

Discourse analysis of newspaper headlines: a methodological framework for research into national representations

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The discussion of the theoretical and methodological issues involved in the discourse analysis of newspaper headlines which forms the basis of this article, arises out of a study comparing the Australian and French press at the time of the crisis in Franco-Australian relations provoked by President Chirac's decision to recommence nuclear testing in the South Pacific in June 1995. This study formed part of a larger project: 'Xenophobia and xenophilia in Franco-Australian relations', undertaken by researchers from France and Australia and coordinated by Peter Cryle, University of Queensland, and Geneviève Zarate, ENS Fontenay/Saint-Cloud, which examined the representations of the two nations in a range of media over the months before, during and after the crisis.¹ To undertake the study of the press, a corpus was constituted from coverage of the crisis in both French and Australian daily papers.

One of the challenges posed by study of the press is how to arrive at valid conclusions, given that the time-consuming nature of discourse analysis makes it difficult to undertake the detailed analysis of a large number of articles. We thus sought a method which would allow us to gain an overview of an extensive corpus. The solution which we arrived at, the study of headlines, offers a number of distinct advantages which we outline in this article. A corpus of headlines facilitates quantitative analysis, for example, a longitudinal study of the frequency of headlines on a particular issue can reveal the evolution in the prominence given to a topic over time; a comparison between newspapers can reveal the relative importance each paper gave to an issue during a particular period. However this article concentrates on the broader theoretical and methodological issues involved in using headlines in research and identifies the linguistic features which are typical of them. It argues further that headlines are particularly revealing of the social and cultural representations circulating in a society at a given time.

Our article addresses :

1. The characteristics which justify that particular attention be given to headlines in press analysis, namely:
 - the prominence they acquire through diffusion;

¹ A number of articles relating to this project can be found in the December 2000 issue of *Mots*, no 64.

- the role they play in orienting the interpretation of the reader;
- the shared cultural context which they evoke.

2. The constitution of a corpus of press headlines.

3. The typical linguistic features of newspaper headlines (using examples from our corpus²).

4. The identification of linguistic features relevant to the analysis of national representations:

- designation
- modality
- presupposition

1.Characteristics which justify that particular attention be given to headlines in press analysis

Diffusion

Headlines reach an audience considerably wider than those who read the articles, since all those who buy the paper will glance, if only fleetingly, at the headlines. Moreover their impact is even wider than on those who actually buy the paper, since headlines are often glimpsed on public transport, displayed on fliers etc. This is particularly true of front page headlines, which also of course draw the casual observer to conclude the importance of a particular issue which has been given prominence in this way. The impact of headlines on the reader is likely to be all the stronger because certain *linguistic* features of titles make them particularly memorable and effective: impact is deliberately sought (particularly but not exclusively in the popular press) through the use of puns³, alliteration, the choice of emotive vocabulary and other rhetorical devices⁴. We will discuss some of these linguistic features in more detail later.

Perspective

The second point refers to the role played by headlines in orienting the reader's interpretation of subsequent 'facts' contained in the article. Headlines are signposts showing the route to take through complex material. They encapsulate not only the content but the orientation, the perspective that the readers should bring to their understanding of the

² Headlines are shown throughout the article in smaller type.

³ According to Fiala, the use of puns has become widespread in media discourse, and particularly in titles and subtitles. Pierre Fiala and Benoît Habert, 'La langue de bois en éclat: les défigements dans les titres de la presse quotidienne française', *Mots* no 21, December 1989, p. 83.

⁴ Allan Bell, *The Language of News Media*, Blackwell, 1991, p. 189.

article⁵. With much press news drawn from external news agencies and shared with competitors, the headline is a newspaper's opportunity to stamp its individuality on what is otherwise a mass-produced product.⁶

The headlines and section titles, as they succeed each other through the newspaper structure a particular view of the world by imposing on information a hierarchy of importance: a hierarchy from top to bottom of the page⁷; according to size of headlines, font etc; and in order of appearance through the newspaper from front to back. An entire system for categorising the world is in fact represented by the divisions and order imposed by the use of section titles which suggest a particular relation to the reader⁸: For example: 'Local news' implies closeness to the readers and therefore, by implication, closeness to their preoccupations; 'International news' suggests that the issues are at one remove.⁹

Repetition both through synchronicity (co-occurring headlines within one issue of a newspaper) and diachronicity (repetition over time) 'trains' the reader to develop certain expectations and imposes certain connections and interpretations. Thus anaphoric references relate headlines to previous events and situations, creating forms of classification that group under one heading possibly disparate phenomena. Mouillaud and Tétu give the example of the use of the rubric 'La crise', an anaphoric reference to a general socio-economic situation supposedly previously defined, yet whose exact definition and boundaries are almost certainly unclear to most readers.¹⁰ To speak of the 'proletariat', or 'la Crise' or in our case 'France' is

⁵ "Les titres sont le moyen d'une mise en condition des lecteurs. En principe ils devraient annoncer le sujet des articles; en fait ils servent d'accrochage et orientent l'opinion." Claude Abastado, *Messages des medias*, Coll. textes et non textes dirigée par R. Fayolle et F. Vanoye, Cedic, Paris, 1980, p. 149.

⁶ Hannes Kniffka, *Soziolinguistik und empirische Textanalyse: Schlagzeilen- und Leadformulierung in amerikanischen Tageszeitungen*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1980, p. 41. cited in *The Language of News Media*, pp. 185-6.

⁷ Note however that the reader will not necessarily follow the order suggested by page numbering, nor read from top to bottom. As Kress and van Leeuwen point out in relation to newspaper front pages, 'reading paths' are not always clearly encoded and even if they are, the reader does not necessarily follow the path laid out: the newspaper reader tends to scan, then select what he will read first, if he reads anything at all apart from the titles. 'Front pages : analysis of newspaper lay-out', in Alan Bell and Peter Garrett (eds), *Approaches to Media Discourse*, Blackwell, 1998, p. 205. These observations support our argument concerning the significance of the titles of articles in attracting the reader's attention and interest.

⁸ For Mouillaud and Tétu, headlines are the "clé de voûte du dispositif tout entier du journal", *Le journal quotidien*, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1989, p. 116.

⁹ M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London, Sage, 1995, pp. 118-9.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 120.

to presuppose a world where reality corresponds to the categories used, with their associated ideological and theoretical frameworks.

A similar process is at work in the categorisation that takes place when events are described as examples of abstract, general phenomena, through the use of terms such as 'ethnic cleansing'; 'violence in schools' etc. This creates what Patrick Charaudeau calls an 'effet d'amalgame'¹¹, encouraging the readers to link events in ways which they might not have done otherwise. In our corpus we find that the papers frequently group together articles related (sometimes distantly) to the issue of nuclear testing under one heading, for example on pages headed 'French nuclear testing: the Fallout'.

Cultural knowledge

Headlines are a particularly rich source of information about the field of cultural references. This is because titles 'stand alone' without explanation or definition; they depend on the reader recognising instantly the field, allusions, issues, cultural references necessary to identify the content of the articles¹². They thus rely on a stock of cultural knowledge, representations and models of reality that must be assumed to be widespread in the society if the headlines are to have meaning. Common shorthand in headlines such as references to the 'PM', 'le Président', 'Canberra', suppose not only a certain minimum of political and general knowledge, but also help to situate the readers within a national framework, since they must assume that the 'PM' referred to is their own. We have explored elsewhere the forms of national identification that are revealed in headlines¹³.

The recognition by the reader of various types of puns and plays on words also relies on general and cultural knowledge. This wordplay is a very typical feature of headlines and is generally confined to the headlines and found far less often in the body of articles. It can take several forms :

- A play on double meaning :

Ondes de choc (*Libération*, 7/09/95)

Testing times leave legacy of bitterness (*Australian*, 20/06/95)

¹¹ P. Charaudeau, *Le discours d'information médiatique*, Paris, Nathan, 1997, p. 249.

¹² Maingueneau refers to this as 'encyclopedic knowledge': D. Maingueneau, *Les termes clés de l'analyse du discours*, Paris, Seuil, 1996, p. 34.

¹³ C. Develotte & E. Rechniewski, 'Expressions de l'identité nationale dans les titres de journaux: une étude comparative de journaux français et australiens pendant une période de crise', in Malewska-Peyre, H., Tanon, F. et Sabatier C (eds), *Identité, Altérité, Acculturation. Perspective francophone*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001 (in press).

- References to specific historical events (the 'phony war' of September 1939-May 1940; Gough Whitlam's injunction in 1975 to 'maintain the rage') :

Drôle de guerre dans le Pacifique (*Liberation*, 2/9/95)

Frustrated islanders try to maintain their rage (*Australian*, 22/6/95)

or to specific cultural items such as the title of a well-known book (The Grapes of Wrath) or film (Hiroshima mon amour) :

Wine merchants brace for the grapes of wrath (*Australian*, 16/6/95)

Mururoa mon amour (*Libération*, 6/9/95)

These references often involve the reworking of fixed formulae, a process which Fiala refers to as 'défigement'¹⁴:

Mururoa, son lagon, ses coqs, son Café de Paris (*Libération*, 29/30/6)

Les Français, la bombe et le mimétisme (*France-Soir*, 5/08/95)

(these headlines resemble the title of a fable by La Fontaine)

Australie : les raisons de la colère (*Libération*, 22/8/95)

Liberty, fraternity, and not in their backyard (*SMH*, 15/6/95)

Commenting on what he refers to as PVC, 'palimpsestes verbaux culturels' Robert Gallisson argues that such reworkings of linguistic and cultural forms constitute a 'conspiratorial wink' in the direction of the reader. They help to create and maintain a sense of shared community and collective identity¹⁵. More generally it is clear that this may be true of all the cases in which cultural knowledge specific to a certain society must be mobilised to aid understanding: successful decoding proves that the reader is an 'insider'. It is the particular characteristic of headlines that they rely to a greater extent than the articles themselves on the reader supplying the missing cultural links.

2. Constitution of the corpus

Analysis of headlines in the print media poses a number of questions in relation to the constitution of the corpus, notably :

- over what period the headlines should be collected;
- the choice of which newspapers to include : national and regional ? with different socio-economic readerships, political orientations etc ?

¹⁴ Fiala, op.cit.

¹⁵ "C'est donc ce qui donne aux interlocuteurs le moyen de se reconnaître, de baliser leur espace de communication. C'est aussi ce qui permet à l'émetteur de faire basculer le récepteur dans son camp [...]", R. Gallisson, 'Les palimpsestes verbaux: des actualiseurs et révélateurs culturels remarquables pour publics étrangers' , *Etudes de linguistique appliquée*, n° 97, jan-mars 1995, p. 106.

- the criteria to use in the choice of headlines. A simple keyword search, involving a list of words such as 'French', 'testing' etc will not identify all the relevant articles and headlines, precisely because of the inventiveness of the headline writers.

The decisions become even more complex when the corpus is to furnish material for comparison between countries, as in the case of our project. These additional problems include :

- the need to constitute a corpus of similar size in each country : this may involve gathering headlines over periods of different lengths : in our case, there was considerably more press coverage of French testing in the Australian press, than of Australian reactions in the French press.
- the need to include newspapers with comparable publics in each country.

Our corpus was constituted of headlines appearing over a period of one month (Australia) and three months (France) following the announcement of the decision. The different length of the periods reflected the necessity to constitute comparable corpora, since there were fewer relevant articles in the French newspapers. We arrived at a roughly similar number of headlines in each language: 296 Australian and 346 French - a total of 642.

The French corpus was constituted from 5 national newspapers published in:Paris : *Le Monde, Libération, le Figaro, Le parisien libéré, France-Soir* - which address a range of publics.The Australian corpus drew on a national newspaper (*The Australian*) and two published in Sydney: the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Telegraph/Mirror*. The choice of these papers gave us access on the one hand to a range of political perspectives, and on the other to diverse socio-economic publics.

As to the criteria used in the identification of relevant headlines, we included all titles heading separate articles - on front page and internal pages - which addressed the nuclear testing issue, including those where Australia or France were not mentioned directly.

3. Typical linguistic features of newspaper headlines

Previous research into newspaper headlines has raised the question of whether similar features can be found in the press of varying cultures and languages; studies have not however involved headlines from a wide enough range of countries to allow for conclusions to be drawn. According to Kniffka, for example, headline structures appear to be very regular across languages, but his analysis involved only German and American

English texts.¹⁶ Other studies analyse headlines from only one country: Allan Bell analyses the 'distinctive telegraphic syntax' of English newspaper headlines¹⁷; Ingrid Mardh offers an exhaustive study of the characteristic features of the headlines of a range of English newspapers¹⁸. In seeking to identify the linguistic entries most relevant to the study of headlines in our corpus, we drew in particular on these studies, and on that of Mouillaud and Tétu for the French press.

Mardh identifies the following linguistic features as typical of headlines in English newspapers: the omission of articles; the omission of verbs and of auxiliaries (the verb 'to be' for example); nominalisations; the frequent use of complex noun phrases in subject position (in theme position¹⁹); adverbial headlines, with the omission of both verb and subject (an example from our corpus: French ?... non merci); the use of short words ('bid' instead of 'attempt'); the widespread use of puns, word play and alliteration; the importance of word order, with the most important items placed first, even, in some cases, a verb²⁰; and independent 'wh' constructions not linked to a main clause²¹ (an example from our corpus: Why the French don't give a damn), a form not found in standard English.

Mouillaud and Tétu, analysing *Le Monde*, suggest the following features as typical of headlines²²:

- a) the suppression of spatial and particularly temporal markers;
- b) the use of the present tense of verbs (where they are used) as opposed to - or in place of - any other tenses;
- c) the replacement of verbs by nominalisations;
- d) the suppression of declarative verbs and the disappearance of signs of speech (quotation marks; personal pronouns)²³.

These studies have helped us to identify certain recurring linguistic features of the headlines in our corpus. We are not aiming here, however, to provide

¹⁶ Quoted in Bell, op. cit., p. 189.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 185

¹⁸ Ingrid Mardh, *Headlines: On the Grammar of English Front Page Headlines*, Malmo, 1980, p. 183.

¹⁹ We use the term 'theme' to refer to the left-most constituent of the sentence. "Each simple sentence has a theme, the starting point of the utterance, and a rheme, everything else that follows in the sentence[...]", Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 126-7.

²⁰ Mardh, op. cit., p. 183.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 97-98.

²² Ibid, p. 125.

²³ "[...] le titre tend à effacer les marques du discours et à les remplacer par des marques de procès ou d'état", Mouillaud and Tétu, op. cit., p. 125.

an exhaustive account of the linguistic features of headlines in our corpus, nor to compare French and English headlines, although our corpus allows for this possibility. Because of our research into expressions of xenophobia and xenophilia, we have sought rather to identify those linguistic features of headlines which are of particular relevance to the study of **national representations**.

The term 'national representations' has been coined as an extension of Serge Moscovici's category: 'social representations'. In a 1970 article Moscovici describes social representations as: '[..] cognitive systems with a logic and language of their own. [...] They do not represent simply 'opinions about', 'images of' or 'attitudes towards' but 'theories' or 'branches of knowledge' in their own right, for the discovery and organisation of reality... systems of values, ideas and practices with a two-fold function: first, to establish an order which will enable individuals to orient themselves in their material world and to master it; and secondly, to enable communication to take place among members of a community by providing them with a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of the world and individual and group history'.²⁴

Moscovici emphasises the role of social representations in constructing the knowledge systems on which we rely to interpret and react to events. He argues elsewhere that this 'knowledge' does not resemble the rational, reified universe of scientific discourse, but is a common-sense, consensual universe, into which have infiltrated, certainly, fragments of scientific knowledge, but in popularised and half-understood forms, and mixed with other types of knowledge. Generated and maintained in the realm of public discourse, social representations constitute 'a whole complex of ambiguities and conventions without which social life could not exist', and 'an implicit stock of images and ideas which are taken for granted and mutually accepted'.²⁵ Social representations, then, 'establish an order', they make the unfamiliar, familiar, enabling the new and the unknown to be included in a pre-established category²⁶; and they enable communication to take place, communication based on a shared code.

We use the term 'national representations' to refer to the knowledge systems that encapsulate knowledge about other nations and nationalities.

²⁴ Serge Moscovici, foreword to C. Herzlich, *Health and Illness: a Social Psychological Analysis*, London, Academic Press, 1973, p.xiii.

²⁵ Serge Moscovici, 'The phenomenon of social representations', in *Social Representations*, Robert M.Farr and Serge Moscovici (eds), Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 21.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 26

The term can apply both to representations of one's own nation, people and country, and to representations of other nations. The interrelationship of these two categories of representation, the contrasts and binary oppositions that can be created, and the role played by representations of the other in defining one's own nationality and identity, these are issues which we have explored elsewhere²⁷. In this article we give examples of representations of France and the French in the Australian press, and of Australia and Australians in the French press in order to illustrate our argument that headlines are a particularly rich source of information about the national representations circulating in a society. The advantage of analysing headlines is that they refer to and encapsulate this 'knowledge', for the reasons which we have outlined above: they rely on widely disseminated cultural knowledge in order to be understood. They thus constitute a kind of 'shorthand', a simplification and condensation of ideas. They play, moreover, both a passive and an active role: they depend on and mobilise this knowledge but also in turn help to disseminate and reinforce it, they create new associations and networks of meaning. They also seek to exploit representations for pragmatic effect. To understand how headlines perform this double role, we will examine some of the linguistic features of headlines that are particularly relevant to the study of national representations.

3. Specific linguistic features relevant to the analysis of national representations

- designation
- appraisal
- presupposition

Designation: the processes of naming

For Bell, following Kniffka, the essential structure of a headline includes an action and an agent, though as we have seen the agent may be left unclear²⁸. The designation of the agent in a headline, where this occurs, allows for subtle and not so subtle valorisation or devalorisation :

Les kangourous n'ont pas de complexes (*France Soir*, 3/8/95)

All Blacks et surfeurs contre les essais (*Libération*, 10/7/95)

Les anti-froggies se calment (*Libération*, 1/7/95)

In all these French examples, the terms used to describe the Australian reactions are demeaning: one can hardly take seriously protests emanating from a people better known for their sport and their strange animals.

²⁷ Develotte & Rechniewski, art. cit.

²⁸ Bell, *The Language of News Media*, p. 189.

Similar processes can be identified in the Australian corpus:

As Jacques would say : "Let them eat yellowcake" (title of Letters page, *SMH* 17/6/95)

In this example, the use of the first name robs the president of his authority; it is possible, too, that the name Jacques/Jack is not one that can be taken very seriously in English, since it recalls expressions such as 'I'm all right Jack'. Moreover the pun on yellow cake refers, of course, to the phrase supposedly used by Marie-Antoinette and inscribed in history as symbolic of her regal indifference to the plight of the poor; here it is mobilised to portray Chirac as an arrogant monarch indifferent to the opinions of the Australians. Such headlines only work, we suggest, because Australian readers are ready to interpret Chirac's actions as an expression of arrogance.

Two other aspects of the designation process are interesting in relation to the study of national representations : the processes of generalisation and personification. The examples above illustrate an extremely common procedure: designations such as 'the French', are used to refer to decisions and actions in fact taken by the French president, government or its representatives. This is a form of synecdoque, where the whole represents a part: in this case 'the French' represent the French political elite.

Examples:

French refuse to parley or even answer phones (*SMH*, 15/6/95)

(in fact the article refers to staff at the French Embassy)

French caught red-handed (*Telegraph*, 14/6/95)

(refers to the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior)

La reprise prochaine des essais nucléaires français est vivement condamnée par les pays du pacifique (*Le Monde*, 15/6/95)

The nationality adjective can perform the same function: in the Australian press we find frequent references to the 'French tests' and the 'French decision'²⁹. A similar process is at work in the use of the nation's name: as Moscovici points out in a powerful article on social representations, naming a nation creates a fictitious entity which is almost invariably then personified³⁰:

L'Australie accuse la France de "bluff" (*Le Figaro*, 5/8/95)

France is not likely to budge (*Australian*, 17/6/95)

Moreover the motives and actions of these fictive entities are then frequently explained by recourse to ill-defined terms taken from popular

²⁹ There are few examples of the use of 'The Australians' in the French corpus, reflecting in part the different roles played by the two countries during the crisis.

³⁰ Moscovici, 'The phenomenon of social representations', p. 43.

psychology such as 'inferiority complex'³¹. Processes and motivations which may, perhaps, explain actions at an individual level are thus attributed to countries, to provide explanations of geopolitical phenomena. A further result of such a procedure may be to associate all members of a nationality with traits of character or actions attributed to the objectified national community, and thus to justify general retaliation: witness the discrimination that took place against French people in Australia in 1995.

A further feature of headlines that tends to contribute to this kind of generalisation is the suppression of spatial and temporal markers, a feature identified by a number of the theorists already quoted: Mardh, Bell, Mouillaud and Tétu..

Two examples:

Why the French don't give a damn (*SMH*, 17/6/95)

Les kangourous n'ont pas de complexes (*France Soir*, 3/8/95)

illustrate both the use of the present tense and the suppression of spatial and temporal markers in headlines. These characteristics tend to place the event in a dehistoricised, static present. It is thus possible to read these headlines both as a comment on a current situation and as a description of perennial attitudes. Particular events or reactions are included in a series or class of events, creating unfounded generalisations³². Comments about the behaviour or attitudes at a particular time are thus transformed into statements about unchanging characteristics - in this case, about national characteristics.

Appraisal

It is clear that the processes of naming are involved in the appraisal of the other nation. But in addition to the analysis of designation, it is necessary to identify other forms of appraisal: adjectives, verbs, adverbs which convey the perspective of the writer.

In the headline : Heavy-handed Chirac shatters rapport (*Australian*, 15/6/95) the verb continues and reinforces the allusion to Chirac as a powerful bully. The structure of the headline, placing the adjective in thematic position,

³¹ In an article by Greg Sheridan published in *The Australian*, 15th June 1995, 'Why the French seek to provoke world outrage', Sheridan proposes an explanation of Chirac's decision by portraying France as an attention-seeking 'hooligan': 'Now, as nothing more than a troublesome middle power, the only way France can gain the sort of attention it craves is through perpetrating acts of outrage.' His article contains a number of references to the 'strange psyche of the French'.

³² "L'événement tend à se transformer en classe. Celle-ci produit une sédimentation du présent qui fait disparaître la dynamique de l'ouverture." Mouillaud and Tétu, op. cit., p. 126.

draws attention to it and gives it added emphasis. A similar structure is found in : Defiant Chirac rebuffs Evans [...] (*Australian*, 19/6/95).

French examples include: L'Australie accuse la France de "bluff" (*Figaro*, 5/8/95) where the journalist chooses a verb which places Australia's statement in a negative light. In the headline: Les anti-froggies se calment (*Libération*, 1/7/95) appraisal results from a subtle form of code-switching: the fact that a French journalist uses a slang, pejorative term: les froggies(frogs), supposedly current in Australia, to refer to the French, denigrates not the French but those who have invented the insulting term.

Presupposition

A number of the features of newspaper headlines that we have discussed can also be seen as examples of presupposition. Dominique Maingueneau uses the term 'le préconstruit' to refer to those elements in discourse which are presupposed, which are presented as self-evident and unproblematic³³. The 'préconstruit' is often found in nominalisations : an example from our corpus: A president runs rings around world nuclear consensus (title, Letters page, *Australian*, 16/6/95) presupposes the existence of a world nuclear consensus which only Chirac defies.

Maingueneau identifies two main forms of presupposition: the first is inscribed in the linguistic structure, the second derives from the relationship between the enoncé and its context and carries pragmatic significance³⁴.

Linguistic presupposition :

a. deriving from syntactic structure:

In the headline : Why the French don't care (*SMH*, 17/6/95) the structure of the sentence presupposes that the French don't give care: the only question to be considered is : why.

Similar examples include : Why the French insist on attracting world outrage (*Australian*, 15/6/95)

Pourquoi les Français sont des connards (*SMH* 15/6/95 - in French)

Pourquoi l'Australie dit non aux essais nucléaires (*Le Monde*, 28/6/95)

b. deriving from anaphoric/cataphoric use :

Dare the French do *it* again ? (*SMH*, 8/7/95): it is presupposed that the French have already done 'it' - but what is 'it' ? the reader must supply the answer.

³³ Maingueneau, op. cit., p. 67.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 68-69.

Le Pacifique pour tous (*Le Monde*, 4/07/95) : the reader has to interpret the reference to give to the pronoun.

Pragmatic presupposition:

This form of the implicit relates to the action or reaction expected of the reader and derives from the relation of the énoncé to its context, including the context of the discursive 'rules' which ascribe to certain forms of language, certain pragmatic functions.

Sending a frigate would maintain the rage (*SMH*, 15/6/95)

The French lepers (*Telegraph*, 15/6/95)

In the first example, the fact that information concerning the originator of the idea of 'sending a frigate' is suppressed transforms the headline into an appeal to the reader for agreement, if not action. The headline The French lepers can be interpreted as a call to boycott, avoid, or fear the French. It is difficult to draw a clear line between an informational headline and one which has a pragmatic function since much depends on the context and the readership. Headlines such as Boycott could help turn deficit round (*SMH*, 15/6/95) can be taken as simply informational, or can be seen as adding to pressure for such a boycott, presented implicitly as a patriotic and commercially sound act.

It is of course possible - indeed common - to find a number of forms of implicature in the same headline, as the following example illustrates:

The headline : French arrogance explosive(*Telegraph*, 15/6/95) implies:

- that all French are arrogant, a presupposition that it is not necessary to argue because such a representation of the French will be 'recognised' as familiar and valid by an Australian readership;
- that French arrogance explains the decision to restart tests: the title supposes an explanatory link between a character trait and the decision to resume testing;
- that French arrogance is dangerous: the headline could imply a warning.

The power of all forms of implicature and presupposition derives from the fact that they remove what is presupposed or implied from direct contestation. A discursive 'sleight of hand' slips the presupposition as an established fact under the guard of the co-énonciateur. Presuppositions reveal what is likely to go unchallenged: the stock of national representations circulating in a society. The advantage of working on a corpus of French and Australian newspaper headlines is that it enables the researchers to suspend the 'complicity' which normally binds the reader to the national perspective implicit in the media. It is not easy to gain such distance, since, as Billig argues, 'nationalism has seeped into the corners of our consciousness; it is present in the very words which we might try to use

for analysis³⁵. A comparative study of the two constituent parts of the corpus, belonging to different national traditions, encourages the questioning of the classifications and categorisations of the world which may appear self-evident to the nationals of each country.

The headlines in our corpus offer a powerful insight into the national representations circulating at a period of crisis in Franco-Australian relations: crises, Moscovici argues, are particularly revelatory: 'the character of social representations is revealed especially in times of crisis and upheaval... collective memories are stirred..the divisions between social representations appear unadorned, private and public worlds become blurred.'³⁶ In the case of the corpus of French newspaper headlines we find constant associations of Australians with the sea, with surfers, fauna ('kangourous') and sport. The representations are rather impoverished: little knowledge about Australia can be assumed on the part of the French reader. In the case of the Australian corpus, the network of representations of the French is richer and more complex. We find references that relate to French history: Bastille Day or Marie-Antoinette's apocryphal : Let them eat cake; and more contemporary references, which are moreover often evocative of past conflicts: Rainbow Warrior, Greenpeace, Mururoa. Use of a few words of French in headlines ('non', 'merci') indicates a supposed familiarity with the language. Other headlines rely on representations of France associated with wine, cuisine or love: [...]France's lust for la bombe(*Australian*, 17/7/95). The range of references and their link with lifestyle and culture, the knowledge of history and language (however rudimentary) which is supposed, all these reflect the important role which France has traditionally played in the Australian imagination as 'the familiar foreign'³⁷. These largely positive associations are, however, tempered by a network of representations around the themes of arrogance, portraying the French as characterised by self-interest, indifference to the feelings and opinions of others, defiance and intransigence.

Importantly, such representations provide the building material for the framework of argument, opinion and explanation that are constructed by the press around the events, as the headline 'French arrogance explosive' illustrates. We see at work in the headlines an extension of networks of representations, a reformatting of mental models, as new events are 'connected up' to existing representations in a process which Moscovici

³⁵ Billig, op. cit., p. 12.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 54.

³⁷ P. Cryle, A. Freadman & B. Hanna, *Unlocking Australia's Language Potential. Profiles of Nine Key Languages in Australia: French*, Melbourne, NLLIA, 1992, introduction.

describes as one of the essential functions of social representations: making the unfamiliar, familiar³⁸: through the process of *anchoring*: 'a process which draws something foreign and disturbing that intrigues us into our particular system of categories and compares it to the paradigm of a category which we think to be suitable'³⁹. Thus phenomena from daily life are assigned to pre-established sets and sub-sets, are compared to paradigms and prototypes (the latter often in the form of exemplary members of the group, or ideal types), in order to make the world in which we live meaningful, so that we can function within it and satisfy physical, psychological and social needs.

As we argued earlier, headlines draw at least part of their power and meaning from the pool of shared cultural, political and general knowledge on which they draw. Not only can they intrigue and awaken interest, they 'reward' the reader through the intellectual satisfaction gained in successfully decoding them⁴⁰. They also reinforce the sense of belonging to a community, both through the references to one's own society and nation, and through stereotypical representations of other nations and peoples. The comparison of national characteristics is often held to be one of the constitutive factors in the development and maintenance of national consciousness; if the press provides one of the most powerful vehicles for such comparison in modern society, it could be argued that headlines - because of their diffusion and visual and linguistic impact - play a key role in maintaining the constant presence of these representations in our daily lives.

³⁸ Moscovici, 'The phenomenon of social representations', op. cit., p. 27.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 29

⁴⁰ Gallisson writes of this satisfaction in relation to the decoding of cultural palimpsests. art. cit., p. 106.

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