

INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE MEDIATIZATION STRATEGIES OF THE LOCAL POLITICS

Abstract: The present paper stands for a demonstration exercise in terms of deformation of the media related political reality by means of media agenda effect in Constanta local publications bearing different political perspectives: "Telegraf" and "Cuget Liber", on 31 May 2006 and "Ziua de Constanta", "Cuget Liber", "Telegraf", "Replica", on May 2008. The analysis refers to the coverage of the political conflict, referential clues, the objective functioning of media related language, the vericonditional interpretation of the political discourse or deconstruction of media related political icon. The examples extracted represent indicators of interference and political complicity between politicians and journalists, which are proven by analyses of real facts. Most of the times, the political icon is deconstructed by transmission of false information through the media article.

Key words: mediatization, intertextuality, journalistic discourse, political communication .

We base our approach on the fact that political discourse is the power to influence the policy issuers, enclosed in a media ritual that completes its credibility. We judge the ideological content or persuasive language in terms of intentionality, addressing a critical reading on affectivity used as impact or manipulation of news reader. We believe that the pragmatic approach of the journalistic language allows the study of the communication relations or interaction between the media communicators, representing various forms: persuasion, information, cooperation, conflict. For this purpose, we selected press articles, in May 2006 and 2008, from local publications from Constanta: *Cuget Liber*, *Replica de Constanța*, *Telegraf*, *Ziua de Constanța*.

Examples drawn from newspapers are interference arguments and political collusion between politicians and journalists, tested by analysis of facts. "The Newspaper" becomes the setting for the construction or deconstruction of political reality. Theoretical applications of media texts allow the study of the intentional communication of information, pseudoinformation, noninformation and messaging strategies to mass society.

The subjects introduced by media indicate a favorable or unfavorable approach of the political life. The editorial policy of the *Cuget Liber* magazine supports PNL and promotes a speech attacking the PSD, both in 2006 and in 2008. Also in 2008, *Ziua de Constanta* magazine embraces PNL/PD policy and indicates a negative critical perspective about PSD. Again in 2008, *Replica* magazine projects a deprecatory representation of PSD, favouring PNL. *Telegraf* magazine supports PSD in its speech, while attacking right-wing politics. The media becomes an agenda creator: it creates the political agenda according to its personal political ideology. The media related agenda reflects an interpretative range of subjects preferred by the journalists, who amplify their significance: "the mass – media related agenda

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effect refers to mass – media capacity to amplify the importance of a problem in the people's mind by providing repeated news" (Severin and Tankard 235).

Thus, certain political subjects are presented more intensely, they may appear on the front-page of the magazine for days, while other political subjects, which are truly important, are simply ignored. Usually we observe that the journalists retake subjects from one another, especially the most sensational and conflictual ones regarding the notorious political characters. The sociologists identify here a type of "deformation through agenda", aimed towards the politics that rules over the related publication (Severin and Tankard 247).

The reality is deformed by the "agenda effect" or by certain constraints: "in fact, the political discourse (made known or not by the media) bears the tracks of a multitude of constraints connected to certain political objects: political systems, political space, mass – media, political roles, political ideologies, political strategies" (Roventă-Frumușani 10).

The quoted researcher considers that the generalized intertextuality characterizes a closed political communication, which is self – quoting, which designs itself and redesigns the discourse (Roventă-Frumușani 8).

The journalists build their media materials according to the public expectations: "the pressure regarding the political life media involves first of all the agenda determination according to the public opinion's barometer and according to its transmission within the limits of an accessible, seducing, memorable discourse". (Roventă-Frumușani 8).

Luminița Roșca, specialist in media manipulation techniques, considers that the intertextuality occurs in the media discourse not only when communicators explicitly refer to other texts, but also when the article is created as a mere continuation of an already existent article: "the intertextuality may repeatedly occur in the text construction by means of quotes, qualification, assessment, abstract, repetition, direct reference to other texts, confutation and emphasis" (Roșca 25).

Of course, the constraints are the product of editorial policy which recompose news article. Journalistic discourse becomes an interface of the institution governed by political marketing. News is shaped by the agreement between the editor-reporter (Munteanu 48), by a pre-existing pattern in editorial office, by certain conventions and approaches by even the readers' expectations. Also, when political interests are promoted, media product is involved in social or political conflicts between competing groups.

Journalistic text is the result of an institutional act, because it requires from the journalist to follow an extremely well established architecture of form, under political and financial pressure. Market mechanisms (Habermas 44) becomes institutionalized by the lines of private law (contract and property), but such a discourse ethics raises the question of truth. Breaking from the branchmark and plunging into the retouched subjects are easily digested by the public, but cancel the discursive concept of truth.

Regarding the media involvement in the political actions, Lucian Sfez considers that the mediums annihilate the political symbols until such symbols are dispossessed of any power by such mediums: "The mediums that privilege a certain event always present ever fluctuating images, which are renewed as soon as they become used: the images of the uselessness situated at the antipodes of a symbolic political inequality and that can rarely be interchanged" (Sfez)

The authors J.J. Van Cuilenberg, O. Scholten and G.W. Noomen express their fear that an increasing quantity of information will lose its informational function and we shall reach to "blind information": it is about false information, an information that does not reach to any receiver and which lacks significance (Cuilenberg, Scholten and Noomen 71).

The hereinabove quoted authors remind us about the conceptual engineering by oral extension and intension and associative engineering, which exclusively

refers to persuasion using connotations in the construction of images, as we also identify in the media analysis ((Cuilenberg, Scholten and Noomen 74).

Following the significance of the political event on the mass – media agenda, I have chosen the local magazines *Telegraf* and *Cuget Liber* from 31 May 2006. The topic of the event was identified in both publications: tough discussions connected to the election of the president of Local County Council.

The event presented by the local mass – media agenda is connected to the conflict between Constanta Prefect, Dănuț Culețu, and the County Council President, Nicușor Constantinescu.

The journalistic discourse expresses a deterioration of political life, which is triggered by the political scandal occurred between opposed parties” PSD and PNL. We notice that the journalists selected from the attack political discourse those fragments intended to influence the public opinion. We identify here the theories pertaining to researcher J. Gerstlé regarding the political communication:

Politics is a universe of forces, but also a universe of tokens with social efficiency, which is not necessary to be only cognitive or expressive. Its language and transposition in discourse allows the identification of the agreement, of compromise, bearing a peace – giving virtue in the social relation. The discourse serves the conflict, the strategy, the manipulation, the domination (Gerstle)

The media related event regards the dispute of the two political personalities, taking into account the decision of Prefect Dănuț Culețu to attack the decision regarding the election of the President of Constanta County Council and it was rendered by the two magazines from different perspectives.

(1) “Nicușor Constantinescu is at war with the County Prefect”

(C.L., 31.05.2006).

The title in *Cuget Liber* indicate a negative approach of the journalist at the address of N. Constantinescu by using the verb “is in war”, which reflects the political conflict. The article in *Cuget Liber* presents the context of the political event, the factors and the causes that led to the advent of the conflict and to the accusations from both sides.

The journalistic language builds a powerful and aggressive *lead* (Popescu, 2002, s.v. *lead*: “designates the initial paragraph of the news”) by repeating the verb “to accuse”, with the purpose of emphasizing the seriousness of the situation. The tonality is sharp when it comes to the attitude, gestures and actions of County Council President, Nicușor Constantinescu: “The president accuses!he firmly sustained that....”

We notice a slightly subjective approach, taking into account that the journalist paraphrases N. Constantinescu’s discourse. The language that the journalist uses is simple, popular, comic “firmly, in this case, everything is drawn...” The subjective items are emphasized in the article by means of the ironic (not knowing the law) and comic tonality: the fact that N. Constantinescu invents laws when it comes to legal aspects.

The journalist from *Cuget Liber* renders legitimacy and credibility to the media material by resorting to legislation (Law no. 554/2004 regarding the administrative legal rules or resorting to the Code of Civil Procedure, at article 10), by resorting to legitimate power or to the opinion of specialized, expert individuals “the judgment is made on a civil procedure and it is not us who are saying it, but the legal experts”. The journalist’s discourse related strategy aims to render visibility to the preferred political character, by providing different arguments that generate credibility effects.

The discourse of D. Culetu prefect is presented in *Cuget Liber* magazine in a single paragraph, without paraphrases or opinions from the journalist. The discourse of politician D. Culetu is argumentative, as he attempts to convince by proofs. The politician presents his arguments supported by the legal grounds, he invokes rules, articles, consultations with specialized individuals in the field. The discourse is purely administrative, expressed by specialized terms: “law”, “decrees”, “polls”, “legal administrative”, “Court”, “prerogatives”. The prefect’s intervention mentioned the law and less the attack towards N. Constantinescu.

(2) “*Culețu, the author of the most serious abuse in the history of any prefect’s job*”
(T., 31.05.2006).

In *Telegraf* magazine, the title is calumnious and verdict giving to the address of the prefect. Nevertheless, the title appears under the form of a quotation and it is rendered from the statement of Nicușor Constantinescu. The only visible interventions of the journalist are the selection and classification of negative information in terms of hierarchy, the choice of the negative quotation for the title. The authority of the article is rendered by such an aggressive opinion – title aimed to denigrate the image of the political opponent, especially by the relative superlative “the most serious abuse”.

The article from *Telegraf* magazine depicts as main character N. Constantinescu, who attacks and accuse D. Culetu of transgressing Law 340/2004 regarding the election of County Council President. The lead brings information regarding the legislation and presents the circumstances that led to the burst of such war between the political personalities.

The narrative apparatus opens the presentation of the political case: the political adversity and the resort to political reasoning. The argumentative apparatus is represented by the authoritative voice of the leader (“leader of the county authority”), who tries to support his arguments and political actions based upon a legal frame. The journalist allots a great amount of space to the discourse held by PSD politician.

At the end of the article, the *Telegraf* journalist also brings to light the opinion of another source represented by President of the National Union of County Councils in Romania, Liviu Dragnea:

(3) “the prefect’s action is a purely political attack, by means of which Culetu demonstrated that he is apolitical”.
(T., 31.05.2006).

By the lexeme “apolitical”, we can observe a subtle irony and an attack to the address of the prefect. The journalist paraphrases the political discourse, but there are also entire mot-à-mot phrases extracted from the declarations of the county president. We can notice that although the information competes with the opinion shared by the journalist and the politician, the media treats the political personalities on a preferential basis.

The article of *Telegraf* magazine is made of the acid declarations of N. Constantinescu to the address of the prefect:

(4) “the action of the prefect represents the greatest abuse.....it is a mockery....an action to harm, to create chicanes”
(T., 31.05.2006).

Here we notice the twice repetition of an opinion of which the aim is to emphasize and to draw attention to the seriousness of the problem:

(5) “the action of the prefect the greatest abuse.....attacked the election, from political reasons and due to reasons of revenge, of Mister Stelian Dutu”
(T., 31.05.2006).

Telegraf magazine places the image of the politics within significant social moments, with the purpose of sensitizing the public. In order to prove such thing, we shall analyze the declarations of N. Constantinescu, his interests and fears for the homeless following the floods that occurred in the county:

(6) “I have acted to fight against the floods....unfortunately, the future of those affected by such natural disasters is uncertain....and given such problems that the county faces ...the prefect illegally attacks the election of CJC president”
(T., 31.05.2006).

The politician proposes to sensitize the electioneering when he resorts to the condition of the homeless. The politician’s discourse aims to incite the public opinion:

(7) “...it is up to the citizens of Constanta County to judge whether the action of the apolitical prefect is good or not”
(T., 31.05.2006).

The journalistic discourse from both magazines constructs or deconstructs the image of the political man. The excessive spread by the media of a political conflict is transformed in a false event in which the political referents win an obvious and obsessive notoriety on the political stage.

Another subject of dispute between the local politicians was transformed by media in an event depicted in many local magazines, which stay hidden under the shadow of left or right wing editorial politics. The conflict between burgomaster Radu Mazare and Local Council, on one side, and D.A.D.L.(Department of Dobrogea Waters – Sea Shore).

Director, Gheorghe Babu, on the other side, started on 9 May 2008, when the hereinabove mentioned director refused to join the Council meeting. The councilors voted at that time for his demission since he did not fulfill his duties as he had promised. On 12 May 2008, Gh. Babu organizes a press conference, explaining the reasons of his absence, but he does not mention the reasons for which he did not implement his promises.

In *Ziua de Constanța* magazine, there is a material mentioning the following:

(8) “Babu corrects Mazăre’s blunders”
(Z.C., May 2008).

The title confirms that the journalistic approach is against the local burgomaster and pro Babu. The discourse in the subtitle indirectly addresses to the burgomaster, who is accused of having triggered the conflict with the beach operators:

(9) “D.A.D.L. Director considers that the burgomaster artificially fuels the conflicts with the beach operators”
(Z.C., May 2008).

Gh. Babu reveals the true cause of the conflict, which is the beach bars:

(10) "...in 2001, upon proposal of burgomaster Radu Mazăre, he approved a PUZ of 174 de beach-bars in Mamaia resort"

(Z.C., May 2008).

(11) "Babu said that he does not understand how it can be possible that at that time there were 174 beach – bars accepted and at present, not even four or five beach bars can be operated in order to calm the beach operators".

(Z.C., May 2008).

"Cuget Liber" magazine chooses not to write about the scandal Babu – local administration, in exchange, we have a similar article, the same media agenda about the Romanian sea shore, where the scapegoat is the same socio – democrat burgomaster:

(12) "The entire sea shore of Constanta was batched and alienated, thus blocking the access to the beaches"

(C.L., May 2008);

(13) "*the economic agent can hardly have access to the beach, since Constanta City Hall sold the access roads from Constanta sea shore*"

(C.L., May 2008).

D.A.D.L. Director accuses the City Hall of illegally alienating the public space areas:

(14) "The area from the end of 102 Tramway Line of Zorelelor was alienated"

(C.L., May 2008).

At the same time, the journalist maintains the accusations brought by Gh. Babu and draws the conclusion:

(15) "Few are those who comply with the construction law in the area"

(C.L., May 2008).

Replica magazine presents a political mirror taken from the approach defended by *Cuget Liber* and *Ziua de Constanta* magazines, in which the actions carried by Constanta burgomaster are negatively criticized:

(16) "The liberal even considers that the bribery related charges brought to him in the last Local Council meeting could be very well applied to Radu Mazare as well"

(R., May 2008);

(17) "the old conflict between the hotel keepers and the beach operators is invented and artificially maintained, especially by the attitude displayed by Constanta burgomaster"

(R., May 2008).

Both *Ziarul de Constanta* and *Replica* magazines remind the public about the "artificial" conflict issued by the burgomaster.

On the other side, *Telegraf* magazine defends the burgomaster's image and blames the actions carried by Gh. Babu:

(18) "Babu divides the beach operators in fools and rat faces".

(T., May 2008).

When it comes to the person of Gh. Babu, the journalist is ironically asking:

(19) “Is it a joke... or impertinence? This is the dilemma that D.A.D.L. Leader , Gheorghe Babu, faces regarding the request for his resignation.”

(T., May 2008).

He considers that this is the dilemma of D.A.D.L. Leader.

In a subjective and ironic note, the journalist accuses D.A.D.L. politics:

(20) “Department of Dobrogea waters – sea shore is self – exceeding from a summer season to another one. This summer there are all the chances of the operation of illegal beach bars on Mamaia beaches.”

(T., May 2008);

(21) “Two months after that, D.A.D.L. Leader admits himself defeated by the beach bars that are proudly erected, defying the law and the Local Council decisions”

(T., May 2008).

Telegraf magazine reflects a political agenda that deforms the image of D.A.D.L. leader. The journalist (press language) ironically creates the invincible image of D.A.D.L. Leader:

(23) “Gheorghe Babu claimed that in few days he will demolish all illegal constructions on the beaches from Constanta. Two months later, D.A.D.L. accepts his defeat in front of the high-rising beach-bars, defying the law and the Local Council decisions”

(T., May 2008).

The editorial policy accuses D.A.D.L. of inequality.

(24) “the endangering of the summer season”

(T., May 2008).

The journalistic language considers or accuses that D.A.D.L. is a public danger.

(25) “he was sitting hunchbacked between tables and chairs”

(T., May 2008).

The journalistic discourse creates a caricature in order to minimize Gh. Babu.

(26) “he admits it is his fault that he did not keep his word”

(T., May 2008).

By the verb “admits”, the journalist strengthens the guiltiness of the political referent, relying on the credibility that the reader allots to the media editorial.

(27) “D.A.D.L. Leader admits his fault for breaking his word and calls down a Babu-type solution – occult forces of the twinning between beach operators, D.A.D.L. and Constanta City Hall”

(T., May 2008).

The expression refers to D.A.D.L. monopoly over beaches.

(28) “In other words, DADL is convinced that if the parties would take place at the negotiating table, the problems would be solved. D.A.D.L. Leader suggests this compromise solution because, he said, he can not compel beach operators to demolish beach-bars, given that they provide an yearly income over 7 million lei...”
(T., May 2008).

The editorial policy reminds us that the compromise means complicity in political actions.

(29) “D.A.D.L. leader took the cat and threw it over the gate of the City Hall”
(T., May 2008).

The expression “took the cat and threw it over the fence” shows the initiative taken by D.A.D.L. to blame the City Hall clerks in a popular journalistic style, which is close to the comic expression of an imaginary situation, but which draws the reader’s attention.

The declaration of PSD councilor, N. Moga, brings the personalization of politics by using the verb at the first person:

(30) “**It bothers me** that such individual promised the Local Municipal Council to demolish the illegal buildings on the beach, but it was nothing that he did”
(T., May 2008).

Conclusions

The local media administrates the political message and drafts the daily agenda so that it persuade the media consumer to get involved in the political life. The journalists are those that take over the parties’ political role, decide the importance of political events and classify the information according to a certain hierarchy. Thus, the political actions are formed and deformed in a negative or conflictual dimension.

The articles repeat old conflictual stories, rendering archetypes by their actualization in real life. In other words, under the sign of political compromise, the media takes again or repeats actions or portraits that capture the readers’ attention, resorting to different marketing procedures.

The intertextuality supposes the retaking of certain typologies, topics, situations or conflictual and spectacular actions that capture the consumer’s attention. The greater the authority or the more influential the communicational political interaction, the more it is spread by media under the same form in a great number of magazines.

The promoted discourse is the effect of the political pressure, the only one who decides and imposes the media text approach. As a result, we are witnessing a control over the profession or a professional identity crisis generated by those who occupy positions of decision. Journalistic language serves to represent the political perspective in two ways:

1. promoting the actions of political figures which support the publication;
2. the devaluation and belittling of political opponents of the editorial office.

The intentions of those who are favorized are represented in the media as a legitimate force that respects the rights of citizens. The intentions of the journalists which discredit the the actions of politicians indicates a perspective and ironic sneer at them, by using various strategies to influence the language. We also noted instances where the media describes a factual context, referential or real, where the journalist presents solid evidence of coherence (subjects identity, place, time), in order to get credibility. What is added to this referential dimensions are deprecatory remarks and depreciative intentions of the journalists and the

politicians, which overturn the factual context. Most times, the politicians are the ones who have brought accusations conflicts and accuse the other politicians, from adverse/opposite parties, through various assumptions and without arguments. The performance of the policy communicators or the success of their speech/discourse depends on how the reader trusts or gives legitimacy to such a discourse.

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