21 Discourse and Media

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0 Introduction and Approaches

The average weekday *New York Times* contains more than 10,000 column inches of text and is seen worldwide by an estimated 3.37 million readers.[1] The news that the *Times* sees fit to print often finds its way into discussions by policy-makers and politicians, meaning that it effectively sets (or follows) the national agenda for public discussion, as well as functions as a "paper of record" for society. On the other side of the United States, the average *Corning* (*California*) *Observer* publishes some 1000 column inches of copy three times a week and is read by a community of barely 10,000. Each word is an open invitation to comment and criticism by citizens of varying enthusiasms who watch closely whether the paper strays too far as a player on the civic team. Meanwhile, television offers an array of up to dozens of channels for 24-hour consumption. By one estimate, by the time a child is 18, she or he will have ingested 10,000 hours of talk on the tube. The flexible medium of radio shows no signs of abating, and the Internet has given us up-to-the-last-possible-minute news from all over the world.

As the scope of the media is so far-reaching, in the US and throughout the world, and so globally situated and influential, it is not surprising that it is the subject of a great deal of intellectual scrutiny. Within academic areas such as cultural studies, media studies, critical theory, semiotics, rhetoric, film studies, and the like, the impacts, roles, and cultural reproductions of what is broadly termed "media" are dissected and deconstructed. The discourse and language of the media are also addressed by academics, and increasingly by linguists.

The discourse of the news media encapsulates two key components: the news story, or spoken or written text; and the process involved in producing the texts. The first dimension, that of the text, has been the primary focus of most media researchers to date, particularly as the text encodes values and ideologies that impact on and reflect the larger world. The second dimension, that of the process – including the norms and routines of the community of news practitioners – has been on the research agenda for the past several years, but to date no significant work has been completed.

It is thus a ripe area for further research, especially as factors in the process significantly influence – and define – news discourse.

The relative paucity of attention to process, however, does not mean that the text has been examined as only a static artifact. Most linguists consider the news text from one of two vantage points: that of discourse structure or linguistic function, or according to its impact as ideology-bearing discourse. Either view assumes an emergent, dynamic mechanism that results in the unique display of media discourse over time, culture, and context. In the first view, Bakhtin's notions of voicing ([1953]1986), Goffman's concept of framing (1981), Bell's work on narrative structure and style (1991, 1994, 1998), and Tannen's positioning of the media as agonists and instigators of polarized public debate (1998) have led to valuable insights into discourse structure, function, and effect – and have characterized the very significant role the media play in the shaping of public, as well as media, discourse. In the latter view, the interdisciplinary framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA) – including Fairclough's deployment of social theory and intertextuality in the illumination of discourse practice (1992, 1995a, 1995b), Fowler's critical scan of social practice and language in the news (1991), and van Dijk's work on the relation of societal structures and discourse structures, particularly as this relation implicates racism (1991) – has been seminal, and indeed, with Bell (1991, etc.) has created the foundations of the field of media discourse studies thus far (for an extended discussion of CDA, see Fairclough 1995b; van Dijk, this volume).

In this chapter, I will discuss the major developments in media discourse research, and suggest areas for further work, particularly research that seeks to explain media discourse in terms of the community that produces it. To refer to the content or output of journalists, in qualifying "discourse," I will use "media" and "news" interchangeably, in part because what is considered news comprises a great portion of what is transmitted through the media. One could divide media content into two main parts: news and advertising (cf. Schudson 1981; Bell 1991), or also add a third category, entertainment (cf. Fairclough 1995a). The references to news or media discourse will concern the broad range of stories, features, and genres that makes up "news" – in the modalities of print, broadcast, and web – as opposed to advertising or entertainment. I also use "media" interchangeably with "practitioner" or "journalist," referring to the people who produce or write the news vs. the news itself.

The chapter addresses the following: (0) introduction and summary of approaches and methods; (1) the inception of media discourse research; (2) audience considerations; (3) data; (4) insights for discourse, which highlights two areas of current analysis: narrative structure and style; and (5) directions for future research. But first, a brief summary of the field in terms of its primary *approaches*, *methods*, and *topics* of investigation is in order, as most discussion of language and discourse factors relates to them and even integrates them.

The three main approaches to the study of media discourse can be characterized as (1) discourse analytic, (2) sociolinguistic, and (3) "nonlinguistic." While the discourse analytic approach is the primary focus of the chapter, it is well to note the other approaches as media discourse researchers tend to blend aspects of all three approaches in a single work. Indeed, even the discourse analytic approaches that underlie a great deal of the research on media can be characterized as hybrids of existing frameworks – pragmatics (e.g. Verschueren 1985; Wortham and Locher 1996),

conversation analysis (e.g. Greatbatch 1998), variation (led by Bell 1991), Labovian narrative analysis (incorporated by Bell 1991, 1998; van Dijk 1988) and interactional sociolinguistics (Goffman 1981; Cotter 1999a) – optionally interlaced with sociological content analysis. Or, for example, the approach can be "critical" in the sense of looking at social impact or inequality (cf. Santa Ana 1999); or concern political economy in the sense of the social value of language (cf. Jaffe 1999), without necessarily aligning with a major tradition, such as critical discourse analysis or media studies.

At this juncture, I have reserved the term "sociolinguistic" for work that involves variation and style in the media or a similar close analysis of language. In doing so, I make a key differentiation with the "discourse analytic" paradigm, which addresses discourse-level matters related to larger stretches of talk and text beyond the word or sentence level, including questions of participant, topic, function, and discourse structure, as well as a range of topics that includes news interviews, quotation and reported speech, register issues, politeness, positioning and framing, and so forth. (As discourse structure has been an important area of focus, work in this area will be highlighted in subsection 4.1.)

Researchers often rely on sociolinguistic insights, either to characterize some dimension of media language, such as variation and style, or to inform related discourse-level work, such as genre and register. (As style and register considerations have been well studied they will be discussed in greater detail in subsection 4.2.) The "nonlinguistic" research involves work in political science, media studies, or communication studies paradigms and, to some degree, in cultural studies. While the nonlinguistic research is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to note that work in the nonlinguistic domains is referred to by media discourse researchers perhaps more than in any other topical area of discourse analysis (e.g. Jamieson 1990, 1996; Campbell and Jamieson 1990; Schudson 1981, 1986; Tuchman 1980; Haraway 1991).

Likewise, the methods used by media language researchers often are managed in a cross-disciplinary manner, roughly falling out along the lines of the three dominant approaches noted above. Nonetheless, research methods tend to cluster in one of several areas irrespective of the approach or field: *critical* (discourse approach), *narrative/pragmatic* (discourse/sociolinguistic approaches), *comparative/intercultural* (discourse/sociolinguistic approaches), and *media studies* (nonlinguistic approach). Less systematically explored to date, but increasingly important, are the *practice-based or ethnographic* (discourse/sociolinguistic approaches) and *cognitive or conceptual* methods (discourse/nonlinguistic approaches).

To further elaborate, the primary methods of analysis at this juncture are:

1 **Critical:** This method is "critical" in the sense of revealing societal power operations and invoking a call to social responsibility. It is informed by social theory, the systemic-functional approach to linguistics developed by Halliday (1985), and the earlier critical linguistics work of Fowler et al. (1979), as well as notions of mediated action (Fairclough 1989, 1995a, 1995b; Fowler 1991; Scollon 1998; van Dijk 1988, 1991, 1993).

2 **Narrative/pragmatic/stylistic:** A great deal of research focuses on discourse-level elements and explanations, often in tandem with pragmatic analyses, discussions of presentation and perspective, style and register, and issues of audience response to texts (Bell 1991; R. Lakoff 1990; Meinhof 1994; Richardson 1998; Verschueren 1985; Tannen 1989; Weizman 1984; Wortham and Locher 1996; etc.).

The structure of news discourse has probably received the greatest attention to date (the researchers just cited dealing in some way with structural issues), often in relation to other linguistic elements (e.g. Leitner's 1998 sociolinguistic examination of discourse parameters underscores the heterogeneity of media forms).

3   **Comparative/cross-cultural:** Researchers in this area reveal important understandings of the role of culture and politics in the production of news discourse and delineate the variable aspects of news practice not apparent in solely western media-focused treatments (Leitner 1980; Love and Morrison 1989; Pan 1999; Satoh 1999; Scollon 1997; Scollon and Scollon 1997; Waugh 1995; etc.).

4   **Media/communication studies:** Researchers in this heterogeneous area either employ traditional positivistic research protocols and content analyses or work from the insights of cultural studies, semiotics, social theory, and social history; aspects of language or discourse may not be addressed as such (Glasgow Media Group 1976, 1980; Hall 1994; Hardt 1992; Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Schudson 1981; etc.).[2]

5   **Practice-focused:** Currently advanced by "journo-linguists" (linguists with newsroom experience or professional training which informs their analyses) who look to aspects of the situated practices of news reporters and editors, the practice-focused method, often informed by ethnographic procedures, aims for a holistic reading of media discourse (Bell 1991, 1998; Cotter 1993, 1996a, 1996b, 1999a–c, in press, in preparation; Knight and Nakano 1999; Peterson 1991, 1999).[3]

6   **Cognitive:** Cognitive methods, relative either to comprehension or to other aspects of mental structure, seek to reveal the relations between cognitive processes, conceptual metaphor, social meaning, and discourse (G. Lakoff 1996; Santa Ana 1999; van Dijk 1988, 1998; van Dijk and Kintsch 1983).

The different approaches and methods cover some of the same analytical territory, often focusing on the following primary topics:

- the narrative or sociolinguistic elements that construct or underlie news discourse (see subsections 4.1 and 4.2);
- the implications of quotation and reported speech;
- the exercise of power, bias, and ideology in the press;
- the effects of the media in perpetuating social imbalance, notably racism and immigration (the focus of European researchers) and minority representation (the focus of US researchers);
- key genres, including broadcast interviews;
- the role of the audience (see section 3) in terms of sociolinguistic news "design" (Bell 1984, 1991), reception (Richardson 1998), discourse comprehension (van Dijk 1987), and position within the media process (Cotter 1996a, 1996b, 1999a);
- issues of production and process of newsgathering and writing.

1   The Inception of Media Discourse Analysis

Now that the main approaches and methods have been outlined, I turn to the development of the subfield of media discourse analysis, discussing early work and applications.

The United Kingdom has been the leader in most of the dominant approaches to media language research. The work of the Glasgow University Media Group, collected in the books *Bad News* (1976), *More Bad News* (1980), and their successors, have been influential in setting the stage for research on media discourse, particularly in Britain, Europe, and Australia.[4] The *Bad News* books are well known as canonical examples of the study of media language, despite well-reported flaws that subsequent researchers in the British media studies tradition acknowledge. The researchers in these early ideological analyses of the British press investigated the content of industrial reporting in the British broadcast media. Lexical choices, the positioning of information, and the use of quotations are evaluated through content analysis and offered as evidence of bias in the press.

The other major contribution by British scholars over the past decade or so has been in the development of media studies – led by many researchers and building on the established cultural studies work undertaken at the University of Birmingham – which borrows from semiotics and critical theory-oriented traditions. As an example, Graddol and Boyd-Barrett's (1994) volume is an early survey of the range of approaches to investigating media texts by scholars working in the British tradition, and details how multifaceted and multidisciplinary the media studies approach can be. For one, Australian functional linguist M. A. K. Halliday – whose systemic-functional analytic framework is the basis of much current work – contributes research on oral and written texts. In the same volume, cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall discusses audience familiarity with the "negotiated code" of the dominant culture (Hall 1994: 210), and applied linguist Ulrike Meinhof discusses the heteroglossic verbal and visual messages on TV, a situated semiotics that makes the medium's effects difficult to predict.

To date, the work of British scholars, as well as that of researchers from Germany, Holland, Australia, and New Zealand (mentioned previously), has formed the basis of media discourse work that has established the subfield. As researchers, they have been laboring primarily to articulate larger theories of news language using national or international stories as data. Their work stands in contrast, particularly as language and discourse are addressed, to that of their American counterparts. The American contributions to media research have largely been outside of linguistics, either continuing along the lines of traditional, quantitative communications research or based on political science. Within linguistics, there is little work by American scholars (but see Scollon 1998), as well as very little discussion by linguistically oriented researchers of American newsgathering traditions (noted by Cotter 1996a, 1999a).

Thus far, a primary objective of most media discourse analysis (from the linguistic to the sociological) is often the registering of the presence of bias or ideology in language, or the problematizing of power relations in society. As such, social theory has often been more a basis for analysis than linguistic theory. This is especially the case in the early work of the Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980), Davis and Walton (1983), and Kress and Hodge (1979). The literature as a body tends to focus variously on the ideological implications of language in the media, and thus critiques of the approaches are organized around the validity of findings of bias, whether instigated through linguistic or sociological means.[5] The fundamental concerns are: to what extent is language evidence used to support the ideological frame or bias a researcher believes is there? To what extent does focus on ideology as a

research goal obscure the potential contribution that a linguistic examination could bring to bear?

Early critiques of media discourse analysis came notably from Verschueren (1985), whose work is grounded in pragmatics and "metapragmatics," and Bell (1991), whose initial sociolinguistic research on language style and variation in media language has expanded to include issues of narrative and discourse. Verschueren, for instance, noted that either the linguistic work was not sufficiently contextualized, ignorant of the "structural and functional properties of the news gathering and reporting process in a free press tradition" (1985: vii), or the ideology work drew obvious conclusions, "simply predictable on the basis of those structural and functional properties" (1985: vii; see also Cotter 1999a). Bell, for his part, critiques the earlier content-analytic approaches to media language analysis, which in his view suffer from a "lack of sound basic linguistic analysis" (1991: 215). Approaches that are too simplistic do not advance the field, erroneously presuming "a clearly definable relation between any given linguistic choice and a specific ideology" and assigning to "newsworkers a far more deliberate ideological intervention in news than is supported by the research on news production" (Bell 1991: 214).

Currently, as more work is being done in both social theory and linguistics-situated frameworks, and the interdisciplinarity of media research is more firmly established, the issues under consideration tend to focus less on methodological or theoretical limitations than on what the different approaches – taken together – can usefully reveal.

2   Audience Considerations

Attention to audience is the first step away from text-focused analyses of media, and many researchers are aware that a theoretical position of media discourse that includes the audience is desirable.

Different linguists or theorists offer different conceptualizations of the audience and its role in the construction of media realities. In the approaches I address here, the audience is conceived of as part of the discourse mechanism. This is in contrast with more conventional assumptions about mass communication which rely on the active sender–passive receiver "conduit" model, which is now contested. The position of the audience may be one of the more salient differentiating features of the various research paradigms. A great deal of the research (from within discourse analysis and sociolinguistics and outside of it) either casts the audience as individuals who do not have much choice in resisting media power, or credits the audience's role with more equality in the relationship: as being *both* active and acted upon.

There are different ways to explore the concept of audience agency or interaction in media discourse. Goffman's frame analysis of radio talk (1981) was one of the first to articulate and apply the insight that the relationships among the different interlocutors determine the nature of the speech event and the talk that is appropriate to it. Similarly, in Bell's view (1991), which builds on Goffman's categories of participant roles, the media audience takes on multiple roles: that of speaker, addressee, auditor, overhearer, and eavesdropper. As media-savvy participants in

the larger culture, we recognize audience roles and embedded points of view and are conscious when an interviewee – or an interviewer – departs from a prescribed position. (Bell 1991 cites former US President Jimmy Carter's oft-quoted post-*Playboy* interview remarks, in which he admits to lusting "in his heart": Carter's words were appropriate for the immediate addressee, but not for the ultimate listening audience, especially coming from a candidate for president.) In a related, but less Goffmanian way, Cappella and Jamieson (1997) employ the concept of frame to account for the influence of media language on public opinion. Their work on political campaign coverage determined that audiences who read stories about strategy became more cynical about politicians and politics than those who read stories that focused on, and were thus framed in terms of, issues.

Meinhof's work on the visual and textual double messages in television news, which she argues have cross-cultural implications, is consciously predicated on a focus away from "text-internal readings, where readers are theorized as decoders of fixed meanings, to more dynamic models, where meanings are negotiated by actively participating readers" (Meinhof 1994: 212). Her own three-part taxonomy of communication, which circumvents the sender–receiver model and is briefer than Goffman's and Bell's characterizations, includes *actors*, *activities or events*, and *the affected, the effect, or outcome.*

The audience is considered from cognitive perspectives, as well. Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) led the early work on the cognitive factors in the processing of information that influence comprehension of texts by readers. They establish that hierarchical relations exist among discourse strategies; that information comes from many sources within text and context; and that "forward" and "backward" interpretation strategies operate on the local level to specify the meaning and constrain interpretation – insights that background many current assumptions about audience interplay with text.

In comprehension research such as this, the audience and its range of innate psycholinguistic abilities are assumed and essentially backgrounded in the discussion of other issues. This stands in contrast to the work by investigators who incorporate the tenets of reception analysis in their investigation of media discourse, a blend of methodologies that has received little attention by linguists (Richardson 1998). In Richardson's work, the audience is foregrounded as a key element in the production of discourse meaning both through the researchers' emphasis on audience comprehension of texts, and by the audience's response to texts in the data-eliciting process itself.

Bell (1984, 1991) has worked to articulate a framework for considering the role of the audience on the sociolinguistic level, using phonological, lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic evidence to construct a theory of "audience design." Major insights of the framework involve the role of style, which in different ways can either be responsive to the linguistic norms of an audience, or refer in some way to a "third party, reference group or model" outside of the speech community (Bell 1991: 127). Style strategies, thus, can be seen as playing an essential role in redefining and renegotiating the media's relationship to the audience.

Finally, Cotter (1993, 1999a) attempts to characterize the nature of the relationship between the news community and the "community of coverage" it serves. This work focuses on the interactive properties of the "pseudo-dyadic" relationship that exists between the two communities, as well as on the dynamic of "reciprocal transmission"

– "the interplay of texts, creators, and audience" which allows the media to engage on the social or phatic level, at the same time providing content that "captures facts about our social worlds" (Cotter 1999a: 168).

3   The Nature of Data

The ubiquity of media language and its easy accessibility make it a natural data source for linguists interested in the components of language and discourse and for other researchers interested in assessing the effects of language on culture. Given that the media is such a widespread purveyor of talk about our world and our position in it, it is a bit surprising that not more linguists attempt to work with it. However, those who have explored media discourse tend to select and utilize data that will allow answers to fundamental questions about language, about the nature of the news and the media, and about more abstract issues of language, action, thought, and society.

Newspapers are convenient repositories of large bodies of data, and this fact has allowed the development of research backed up by quantity of example. As illustration, Suter (1993), aiming to expand the development of the study of text-types, goes to the newspapers to find a "prototype text." The "wedding report" is the case study with which he develops his working model of text analysis. He uses data on the wedding report – an account of a wedding which includes time–place–date details as well as other wedding-related information – from a variety of British newspapers to analyze text structure, incorporating the frameworks of Biber (1988), Bell (1991), Halliday (1985), and van Dijk (1988). Suter aims to determine the constitutive features of the four areas that delineate a text type: *situational context*, *function*, *content*, and *form*. His work is a good example of a multidisciplinary approach informed by a broad reading of media as situated social and textual practice.[6]

Other sociolinguists studying media language outside of discourse analysis per se have also made noteworthy use of the extensive database that a single newspaper, or a single media entity, can produce, bolstering with quantity of example a number of claims about media language and its indexing of social stereotype and attitude. For example, Santa Ana (1999) uses a corpus of thousands of stories to analyze metaphors of racism in the *Los Angeles Times'* coverage of anti-immigrant ballot initiatives; and Lippi-Green (1997) uses a film archive of the entire Disney animated oeuvre to correlate accent and stereotyped renderings of nonwhite, mainstream characters in Disney films. Meanwhile, Fasold et al. (1990) look at issues of gender representation in the *Washington Post* before and after gender-inclusion policies were instated. Fasold et al. used a substantial corpus of data and rigorous statistical method as well as a qualitatively informed reading of newsroom style guides.

4   Insights for Discourse

Media data enrich the examination of more traditional discourse parameters, often offering the "third alternative" to standard dichotomies such as the continuum of

spoken and written discourse, or public and private language. Media research offers a challenge to some of our *a priori* assumptions about how discourse might operate in varied, active contexts. For example, Zeliger (1995) observes that quotes present an "interface" between written and oral modes of communication, as they blend aspects of talk and text, an outcome that is present whether or not the channel of delivery is broadcast or print. Similarly, Cotter (1993) notes how the routinized intonation of radio news, which can be viewed as a way to cue listener expectations in a particular discourse environment, is in part a result of the communicative requirements of producing radio news. What are understood as requirements of the job by broadcast professionals cause the broadcast news register to combine features of discourse modes which are traditionally viewable as distinct: written vs. spoken, conversational vs. more public forms, and formal vs. casual style.

Unique distributions of discourse features occur in other media discourse, demonstrating more fully the range of social and textual meanings implicit on the discourse level. Sentence-initial connectives in news stories show a communicative function overriding a prescriptive one (the "don't start a sentence with a connective" rule). The pragmatic and ideational meanings in sentence-initial connectives such as *and* or *but* in news stories (Cotter 1996b) allow the discourse to invoke both conversational immediacy and an authoritative distance – seemingly contradictory goals that are resolved through the multifunctionality of discourse.

The use of quotation or reported speech[7] – by newsmakers, from a range of texts, by direct or indirect means – is another example of a journalistic practice that has been addressed by discourse analysts from many perspectives, in the process illuminating a range of discursive behaviors across contexts. For example, Leitner (1998) examines the use of reported speech in TV news, looking at the distribution of more than a dozen grammatical and textual elements, noting how their presence was instantiated by journalistic assumptions about what is normative in news presentations. Scollon and Scollon (1997) compare quotation, among other features involving point-of-view and citation, in 14 Chinese and English versions of a single story. They note that a complement of discourse features (including author acknowledgement through bylines) works together to project a story with a traceable lineage to its official publishing source. Caldas-Coulthard (1997), on the other hand, notes how some features, particularly the representation of nonlinguistic elements as in face-to-face interaction, are lost as a story undergoes its process of transformation.

Other discourse-level insights exist that could be applied to the study of media discourse, particularly if one is concerned with issues of involvement and detachment (Beaman 1984; Chafe 1982), code elaboration in the written and spoken channels (Tannen 1982), the differences in speech and writing as outcomes of different processes of production (Chafe 1982; Nunberg 1990), the shift from a literacy-based model of communication standard to an oral-based one (R. Lakoff 1982), and the intersection of meaning, intonation boundaries, and grammatical junctures in talk (Ford and Thompson 1992).

Discourse-level analysis also works to pinpoint the key features and behaviors of the language of news. The media context produces unique manifestations of language and discourse, the study of which enriches our understanding of the media as well as of discourse behaviors. In this vein, many researchers have examined the narrative structure of news discourse, the role of quotation and voicing, variation in

register and style, and the relation of conventionalized or standardized language to news routines, among other topics. The approaches adopted and the methods used to examine these components, taken as a whole, draw from the entire range of discourse analysis frameworks familiar to most sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists, encompassing the critical, narrative/pragmatic/stylistic, and comparative/crosscultural methods outlined in section 0. Increasingly, too, work that compares news discourse across culture and community has lent substance and sophistication to discussion of discourse issues (e.g. Leitner 1980; Pan 1999; Scollon 1997; Scollon and Scollon 1997; Weizman 1984; see Scollon and Scollon, this volume, on intercultural communication).

As previously mentioned, *narrative structure* and *style and register* are two productive areas of analysis and produce unique results when media data are considered, and so they will be discussed in greater detail.

4.1   Narrative structure

Journalists write stories, and consequently, research into story structure or narrative becomes relevant to account for their motivations. Frameworks that have been successfully applied to other domains of talk, such as Labov's (1972) narrative framework (see Johnstone, this volume), have also been applied to news discourse. For example, Bell (1991) uses Labov's framework to examine the global narrative structure of news across local and national news boundaries, while van Dijk (1988) outlines a "theory of discourse schemata," which includes the traditional Labovian narrative schema as well as a more elaborated "news schema" – a "series of hierarchically ordered categories" that helps define the discourse (van Dijk 1988: 49).

Bell (1991, 1994, 1998) has long compared the structure of news stories to personal narratives, noting their similarities and divergences, and using the Labovian framework as a point of departure. A key result is the insight that the narrative "evaluation" component, which cues our reading of a news story's salience, is focused in the lead (that is, the very important first paragraph in a news story). The discursive elaboration and alteration of time elements in the news narrative are another feature distinctive to media discourse. Linear chronology is not important in a news story to the extent one would think: "Perceived news value overturns temporal sequence and imposes an order completely at odds with the linear narrative point" (Bell 1991: 153; see also 1995, 1996). In their manipulation of temporal elements, reporters are not stenographers or transcribers; they are storytellers and interpreters (Cotter in press).

This point about a reordered "news chronology," constrained by the norms of text and content that underlie news discourse, comes up again in the work of media researchers Manoff and Schudson (1986). Their collection of nonlinguistic essays looks at the various elements that comprise the news and the process of journalism, namely, "The Five Ws and How": who, what, when, where, why, and how. These are the basic questions reporters answer, and the authors use these components as a way of organizing their discussion of news practice. Bell (1998) uses the Five Ws as an organizing principle in his recent discussion of news parameters. Similarly, Cotter (1999a) talks about the Five Ws in relation to news values and story organization.

Ultimately, the researchers are trying to determine what the placement of these profession-circumscribed informational elements means in the context of news structure and discourse organization.

The surface simplicity of the writing rules (which are standard across newswriting textbooks) and the complexity of their outputs (which varies across presentation domains) have only begun to get the attention they deserve. Bell (1991), for instance, notes the common practice in news-story construction of embedding one speech event into another. For example, a quotation from an interview is surrounded by information from a press release, but on the surface it is realized as a seamless, coherent "story." Likewise, Cotter (1999a, in press), in discussing the progress of a story through time, and Knight and Nakano (1999), in delineating the "press release reality" that informed reporting of the historic 1997 Hong Kong handover, elaborate on the role of multiple texts and multiple authors in the production of news. This multiparty/multi-element infrastructure has been remarked on by other researchers (such as van Dijk 1988; Verschueren 1985; Bell 1991; 1994; Cotter 1999a), who draw a range of conclusions, depending on their research focus.

4.2   *Style and register*

Linguistic style becomes an operative concept in media discourse, as a means both of characterizing the register and the unique features of news language, and also of considering the dynamic role of many speech communities in the production of discourse.

The many social tasks a journalistic text intentionally or unconsciously accomplishes are reflected in the different dimensions of register that many researchers have noted as constitutive of media discourse. For example, Chimombo and Roseberry (1998) see news register as a result of the informing role of news producers and its attendant linguistic correlates. Weizman (1994) notes preliminarily how quotation marks convey a reporter's stance toward the material he or she has included in the news story and in the process help constitute the news register. And Scollon and Scollon (1999) notes that the journalistic register is marked in part by the reporter's standardized practice of avoiding brand names and copyrighted material, an activity that integrates a "hidden dialogicality" with intellectual property priorities.

Style issues have also been addressed in the context of the media of bilingual societies, including Gonzalez's (1991) study of stylistic shifts in the English of the Philippine print media and Cotter's (1996a) research on English discourse-marker insertion in Irish-language radio interviews.[8] Gonzalez notes that a stylistic formality and consistency in Philippine English print media can be attributed to an underlying insecurity toward the colonizing language as well as to the site of English acquisition, i.e. the school. Cotter discusses the presence of discourse markers as a strategy for discourse coherence in a domain in which fluency is expected but not necessarily available, and for the negotiation of identity in a bilingual frame. (See Schiffrin, this volume.) In both cases, the discourse requirements of a well-formed news story or interview condition the use of language.

The constraints on style also derive from the larger culture in which the media discourse is being produced. Leitner (1980) was one of the first to conclude that

language on the radio is marked in culturally constrained ways by stylistic variation and reflects social contradictions (Naro and Scherre's 1996 work on Brazilian Portuguese similarly points to the impact of a media presence on linguistic variation). Employing a comparative approach to investigate the characteristics of language on the radio, Leitner's work on understanding the differences between German and British radio emphasizes the importance of sociopolitical contexts in characterizing media language.

Bell's audience design framework bears mention again, as reference group affiliation would also explain the circumstances in which the media influences or reflects variation in the larger community. Bell (1991) cites several studies of status determinants in both print and broadcast discourse, e.g. in French radio in Montreal and with Hebrew dialects on Israeli radio, a point that is also relevant in minority-language radio broadcasts in places as diverse as Zambia (Spitulnik 1992), Corsica (Jaffe 1999), and Ireland (Cotter 1996a). Social class is also a factor in the work by Roeh and Feldman (1984), who looked at two Hebrew dailies and observed how numbers, particularly in headlines, index social class. They found that numbers were used for rhetorical value more often in the popular daily than in the elite daily.

Journalists' own perceptions of their roles in the public sphere and their changing job duties also influence style and speak to the dynamic construction of media identities. For example, Quirk (1982) notes how speaking style on the radio has changed over time. He compares British broadcast texts from the first half and the latter half of the twentieth century. Initially, news readers were just that: readers, agents for conveying information, reading from a prepared text. Rhetorical devices, such as ad libbing or joking (in what has been called "happy talk") to lessen the distance between broadcaster and listener, were not present as they are in abundance now. Quirk points out that the changing roles of the broadcaster – in particular in relation to audience and in relation to medium – influence style.

Finally, changes in technology itself influence media discourse at the same time as they offer the researcher an opportunity to consider the stability (or intractability) of cultural categories. For example, McKay's (1988) work on voice amplification and gender observes how discourse styles had to alter to fit changing production modes in the early days of technology-assisted communication, from the megaphone to radio. Her focus on the role of gender in questions of authoritative voice indicates that culturally projected views of women's "appropriate" place did not stop at the door of the recording studio. Her observations speak to the perseverance of cultural attitudes over technological boundaries. (See also Moses 1994; Cotter 1999c.)

5   Directions for Continued Research

In the beginning of this chapter, I referred to the discourse of news media as encapsulating two key components: the dimension of text or story, and the dimension of the process involved in the production of texts. The text dimension has been considered productively and work is now well established and organized around a range of research questions, methodologies, and topics that are continuing to bear fruit.

However, as I pointed out earlier, aspects of the production of news texts and the processes involved in newsgathering, reporting, and editing have not been addressed in any degree of depth. It is this latter dimension that I will now consider, elaborating on points I have made elsewhere (see Cotter 1996a, 1996b, 1999a–c, in preparation) that can be considered as researchers change focus from text to process. In particular, it is important to look at *the role of the audience in relation to the practitioner*, and the sites of news production and dissemination from *the larger context of community*. Additionally, a focus on process, production, and practice likely will require an expansion of method – and in that light I propose developing more ethnographic, community-situated research.

5.1   From text to practice

In the research to date, news texts have not been viewed particularly as an *outcome of a discourse process* that comprises key communicative routines and habits of practice that work to constitute the journalistic community; a journalist reports, writes, edits, and produces in the context of his or her discourse community. Nor does the typical researcher think of process and production at first mention of media discourse (but see Bell 1991, 1998; Cotter 1999a, etc.; Knight and Nakano 1999, whose professional experience as journalists has informed their continuing research). And thus, the way is clear for even more work in a newly burgeoning field of academic endeavor that, taken as a whole, incorporates research orientations from a wide variety of disciplines.

Indeed, the multidisciplinary ethos that undergirds existing research can be extended to even more holistic scholarly endeavors. Ideally, developing an ethnographic component is a logical next step, one which would work to explain communicative behaviors from the perspective of the community in which the discourse is situated (for an elaboration on this point, see Cotter 1999a, 1999b, and in preparation). This approach means looking at the "community of coverage" – the audience, readers, listeners, consumers, users – as well as the community of practice (cf. Cotter 1999a, in press, in preparation). A process- or practice-oriented approach would allow new insights into the integrated examination of news practice, news values, and audience role – the key elements that comprise the professional ideology of journalists (Cotter 1993, 1996a, 1996b, in preparation).

A key aspect in the production of media discourse is the role of the *audience in relation to* the media practitioner (Cotter 1993, 1996b, 1999a). Key questions I propose asking are: what is the role or position of the audience in the practitioner's mind? How does this influence creation of the news text? How does it affect discourse structure, style choice, syntax, or phonology? Whom is the practitioner writing for? I argue that a deeper knowledge of the practitioner's focus on his or her readership or audience would allow a more nuanced discussion of media practice and its relation to audience or the communities that are covered (Cotter 2000). While mass communication models position the audience in a nearly invisible role, and some media discourse researchers have made the strong claim that journalists are only interested in reporting for their peers, I make the strong counterclaim that these assumptions can

be challenged, and then better characterized, by ethnographic evidence, and by a consideration of the intentions (if not outcomes) of journalists in relation to their audience (see Cotter 1993, 1996a, 1996b, 1999a–c).

5.2   *Community-based research*

Researchers would do well to consider the range and scope of journalistic practice that exists worldwide. Since most researchers take their data from major newspapers or broadcast outlets, one area for further research pertains to community journalism. With some exceptions (e.g. Bell 1991; Cotter 1999b; Dorian 1991; Jaffe 1999; Spitulnik 1992) extensive study of community journalism (as opposed to metro or international reporting) is fairly minimal in the literature – this despite the fact that community journalists, like their bigger counterparts, apply the profession's standard, which then mediates with local norms (Cotter 1999a), contributing to linguistic heterogeneity as much as larger news outlets do (cf. Leitner 1980; and see the comparative/cultural work cited earlier in this chapter).

I have noted elsewhere that research is rarely focused on the smaller, local paper, or the smaller national paper, despite their pervasive function as main news sources for countless communities worldwide (Cotter 1996a).[9] Additionally, to meaningfully interpret locally produced stories in the speech community in which they are situated, the researcher would conceivably need to possess a fair amount of ethnographic and contextual information – which suggests a range of methodological issues that must be identified and addressed. It is well to remember that a local paper effects results similar to the big metropolitan or national daily on the discourse or sociolinguistic level, using largely the same linguistic currency and intending similar discourse goals but within a different sphere (Cotter 1999a). Roughly the same conditions for language use in the media appear to apply across the board, whether urban or rural, big or small – even transnationally to some extent. I have noted that while the conditions for the formulation of media language are similar, since practitioners are bound by the strictures of their discourse community of media-makers, the results are realized differently in different local contexts (Cotter 1993, 1996a, 1996b, 1999a, in preparation).

Community-based research has implications for other domains, including that of lesser-used or endangered languages. Much of minority-language media is modeled on community journalism practices, primarily because the population that is served by such media is often small and community boundaries are well defined.[10] For example, in Ireland, the community status of the Dublin-based, Irish-language radio station Raidió na Life not only is a legal designation (upon which a broadcast license is issued), and a practical one (the broadcast range is limited to the immediate environs), but also allows for a wider participation of its community of listeners in creating what actually goes on the air than a commercial or state station would have or allow. Not only do community members influence what goes on the air, they can go on the air themselves. The discourse community of journalists then intermixes with the speech community it serves. In the case of community journalism, the community of practitioners has a chance to interact more directly with the audience it serves

(Cotter 1996a, 1999b). This proximity affords us another vantage point from which to scrutinize media discourse processes, practices, and impacts.

6   Summary and Coda

This chapter has outlined a range of work that considers media discourse from several vantage points, examining many aspects of discourse structure, representation, and involvement with audience and society. What has been emphasized has been the importance of media-language work – to articulate a better understanding of the news media, the unique handling of language and text, and the impact on thought and culture – and the challenges it can provide researchers using the tools of linguistics and discourse analysis.

As I have summarized it, the primary approaches to media language analysis are discourse analytic and sociolinguistic, often blended in some way. Analyses of media texts and impacts have been additionally informed by the insights of work in fields other than linguistics: cultural studies, critical theory, and semiotics comprise one area of research that has attracted the attention of many discourse analysts; political science, sociology, history, and a broad range of scholarly activities that make up communication and media studies comprise the other.

I have noted that the methods of investigating media discourse, while uniquely cross-disciplinary in many respects, can be organized into four primary areas and two secondary but rising ones, characterized differently by method of investigation and theoretical focus. These are primarily: critical, narrative/pragmatic/stylistic, comparative/cultural, and "nonlinguistic" media/communication; and secondarily: cognitive/conceptual and practice-based or ethnographic.

In proposing extensions of current research, I pointed out that the news media can be studied in terms of its texts or stories, and also in terms of the process involved in the production of texts and stories. Text-level analyses, including those incorporating aspects of audience involvement or interaction, have been the province of most research to date. Process and production issues have yet to be considered more fully. In that realm, a methodology that includes ethnographic or community-situated research may well be the next area for discourse analysts and linguists to develop, with the prospect of new and exciting insights into media discourse and its linguistic and cultural dimensions.

We play the radio when we drive to work, and hear it at the office. We check on-line news sites for everything from stock quotes to movie listings to the latest breaking news. We get the world in a glance from rows of news racks or over the shoulder of someone reading a paper. The television's steady stream of talk is often a counterpoint to social visits, household activities, and dinnertime conversation, not to mention its other position as social focal point. The media's words intersect with our own. And we discuss the movements of recent and not-so-recent media icons that have received worldwide attention as if they were curious members of our extended community. The media sets a standard for language use, be it to enhance social position or to bond with others. "BBC English" in Britain, "network English"

in the US, and "news English" in the Philippines are considered targets for prestigious usage, while advertisements, sitcoms, music videos, rap songs, and movies give us verbal riffs or catch-phrases that can be shared by like-minded members of our social circle. The technology available to millions of people in the global village ensures that this "franchised" media language, like McDonald's, is accessible, understood, and consumed across a wide geographical and ethnographic swathe. To study media discourse, then, is to work to make sense of a great deal of what makes up our world.

NOTES

1 Figures for 1995 from Paul Beissel, *Times* marketing researcher.

2 Note that discussions of the media by journalists themselves are not included in this listing as their work often does not cross over into academic treatments of media language.

3 Altheide (1996) adapts an ethnographic methodology to the traditional quantitative-oriented content analysis, showing another way that research can be practice-focused.

4 Broad American correlates might be Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* (1988), or Lee and Solomon's *Unreliable Sources* (1991), but these books have not had the same academic impact – or language focus – as the Glasgow University Media Group work.

5 Ideology is defined and investigated differently by different researchers.

6 Reading data from a contextualized position, such as the researchers mentioned in this chapter adopt, can be contrasted to work, often nondiscourse-analytic, that uses newspaper databases or corpora to make claims about usage or linguistic form. Since these claims are often divorced from awareness of text, context, or process, they are thus less defensible – and often erroneous – when extrapolated to language behaviors outside of the media realm.

7 Tannen (1989) refers to quotation practice such as this as "constructed dialogue."

8 On-line news and entertainment sites on the worldwide web afford an accessible source of multilingual, comparative data. For example, in spring 2000, the *Miami Herald* offered 11 different web publications through its portal site to appeal to different audiences, according to Janine Warner, former Director of Site Operations for the Miami office of KnightRidder.com. Especially interesting is the contrast between the English-language news site, the Spanish-language news site (*El Nuevo Herald*), and the youth news site, which cover similar topics framed according to the interests of their different constituencies.

9 The number of papers overall in the US is significant: 1538 dailies and 7176 weeklies in the mid-1990s, according to information supplied by the Newspaper Association of America (dailies) and National Newspaper Association (weeklies).

10 Community journalism is also known as "participatory journalism" in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe, where a correlation with communism is avoided (Ronán Ó Dubhthaigh, 1995 interview).

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