The Language of Newspapers

- English newspaper writing dates from the 17th century. The first newspapers carried only news, without comments, as commenting was considered to be against the principles of journalism. By the 19th century, newspaper language was recognized as a particular variety of style, characterized by a specific communicative purpose and its own system of language means.

Does it have a system?

- It includes a system of interrelated lexical, phraseological and grammatical means serving the purpose of informing, instructing and, in addition, of entertaining the reader. As a result of this diversity of purposes, newspapers contain not only strictly informational, but also evaluative material, comments and views of the news-writers, especially characteristic of editorials.

WHAT'S AN EDITORIAL?

- **noun**
- **1.** An article in a publication expressing the opinion of its editors or publishers.
- **2.** A commentary on television or radio expressing the opinion of the station or network.
- **adjective**
- **1.** Of or relating to an editor or editing: *an editorial position with a publishing company; an editorial policy prohibiting the use of unnamed sources.*
- **2.** Of or resembling an editorial, especially in expressing an opinion: *an editorial comment*

The modern newspapers

- The modern newspaper carries material of an extremely diverse character. On the pages of a newspaper one finds not only news and comments on it, but also stories and poems, crossword puzzles, and so on. Since these serve the purpose of entertaining the reader, they cannot be considered specimens of newspaper style. Nor can articles in special fields, such as science and technology, art, literature, etc. be classed as belonging to newspaper style.

Functions

- The function of **brief news items and reports** is to inform the reader. They state only facts without giving commentary. This accounts for the total absence of any individuality of expression and the lack of emotional colouring. The vocabulary used here is neutral and common literary. It is essentially matter-of-fact, and stereotypical forms of expression prevail. But apart from this, a newspaper has its specific vocabulary that can be found in its other features as editorials, articles, and advertisements.

Do they have evaluative connotation?

- As the newspaper also seeks to influence public opinion on various social, political or moral matters, its language frequently contains vocabulary with evaluative connotation, such as
- *Allegedly: presumibilmente*
- *to claim (the defendant claims to know nothing about it)*.

  These cast some doubt on what is stated further and make it clear to the reader that those are not yet affirmed facts. Elements of appraisa*l may be observed in the very selection and way of presenting the news, not only in the use of specific vocabulary but in syntactic constructions indicating a lack of surety on the part of the reporter as to the correctness of the facts reported or his/her desire to avoid responsibility.
- *appraisal: valutazione

APPRAISAL

- The headlines of news items, apart from giving information about the subject-matter, also carry a considerable amount of appraisal (the size and placement of the headline, the use of emotionally coloured words and elements of emotive syntax), thus indicating an interpretation of the facts in the news item that follows.

- But also Editorials (leading articles) are characterized by a subjective handling of facts, political or otherwise, and therefore have more in common with political essays or articles and should rather be classed as belonging to the publicistic style than to the newspaper.

Vocabulary: specific features (1)

- **a) Special political and economic terms**, e.g*., stability, elections, anti-terror war, terrorist network, opinion polls, human rights, budget deficit, immigration, presidential vote, race, opponent, business, security, to devastate, officials, hostages, protest, breakdown, regime, local terror cells, emergency anti-terror funding…*

Vocabulary (2)

- **Lofty*, bookish* words** including certain phrases based on metaphors and thus emotionally coloured:

  war hysteria, escalation of war, overwhelming majority, a storm of applause, global hunt for terrorists.

  *lofty: alto/eccelso

  *bookish: libresco/pedante

Vocabulary (3)

- **Newspaper clichés**, i.e., stereotyped expressions, commonplace phrases familiar to the reader, e.g*., public opinion, free markets, long-term agreements, a melting pot, to cast a veto over, crucial/pressing problems, zero tolerance, political correctnes*s.

- nevertheless, clichés are indispensable in newspaper style: they prompt the necessary associations and prevent ambiguity and misunderstanding.

Vocabulary (4)

Abbreviations. News items, press reports and headlines are full of abbreviations of various kinds. Among them abbreviated terms are <u>names of organizations, public and state bodies</u>, <u>political associations, industrial and other companies, various offices</u>, etc. known by their initials - ACRONYMS - are very common; e.g., *EU* (European Union), *UNO* (United Nations Organization), *WTO* (World Trade Organization), *EEC* (European Economic Community), *CNN* (Cable News Network), *BBC* (British Broadcasting Corporation), *CEO* (Chief Executive Officer), *MBA* (Master of Business Administration), *BAC* (Blood Alcohol Concentration). The widespread use of initials in newspaper language has been <u>expanded to the names of persons constantly in the public eye</u>, and one can find references to *JFK* (John Fitzgerald Kennedy). Sometimes the whole statements are referred to by their initials, e.g., *WYSIWYG* (What you see is what you get), *FAQ* (Frequently asked questions), *BTW* (By the way), *9/11* (September 11, 2001).

Vocabulary (5)

- **f) Neologisms**. They are very common in newspaper vocabulary. The newspaper is very quick to react to any new development in the life of society, in science and technology. Hence, neologisms make their way into the language of the newspaper very easily and often even spring up on newspaper pages. Now, in the early 21st century, neologisms relating to computers and the Internet outnumber all others, for example, *cybersickness* (a feeling of illness caused by using a computer for long periods of time), *keypal* (someone with whom one regularly exchanges e-mail).

New Words:

- Finance has also launched numerous new words, such as *dead cat bounce* (a situation in which the price of shares* rises a small amount after a large fall, sometimes before falling further).

- Sometimes finance and computers come together, as with *dot-com* (a person or a company whose business is done using the Internet),
  e-cash (money that can be used to buy things on the Internet, but that does not exist in a physical form or belong to any particular country).

- Many new words have come from medicine and biological science, e.g., *biologically engineered, genetically modified*

- *share: percentuale/quota/**azioni***

Vocabulary (6)

Foreign words. These come from different languages. Some are traditionally used in newspaper writing, others have recently come from the areas of new technology (computers, Internet, business, entertainment and changes in society), for example, *beaucoup* (= a lot of money; from French); *ad hoc* (= specialized; from Latin); *bona fide* (= real, true and not intended to deceive somebody (from Latin) ex: *I wanted to prove my bona fides*; *curriculum vitae* (CV) (= resume; from Latin); *sine qua non* (= something that you must have; from Latin); *carte blanche* (= complete freedom; from French); *nouveau riche* (= someone who has only recently become rich and spends a lot of money; from French)

Grammatical paràmeters of newspaper writing:

1) **Complex sentences with a developed system of clauses**, e.g. 6 clauses

2) **Verbal constructions** (infinitive, gerundial, participial)

Grammatical features (2)

3) Attributive noun groups are another powerful means of effecting brevity in news items, e.g., *classic cold-war-style diplomacy; government anti-terror policies; a new patented smoking cessation program; an exclusive worldwide assistance network.*

Grammatical features (3)

- **e) Specific word order**. Newspaper tradition, coupled with the rigid rules of sentence structure in English, has greatly affected the word order of brief news items. The word order in one-sentence news paragraphs and in what are called leads (the initial sentences in longer news items) is more or less fixed. Journalistic practice has developed the five-w-and-h-pattern rule☐ (who-what-why-how-where-when) and for a long time strictly adhèred to it. In terms of grammar, this fixed sentence structure may be expressed in the following way: Subject, Predicate, Adverbial modifier of reason (manner), Adverbial modifier of place, Adverbial modifier of time

- *A famous actor, Nestor Kirchner granted a rare interview last month to NEWSWEEK's Joseph Contreras in Buenos Aires after he was hospitalized for six days for treatment of stomach bleeding (Newsweek, 2004).*

Violation of grammar rules:

- What is ordinarily looked upon as a violation of grammar rules in any other kind of writing is becoming increasingly common as a functional peculiarity of newspaper style.

- *So when he (Saddam Hussein) **surrendered** without a single shot from the pistol at his side, Arab diplomats and journalists **say** the once-admiring Arab masses **were** embarrassed by his meekness (Time, 2004).*

Items:

- Home/Domestic news (stories about current events , political stories, stories about celebrities, , economic news, business, scandals)

- **International**
- **Advertising**
- **Sport**
- **Entertainment**

Types of news:

Hard News focuses on:
- Politics
- Economy
- War
- Disasters
- Accidents
- Science
- Technology
- Law
- Crimes
- Protests

Soft News focuses on:

- People,
- Places,
- Issues that affect the reader's lives,
- Communities problems etc…

Hard News and Soft News

- **Hard News** A hard news story is usually an account of what happened, why it happened and how the reader
 will be affected. Hard news has little value after 24-48 hours.
- **Soft news** is usually timeless, that is the story happens over a longer time span. It could appear any
 day over reasonably long period without affecting its newsworthiness.
- **Case: Quattrocchi**
- As an example, we could look at a real story – the death of the Italian, Fabrizio Quattrocchi, who was kidnapped and then killed in Iraq, (April 2004). The facts appeared as **hard news** in stories mentioning the classic components of a news story: *who, where, when, how and why*. During the period of his capture, **soft news** stories appeared focusing on other angles, such as his family, his work, the daily life of Italians working in Iraq etc..

THE STRUCTURE OF NEWS STORIES

NUCLEUS INCLUDES:

- **Over-line**
- **Headline**
- **Sub-head or summary line/by-line**
- **Lead**
- **Wrap – up**

BODY INCLUDES:

- **Satellites**

The Haedline / The Lead

- The **headline** and the lead are the basis for how the story will develop. Similar information may be found in the body of the story.

- The **lead**, which follows the headline, often in bold font, elaborates the headline but it is not an introduction. It can contain the main idea of the news story, that is the focus of the story or what the story is about. The event can begin at the point which is considered to be of the greatest interest.

- **The lead should also give some or all of the 5 W's(who?,what?, where?, when?, and why /how?)**

- The headline may also be followed by a subhead or summary line which qualifies or elaborates the headline before the lead, and a **by-line**, which tells who wrote the story. An over-line can appear above the headline to clarify it.

Wrap up / satellites

- The **wrap – up** (the optional paragraph o riepilogo delle notizie principali) of a story is not a conclusion, but it indicates a resolution .
- The **satellites** may :
- Reformulate the information given in the nucleus;
- Add information to it;
- Give causes and conditions
- The satellites of hard news stories are based on 5 **W's: who, what, where, when, how / why** which are essential to news stories.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

- Analysis of newspapers involves a consideration not only of reporting styles but also of headline styles since both of them reveal much about ideology and aims of an individual paper.

- Headlines will be the focus of our analysis.

- To catch the reader's attention, **headlines** need to be simple, easily readable and appropriate to the kind of paper in which they are printed. The choice of words for a headline is affected by the ideas to be expressed and by the kind of reader associated with a paper. The structure is often described as telegraphic.

Ambiguity in headlines:

- Sometimes a headline can be ambiguous, it can have two meanings. For example **ambiguity** can occur when a word could be interpreted differently depending on its word class.

- e.g. LOCAL MAN FINDS PICASSO DRAWING IN SHED*

- The **ambiguity** occurs in whether the word DRAWING is a verbal noun premodified by Picasso or whether it is a present participle.

- *shed: capannone/tettoia

Language Features

- The omission of words;

- the use of short words;

- the use of words with strong connotations;

- the use of noun phrases;

- the use of gimmicks* (puns, word play, metaphor, alliteration, rhyme)

- *gimmicks: espedienti/trucchi

Omission of words/short words

- **Omission of words**
- The words omitted are usually *function words,* that is grammatical words that do not carry intrinsic meaning : determiners (some, this, that, the, a, an, etc), pronouns (relative pronouns), auxiliaries
- (be, have, do). Titles (Mrs, Sir, Lord) and punctuation may be also omitted.
- e.g. Bush likely to name 2nd nominee* next week (*President, to be, the* omitted)
- (President Bush is likely to name the 2nd nominee next week)
- **Short words**
- row = argument
- aid = assistance
- raid = robbery.
- ***nominee: candidato**

The Use of Intertextuality:

- Intertextuality means reference to familiar phrases, which are already known to the reader, many coming from film and book titles or the words of songs.

- e.g. MY FUR LADY,ZARA THE BOHEMIAN (how the Queen's grand-daughter was dressed)

It is a pun based on Intertextuality : My Fur Lady echoes My Fair Lady, a musical film.

Headlines visual function:

- **Headlines** may have a visual function. The picture can give meaning to the headline or add an extra dimension of meaning.

- e.g. AND THEY ALL LIVED

- This story carries meaning because it was accompanied by a picture of the crashed plane

Newspapers in Britain 1

- **National Newspapers**
- There are two types of National newspapers in Britain and most of them express a political opinion therefore they may be RIGHT WING or LEFT WING.
- **Broadsheets/Quality newspapers** (*large size*)
- **The Times** (the oldest newspaper ,right wing)
- **Sunday Times** (right wing)
- **Daily Telegraph** (right wing)
- **The Sunday Telegraph** (right wing)
- **The Observer** (slightly left wing)
- **The Guardian** (slightly left wing)
- **The Independent** (neutral)
- **Financial Times** (neutral)

Newspapers in Britain 2

- **Tabloids/Popular newspapers (***compact-sized format***)**
- **The Sun** (the biggest –selling, right wing)
- **Daily Express** (right wing)
- **Daily mail** (right wing)
- **Daily Star** (right wing)
- **Daily Mirror** (left wing)
- **Sunday Mirror** (left wing)
- **News of the World** (right wing)
- There are also other newspapers for example **local** and **regional** newspapers.

Differences between Broadsheets and Tabloids

- **Broadsheets 1**
- **(**serious-minded newspapers)
- Headlines are small. They usually extend over to columns . The print tends to be smaller. Front page headlines, however, are sometimes an exception.
- Long and detailed articles about national and international events.
- The photos are small.

Broadsheets 2

- Lexis is more formal and specific.

- The angle adopted tends to be more factual

- The tone is often controlled .

- Punctuation is used traditionally and formally. Dashes are less frequent.

- Cohesion is created through referencing and lexical repetition rather than through conjunctions.

Tabloids 1

- **Tabloids**
- (less serious newspapers)
- Headlines are big . they are typed in bold print and may extend across the whole page. The front page headlines can occupy more space than the whole article they refer to.
- Shorter articles about less important events.
- Lots of stories about famous people.
- Photos are large often in colour.
- Lexis is often emphatic with short and sensational words.
- The angle adopted is human. News stories (political, economic, etc.) are directly linked to people. The tone is conversational and the approach sensational and dramatic.

Tabloids 2

- Punctuation:
- **Commas** are often omitted after initial adverbials and between strings of adjectives . This avoids complicating the reading process.
- **Dashes** make the style quite informal
- Co-ordinators in initial position are *common*: e.g. And Lisa, 23, is hoping for success tomorrow

Style in Tabloids:

- The style of **tabloids** is distinctive with its sensational approach and dominant front page headlines, while the style of **broadsheets** is distinctive with its factual approach.
- e.g. 1
- **IT'S PADDY PANTSDOWN**
- (The Sun)
- **Mps rally* to Ashdown**
- **(**The Independent)
- Each of the two headlines reports on the same event: the revelation that the politician **Paddy Ashdown** had had an affair with his secretary. The **Independen**t considers the political results of
- the event. The **Sun** focuses on the more sordid side of the event, punning on Ashdown's name and the collocation "caught with your pants down".
- *to rally: schierarsi in difesa

Style in Tabloids. ex 2

- **ICE-BLOCK KID**
- **Karlee,2,survives six hours locked out of home at – 22°C**
- (The Sun)
- **Girl frozen alive on her own doorstep**
- (The Daily Telegraph)
- The **Sun** aims to attract attention and uses both a capitalised headline and a sub-headline. It pervades more information than the **Telegraph** aiming to catch the reader's interest. The colloquial noun KID is typical of the paper's chatty style. The use of the present tense creates a sense of immediacy, adding to the dramatic impact.
- The **Telegraph uses** a straightforward, factual headline which is simple and yet still dramatic. It is a simple sentence in structure. The prepositional phrase functioning as an adverbial highlights the fact that this took place at home, making the story more interesting . It does not use capitalisation.

ATTENTION!

- At present the differences between tabloids and broadsheets are breaking down.
- - Many of the broadsheets have stories about famous people.
- - Tabloids used to be cheaper than broadsheets, but The Times is now the cheapest national
- newspaper.
- - The Times and the Independent have both switched to a compact – sized format.

Newspapers in the USA

- There are more than 1500 daily newspapers in the USA. Each one is usually sold only in one part of the country, but they cover national and international news. In large cities, there is often more than one newspaper and the different ones express different political opinions.
- **Newspapers sold in nearly all parts of the USA**
- **USA Today**
- **The Wall Street Journal**
- **The New York Times**
- **Los Angeles Times**
- **Washington Post**
- **International Herald Tribune:** it is an international newspaper and it is part of the New York Times Company . It is based in Paris, printed at 33 sites throughout the world, for sale in more than 180 countries.