbers be wrong?
JEAN	Well, they were.

- Real dialogue is peppered with phatic devices, particularly repeated *pleases* and *thank yous* regardless of whether actual requests, offers or favours are involved. Film scripts are low on these interpersonal items, as a more ideational (or factual) content is desired. This lack of phatic and interactional devices has been observed to be particularly evident in many subtitled versions of films.
- In real life every individual is in fact called upon to play a variety of roles in his or her normal activity, and in some senses follows an unwritten script. Although this is precisely what a film actor is required to do, the real life role is based on a lifetime of experience, responsibility and interaction that the scriptwriter or actor cannot easily invent. In any case the author's viewpoint, whether conscious or unconscious, must affect his writing. While the mechanisms and dynamism of real talk are still not fully understood, it is clear that the task of a young person trying to write the dialogue of an old couple, or a white New Yorker trying to create a dialogue between black Georgians, is not a straightforward practice.
- In ordinary dialogue an initial topic of conversation often gives way to a series of subtopics, or even to totally different subjects, often signalled by markers of the *Still ...*, *Ooh …* type. Speakers are constantly having to adjust to new scenarios as conversations develop, especially if several people are involved or newcomers arrive. In a film, this reflection of reality might be off-putting to the audience and unnecessarily misleading.

Film dialogue tends to «stick to the point» so as to keep the audience on line. Gregory makes this point in referring to scripts for the stage:

> if the actor ... spoke as people do in «real life», with frequent non sequiturs, false starts, allusions, digressions, sentence fragments, etc. ... the audience would be unlikely to be getting the information it needs to get, in order that the «two hours traffic of the stage» (or film) emerges as a whole and understandable experience.
>
> (Gregory 1978: 43)

- In an abstract, global sense, conversation can be seen as an on-going phenomenon within the culture that generates it.

> Any specific interaction is just one part of a continuing conversation which, strictly, has no absolute beginning or end – only provisional, though decisive, points of opening and closure. Conversation is therefore part of that larger dialogue we call, variously, society, history and culture.
>
> (Pope 1998: 223)

Even in real terms people can recognize that particular conversations can form part of series of conversations on the same topic, having very spread-out beginnings and ends. Active participants (and many passive participants) in a conversation are usually there for the duration, and thus have a gradually unfolding total view of the series of turns and moves comprising it. They are thus able to base their contributions or their understanding of other peoples' contributions on what has gone before. Very often in film we are introduced to a conversation that has already started, we leave it before it ends, or we miss out on certain episodes in a series. The information exchange in the extracts the audience sees is often made artificially clear, so that the audience can grasp what is happening without being privy to the whole conversation or conversations.

- Research has shown that, generally speaking, pauses of one second or more are rare in ordinary conversation, while dramatic pauses in film scenes are often simulated and belie this statistic, through the need to create dramatic pauses.
- Major film stars are often given «good lines» showing how witty, urbane or «streetwise» they are. Such creative use of language is also a feature of everyday conversational exchange, and some people have great conversational gifts, but films can tend to overaccentuate such factors. The «patter» of some of Humphrey Bogart's characters stretched the imagination while pleasing the ear. Alternatively some film characters were (and are) given such clichéd roles, and such clichéd lines, that it is clear that no realistic effect was sought after. Once these roles were played with no sense of reality but also with no sense of irony (e.g., lines from old westerns such as the afore-mentioned *A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do* or *White man speak with forked tongue*), whereas today characters such as James Bond and Crocodile Dundee are deliberately presented as (unreal) parodies.
- People never express meaning through only one channel; when speaking they also use gesture, gaze, positioning, etc. Film audiences do not participate directly in the dialogue unfolding on the screen; they are more or less distant observers and cannot be expected to pick up every nuance of non-verbal communication. Therefore the film-maker's abili-

ty to bring them closer to the event by adopting long, medium, medium-close or close-up shots is very important. Top, bottom or eye-level views are also crucial in this sense, especially where the other components of the scene are instrumental in delivering the meaning, and the «point-of-view» or perspective of the (passive) participant is a factor.

In a sense this last Section has attempted to play the role of the devil's advocate in advising caution in assessing film dialogue. Very often the final result, the complete package of the film script as seen in writing, can seem too perfect, too «short, sharp and tight» (see above). Herbst (1997: 293-294) suggests that three criteria distinguish film dialogue. The intended channel of perception is «to be listened to» and not to be read, the discourse is planned, and the language is not genuine. This final observation is based on the premise that the real level of communication is between the author and the viewer, not the characters on the screen.

However, in spite of the above cautionary observations, many film scripts can be seen to successfully portray diverse aspects of genuine spoken dialogue. By way of illustration of the concepts and theory outlined in this chapter, and based on conversation analysis, a number of examples of film dialogue will now be examined. Although the texts are scripted for the cinema, each example contains a number of features of genuine spoken language, and can thus be said to attain, at least partially, the semblance of reality.