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FACULTY OF POLITICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES
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EDITING AND PRESENTING
RADIO TEXTS

The Language Use of the
Regional Public Radio

- abstract -

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1. Aim of the Thesis and Delimitation of the Theme

The individual obtains its knowledge about the world and himself more and indirectly, therefore, it is important to ask how authentic, clear, comprehensible, memorable are the information coming from different mass media channels. Nowadays, when we receive a large amount of information, by more and more diversified transmission surfaces, the requirement of a reliable orientation is more accentuated. On the radio though, there are no non-verbal tools next to the verbal message, which help the listener in comprehension, reception: mimics, gestures, the look. All these blanks have to be filled in by the voice of the radio speaker and the formulation.¹ Radio journalists – although their messages, “products” are meant and transmitted to others – are not always aware of the addressee’s “temper”, of the decodification processes of the radio listener, of the mechanisms that stimulate or interfere in the comprehension of the message.

The aim of our thesis is to analyze the complex connections of this problem, in the transmissions in Hungarian of the Romanian regional public radios, especially on Radio Tîrgu-Mureş. For example, on Regional Radio Tîrgu-Mureş, during the daily 420 minute broadcast approximately for 130 minutes (more than 30%) the text are presented from a written support (news, announcements, presentations, the texts of presenters, information regarding cultural programmes, notes, comments, etc.).

We wonder that in the case of radio texts presented from written support (news, publicistic genres), what determines conclusively the perception; what stimulates, helps the most, and what prevents the most the efficient reception of the message? What is the role of the news value of the announced information, of the text’s structure and the interpretation (presentation)? What is the emotional reaction of the listener when a text interpretation takes place in a fast or a slow rhythm? To find an answer to these questions we made some studies. We considered that a systematic approach of the studied phenomena is also important, tracing those processes (competition in the field of news on the mass media market, the identity crisis of the public services, deficiencies in education, training, etc.), that have a serious effect on the whole radio communication; can disturb

¹ Wacha, 1999, 220

the public audio mass media for minorities in providing its specific functions (e.g. preserving culture, language model).

2. Research Hypotheses

2.1. I presume that, in the comprehension of radio news the value of news of the communicated information has an important role (how important, interesting is the news, how does it affect closely the listener), and the formulation of the news as well. The exact, clear phrasing, edited for the ear, is the basis of comprehensive interpretation, meant to be understood.

2.2. I presume that, a visual editing, meant to be seen helps the correct, adequate, content and theme-appropriate text interpretation, a well edited, 'well-cut' radio text requires an accurate, content-appropriate text interpretation, meant to be understood.

2.3. I presume that, young people –to whom the Hungarian regional public radio of Romania renounced, practically speaking, in the last decades-, claim, expect programmes with topics meant for them, not only music and short information from the radio. Furthermore, I presume that, young people assign a prominent role to the vocal aptitudes of the radio speaker, to the tone of the radio presenter, to the sentimental-emotional load of the voice.

2.4. I presume that, young people –despite the dynamism, the verve due their age – consider that a calm radio voice and a radio speech in normal rhythm, are really appealing features.

2.5. I presume that, the tones of the voice can be evoked consciously (by practice) and can be recognisably brought forward.

2.6. I presume that, the manner of presenting publicistic texts on the radio, first of all, release an emotional reaction in the listener, this is the 'door' of the perception; an adequate text interpretation intensifies the attention and the positive, receptive reaction of the listener, while a very fast or very slow speech weakens the attention of the listener, in spite of an interesting, appealing topic.

3. Research methods: study with questionnaires, comparative analysis, perception and speech tests, other tests

4. Key notions: regional character and public service, linguistic norms, language use, radio text, editing, radio speech, presentation, interpretation, speech rhythm, perception

5. Notion and word creation: *R-T-A-D Rule*, *R-R-P-C-C Rule* (general and specific requirements of the radio presenter's and reporter's behaviour); *kópé-news* (acronym, requirements of an accurate radio journal)

6. The Structure of the Thesis and the More Important Chapters, a Short Synthesis of the Studies

The thesis is divided into four main chapters: the first chapter, the theory presents the basic features of radio communication, the tasks of the public service and the identity crisis of it, experienced in the present, the disadvantaged radio genres and radio programmes, the connection between the public service and use of language, with special attention to the use of language on regional public radios of Romania; the second chapter, the methodology presents those relevant research methods and results, that partly served as starting-point for my researches, to study the connections of radio text editing and radio text interpretation; in the third chapter I present the studies, analyses, perception tests, that I concluded; in the fourth chapter I summarize the results of the researches, the conclusions that can be useful for radio broadcasting in our country, for the mass media education, radio broadcasting qualification and training; and finally, I sketch the possibilities of developing, extending the research theme.

6.1. Rules of Radio Presentation

A radio editor-presenter has to comply with the complex requirements of the job in completing his multiple tasks. I concluded all the job requirements, that have to be continuously completed by a radio journalist (as a main job and specifically as radio presenter), in rules, a general and specific requirement system. This R-T-A-D rule, drawn up by me, sums up all these basic requirements, the capital letters of these key notions briefly and concisely contain and express in the same time clearly the most important professional and deontological requirements. According to my experience as a professor, I noticed that the students consider that the rules are expressive, they understand and memorize them easily. The general job requirements are comprised in the R-T-A-D rule:

R-T-A-D Rule

1. **RESPONSIBILITY** (professional ethics)
2. **TRAINING**
3. **ATTENTION**
4. **DISCIPLINE** (mental, psychic organization)

The specific requirements for the presenter's behaviour during a programme, (as well as during a report or interview) are the following:

R-R-P-C-C Rule

1. **relaxation** (creating a positive emotional atmosphere, the determining character, the importance of the moment of 'opening', introduction);
2. **revealing** (presentation of the programme's topic/topics, attention, raising curiosity and interest);
3. **presentation** (presentation of a certain topic/topics of the programme, processing, raising the attention of the listener, maintaining the attention by the 'serving' manner, providing, intensifying the content-atmosphere effect by the adequate connection of text and music);

4. control ('controlling' the structure of the programme, providing the internal logical units, keeping the chronological order, efficient dividing of the programme's duration, avoiding 'gaps', the appropriate use of the redundancy that helps comprehension);
5. closing (politeness, determination, the possibility of getting in contact with the broadcasting)

The R-T-A-D Rule and the R-R-P-C-C Rule can be efficiently applied while making a report, as well as in a specific report, interview situation. The success of the report, interview or studio conversation (the presentation of the topic in an authentic and interesting manner) is substantially influenced by the behavior of the reporter, how can he relax, 'open' his report subject, how does he ask ('why', revealing the connection between the reason and cause), how does he follow the stream of thought of the report subject, how can he keep under sentimental and mental control the course of the conversation, how does he close the conversation).

6.2. Radio Listening Habits of Young People and Their Expectations regarding the Use of Language. Study based on a Questionnaire

The following problem arises: in what measure do the regional public radios of Romania know the expectations of their target listeners, the mass media consumer habits, when they determine their editing concept, mass media politics strategy? How often do young people listen to the radio and what station do they listen to? What kind of programme types would they listen to with pleasure? Which are the appealing and disturbing features of the radio presenters among the young people? I was looking for an answer also to these questions in a study based on a questionnaire, that summarizes the answers of 108 high school students. More than a half of the data providers listens to the radio several times during a week, or they listen to it daily. I must mention the fact that more than one third (39%) of those who answered rarely listen to the radio, only occasionally. Therefore, we can conclude that the majority of the young people do not seclude themselves from the radio experience, but the radio does not provide them the information, entertainment and recreation possibilities, that would make them spend some moments (several times weekly, or daily) of their spare time listening to the radio. According to the data of the study the majority considers that one of the most appealing

features of the radio presenter is a pleasant voice, and after this comes the comprehensible, correct speech. I have to mention also the fact that the pleasant voice was indicated by more than 60% of them as an appealing feature. Therefore, among the features considered to be the most appealing feature of the radio presenter two were expressly vocal aptitudes. The pleasant voice proved to be more appealing than the comprehensible, correct speech, and the calm voice was liked instead of an elaborate formulation. This fact proves the empirical experience, that we are involuntarily more attentive to the content of the radio texts, if these are transmitted by a pleasant voice to our ear. Among the 108 people who answered, 92 young people indicated the pleasant voice, 85 young people the comprehensible speech, and 65 people considered that the calm voice is one of the most pleasant features of the radio presenter. This contradicts that spreading supposition, according to which young people prefer a rousing, dynamic, voluble, fast rhythm speech. Nowadays, when everyone wants to dynamize everything, even on the radio, under the sign of innovation, modernization, we should probably analyze more carefully, if the mass media consumer, the listener really claims this.

As a conclusion, we can say that the regional public radio could regain the young listeners, if it would pay more attention to their needs and would include in its programme grid programmes that matches their expectations. Regarding the completion of the listeners, we can't neglect the fact how the young people of our days feel that the radio programmes of regional radios (the ones close to them) are theirs. We have to mention the fact that the young listeners do not consider that the dynamic, voluble tone is pleasant, but first of all they like a pleasant tone, a calm voice and the comprehensible speech, the elaborate use of language. The data regarding fast speech of the study concluded in Tîrgu-Mureş contradicts the data of a similar study made in Hungary.² The majority of the young people questioned in Hungary (Budapest, Szombathely), 78%, were not disturbed at all by the fast speech rhythm. The leader of the study explains this by the fact that the young people are used to the fast, dynamic rhythm of the commercial radios. The data provider young people in Tîrgu-Mureş also listen more often to commercial radios, then to public radios, still the majority of them think that fast radio speech is unpleasant. According to my experiences, my observations, the quotidian, spontaneous speech of the young Hungarian people in Transylvania usually has a slower rhythm, than that of the Hungarian

² Balázs Géza hallgatói attitűdvizsgálata, 2006, 46-55

young people. This empirical statement can be reinforced or disproved by comparative quantitative studies.

6.3. Language Use Phenomena in the Hungarian Programmes of the Regional Radio Tîrgu-Mureş

In radio texts, a part of the foreign expressions can't be, or hardly can be replaced with Hungarian words with the same meaning (let's think about the expressions in communication), still, it is very important to avoid their excessive use, because a part of the listeners in Transilvania, especially the older people do not understand their meaning. Moreover, even the more educated people don't always understand clearly the meaning of some expressions of foreign origin. This fact turned out from a study, that I made among 30 college students. The students received the task to explain the meaning of the following foreign words: „*büdzsé*” (budget), „*regula*” (rule), „*biatlon*” (biathlon), „*prioritás*” (priority), „*globalizáció*” (globalization) and „*hipotetikus*” (hypothetical), to write next to each word the correct Hungarian expression. Most of them (23 answers) knew the meaning of „*prioritás*” (priority), followed by „*regula*” (rule) (18), „*büdzsé*” (budget) (16), „*globalizáció*” (globalization) (15), „*biatlon*” (biathlon) and at the end the word „*hipotetikus*” (hypothetical) (11). The results of the notion test indicates that we don't always know the exact meaning of foreign words that we often hear, even more educated people are confused and it is difficult for them to include new terms in their existing idea-notion system in their own mother-tongue.

6.4. Analyzing the Connection between the Text and the Comprehension of the Journals

The listener has to understand the information presented on the radio by a single hearing. Therefore, radio text editing is first of all a communication issue, the language formulation (exactness, exigency of the language) must serve the efficiency, the public comprehensibility of the information.³ The textual structure of the journals, the manner of the journals' phrasing determinantly affects the comprehension of the journals: the journal

³ Wacha, 1999, 214.

that was phrased clearly, comprehensibly, exactly helps the comprehension of the news, the journals, that were not phrased „for the ear” prevent the comprehension of text. I concluded a study starting up from this presumption. I made two radiojournals with the same content, but phrased differently (in journalist and radio style), and I recorded both versions. 12 people participated in the study (college students), divided into two equal groups: group A (experimental) and group B (control). The two groups did not meet during the study and I did not communicate them in advance, that they have to write down the information that they heard after listening to the journal. The duration of the 1st and 2nd version was of approximately 4 minutes each, therefore both of the groups had to listen to a journal of mostly the same length; I played the record on speaker. The notes of group A. were of only a few words without exception. Nobody memorized dates, time, when evoking the news four of them forgot something from the enumeration of the journal topics, or a cultural news, or political report. Group B. had better results: half of the participants managed to evoke the essence of the information, the characters of the journal (names), the location and a part of the dates.

The obvious differences between the efficiency of the two groups in understanding the journal prove the fact that the comprehension of the journal is determinantly affected by the structure of the journal's text. The journals with a complex sentence structure, can be hardly followed and understood by the listener, in spite of a comprehensive interpretation. The role of the lead (main information) is decisive in the comprehension, memorizing and evoking of the journal's content. In the 2nd version of the radiojournal the news value information was placed at the beginning of the journal's text in each case, this helped the listener to understand the essence. I must mention the results of the study regarding cultural news. In the case of national radios providing this type of information it has no importance or the right to exist, but in case of the local or regional stations this is an important and requested task. The function of the cultural programmes and cultural journals is to draw the attention of the listener to a certain cultural event, community programme, in order to correctly and comprehensively inform the listener about the title of the shows, different events, (festivals, gatherings in villages, etc.), guests, the location and date of the programmes. In the first phase of the study in the cultural journals' text the date and the location of the event was presented at the beginning. After this, the listener was informed only later about the actual programme, the content of the event, the title, the

topic. Just when the listener would decide that he is interested in the proposal (e.g. would gladly watch the show, would attend the event), he forgot a long time ago the date and the location. Furthermore, it is a typical and common fault, that the news about regional events, programmes draw the attention of the listener on the organizers, the organizing participants, not on the actual event, public utility information (event, location, date).

The study regarding the connections between the text and the comprehension of the news brings up other exciting questions, for example, what would be the results of a similar study made on a larger scale, and the participants were people of different age and occupations, instead of college students? What is the role of the news presenter's gender, speech rhythm in the comprehension of the news? I plan other studies in order to answer these questions.

6.5. The Interpretation of Publicistic Texts. The Analysis of the Connections among the Topic, the Content and the Interpretation

Among the publicistic genres on the regional public radio of Romania there are presented more often articles, comments, notes. Some of them are formulated and read by the radio presenters, but many times they use and present the work of external authors, more and more often the articles, writings with documentary, entertaining content, posted on the internet.

In this study I was looking for an answer for the following: when reading short articles with different topics, what is the emotional reaction of the listener to the interpretation of text, and in what measure does this weaken or intensify the attention of the listener. In such study circumstances, when the group of the listener received the task to follow attentively the presented information. I began with the hypothesis that the inadequate, monotonous or fast rhythm text interpretation takes to a negative reaction of the listener, in spite of the interesting topic, and this weakens the comprehension, retention of the text's content. In the meantime, I presume that the adequate, normal rhythm text interpretation leads to the positive, 'receptive' reaction of the listener. As a research method I chose a speech production and speech perception test, in which participated a group of 11 people, 8 girls and 3 boys. They created two groups, four of them received presentation tasks, seven of them listener tasks. I chose four texts with different topics for

the presentation (sports, fashion, science, tale) and I transformed the texts in order to have approximately the same length. The presenters and listeners could not speak to each other about the received task. The first text was a sports history presentation, it concluded briefly the origin and the story of orienteering. The presenter of the article received the instruction to present voluntarily in a monotonous, intermittent rhythm, without paying attention to the articulation, just to read the words one after another. The topic of the second text was fashion, a brief presentation of the actual fashion trends. The presenter in this case received the instruction to read voluntarily in a fast rhythm, without exact articulation. The third article is from a specialist text, a part from a textology study, its short version, by keeping its content. In this case the presenter received the task to present correctly the text, and to try to interpret it comprehensibly and carefully, by using the appropriate articulation, pauses and tones, by changing the rhythm if needed. The fourth text had a similar length to the others, but it was of other genre, it was one of Esop's fables. The presenter received the task to interpret correctly the text and to try to provide an exact interpretation, using the appropriate articulation, pauses and tones.

According to the results of the study the fast text interpretation lead mostly to a negative reaction among the listeners. We must take into consideration these data, because among the young people, especially among the girls, fashion is one of the most appealing, popular topic. In the group of the listeners the majority were girls, still the fast interpretation of the article regarding fashion received the most negative qualification. Therefore, the fast text presentation lead to more negative reaction among the listeners, than the monotonous, articulation-free interpretation. This could be attributed to the fact the three boys in the group of listeners were more interested in the sports history (on the evaluation sheet all three boys indicated that the topic was interesting), therefore they followed voluntarily with increased attention the presented facts, the information regarding sports history. In case of the scientific article the positive and negative evaluation is obviously separated. I also found only unilateral indications on the evaluation sheet. It can be determined, that despite the careful interpretation, those, who did not consider that the topic is interesting, had the tendency to consider that the interpretation was unpleasant and uncomprehensible. Contrary to those, who considered that the presented text was interesting, comprehensible and pleasant. Therefore, we can notice, on the one part the listener's attitude, that reacts in a negative way to the

inadequate presentation (fashion is an appealing topic among girls, in spite of this, they did not like the interpretation and they could not follow attentively the presented information). On the other part, we can notice that the listener handles relevantly the topics that he considers interesting, exciting, pays more attention to these, and he has the tendency to be indulgent with the interpretation of the topic. The most obvious indicators are connected to the fable interpretation. In this case the interesting topic was associated with a careful interpretation, the story that was edited illustratively, expressively, in a manner that could be followed, and interpreted comprehensibly, almost everyone considered it interesting, comprehensible and pleasant, there was only one ‘unpleasant’ qualificative on the evaluation sheet. The person who indicated this, in his motivation told that he considered the interpretation of the fable too slow, that is why he indicated the unpleasant attribute.

7. Conclusions

- i. The regional public radios of Romania can only pull through the identity crisis (that manifests more and more powerfully), if they don't see and search the solution in the change/alteration of external factors (the overall, global mass media processes), but in the professional attitude change, in the development of a responsible editor, presenter, reporter behaviour. I developed, formulated the *R-T-A-D Rule and the R-R-P-C-C Rule* in order to acknowledge this, to demonstrate the professional and the ethical professional job requirements, as a WHOLE.

I recommend bravely and with confidence the teaching of these rules, and the clarification, debate of the notions related to them, with the mass media and journalism students. According to my observations, the commitment to a profession, the direction, orientation of the professional approach (exigency, lack of exigency, enthusiasm, indifference, etc.) is formed in universities, colleges.

- ii. Young people claim the thematic programmes intended for them. The data of the study with questionnaires made with high school students deny the misbelief, that

formed and wilfully „persists” for decades, according to which the teenagers alienated from the public radio and there is no chance to regain them. The regional radios from our country, in order to completely provide their public service tasks, have (should have) to elaborate a programme in order to address to young people.

- iii. The listeners confer a special role to the vocal aptitudes of the radio speaker. The radio presenter is considered appealing first of all by his pleasant, calm voice, this is the „secret” of the connection between the radio presenter and the radio listener. The majority of the data provider people, 78%, consider that the most disturbing feature of the radio presenter is the fast speech. This data is in contradiction with the result of a study made in Hungary, according to which 78% of the data provider young people are not disturbed at all by the fast speech of the radio presenters.⁴
- iv. The value of the news (how important it is, how does it affect the listener as an individual and as the member of a community) has a determinant role in the process of perception. In order to understand and memorize the heard facts, a clear, exact formulation, a comprehensible presentation of the journal’s text is needed.
- v. The lead has a determinant importance in understanding radio journals. The listeners can evoke more accurately the content of journals, news bulletins edited for radio (radio style with successive structure), than the content of news edited in written style (for newspapers). The cultural journals, news bulletins have a specific place, function in the Hungarian programmes of regional public radios. In the formulation, re-editing of information (revision in order to become radio bulletins) regarding events, the order is the following: event+location+time. The inverse information presentation can definitively prevent comprehension.
- vi. Similarly to the volume, the emotional tone, load and intensity can also be directed, regulated. The limit is dictated by the type of the text, by its message. This is formulated most concisely in the thesis of Wacha Imre: „the text also carries the sound”.⁵ Voluntarily speeding or slowing down the speech rhythm is the most difficult. In both cases the speech is exerted, precipitated, inconsistent and leads to the obviously negative reaction of the listener.

⁴ Balázs Géza attitűdvizsgálata, 2006, 46–55.

⁵ Wacha, 1999, 141.

- vii. The questionnaires, perception tests from my thesis can be adapted in the mass media education, in the work of professors in mass media. The revised versions can be applied as teaching methods, simulation exercises, situational tasks.

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