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Media and discourse analysis

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What is media discourse?

Media discourse refers to interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer. Though the discourse is oriented towards these recipients, they very often cannot make instantaneous responses to the producer(s) of the discourse, though increasingly this is changing with the advent of new media technology, as we shall explore. Crucially, the written or spoken discourse itself is oriented to the readership or listening/viewing audience, respectively. In other words, media discourse is a public, manufactured, on-record, form of interaction. It is not ad hoc or spontaneous (in the same way as casual speaking or writing is); it is neither private nor off the record. Obvious as these basic characteristics may sound, they are crucial to the investigation, description and understanding of media discourse.

Because media discourse is manufactured, we need to consider how this has been done – both in a literal sense of what goes into its making and at an ideological level. One important strand of research into media discourse is preoccupied with taking a critical stance to media discourse, namely critical discourse analysis (CDA). It is important that we continually appraise the messages that we consume from our manufactured mass media. The fact that media discourse is public means that it also falls under the scrutiny of many conversation analysts who are interested in it as a form of institutional talk, which can be compared with other forms of talk, both mundane and institutional. The fact that media discourse is on record makes it attractive for discourse analysts and increasingly so because of the online availability of newspapers, radio stations, television programmes and so on. Advances in technology have greatly offset the ephemerality factor that used to relate to media discourse, especially radio and television (where it used to be the case that, if you wanted to record something, it had to be done in real time).

It is a time of great change in media discourse, and this chapter aims to capture this moment, especially in the final section, where traditional notions of media discourse are challenged, in this time of opening up of the medium through Web 2 technologies.

How have print media been studied?

Linguistic analysis of the newspaper media is very often sceptical, and linguists sometimes see themselves as policing the subtle manipulation of language to distort reality. White (1997), for example, claimed that, by 'severely' circumscribing subjective interpersonal features in hard news reports, journalists can, through 'objective' language, purport to be neutral, essentially where formal language provides the veneer of neutrality. White suggests that the use of such an

impersonal register is but 'a rhetorical stratagem to aid the obfuscation of a reporter's subjectivity' (p. 130). However, quantitative measuring of media bias has largely been left to other disciplines, such as content analysis.

Of note, Biber et al. (1999) identify the language of newspapers as one of the four major registers in the English language, along with spoken conversation, academic writing and fiction. Much attention is given to 'genre analysis' (see Swales, 1990) in the linguistic study of newspapers. That is where the language used in print media is described in terms of what makes it different from other 'genres' of language, and in so describing it linguists aim to arrive at a better understanding of individual genre characteristics. For example, Toolan (1988) examines the language of press advertising. Other studies have examined sports reporting in newspapers (Wallace, 1977; Ghadessy, 1988; Bhatia, 1993). Register variation is covered in depth by Biber (1988); (1995) and Biber and Finegan (1994). In-depth treatments of the language of newspapers are relatively few. The most comprehensive from a linguistic perspective come from Reah (2002, a reprint of 1998 edition) and Bednarek (2006a, b). Reah (2002) comprehensively characterizes what newspapers are, as well as providing a detailed treatment of newspaper headlines and their 'manufacture' through what is left in and what is left out and how words are ordered. Reah also takes a detailed look at newspaper audiences and their role and relationship with and for newspapers. Linguistically, Reah looks bottom-up at the impact of both lexical choice and syntax and discourse on the building and manipulation of meaning, using case studies from the press. Bednarek (2006a, b) present a corpus-based study of evaluation in newspapers based on a corpus of 100 newspaper articles comprising a 70,000 word corpus, from both tabloid and broadsheet media. Bednarek's work is quantitative and she provides detailed explanations and justifications of her framework of evaluation and bias in newspapers. Given the superfluity of newspapers and the daily role they have in meaning-making, it is surprising how few linguistic studies there are, proportionally, of how they use language. The area of critical discourse analysis offers more potential as a framework for the analysis of newspapers and there has been a number of substantial works in this area. When coupled with corpus linguistics, it offers a very powerful tool for the analysis of how newspaper texts frame topics over time. We shall explore this further below. Overall, we can say that the discourse of newspapers has not been studied in any concerted way. We have learnt a lot from different perspectives, but so much more could be done in this respect, and perhaps with the easier availability of texts in electronic form more concerted progress will be made.

How have spoken media been studied?

Conversation analysis (CA) has been the prevailing methodology in the study of spoken media discourse, that is, radio and television. CA is a research tradition that has grown out of ethno-methodology, an area within sociology rather than linguistics. The influential work of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson has contributed to and strongly influenced research into spoken media discourse (for example Schegloff, 1968; Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff et al., 1977; Sacks, 1992). CA takes a 'bottom-up' approach to the study of the social organization of conversation, or 'talk-in-interaction', by means of a detailed inspection of recordings and transcriptions (Have, 1986). That is, it focuses in on how conversations are structured and organized locally turn by turn, and from this it makes inductive comments about social organization. As Scannell (1998) notes, the object of study for CA is social interaction rather than language. As McCarthy (1998) points out, this field offers the possibility of fine-grained descriptions of how participants orient themselves towards mutual goals and negotiate their way forward in highly specific situations. This makes it suitable for the study of many social situations, including media interactions. In the area of media discourse quite a substantial amount of CA research has amassed around news interviews,

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talk shows and radio phone-ins. By comparing turn sequential order in media interactions with those in mundane talk, much can be revealed. Moving above the level of individual turns or adjacency pairs, conversation analysts are also interested in identifying the 'canonical' structure of interactions, that is, the sequential norms of interaction in particular settings. Telephone call openings have received particular attention (Schegloff, 1968; Godard, 1977; Schegloff, 1986; Whalen and Zimmerman, 1987; Hopper, 1989, 1992; Cameron and Hills, 1990; Hopper et al., 1991; Hutchby, 1991, 1996a, 1996b, 1999; Halmari, 1993; Drew and Chilton, 2000 – among others). This has proven a very powerful comparative tool in the analysis of institutional interactions, including media discourse, because 'baseline' sequences of interaction from mundane conversation can be compared with interactions in institutional or other settings.

By way of example, Schegloff (1986) characterized the canonical structure for a phone call opening between 'unmarked forms of relationships' (that is, among people who are not particularly intimate, but who are not strangers) as having the following structural organization (Figure 31.1):

Summons-answer:	0. Phone rings		
	1. Answerer:	Hello	
Identification-recognition:	2. Caller:	Hello Jim?	
		3. Answerer:	Yeah
		4. Caller:	's Bonnie
Greetings:	5. Answerer:	Hi	
	6. Caller:	Hi	
'How are you?' sequences:	7. Caller:	How are yuh	
		8. Answerer:	Fine, how're you
		9. Caller:	Oh, okay I guess
		10. Answerer:	Oh okay
First Topic:	11. Caller:	What are you doing New Year's Eve?	

Figure 31.1   Canonical call opening between 'unmarked forms of relationships' (Schegloff 1986).

Hutchby (1991) provides these typical examples of radio phone-in openings:

1)

1.   Presenter: John is calling from Ilford good morning
2.   Caller: .h good morning Brian (pause: 0.4) .hh what I'm phoning up is about the cricket.

(Hutchby, 1991: 120–121)

2)

1.   Presenter: Mill Hill is where Gloria calls from good morning
2.   Caller: Good morning Brian hh erm re the Sunday opening I'm just phoning from the point of view hh as an assistant who actually does do this…

(Hutchby, 1991: 120–121)

By comparing the canonical turn structure of telephone opening (that is, what typically happens in a normal call between callers who are neither very intimate nor strangers) with a call opening from a radio phone-in we can immediately see how the stages or turn sequential order differs. We can see that the identification and recognition is carried out by the institutional power role holder, the

presenter. We can see that the presenter's first turn not only performs the function of summons and identification, it also includes the greeting. There is therefore a contracting, or attenuation, of turns as a function of the institutional interaction. However, this attenuation could also be referenced against work by Drew and Chilton (2000) who look at call openings between intimates, drawing on a corpus of calls made between a mother and daughter over a three two-month period, where they found the attenuation of turns to be a function of the close relationship and regularity of the calls over time.

Most of the calls analysed by Drew and Chilton were for the purpose of 'keeping in touch', in other words there is normally no express purpose for calling other than to maintain contact. Mother and daughter call each other once a week, around the same time every week (Figure 31.2).

Summons	0. Phone rings
Answer + Identification-recognition +	1. Answerer: Hello
Greetings ('How are you?' also possible)	2. Caller: Hello
	3. Answerer: Oh hello
First Topic:	4. Answerer: I've been waiting for you

Figure 31.2   Call openings between intimates after Drew and Chilton (2000).

Again, here we see attenuation of call stages. As Drew and Chilton point out, the relationship of the callers allows for the attenuation of the canonical stages because the callers are intimates, and because they are expecting the call. The voice sample provided by hello achieves all Schegloff's stages of answering, identification/recognition and greeting in this interaction. O'Keeffe (2006) argues that radio-in presenters, in their public personae, build a pseudo-intimate relationship with their audience and, like in the mother–daughter calls, there is there both an intimacy and a regularity about the interaction. The show is on at the same time every day or week, callers 'know' the presenter and they call him or her. This pseudo-intimacy and pseudo-familiarity is borne out in the way that presenters talk about themselves as if ordinary friends with ordinary lives, as exemplified in this example from an Irish radio chat show:

3)

Presenter: It's Wednesday morning Anna good morning to you.
Caller: Good morning Gerry how are you?
Presenter: Oh well [yawning] I'm good a little bit of sunshine this morning.
Caller: Oh well that's good.
Presenter: It's had a positive effect on me anyway dunno about every.
Caller: Well I think it has on everybody hasn't it?
Presenter: It took me feckin well half an hour to put out the bins this morning that was the only thing that depressed me and then do you know do you ever have one of these ones where you know everything is going well Ryan then decides that he is going to put five or six of plastic sacks up on top of one bin that I'm wheeling right?
Caller: Yeah.
Presenter: And then puuff.
Caller: And they all fall.
Presenter: No one of them explodes all over me
Caller: Stop. [laughter] That's horrible.

Presenter: <$E> laughter <$E> and I know you know that one or two of me neighbours are looking out at going 'look at the big ejitt I knew that was going to happen to him'.
Caller: Yeah but they'd be looking at you y'see they wouldn't look at me doing that.
Presenter: Ah well who knows.
Caller: Well I hope they wouldn't anyway.
Presenter: Okay what do you want to talk to us about? (The Gerry Ryan Show RTÉ 2fm radio)

Markers of pseudo-intimacy in extract 3 are:

- First name reciprocation: Anna – Gerry
- Informal non-verbal behaviour: presenter yawning
- Chit-chat and badinage: how are you/ I'm good a little bit of sunshine this morning/Oh well that's good … I'm good a little bit of sunshine this morning, etc; reciprocation and repetition of discourse markers oh well by both presenter and caller; collaborative laughter.
- Use of taboo language not normally associated with talk radio discourse: feckin and other non-standard language: the Irish English for ejitt meaning idiot.
- Talk about mundane domestic chores from the private life of the presenter (moving from public to private persona): talking about putting out the rubbish bins and the story of what went wrong.

Using corpus linguistics in tandem with other methodologies

The study of turn structure and organization is the main means of looking at spoken media discourse within the framework of CA. Its main limitation is that it only allows for the close analysis of small amounts of interaction, and so it is more difficult to make generalizations about findings. A growing number of studies are using small corpora, however. O'Keeffe (2006) shows how a corpus-based approach can work well with CA as a means of analysing larger amounts of data. Let us take for example openings and closings. If we look at a small corpus of radio phone-ins – 55,000 words, all from the same show, Liveline, an afternoon show broadcast on Irish radio (RTÉ 1) – and we look at all of the closings across the corpus, we can make more general points than by looking closely at one or two alone. In all, there are 21 closings in the data and in 100 per cent of these we find discourse markers and thanks. The discourse markers operate as linguistic brackets to accompany the discourse markers symbiotically in many of the openings. These again are liminal items marking the boundary where the presenter shifts footing from the transient caller back to the relatively stable audience, to bring about the closing of the call in a collaborative manner. The opening patterns are the opposite. We find that the audience is addressed first, then the footing is changed to the caller by use of discourse markers and vocatives. For example:

4) Opening

1. Presenter: And next we head west Colm good afternoon to you.
2. Caller: Am good afternoon Marian.
3. Presenter: Colm McCarthy now you're involved can you tell me how you got involved in Inis Mór and what you're doing there?
4. Caller: Well we're opening up a new heritage centre on on Inis Mór the largest of the Aran Islands am based on the story of the Aran sweater…

In turn 1, the presenter addresses the audience: And next we head west, giving them a deictic orientation as to the location of the next caller. Also in turn 1, the presenter changes footing to address the caller. The vocative becomes the footing pivot Colm good afternoon to you. The repetition of the vocative in line 3, followed by the discourse marker now, moves into 'business of the call' phase. In the closing, we see a reversal of the footing pattern whereby the presenter typically uses discourse markers to signal closing (well in the extract 5) and finally uses a discourse marker plus the vocative to introduce the thanking phase. Notice the use of the pronoun us in turn 1 (extract 5) to signal the change of footing back to the audience. The presenter does not say 'thank you very much indeed for talking to me':

5) Closing

1. Presenter: Well well I suppose one way or the other I I I've a suspicion that people want certain things to go away but some things just won't <laughs > am some things have to be faced anyway there you go. Ah listen Bishop Donal Murray thank you very much indeed for talking to us.
2. Caller: Not at all. Thank you very much.
3. Presenter: ⌊Okay all the best cheers bye bye.

In turn 1, the discourse marker well draws a line in the discourse and orients the caller and the audience to the forthcoming closing. The use of ah listen later in the same turn consolidates this process. On closer analysis, we find that in 67 per cent of all closings us is used, and we (presenter + audience) is used in 24 per cent of all closings. Here are some more examples:

6)

1. Presenter: …Obviously that's what on your mind anyway Breda we'll see what advice we can get I imagine people are going to say that you have an excessive prejudice against tattoos but we'll see we'll see okay?
2. Caller: …Thank you very much Marian.
3. Presenter: OK all the best Breda thanks a lot cheers thank you bye bye.
4. Caller: OK many thanks bye bye now. CD track

7)

Presenter: Right. Okay okay well I can tell you this much you could talk until the cows came home and you would not convince our first caller that it was a good idea however am there you go. Nora Donnelly thank you very much indeed for talking to us and thank you Una. Thank you. All the best. Bye bye.

8)

Presenter: Okay Catherine it's a cautionary tale and of course it <unintelligible utterance> applies to the pill obviously and applies to other medication I mean to actually know what the side effects could be and to take steps as soon as you do and thank you very very much indeed for talking to us.

In the closings, we also notice another common feature, which collaboratively closes the call and ensures common ground for all the participants, namely the use of a coda, formulation or evaluation of the state of affairs. We find that these occur in 67 per cent of all closings. For example in the above extracts we find:

1) we'll see what advice we can get I imagine people are going to say that you have an excessive prejudice against tattoos but we'll see we'll see

2) I can tell you this much you could talk until the cows came home and you would not convince our first caller that it was a good idea however am there you go

3) it's a cautionary tale and of course it <unintelligible utterance> applies to the pill obviously and applies to other medication I mean to actually know what the side effects could be and to take steps as soon as you do.

Table 31.1 provides a summary of the quantitative analysis of presenter–audience address features in closings.

By using a corpus we can also examine the consistency and pragmatic specialization of certain patterns. Such evidence of lexico-grammatical systematicity at routines of openings, transitions and closings gives us a strong sense of a programme and its familiar and repeated structure. The routineness, created, repeated and sustained by the presenter, brings stability and familiarity to this mediated form of communication and thus simulates the kind of pseudo-intimacy that we find in the mother–daughter calls (cf. Drew and Chilton, 2000). One can illustrate this by using a concordance search for the high-frequency pattern of: 'Right. Okay.' We find that it clusters within the routine of call closings in the radio phone-in corpus and it is uttered by the presenter very often, being followed by a vocative (see Figure 31.3) to signal that the call is drawing to a close.

Table 31.1 A breakdown of the discourse features of presenter–audience features in closings

Feature	Occurrence	Percentage
Discourse marker	21	100%
Thank	21	100%
Us	14	67%
Coda/formulation/evaluation	13	62%
Bye	16	62%
We	5	24%

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 1    <$1> Right. 0kay. Listen thank you very muc
 2    <$1> Right. Okay James thank you very much
 3    <$1> Right Okay Joe. Okay thanks a million
 4    <$1>?Right okay. <$2>
 5    <$1> <$E "Laughing"> Right okay. Okay all sorts of spin off
 6    <$1> Right. Okay. Okay well that's a good a
 7    <$1> Right okay. <$2> <$1> Okay C
 8    <$1> Right okay <$E "chuckles"> <$2>
 9    <$1> Right okay. <$2>
10    <$1> Right okay good to hear it nice to tal
11    <$1> Right. Okay Áine Ní Chiarán thank you
12    <$1> Denis? <$2> <$1> Right. Okay thank you very much indeed
13    <$1> Right okay so you're opperating stricl
14    <$1> Right okay so let people be beware of
15    <$1> Right okay Michael McDowell thank you
16    <$1> Right okay so basically you want to kn
17    and I'd recommend it to anyone. <$1> Right. Okay okay well I can tell you t
18    <$1> Right okay Teresa thank you very much
19    <$1> Right okay eh just before I let you go
20    <$1> Um right right okay David. What are you
21    <$1> Um right right okay David. What are you doing
22    <$1> <$E laughs> Right okay okay </$E > right Emmett tha
23    <$1> <$O2> Okay right okay Noel. All the best </$O2> b
24    <$1>Right okay Thank you very much indeed
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Figure 31.3   Presenter's systematic use of right + okay [vocative] in call closings

In the brief example about we mentioned the use of a vocative. This brings us into the area of pragmatics. The field of pragmatics also provides a worthwhile complement to corpus linguistics. O'Keeffe (2006) illustrates in detail how it can play a key role as an analytical framework within the study of spoken media discourse. Issues of power and politeness are fundamental to this institutional context where the power role holder, the presenter on radio or television, is keen to downplay power through hedging and other politeness devices. O'Keeffe (2006) also highlights the importance of looking at deixis ('pointing', i.e. words and phrases that we use to point to people, things, time and place). In political interviews, it is always worthwhile exploring the use of pronouns, as exemplified in this extract from an interview, conducted in February 2003 as part of a special BBC Newsnight programme in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq. The interview was between the British prime minister at the time, Tony Blair, and BBC presenter Jeremy Paxman. It was held in front of a live public audience in Gateshead. In the later stages of the programme, the audience asked the prime minister questions. The transcript and video clip are available online. Notice how the pronoun we is used and re-appropriated. What the audience use of we refers to is 'the people of Britain who are against an invasion of Iraq', while the prime minister's use, to the contrary, refers to 'we the people of Britain who must invade Iraq':

9)

Male:	What are we going to accomplish with war?
Tony Blair:	Disarmament of Iraq, of the weapons of mass destruction.
Male:	And then we move round the world?
Tony Blair:	No, we don't move round the world creating war on everyone, but what we do do is we do confront those countries that have this material and if we can do it through partnership and by agreement with them, we have to reduce the threat that they pose. Because otherwise this stuff will carry on proliferating and it will be traded round the world and that causes a threat to us…. (South Africa. 6 February 2003. Full transcript and actual interview available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/2732979.stm)

Another bedfellow of corpus linguistics in the study of media discourse is critical discourse analysis. One of its main exponents in relation to media discourse is Fairclough (1989, 1995a, b, 2000). CDA, according to van Dijk (2001: 352), is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. Van Dijk (2009) observes that critical studies of discourse are problem-led rather than discipline or theory oriented. Obvious examples of problems that relate to abuses of power and injustice are in relation to gender, race and class. Critical scholars, according to van Dijk, are interested in the way 'discourse (re)produces social domination, that is the power abuse of one group over others, and how dominated groups may discursively resist that abuse' (van Dijk, 2009: 63). However, the impact of CDA in the study of the discourse of media may have been lessened by the largely qualitative nature of CDA, whereby single texts were often the basis for analysis and hence limited the scope for generalization of findings. CDA studies looked at how single texts framed issues. The wider availability of newspaper texts in electronic form has allowed for the merging of the more quantitative approach from corpus linguistics with CDA to provide a very sharp analytical tool. As O'Halloran (2010: 563) comments:

> Before corpus linguistics became mainstream, CDA examined such framings in single texts at a particular point in time, or over a very short period. One of the advantages of the abundance of media texts in electronic form … is the ease with which corpora can be assembled for

revealing the following: how media texts might be repeatedly framing issues or events which are reported over a significant period of time.

CL has proved a boon for CDA. As O'Halloran (2010) notes that, increasingly, critical discourse analysts employ corpora in their investigations of media discourse and points out that, by using corpus investigation, critical discourse analysts can now gain insight into the kinds of cultural and ideological meanings being circulated regularly.

Looking to the future: new frameworks

Let us return to the definition of media discourse. At the outset, we said that it refers to interactions that take place through some broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer. We also said that, though the discourse is oriented towards these recipients, they very often cannot make instantaneous responses to the producer(s) of the discourse. However, at the time of writing, we are in the midst of a major change in terms of how and who mediates the discourse. Our traditional paradigms are rapidly becoming outmoded by virtue of their limited view of the limitations of audience participation. The change is driven by new media, their opening up of how to broadcast your thoughts far and wide and how audiences can respond to what they see, hear or read, instantly. This throws up in the air our traditional notions of the institutional participation framework of media discourse, both spoken or written. Let us consider in detail this changing notion of participation frameworks of media discourse.

The phrase 'participation framework' comes from Goffman (1981). Essentially, it refers to the communicative environment within which media discourse happens, and core to that context is not only the producer(s) of the discourse but also the consumers – the audience. In the case of written discourse, the participation framework comprises an author or authors (the media persona) who broadcasts through the written medium to a reader or readers. What is produced may be read at any time after it is published (Figure 31.4).

In the case of spoken media discourse, the participation framework is made up of a studio-based media person, often interacting with a guest or another media person, in the studio, on location or on a phone line, and their interaction is broadcast either though an audio channel alone or through an audio-visual channel. It is consumable as soon as it is broadcast, or it may be recorded or downloaded and listened to at a later stage (Figure 31.5).

Up until the advent of Web 2 technologies (internet, social networking, blogs, wikis, video-sharing and more) and other advances (mobile phone technologies, advances in hardware), these
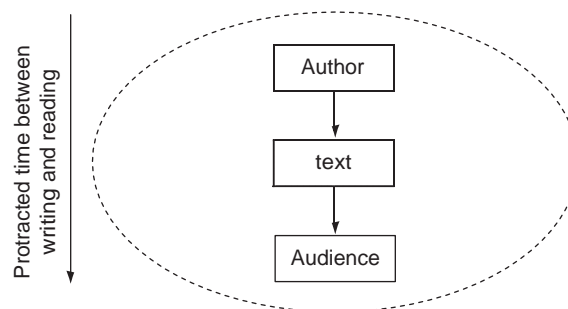

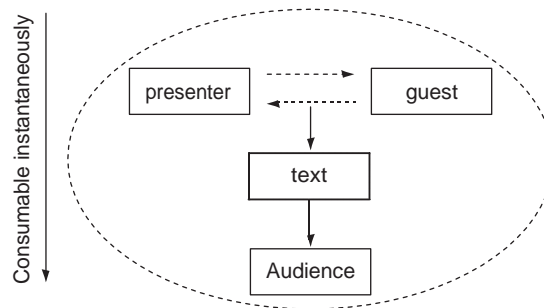Figure 31.4   Basic participation framework for written discourse

Figure 31.5 Basic participation framework for spoken discourse

two basic participation formats would have covered most possible forms of media discourse. Now, however, media discourse is at a new stage, where the participation frameworks have altered in a number of ways. There are greater levels of intertextuality and a blurring of the lines between spoken and written media. Newspapers have web and video links as well as sound clips and opinion polls. Television programmes have text on screen, websites to follow up on, chatrooms and so on. Radio programmes can talk about pictures and visual items and post them on their website for listeners to see; they can have a webcam in their studio so that audiences can 'see' them on the radio. The advent of social networking sites means that television and radio programmes can be 're-broadcast' within micro-participation frameworks. The social networking sites themselves have the potential to connect with larger audiences than some television, radio or newspaper articles. Facilities such as twitter allow individuals to generate broadcast thoughts to which others can respond to. In summary, we can say that:

1) the reader is no longer reading an article in protracted isolation; s/he can comment on it via a website, email it to a friend, post it on a social network for others to discuss it. Journalists and commentators often respond to the comments posted in reaction to their articles, thus creating an extension of the process–product–process–(product–process)…;

2) the audience is no longer a passive recipient or eavesdropper in the case of radio and television; its members can very often text the programme and have that text read out, they can join a chat with each other, they can post a link to the programme on a social network or blog and have others listen/view it and comment. They can take part in audience opinion polls via text message or weblink;

3) the ephemerality of the spoken and written media is lessened by the ripple effect that email, websites and social networks can have; when a consumer reads/listens to/views something that s/he or she wants to react to, s/he can spread it around over time to others, who will then consume it, possibly comment on it at a later date and pass it on further, and so on.

This calls for a new understanding of media participation frameworks. The following figures are proposed as a starting point for new ways of looking at the participation frameworks of new written and spoken media (Figures 31.6 and 31.7).

The opening up of the feedback channel from the audience means that we find new patterns of interaction; for example, we regularly hear presenters say things like 'A text in from Peter in Warwick says …' or 'we have a number of texts suggesting …'. Our news broadcasts can have ticker tapes running with text responses to what viewers are watching in real time. Whereas before we might get a colour piece giving us a random recording of the vox populi in some streetscape on
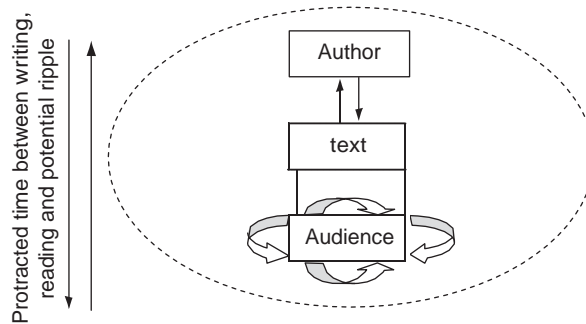
Figure 31.6 New participation framework for written discourse
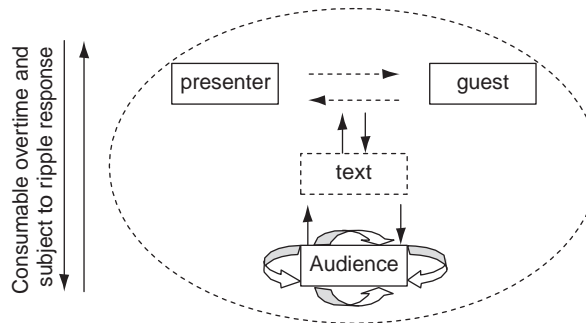

Figure 31.7 New participation framework for radio and television discourse

some issue of the day (e.g. a vox pop piece within a radio or television programme on what people stopped in the street think of X), this has now become much more spontaneous and instantaneous. Social networking sites, twitter, discussion boards and blogs are just some of the formats that allow anyone to broadcast from the profound (what's the meaning of life?) to the practical (anyone know how to fix an ipod?) and even to the minute (I'm off to bed now).

The discourse of social networking sites is an exciting area, waiting to be substantially researched and described. Here are some typical interactions from social networking sites:

10)

Post 1 A: Back in Melbourne, Canberra wouldn't just set my world on fire …
Post 2 B: Hey [nickname] were you trying to skype me per change? I am an hour ahead here. I am off today, it's a bank holiday definately [sic] chat soon x
Post 3 C: that's [sic] what you get for going there when everything is happening in Melbourne – see you next week

11) (this post was spread over a 28-hour period)

Post 1 A: [name] is waiting for furniture …
Post 2 B: it's still here, sorry!
Post 3 A: Hmm. Some of it is here, just not mine … The wireless is work, though!
Post 4 C: where (and what) did you order?!?!

Post 5 A: Ha! I didn't really order anything, [name of C]. My department is moving to a different building on campus and I'm just waiting for my desk, bookcases, crates and filing cabinets to arrive. I like the new space – it's just a little empty right now…

Post 6 D: a bit too much space then;) have you tried out the acoustics before all the stuff comes in?

Post 7 A: Ha, yes, the acoustics are good!
All my furniture and crates are here now. Anyone wanna help me unpack??:)

Post 8 E: Any time, if you help me get rid of the fridges in my living-room.

Post 9 A: Oh dear… sounds painful but then having a fridge in the living-room may actually be quite convenient. Nobody has to go far from the soda to get refreshments and snacks… I'm done with the crates and will start decorating now!

Post 10 E: I can see the possible bright side – but now the fridges (two) are gone! So little space feels like so much!

These interactions push us into new ground as discourse analysts. On initial perusal, the following are noteworthy in terms of their description:

- the language use is closer to spoken than written discourse,
- the language is informal and marked by emoticons and exclamations to create a sense of non-verbal communication and co-presence,
- however, these interactions, though they appear to simulate face-to-face interaction, do not always happen in real-time. The ten posts in extract 11 happened over 28 hours,
- posts roughly equate to turns,
- sequences of posts roughly equate to an exchange,
- posts are not ephemeral; they remain to be read and responded to at an indefinite time after they have been written. They are therefore much more 'on record' than a spoken interaction,
- conventions of written grammar can be flouted with relative impunity (especially spelling, punctuation and grammar).

In summary, it is an exciting time in the study of media discourse because all of the parameters are changing; all of the modes of communication are opening up to the vox populi. It is the challenge of discourse analysts to come up with new paradigms and appropriate methodologies to encapsulate and describe all of these new frontiers of communication.

Related topics

Conversation analysis
Critical discourse analysis
Creativity in discourse
Multimedia analysis
Discourse and knowledge

Further reading

Durant, A. and Lambrou, M. (2009) Language and Media: A Resource Book for Students. London: Routledge.

This book gives a comprehensive introduction to the study of media genres. It also collates key readings and is accompanied by a supporting website. Of particular use to research students is the section on exploring examples of language data.

O'Halloran, K. (2010) 'How to use corpus linguistics in the study of media discourse', in A. O'Keeffe and M. J. McCarthy (eds.) The Routledge Handbook of Corpus Linguistics. London: Routledge, pp. 563–577.

This article provides a very good insight into the application of corpus linguistics to critical discourse analysis, using a corpus of articles from the UK newspaper The Sun as a case study.

Bednarek, M. (2006) Evaluation in Media Discourse: Analysis of a Newspaper Corpus. London: Continuum.

This is a very thorough corpus-based study of evaluation in newspapers on the basis of a corpus of 100 newspaper articles comprising a 70,000 word corpus, from both tabloid and broadsheet media. Methodologically, it is a good example of the use of corpus linguistics in the study of newspaper texts.

O'Keeffe, A. (2006) Investigating Media Discourse. London: Routledge.

This volume provides an exploration of spoken media discourse using a combination of approaches including conversation analysis, discourse analysis and pragmatics in the exploration of a corpus of over 200,000 words of spoken media interactions.

Reah, D. (2002) The Language of Newspapers. Second Edition. London: Routledge.

A detailed treatment of newspaper discourse and its wider context, including a detailed look at audiences and their role and relationship with newspapers. It looks at the impact of language and discourse on the building and manipulation of meaning, using case studies from the newspapers.

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