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MEDIALIZATION OF NEWSPAPER LANGUAGE ON THE EXAMPLE OF ITALIAN AND POLISH FOOTBALL COLUMNS

Key words: football daily news, daily sports newspapers, language of sport, Modern Italian.

ABSTRACT

The article discusses various characteristics of medialization of the language of the press, with a particular focus on football news and language of sport. In the author's opinion the phenomenon of medialization of the daily press is considerable, primarily due to the influence of television on the way newspaper articles are written. The main objective of the study was to establish how the written media have changed under the influence and competition of other media, especially television.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the growing influence of popular culture, the language of mass media, including football news language and sports lexicon, has firmly settled in our daily life. We have all become familiar with such expressions as *to score an own goal*, *to assist someone*, *to be in an offside position*, *to dribble somebody to death*, etc. [1]. The present article discusses the phenomenon of medialization of Italian and Polish football press articles in view of the above-mentioned impact of mass culture on the linguistic processes.

In my studies of the press I have paid much attention to its spectacularisation, which under the influence of the language of television and weekly magazines with their screaming headlines, has become evident in newspaper columns. Another new important factor and an element of novelty in daily sports newspapers is the spoken, colloquial language which, due to other media and increasing coverage of popular culture has also crept up in the headlines of sports newspapers.

The corpus constituting the basis for the analysis of the language of football news consisted of paper editions of an Italian daily sports newspaper "La Gazzetta dello Sport" and its electronic version, an Italian website dedicated to sports gazzetta.it, and the Polish Internet football network futbolnet.pl. The choice of these sources was prompted by the fact that daily sports newspapers are the most commonly read newspapers in Italy (www.audipress.it/dati.html).

The article discusses changes that have occurred in Italian daily newspapers in the last few decades following the emergence of television and Internet publications. This transition has significantly affected the newspaper medium itself. Thus, the analysis focuses on the characteristic features of sports newspapers as well as trends set by the other media.

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LINGUISTS AND THE LANGUAGE OF MASS MEDIA

My area of research is relatively young and challenging. According to Andrea Masini, “The linguists’ rather keen contemporary interest in the Italian mass media language was initially accompanied by some hesitation” [2]. Many researchers agree with this opinion. Masini claims that among the factors which had influenced that reluctance were “unwillingness to confront current issues” and “[...] further embryonic development of mass media [...] that had not been so popular and accessible as they are today”. Masini emphasizes that it is already assumed that the receiver of the mass media language is an unlimited, anonymous audience, which coincides with the name “mass media” [3]. Another important factor influencing the language of mass media is that the reader to whom information is directed is reached by the print media in the same way as the listener and the viewer are reached by the broadcasting media. This has a considerable impact on the specificity of the medium language. Antonella Stefinlongo also underlines the importance and essence of the direct influence of extralinguistic factors such as social change and technological progress on the language system [4]. The result of those changes has been the mediamorphosis of daily newspapers.

MEDIAMORPHOSIS OF DAILY PAPERS

There is no doubt that the phenomena that have transformed the newspapers and the media in general were initiated by the emergence of television as the mass medium of communication. Television brought weekly news summaries and also initiated the sensational trend of newspapers. As the linguist Iliaria Bonomi notes, “Television, in addition to depriving newspapers of many readers, significantly affects their [...] appearance and language” [5]. Another important issue related to the medialization and metamorphosis of newspapers is a visible increase of the space and the number of entertainment articles. Bonomi writes that “[...] the way in which newspapers spread the visual element, represented by pictures, diagrams, tables is obvious. In other words, the graphic-pictorial component has spread at the expense of words and it is evident for all” [6].

Among the linguistic phenomena making the information more visible Bonomi points to the example of past tense being replaced by the so-called historical present tense to “add immediacy and visibility”. Following Bonomi, Giovanni Battista Moretti notes that this linguistic technique is used to “capture imagination and reach into the realm of feelings” [7]. Let us consider the following examples from daily sports newspapers:

“The Bianconeri defeat Pellegrini and thus ensure their participation in Seville’s Peace Cup finals clash with Aston Villa. After the goal scored by Cannavaro in the 3rd minute of the match, in the 41st minute from the penalty equalises Cristiano Ronaldo. In the 4th minute of the second half Salihamidzic’s gorgeous goal” (gazzetta.it, July, 2009);

“Coppa Italia, Inter win 1-0 at the Stadio Olimpico in the first leg of the semi-final with a great shot by Stankovic at the end of the first half. The Giallorossi miss a sitter at the start with Vucinic and don’t manage to come back in the second half. Leonardo moves closer to the final and there are some small signs of improvement from the team” (gazzetta.it, April, 19, 2011);

“Napoli, pure passion. Champions League football awaits” (headline, gazzetta.it, April, 18, 2011); “Beckham scores but Barcelona wins (headline). Beckham is not enough. Barcelona qualifies” (gazzetta.it, August, 2, 2009).

The application of the above techniques seeking to fulfill the reader’s expectations and, first of all, to face TV competition is currently common practice in daily sports newspapers. When it comes to the themes and the language, daily sports newspapers aim at attracting the reader’s attention and making him participate in great sports events. Let us have a look at the following lines:

“Allegri wants everything «The cup final and the championship». On Wednesday the home leg of the semi-final at San Siro; the Rossoneri’s coach will bring back Ibrahimovic, who is banned in the league: «Zlatan will start alongside Cassano and Pirlo»” (gazzetta.it, April, 19, 2011);

“Marchisio to renew Chiellini’s contract. The Juventus midfielder is waiting for a salary rise: «I hope it can be sorted out before the end of this season. I’m not concerned, but I wouldn’t want to start next season worrying about the contract». Quagliarella at Vinovo: «After Easter I’ll be back training here», while the defender should make his comeback against Catania” (gazzetta.it, April, 20, 2011).

On the other hand, the emergence of new technologies, and the so-called mediamorphosis due to information systems, makes – as emphasized by Bonomi – “[...] journalists write their articles directly on their computers, partially on the basis of agency dispatches, and converting them into articles-commentaries [...]” [8].

It is worth noticing that in addition to the changes in administration of sports news and introduction of new methods and innovative tools as a result of progressive medialization, the journalist profession and work have been also transformed.

THE INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION

The contribution of television to the innovative processes discussed here is without any doubt one of the most significant and influential from the linguistic viewpoint. What is more, under the influence of television the way sports news appears and is broadcast have been changed profoundly. This influence has caused sport games to be associated with spectacles for much larger audiences. In part, it is due to the fact that the priorities in newspaper information are set by television information, and that the roles of different media are confined to a redefinition of media information. Alberto Papuzzi observes that information in daily press is “preceded by information on television” [9]. Paolo Murialdi, who agrees with Papuzzi, adds that “now the reader does not require a football game or a cyclist race to be recounted to him a day later, minute after minute, in vivid detail and with amazing accuracy, because he has already seen its highlights on TV”. Gianni Faustini [10] claims the same, asking rhetorically whether anyone after having watched Sunday Sport will want to read sports press articles on the following morning.

The first football World Cup was broadcast by Italian television in 1958 from seemingly inaccessible Sweden. Two years earlier, for the first time an Italian League football game had been broadcast live. These dates marked the beginning of the long domination of television, but despite this fact, between 1976 and 1982, three Italian sports newspapers doubled their circulation. Murialdi lists several reasons for this increase in circulation figures [11]: desire to escape, to get away from politics and journalistic cunning. Murialdi thinks the increase in TV sports coverage should not be underestimated: “Instead of causing a sense of surfeit, sport on television has had a tug effect, making the interest and curiosity in the audience grow. In fact, sports newspapers refer to the elementary feelings, favoring background facts or athletes’ private lives. Then newspapers attempt to simplify the language and to use graphic resources (stock page breaking, sophisticated use of photography, clear pagination) that add spectacularity to the information” [12].

Despite black scenarios and apocalyptic visions, TV not only did not reduce the number of spectators in the stadiums, but even contributed to the popularization of football in Italy. However, the emergence of television completely changed the perception of sport: it brought sport directly into homes as a window to the world. Previously, in order to see a game, one had to go to the stadium, but now, thanks to live TV coverage, one does not have to wait for the morning newspapers to know the headlines.

In addition to the increasing spectacularisation of information, also the way information is reported in newspapers has changed. One of television characteristics discernible in newspapers is the requirement to provide a spectacular mix of information to readers, including comprehensive information about daily life and even how to spend free time. All of this is dictated by the need to keep up with the medium of television, which also takes place, as defined by Papuzzi, in the form of “[...] progressive periodicity of each type of papers, with regard to issues, languages, topics, as well as supplements” [14]. Therefore, issues related to entertainment are frequently published, and the number of pages, illustrations and photographs steadily increases. Dario Corno [15] speaks about a particular magnification effect typical of TV, and Bonomi notices that “[...] in the way of presenting information there is often an echo of its earlier,

obvious acquisition from television, which makes journalists add to the raw information some additional elements of beauty often already familiar to the reader [...] the mix of information with the commentary may be partly connected with the fact that newspapers somewhat lost or ceded the role of the first and only information source to television” [16].

SENSATIONALISM SEEKING

Another important feature of the already transformed newspapers is the high frequency of occurrence of sensational news. Indeed, it is extremely common because this way of presenting information is one of the factors that glorify the character of sports articles. It is, after all, to impress readers (it is not a coincidence that we are use such expressions as *to cause a sensation, to get a scoop*). It even occurs in the case of unconfirmed information. Papuzzi explains two mechanisms on which the concept of sensationalism is based: “The first is the use of literary or paraliterary language which dominates the information itself [...]. The other method is to create information with other information [...] or its autoreferential circulation [...] under the influence of which the event that triggers information, constitutes a separate message” [17].

This aspect prevails today in sports journalism, primarily in the headlines. Sometimes it can be a difficult and often even an impossible task for “La Gazzetta dello Sport” or “Tuttosport” – which provide their readers with daily doses of new, brilliantly synthesized sensational news – that football games are played on weekends. Let us look at the following headlines:

- “Europa League: A dramatic match in Copenhagen, Legia draw, Mucha superhero!”;
- “Caceres is going to play for Juventus!”;
- “Champions League. Celtic’s sensational defeat. Marcin Żewłakow scores!”;
- “LE: Lech’s six goals in Norway!” (futbolnet.pl, July, 30, 2009);
- “Zagłębie demolished at Łazienkowska Street”;
- “Korona Kielce humiliate Polonia Warszawa” (futbolnet.pl, August, 2, 2009).

To sum up the issue of sensationalism, let us analyse how its interpretation by Maurizio Dardano [18] and Violette Morin [19]. What Dardano calls *sensationalism*, Morin refers to as *coefficient de*

spectacularisation consisting of the following elements appearing frequently in newspaper football columns:

- use of adjectives in the superlative,
- photos,
- emotionality,
- direct quotations,
- exclamations,
- direct speech,
- lively and colorful descriptions,
- active present tense.

MAKING HEADLINES

The way of displaying messages by page breaking, composing the headlines and other editorial tricks also affects information interpretation. It is said that headlines constitute the key to decode the entire message of the article. Indeed, to attract readers’ attention and awaken their curiosity, one has to, in addition to sensationalism-seeking, resort to another factor that is the composition of headlines, which has been elevated by sports newspapers to the level of an art. The following examples illustrate this phenomenon:

- “Pogoń on their knees in Gorzów” (futbolnet.pl, August, 8, 2009);
- “An awesome match in Warsaw. Polonia like Manchester United” (futbolnet.pl, August, 9, 2009);
- “Manchester City wants to break the transfer record and buy Messi!” (futbolnet.pl, August, 10, 2009);
- “Spalletti: «Totti is phenomenal»” (gazzetta.it, August, 6, 2009).

Moretti observes that skipping prepositions and articles in the headlines is the norm “primarily, because of space constraints. The headline has to succinctly summarize what will be treated in the article itself” [20]. Let us consider the following examples: “Diego’s come back! Juve recover Brazilian genius champion”; “Ancelotti directly conquers England” (“Tuttosport”, August, 10, 2009). The reason for doing it is explained by another Italian linguist, Dardano, who remarks that among many ways of reading newspapers one of the most common is to only look at headlines simply because “the reader wants to know everything but does not want to dwell on any longer” [21].

The reader lives in a hurry and because of that the newspaper layout should facilitate information assimilation. According to Dardano, “The headlines, page breaking, photos have to bring us to «know before we understand»” [22]. In consequence, the reader has the opportunity to pre-familiarize with the greatest amount of information possible to be able to find what interests him most.

Thus the headlines are the key to article reading. According to Umberto Eco, when analysing the daily press, you should focus your attention primarily on headlines because “they are the real part read by the majority of readers” [23]. Dardano agrees: “The headline is a separate part as it presents the message and summarizes the parts of the message we want to emphasize” [24]. In conclusion, it should be noted that all those innovations were introduced and propagated in newspapers mainly due to the need to cope with competition from the other media.

NOMINAL STYLE

According to Moretti, in a nominal sentence the predicate is expressed without a verb. Moretti observes that such sentences “are common both in the written language and in the spoken language [...]. Their use [...] is part of our daily communication, first of all, [...] in emotionally marked situations”. [25] Another media-related feature of nominal sentences that Moretti emphasizes is: “[...] their practical compactivity [...]. In fact, because of the compactivity criterion, the nominal style appears regularly in certain sectors of the daily press (language of politics, sports columns, news), especially in the headlines. This is not only due to the requirements of brevity and compactivity, but also to the newspapers’ predilection for making impression, for sensationalism-seeking” [26]. In this style “verbs can appear, but only in the nominal form of participle” [27].

Following Moretti, Bonomi observes that: “Because of the characteristic brevity the use of nominal sentences, i.e. sentences without the verb in the predicate function, has been welcomed in journalism for a long time, since the beginning of last century” [28]. The linguist notices that such sentences, although appearing most often in the headlines, are also particularly common at the beginning of articles, as they serve to give a rapid

and animated course to the facts being described. Nominal sentences also often appear in the final parts of newspaper articles as explanatory conclusions. Although the nominal sentences “characterize, in general, the style of writing of the daily press, they are most common in daily and sports columns that are more pronounced for informational, narrative and descriptive purposes” [29]. All these factors underline the spectacular nature of the football column. Brevity and conciseness of sentences, elements of spoken language, and spectacularisation are achieved with the nominal style. These elements appear most frequently in the headlines, according to the scheme: headline + message announcement + quotation => article.

The need to impress and sensationalism are at the expense of an ordered presentation of the event. Headlines, which are aimed to attract readers’ attention, serve as a synthesis of the event, e.g. “Friendly. The Netherlands draw with England”; “Argentine defeat Russia” (futbolnet.pl, August, 13, 2009).

The headlines announce the issues, while the sequence of sub-titles only partially corresponds to the sequence of issues, in compliance with the requirement to surprise the reader with visual references and complex connotative elements as well as their spectacular character. The return to the description of the event (venue, participants) and game analysis are only subsequent. This exposing technique as well brilliant and sensational headlining are aimed to maximize spatial capacity. It is worth noticing that the basic elements of the sports column: expanded spectacularization and suggestiveness, pathos-seeking and structural economy, are tendencies common in the other media.

It should be also noted that the tendency to dramatize football games and expressiveness can be obtained by adding comments in direct speech and by using the spoken language:

- “Jacek Zieliński: Beaten Fredrikstad, it’s Piast turn” (futbolnet.pl, August, 1, 2009);
- “Toure: I’ve quitted because Arsenal are getting rid of main players” (futbolnet.pl, August, 2, 2009);
- “Lewandowski: Lech’s management didn’t want to let me leave” (futbolnet.pl, August, 3, 2009);
- “Buffon comforts himself: I’m happy with Trezeguet” (gazzetta.it, August, 3, 2009);

- “Del Piero: In four it’s possible” (idem); “Mutu doesn’t agree: judgment unjust” (idem).

The use of quotation marks in the sub-headlines serves the purpose of highlighting or shortening individual words or phrases. It also serves to “separate the writer’s opinion from the participant’s opinion” [30]. According to Dardano, such a distance is often emphasized by repetitions and intrusions, for example, “Indeed, according to X”. What is more, the most common examples in sports column headlines are those in which the announcement of a fact anticipates the chronicle of the game:

- “Poland is beautiful! Obraniak-Greece 2-0”;
- “World Cup Eliminations: Germany and Norway win. The agonies of the French”;
- “World Cup Eliminations CONCACAF. Costly scored twice. Messico beat the US” (futbolnet.pl, August, 9, 2009).

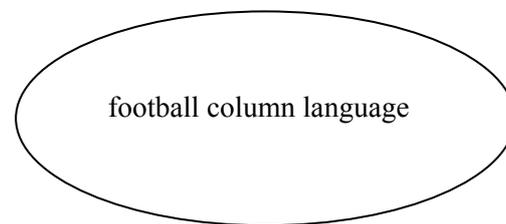
THE FINAL WHISTLE

The language of mass media is one of the most vivid, colorful and modern means of communication. It is a media phenomenon which has managed to penetrate even the language of politics thanks to such remarkable factors as its spectacularity and clear emotional marking. The above analysis shows that the sports column due to its capacity of absorption and openness to new ideas is very susceptible to the medialization process. In addition, it features a specific linguistic mix as well as the presence of numerous borrowings from other semantic fields.

Beside its main, informative function the newspaper, both in its paper and electronic editions, has become a tool of daily life, entertainment, relaxation, and the sports column serves as a means to re-experience the last night game. These features make newspapers, as Dardano claims, “shape social relations” [31] by adapting to the modern requirements of mediality. It should be noted that the connection between sport mass media and the undoubted medial strength of football plays a huge role in contemporary society. Both have vastly contributed to the popularization of football as well as to news reporting from football fields. As stated in the *Il Rapporto Annuale 2007: Comunicazione e media (Annual Report 2007: Communications and mass media) in Italy*: “Integration of mass media affects the popularization of their use, drawing also

the traditional media on the increase of the interest in them” (www.censis.it).

Fabio Rossi observes that highly relevant to the medialisation of the language of the Italian football column is the fact that “Millions of readers, sometimes uneducated, have mastered the wreath of professionalisms, metaphors, colloquial expressions, borrowings specific to the language of sports, [...] whereas even those with higher education lock up at the contact with the terminology from other areas similar to the basic vocabulary” [32].



- special languages (languages of other sports)
- technical languages (language of medicine, language of law)
- metaphorical language (semantic fields)

Figure 1. Football column language and its lexicon

There is no doubt that the language of the football column reflects striking linguistic phenomena: spectacularisation of description (clearly under the influence of television, competition and popularity), expression of emotions through the text, and the pathos of the metaphor. The emphasis on thought strengthening, enunciation, and pathetic coloring of selected highly-moving words are the main features of the modern newspaper football column.

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