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**REPORTED DISCOURSE MANIFESTATIONS IN**  
**JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE**

**- PhD THESIS -**  
**ABSTRACT**

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**Key words:** *reported discourse, direct discourse, indirect discourse, discursive continuum, media discourse, critical discourse analysis, intertextuality, questions on behalf of the public, modes of distancing.*

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that *Reported Discourse* occupies a primordial position within the verbal strategies mass-media uses in order to reach the goal of capturing the attention of the public and of manipulating it. *Reported Discourse* as a linguistic means has sometimes the power to modify the audience's perception upon some public events or personalities, to steer the receptor of the cited text over to the direction intended by the person quoting some words, to offer the reader a way (not always unique, and almost never the most honest) to interpret reality. *Reported Discourse* proves itself to be a unique expressive code, vital for the stylistic register of media discourse.

We introduced first, within the first chapter, *The Evolution of the Reported Discourse Concept*, the perception Latin Rhetoric had on the opposition **oratio recta** versus **oratio obliqua**, as the semantic change the two forerunners of Direct Discourse (DD) and Indirect Discourse (ID) underwent in time seems edifying for the way modern social discourse perceives truth and falsehood. In Ancient literature Indirect Discourse, used as a primary mode of rendering historical narratives, represented the discourse of truth, while Direct Discourse, reduced to fictional dialogue works, represented falsehood meant to create the illusion of reality. Or, starting with the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the theoretical approaches to the DD/ID couple state the exact opposite: Direct Discourse assimilated through its typographical marks (inverted commas, dialogue line, etc.) to faithful quotations becomes truthful discourse, true reported discourse one can trust, or at least which offers the illusion of truth, while through its transforming structure, Indirect Discourse sees itself reduced to representing a falsified, transposed, modified discourse.

Classical French grammars proposed a major paradigm change when dealing with the DD/ID couple. Instead of operating with notions related to reality and fiction, or truth and falsehood, these grammars approach manners of reporting RD to the linguistic actors. DD becomes a heterogeneous linguistic fact, presenting two independent enunciations, two distinct voices. ID is a homogenous structure, a block realized by assimilating an

enunciation within another. The first enunciation is the subject of a transformation, and we listen only to the reporter's voice. These theories also led to the apparition of the first deontological quotation norms.

The first chapter also deals with the notion of Free Indirect Discourse (FID), a form which sums up any mixed manifestation of RD. FID is the one to introduce mixed forms and to help the DD/ID couple to overcome the barriers of syntactic conventionalities in order to reach the discursive dimension of an enunciative phenomenon.

The use in the modern media discourse of the two basic reporting forms (direct discourse and indirect discourse) was seconded by the apparition of some mixed forms, sometimes debatable in their usage, as well as by an overturn of the true/false values the two were supposed to hold, as a deep semantic charge. United, together with some mixed forms relevant because of their frequent apparition within media discourse, under the name of Reported Discourse, the manners of reporting the words of a third are, in the second chapter, *Descriptive and Explanatory Models of the Reported Discourse*, the object of analysis from a discursive perspective of the phenomenon.

We identified the research axes *Reported Discourse* can be situated on, starting from a generalizing definition of it. We dealt in turns with the relating of the primary enounce, the way in which the reporter creates a special enunciative space for the enounce he reports, as well as with the mode in which he attributes the primary enounce to the originary enunciator.

We paid special attention to some strategies of distancing from the primary enounce, as these constitute manipulative discourse functions within media discourse. This is why these strategies are reprised in a special chapter of this thesis. All the theoretical points made above have been, as often as possible, accompanied by examples from the studied corpus, which underlined once more the fact that, beyond grammar, the consumer of media texts is permanently confronted with the other two facets of *Reported Discourse* – belonging and fidelity. Starting from these two traits of *Reported Discourse* we differentiated on respective morphosyntactic, enunciative and semantic levels, the values the report between citing discourse (enunciation) and cited discourse (enounce) can attain. The proposed research axes tried to turn *Reported Discourse* into a

**continuum**, namely into a mixed manner of manifestation of the forms which may appear, and which proves the fact that not as much the grammatical form as the discursive function is important when we approach this structure within media discourse.

The third chapter, *Morphosyntactic and Pragmatic Presentation of the Reported Discourse*, attempts to review the main theories and taxonomies dedicated to *reported discourse* on a morphologic, syntactic and then pragmatic level. The chapter constitutes a passage between the first two chapters dedicated to reported speech in its transformation from a rhetorical device into a morphosyntactic structure, and the following chapters which will integrate this structure in a given discursive type and will subject it to a deeper analysis from the point of view of the enounce as a language act.

The first part of this chapter presents the tendency of traditional grammars to analyze the traits which differentiate and situate in a functional opposition the couple DD and ID. Now, we also try to present the most important modes of classification of RD introductory verbs, classifications taken from linguistic works which attach themselves to several tendencies of analysis. The starting point for all theories, irrespective of the analysis school they belong to, are of course the Latin *verba declarandi*, the forerunners of the declarative verbs of the normative grammars. The quoted theories offer a bridge between an enumeration of verbal categories having in common the possibility of introducing RD and the phenomenon of integrating these in the field of discursive linguistics.

The tendency to surpass the syntactic plan in the definition of RD is a modern feature of linguistic analysis and the passage to this new level is confirmed within Romanian linguistics as well. For example, in the new edition of the Romanian Academy Grammar, the author of the chapter dedicated to RD approaches the phenomenon from three perspectives: syntactic, semantico-pragmatic and intonational. The same article also introduces the term *secondary declarative verb*, creating thus a new category, which sometimes unites verbs with different semantic values and operational modes inside a particular class of RD introductory verbs.

In the second part of the chapter, the same structure has been presented from the point of view of pragma-linguistic analysis. Pragmatically, RD is a complex mode, which depends on several factors in order to attain its discursive functions. The most important

factors of communicative success or failure through *Reported Discourse* are, according to our study, the way of reporting an utterance, the description of the initial enunciation mode, and last but not least, the interlocutors' position. Starting from the interlocutors' position this part of the chapter succinctly reviewed some possible attitudes of these persons towards the fidelity degree of the reporting, the ways of reporting and distanciation, as well as their attitude towards the primary enounce.

The fourth chapter, *A General Overview of the Contemporary Media Discourse*, starts from the premise that media discourse has a major impact upon modern society and that it strongly influences other discourses that shape human culture. One of the many manifestations of this culture is the political discourse. There hasn't yet been proposed a unique theory of the integration of the two discourses (media and political) in a coherent continuum and of the impact of this integration on the public domain.

Historically, at the beginning, media discourse was perceived as independent from the political domain. Media defined the individual as an actor who respected the social contract that formed the basis of civil society. At that point media was perceived as an autonomous control system.

The weak point of this theory was the failure of integrating the press, the social actors and the receiving public within the fields of power relations and conflicts of interest which define in fact any given social interaction. In reality media discourse fulfills a double role, of luxury (mainly promoted by the advertising market) and of social relating instrument (mainly promoted by the political discourse). Nowadays the media landscape is becoming pluralistic and complex, and a hybridization of the nature of the public system is to be observed. A consequence of this hybridization is the passage of the political discourse from the exclusive domain of the informative genre towards other connected domains (such as the entertainment domain). Hence the problem faced by the political discourse, namely its incapacity of establishing a clear delimitation between information as news and information as gossip.

The last part of the chapter illustrates with examples borrowed from Romanian central newspapers the way in which media discourse can nuance, distort and even misrepresent the political discourse it reports.

In the majority of the related scientific works studied, media discourse has been analyzed on four major levels: law and belonging; production and creativity, textual content and the consummation of this type of discourse. From the point of view of Discourse Analysis, most relevant are textual content and the consummation of media discourse. Linguists and sociolinguists have mostly found research sources inside media discourse and this because of several reasons. First, journalistic texts are the most accessible as sources of linguistic data and present the use of the language as a communication tool within a specific discursive mood. These texts are trustworthy living proof of linguistic practices at a given moment in time and in a given socio-political context. At the same time it is also important to examine the way in which these texts reflect the culture and socio-political training of the audience they address, audience which, in its turn, is more and more often the subject of scientific research within Discourse Analysis.

Because of this, in chapter 5, *Critical Discourse Analysis – New Tendencies in Approaching Media Discourse*, we mentioned three ways of scientific research for media discourse, which, diachronically, contributed to an increasingly pertinent analysis of the mechanisms that bring life to the press text. We speak about Content Analysis, a pet theory of researchers in the 50s and which limited itself to describe the manifest content of the media text, Discourse Analysis, a transition stage in which media text creates itself as a dialogue with society, and, finally, Critical discourse Analysis (CDA), an analysis mode which offers a dual approach to the media text: it situates the text it analyzes in a larger context of expression and considers the meaning of the text as a complex construction which cannot be realized unless there is an interaction between the three primordial communication agents, irrespective of the discourse type. (The three are the producer/enouncer, the text and the consumer/receptor).

We favoured this analysis method because one of the main CDA desideratum is to influence, through the results of its research, the practices and the social relationships between the discourse actors, as from the point of view of this analysis mode the use of language is modeled by the society, but at the same time journalistic discourse produces or reproduces the society. CDA analyses and criticizes social power and its explicit and implicit representations inside press discourse.

In this chapter we analyzed four key-themes of CDA, which proved themselves relevant for approaching *Reported Discourse* within mass-media texts. We succinctly analyzed the concepts of *constituted and creative character of the discourse* (from the romantic perspective and according to the materialistic view), *power* (from the perspective of social relationships as mirrored in the written text), *ideology* (underlining the importance of journalistic discourse as a mediator of it) and *hegemony* (according to Gramsci's theories applied to the social domain).

A conclusion which has pointedly imposed itself when analyzing the corpus at our disposal is that media discourse plays a crucial role in maintaining class authority within the political system. Even a grammatical structure apparently neuter, such as *Reported Discourse* is an important piece in the toolkit for the manipulation of the receptor belonging to the producers of media discourse.

We concluded that CDA represents a perfect analysis instrument for the utilization of language and for the socio-cultural structures that have marked out our existence. CDA attributes three dimensions to each discursive event, analyzing the media text as a three-faceted prism. The media text is at the same time *written text*, *discursive practice* and *social practice*. In the last part of the chapter we rapidly reviewed the three dimensions mentioned above, placing at the core of the discursive practices the modes in which RD can constitute itself as a subject of analysis for CDA.

Chapter 6, *Intertextuality and Reported Discourse in News Articles*, the first chapter mainly practical of this thesis starts with some short considerations linked to intertextuality as a discursive mode of promoting dialogism. Dialogism within discourse made it possible for the language to be perceived as a fighting place, a battlefield for several voices. A classical way of realizing this conflict is parody, the radical or superficial transformation of a preexisting text. Any text is not a finite product, but an environment for dialogic interaction, a mobile and forever changing environment.

The chapter illustrates then, with examples, the two main manners of manifestation of intertextuality (internal and external) within journalistic discourse. External intertextuality has been attached to the journalistic concept of *running story*, while internal intertextuality has been presented and exemplified in five of its manifestations: *Direct Quotation*, *Strategic Quotation*, *Indirect Quotation*, *Transformed*

*Indirect Quotation*, and *Ostensible Direct Quotation*. A conclusion that appeared after examining the examples in the corpus, conclusion reinforced by analyses made in the next two chapters, was that the transforming discursive elements are in fact discursive strategies which serve a rhetoric of public manipulation through journalistic discourse. *Reported Discourse* is definite proof of a journalist's action of taking information or opinions from an anterior text and incorporating them in another one.

In the case of *Reported Discourse*, we have to take into account two major aspects of the interrelation between the two texts. First, there is the relation between the quotation and the original. Whichever way the report may be (direct, indirect, transformed), a quotation may be more or less faithful to the linguistic event it is supposed to cite. Second, one has to take into account the relation between the quotation and the rest of the text it appears in. Media discourse will never be objective, ethical and moral, but will be an engine for diverse indoctrination strategies and for subjective stands.

Subjectivity on the part of the reporter could also be perceived in chapter 7, *Involving the Audience in Broadcast Interviews. The Interrogation in Reported Discourse*. Although in this case the source of the examples was no longer the written press but television, we couldn't discern any major difference between the two journalistic levels in as far as the manipulative intentions of the reporter were concerned. Moreover, in the case of broadcast interviews, reporters take even more liberties when they involve the public in the interviews they conduct, by devising questions they attribute to this public.

This type of questions has the role of helping television journalists keep their distance from the substance of the question, and not endorse its content. What could be perceived as a proof of absolute professionalism, namely the relegation of any trace of subjectivism from the part of the interviewer in the questions addressed to the interviewee is in fact a self-presentation technique, a way to tackle specific incidences at some key moments of the interaction between the participants in the interview.

The three possible types of questions we have identified within the analysis of the examples provided by the corpus clearly demonstrated that it is not a matter of equidistance or of exemplary professionalism from the part of the journalist/interviewer. It is in fact a dual attitude of the interviewer towards the words he presents as reported:

the questions on behalf of the public are for him a way of self-imposing, of underlining his professional importance on the one hand, and on the other hand, an occasion of distancing from the content of these questions in a posture of self-defense.

In conclusion these types of questions legitimize and neutralize the aggressive verbal behaviour an interviewer may adopt towards the interviewee. Paradoxically, we could notice the fact that this strategy of questions addressed on behalf of the public is efficient, being almost never contested by the interviewee. On the contrary, the interviewee, by answering these questions most of the time, does nothing but validate their alleged neutrality. Answers come even in cases when the questions were considered, before their legitimization through the public's interest, as being uncalled for or even malevolent.

The last chapter of the present thesis, *Ways of Distanciation from the Reported Discourse in Journalistic Practice*, succeeds in proving that distanciation from the reported discourse brings to the foreground, for most of the times, the originary speaker, and goes on underlining the subjective valence of this type of discourse. For instance, through the *conditional* as a verbal mode of reporting subjectivity manifests itself in the reporter's refusal to assume the reported words to any extent. On the other hand, we could also observe, while analyzing the examples, that structures such as *on his opinion...* can also be used to introduce an authoritative reported quotation.

Sometimes the reporter will resort to reporting his own words using such a structure, only reflexive or taking a first person de locutive pronoun, in order to confer greater importance or credibility to his own enounces. We have also observed that, although on a morphologic level these distanciation modes can mainly be identified with DD, therefore with truthful quotation, this game of refusing to assume an enounce or of bringing to the fore an originary illocutor serves again to influence the receiver of the quoted information.

This chapter also showed that reporting a discourse from the distanciation perspective implies a dialectical reporting to a previous linguistic actor. A double movement of distanciation and of actively assuming the enounce is crystallized in attributing the enounce through effectively mentioning the subject of the discourse, whatever the weight of the reporter's critical evaluation.

Examining this multilateral grammatical structure, omnipresent in our field of analysis, we have demonstrated that reporting forms become dogmatic and ideological, and that they manipulate us in our position of receptors. They do it firstly because they symbolize a series of active binary oppositions within the frame of social discourse (starting from the couple true/false). Secondly they do it because these forms condition our practices of interlocutors when, in our turn, we use *Reported Discourse* in our verbal interactions. And not in the least they do it because some linguistic actors give us the illusion that, when reporting, we can understand, comprehend and reassume the full weight of a third person's words.

Looking at the present thesis in its ensemble, we consider we have succeeded in demonstrating the fact that any form of reported discourse, even DD can be modalised and charged with subjective semantic values in journalistic texts. Although presumingly only ID should bear the mark of the reporter's subjectivity, any reporting mode, DD, ID FID, or other mixed forms are engines of subjectivization of the quoted enounce.

Reported discourse is a favoured mode of manifestation of this manipulative subjectivity as it succeeds in attributing to another linguistic participant what in fact the reporter tries to induce us. Within press discourse the reporter doesn't quote the words of an originary interlocutor to provide the receptor with their semantic charge or their illocutionary value, but he generally uses these quoted words to strengthen an ideologically assumed position which is to be transmitted to the receptor.

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