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THE DIALOGUE IN ADUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA

ABSTRACT

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ABBREVIATIONS

1. CNA – Consiliul Naţional al Audiovizualului.

2. DE - *Dicţionarul enciclopedic*,vol.I, 1993, Bucureşti, Editura Enciclopedică.

3. DMC - *Dictionary of Media and Comunication*, 2009, Marcel Danesi, Armonk, N.Y., M.E. Sharpe.

4. DŞL- *Dicţionar de ştiinţe ale limbii*, 2001, Bucureşti, Nemira.

5. ET - *Enciclopedia of Television*, 2004, Chicago, Museum of Broadcast Communication.

6. GALR- *Gramatica limbii române*, vol II, Enunţul, 2005, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.

7. IVLRA - *Interacţiunea verbală în limba română actuală. Corpus (selectiv). Schiţă de tipologie.* Bucureşti, 2002, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti.

8. LNPR - *Le Nouveau Petit Robert*, 2002, Paris, Édition Le Petit Robert.

9. NODEX – *Noul dicţionar explicativ al limbii române*, 2002, Bucureşti, Litera Internaţional.

cf. = compare with;

engl. = English;

etc. = et caetera;

fr. = French;

tv.= television;

vs.= versus.

THE DIALOGUE IN AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA
ABSTRACT

Key words: dialogue, television, discursive strategies, dialogical behaviour, dialogical cooperation, verbal politeness.

Our paper is dedicated to dialogue as a form of communication in audio-visual[1] media. We oriented towards television communication due to the fact that the broadcast programs illustrate various forms of verbal interaction. Secondly, the dialogue is the form that best emphasizes the relationships between participants and the adopted strategies for a successful communication. The dialogue is the basic form of communication in many genres and televised programs. At the pragmatic-discursive level, this variety of forms was an interesting source of analysis.

The choice of this research field was largely due to the growing popularity of the audio-visual media. Secondly, the dialogue inside the institutionalized space of television has been, in the last decades, the "victim" of obvious transformation by degradation of language and by gender hybridization, changes made in order to achieve supremacy of the audience. Print media had signalled, ever since last century, the need of spectacular; this aspect has been exploited by television with explosive language and incisive dialogue, for which the public has a growing appetite. This "metamorphosis" of television verbal exchanges is, in our opinion, worth to be analysed.

In our paper, we propose an approach to dialogue communication from a pragmatic-discursive perspective, emphasizing verbal interaction in the institutional context of television. The choice of the pragmatic perspective was due to the interdisciplinary nature of the field (interference with branches of linguistics and sociolinguistics, ethno-linguistic, and psycholinguistics). We also considered the definition of pragmatics as a discipline whose object is "language, not seen as a system of signs, but communicative action and interaction." (DȘL 2001: 396 – our translation). For the discourse analysis, we mention that we used the term "discourse" as interpreted by the French school, perspective shared by some Romanian researchers (Roventa-Frumuşani 2004, Beciu 2009).

> The speech indicates [...] how a social actor uses language (conversational, scientific, administrative, etc.) as well as other communication resources (non-verbal language, various media and so on) so as to give a "point of view "or a position about what is being communicated and related to it. (Beciu 2009: 33-34 – our translation)

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[1] In our thesis we use the term "audiovisual" to refer only to television media. The dichotomy print media-audio-visual media is used in the field, the terms are registered in DEX. The term "audio-visual media" defines television station, the phrase has been used by many researchers in the field (Charaudeau, Ghiglione 2005, Bertrand 2001; Stoichitoiu-Ichim 2001). (cf. fr. presse audiovisuelle).

We believe that the pragmatic-discursive approach is adequate for studying and analysing the speech dialogue as a favourite form of communication in audio-visual media.

Regarding the research field, we followed those audio-visual structures that included a verbal exchange, regardless of the number of participants in the dialogue, their identity or the subject matter. Another criterion by which we delimited the field of our research was the nature of TV programs: we chose for a dialogue analysis only those programs that, allegedly, broadcast "unscripted"[2] talk. Therefore, we excluded televisual genres such as: movies and television series, commercials, sitcoms and any program that involves scripted talk. The material for our thesis was collected by selecting programs aired between: January 2007 - June 2012. The analysis was done on a new corpus (Appendix 2), made personally, by recording on magnetic tape excerpts from the selected programs.

Records made pursued accumulating a varied working material to allow analysis of dialogue from several points of view. The most important criteria for the classification of the analysed dialogues were: content (conversation versus discussion), the number of participants (two or more), participants' relationship (conflictual dialogue versus non-conflictual dialogue), communication network and the balance of social power.

The main objectives of our thesis were:
• the analysis of the dialogue in the context of institutionalized verbal interaction;
• determining the characteristics of dialogue in audio-visual media;
• creation of a corpus of texts to illustrate televised genuine examples of verbal interaction in institutional context.

Apart from the objectives set above, we also took into consideration for our research a number of assumptions contained in other specialized works:
• the degree of "conversationalisation"[3] of the television discourse (Fairclough 1995);
• the prevalence of polite verbal behaviour (Fairclough 1995; Charaudeau, Ghiglione 2005; Bignell, Orlebar 2009).

From the methodological point of view, for our thesis we have taken into consideration the diversity of verbal interactions, which range from dyadic communication, to group and, of course, mass communication. In this context, the choice of a single method of analysis would have meant to limit the field of research. Therefore, we opted for

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[2] Goffman (1981).
[3] By 'conversationalisation' we intend the leveling of the language used in the television programs, caused by the use of familiar words, specific to mundane conversation.

an interdisciplinary approach, using specific methods of pragmatics (conversational analysis, elements of discourse analysis), sociological methods (observation, behavioural analysis), or methods of rhetoric (analysis of argumentative strategies).

For conversation analysis, we chose as models the works of Scannell (1991) and Hutchby (2006), focusing on the importance of the sequence of turns and the principle of alternation. We also adopted some elements of discourse analysis, see Fairclough's model (1995), for example context analysis, communication strategies and discourse markers.

The selection of TV stations where the records were made from was based on: audience, national coverage, the share of informative shows, cultural and educational role – following the model used in CNA reports. We watched 10 Romanian TV channels: TVR 1, Antena 1, ProTV, Reality TV, Prima TV, TVR 2, TVR Cultural, Antena 3, B1 TV, Kanal D.

The choice of programs to be analysed was made according to several criteria:
• typical dialogical structure (we have limited our research to the study of those programs involving direct or mediated talk);
• realistic content, nonfictional, participants in the communication situation offering *ad hoc* responses;
• the audience share (source: survey INSOMAR 2007 and IRES 2011 - published on the official website CNA);
• the typology of audio-visual genres (debate, talk show, interview, entertainment show, reality show).

For differentiation, but also for diversification, we made several records from a large number of television shows and programs with different format and topic. Phonetic transcription has been simplified to facilitate access to content. The records are made on electronical devices, allowing access to them anytime, for an improved phonetic accuracy of the transcripts.

The paper includes a theoretical part (first two chapters), dedicated to dialogic communication elements and to television field; the second part contains the analyse of the dialogue at the pragmatic-discursive level (Chapters 3-6). The analyse chapters followed dialogic specific structures, dialogic behaviour and roles, markers and pragmatic-discursive strategies, obeying the principles of cooperation and politeness etc. Where possible, we highlighted theoretical aspects using examples from the television dialogue.

In the first chapter, *The Dialogue*, we defined the theoretical framework of our paper, selecting only those aspects that are relevant to the analysis that we undertake in the second part. Thus, the chapter includes the specification of the types of dialogue and its constituent units, as well as other theoretical aspects covering verbal interaction, such as dialogical competence, the types of communicative behaviour, discursive markers etc. In the second part of the chapter, we detailed the elements of pragmatic theories to illustrate those concepts that we use in the dialogue analysis. We referred primarily to the principle of cooperation (Grice 1975), the principle of politeness (Lakoff 1977, Leech 1983, Brown and Levinson 1987), and the aspects of impoliteness (Culpeper 1996; Bousfield 2008). We selected some theoretical landmarks of rhetoric[4], focusing on elements found in televised political dialogue.

The second chapter, *Television and the Audio-visual Offer,* is a general presentation of televisual media. We have included a brief characterisation of Postmodern television, focusing on the main changes caused by the transition from "paleo-" to "neotelevision" (Eco 1985). Secondly, we have selected some of the relevant elements for dialogue analysis, starting with the context, continuing with participants (comperes, guests, spectators / viewers) and, of course, the themes of the dialogues. This chapter has not sought an exhaustive presentation of televisual environment, only the specific aspects of the audio-visual communication, taking into account the objectives of our thesis.

The second part of the paper is dedicated to televisual dialogue analysis, according to specific genres. The chapters include several sequences analysis designed to highlight different dialogue structures in a variety of communicative situations, and end with partial conclusions, which summarize the characteristics of the verbal interaction in the respective genre. The pattern applied in all 4 chapters is the result of our own conception; to develop this type of analysis we considered works which included televisual conversation analysis: Fairclough (1995), O'Keeffe (2006), Hutchby (2006).

The analysis scheme includes: establishing the particularities of the communication situation (depending on the specifics of each program); detailing communicative context (time, place, participants, aim of the dialogue); identification of the types of power[5]

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[4] In our paper we use the term "rhetoric" with the following meanings: "1) The art of beautiful and persuasive speaking, oratory, eloquence. 2) branch of language science dealing with the study of this art. / <ngr. ritoriki, lat. rhetorica, fr. Rhétorique "(NODEX 2002).

[5] French and Raven identified five bases of power and social influence: the expert, referential, rewarding, coercive, legitimate (in Cartwright and Zander, 1968: 259). Cf McQuail 1999.

involved in verbal interaction, describing the communication network[6]; analysis of the communicative behaviour, analysis of discursive strategies; detailing pragmatic and stylistic aspects; identifying features of language. Due to the fact that the analysis focused on several types of programs, where appropriate, we adjusted the scheme accordingly.

The third chapter, *The Interview - a Privileged Form of the TV Dialogue*, presents several analyses of interview fragments. The interview is one of the most used methods to obtain quick and reliable information. In addition, being most of the times recorded, it allows to be used in various programs: news, cultural, economic, political shows etc. For our thesis, the principle of selection was primarily thematic (thus, we selected the following types of interview: cultural, political, social and star interview), and secondly, it took into account the type of dialogue. The analysis focused on comparison of dialogue structures in different contexts, with emphasis on identifying journalist's strategies, but also on the interviewee's reactions. Another aspect of the research included the way of verbal negotiation for access to information.

A television interview is largely the result of journalists' attitude. Dialogue analysis revealed that there are situations in which reporters adopt an offensive attitude (see especially political interviews), making use of all means to get a verbal response, and situations more rare when there is an undeclared pact and the dialogue flows smoothly without any incident (such is the case of the prearranged interviews). Moreover, the organization of dialogue, with a clear structure which provides a coherent communication is as well reporter's attribution. We identified in our analysis examples of well-structured dialogue, as well as less organized interactions and even some which were lacking coherence.

Two common features of the interview are the elusion strategies and holding back responses, especially in political interviews, but not only. Unlike other genres of TV, it requires the prior consent of the interviewee to be subjected to some questions, more or less uncomfortable. Accepting attending an interview, the guest undertakes to give answers to all submitted questions; yet, there are times when the dialogue enters a deadlock caused by the content of the question, the guest seeking to elude the answer.

The dialogic structure and the method of construction of verbal interaction are influenced by the purpose of the interview. The interviews that aim to entertain the

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[6] Communication networks were identified on the basis of experimental studies focused on group communication and they are distinguished by the degree of centralization / decentralization of decisions taken by the group (Bavelas, A., 1950, *Communication Patterns in Task-Oriented Groups. Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 22, 723-730).

audience (as is the one with a star), include several forms of verbal interaction (compere - journalist, compere - interviewee, guest-guest, guest - journalists) made in an informal language, even familiar, without seeking to obtain a certain information from the interviewee. The typical structure of a dialogue follows the pattern of usual conversation: question – answer – feedback.

In the fourth chapter, we proposed a parallel analysis of two types of TV genres: *The Dialogue in Televised Debates and in Talk Shows*. We chose this approach because of the peculiarities of manifestation of these genres on Romanian channels, where the two are seen as interdependent. Since these genres of TV have supremacy among Romanian audience (besides "reality shows"), this section has a special structure, including numerous dialogue analyses and a case study dedicated to the final debate of the presidential campaign from 2009.

There are two major differences between verbal interactions in medical and cultural talk shows and the political ones: in the first case, verbal interaction can vary in shape, being relatively flexible in structure; however, in political talk shows or debates, dialogue structure is fixed, predetermined, with turn allocation directed by the host. The second difference is the language: in debates and political talk shows the preferred language is standard, with specific terms from politico-social sphere; in other types of talk shows, even in medical ones, the language is familiar.

Perhaps the most obvious feature of the dialogue from talk shows and political debates on Romanian TV channels is the eristic component. Despite the fact that, theoretically, they should contain persuasion or negotiation dialogues within the boundaries of civilized discussion, in most cases, the dialogue degenerates into a verbal conflict. Most of the times, the communication fails and the theme of discussion is abandoned, the host intervening to divert the dialogue.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to *Dialogue within Reality Show Programs*. The analysis of the dialogue within well-known formats such as "tele-seduction", "tele-experiment" and "tele-casting"[7], emphasized persuasive and argumentative strategies. Another objective of this chapter was to highlight the structural features of a dialogue where there is an inequity in the balance of power; this imbalance is frequently caused by the existence of differences between the required and assumed the role.

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[7] Types of reality programs, according to the classification made by.Zeca-Buzura (2007:80).

One observation concerns the structure of the dialogue, which is less constrained by rules than in other types of TV genres, such as the interview or the debate. Communication is not always centrally coordinated by a compere, something that gives relative freedom to verbal interaction (e.g., to exchange role). The compere's role is minimized, focusing on the behaviour and the relationships between participants.

The language from reality shows is mostly familiar, and it is supported in this register even by the hosts of the programs. Thus, it encourages regular viewer to have a sense of identity by seeing people who speak spontaneously, in the same way they would address to their loved ones, family, friends. However, we notice the existence of censorship in the vocabulary, the participants generally avoiding using insult and offense in spite of the verbal conflict. We believe that this censorship is not due to the awareness that the message can be heard by everyone (through the video camera), but rather to the fact that the stakes were high enough so as to function as a motivating factor. Even in programs that apparently do not evaluate the way a person speaks, participants repressed the desire to criticize the jury, to question their choice, to accuse or disapprove decisions of the other participants.[8] In our opinion, the language used in such verbal interaction is common, but not entirely spontaneous.

The last chapter of analysis, *Conversation as a Form of Communication in Entertainment Programs*, comprises observations on several forms of entertainment programs: quiz shows, morning shows and weekend shows. The analysis assumes some formal similarities between everyday conversation and the conversation within entertainment programs.

In our opinion, the dialogue analysis indicated significant differences between everyday conversation and the television one, for example, the aim of the dialogue: in the first case, the main aim is to share knowledge, in the second case is entertainment / seduction. From this difference results another major one: inside the televised dialogue, the target of communication, the viewer, is passive, whereas the speaker from the studio is sometimes a "tool" to send the desired message. While in everyday conversation turns are negotiated and balanced *hic et nunc*, in television broadcasts, this rarely happens, the roles are pre-allocated, the host arrogating the right to intervene and redirect the word to another speaker or to another topic of discussion. Televised conversation topics are usually previously established or in agreement with the guest(s). The style of the participants in the

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[8] The observation is made on the broadcast materials. We are aware of the possibility of images truncation, but in our paper we only refer to what is broadcast, to the final product, shown to the viewers.

communication situation is different, in everyday conversation it is natural, free of stylistic excesses, familiar, sometimes in slang; the style of televised dialogue is biased, highly ironic, familiar, with playful accents.

Another defining feature of conversational dialogue in entertainment programs is the freedom of expression. Except reality shows, which are permissive in terms of language, no other TV program shows better an expressive language than the entertainment formats. Thus, in addition to a variety of stylistic means, there is a preference for irony and playful behaviour, especially from some of the comperes / hosts.

The thesis itself is accompanied by two appendixes. Appendix 1 includes a list of the programs where we chose the dialogue fragments from, used in our thesis. It only includes the titles of the programs from which we kept excerpts of verbal interaction, even though the number of programs watched (and recorded, was initially higher). Appendix 2 includes, in the order they are inserted in the thesis, all fragments of dialogue used in our paper. Besides these appendixes, we also added the list of abbreviations and phonetic conventions - which are placed at the beginning of the paper. Regarding the phonetic transcription, we adapted the model used by L. Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu (2002), but for an easier accessibility to our thesis, we kept only certain conventions widely used in the research field; we also added some of our own conventions in order to highlight issues encountered in certain communication situations.

The purpose of our thesis was to identify features of the dialogue in the television programs. Following are some of the conclusions we reached after analysing fragments of the dialogue:

1.   The TV dialogue, although strongly "conversational" (cf. Fairclough 1995), it is not a subtype of everyday talk. To support this view, we note that in addition to the issues identified by researchers in the field (pre-allocated roles, unequal power relationship and different purposes), we submit our own comments regarding the constraints of the dialogical behaviour. Thus, the majority of verbal exchanges from the television studio are artificial, caused by the limitations of the content, limitation of guest's responses in relation to various factors: the reality show participants are constrained by the role they assumed; participants in a talk show or debate are constrained both by the quality in which they attend the show and by other participants who restrict the access to talk, thus the information is truncated; competitors of various quiz shows have limited interventions by the existence of a set of rules, as well as by the interference of the TV host. Under these conditions, verbal interaction is fragmented, incomplete; the speech turns are strictly

limited. If in everyday conversation, there is not always a pre-established topic, in televised dialogues the discussion are centred around a theme announced from the beginning of the show. Trying to change the topic is often sanctioned by other participants in the verbal exchange.

2.   Regarding the structure of the dialogue, we noticed that there is a double addressee: the studio interlocutors and audience / viewers. At linguistic level, this leads to the use of different dialogue markers (both for initiation and maintenance as well as for closing the verbal sequence).

There are differences between the informational or educational programs (news, debates, talk shows) and the entertainment shows or quiz shows. In the first case, dialogue is built on the adjacent pair 'question – answer'; by contrast, in entertainment shows, the dialogue structure is ternary: question - response - feedback. The difference between the two types of structures is explained by lower or higher degree of "conversationalisation".

3.   Regarding the organisation of the dialogue, the interview is the dominant form in most TV genres. Thus, in addition to established form from the news programs, we noticed the presence of this form of dialogue in breakfast shows, quiz shows or in reality shows. The main argument for using this form of interaction over others (debate, commenting, discussion, explanation etc.) is the fact that there is the possibility of an effective control from the host, who has the pre-allocated leading role of dialogue, imposing the topics of discussions, commercial breaks, as well as the ending of the interview.

4.   The TV host has a major influence on dialogue (structure, evolution, end). The decisive factor in most of the verbal interaction analysed is the compere. Thus, there are situations where he does not impose a clear structure of the dialogue and this results in open discussions,   in discrepancy with viewers' expectations from the show. Sometimes the compere intervenes excessively, he gives his opinion, comments, judges, trying, under the legitimate power, to impose his point of view (such is the case of talk shows or political debates comperes). There are situations when the host imposes a certain dialogue structure, as in some quiz shows, where participants have to stick to answering the question; there are, however, cases where the compere deliberately elude the structure question - answer - confirmation / denial, using deceiving strategies in order to influence the participants. We found a different attitude at reality television hosts whose role is limited to observation and, they intervene only when necessary. The dialogue in these programs is therefore varied from the structural point of view, competitors freely communicating through "multichannel" networks.

5.   Increasing need for sensationalism is reflected in the media of television more and more strongly, even in formal speeches such as the interview during the news. Thus, either directly or implicitly, comperes always find the way to incite to the disclosure of unpublished news and at the same time to promote the image of the respective television station.

6.   Regarding the balance of power between participants in televised dialogues, dialogue analysis showed the supremacy of media, be they reporters, newscasters, comperes or entertainers. In almost all verbal interactions conducted in the area of television, the legitimate power went to journalists who made use of it, from choosing the guests in the studio to limiting access to talk. Exceptionally, we encountered situations in which legitimate power of the journalist was ignored and pre-allocated roles were reversed: such an exception is a broadcasted dialogue which took place outside the institution of television; a second example is the dialogue with a personality who, by virtue of its status, can attempt to overturn the balance of power.

7.   From a pragmatic point of view, televised dialogue revealed the existence of linguistic cooperation, but it was mostly conditioned by the participants' goals. While in the interviews and broadcasts of "reality television" participants have shown verbal cooperation by obeying the principle of politeness, especially the approval and the generosity maxims, in the case of debates and talk shows it was found an intentional breach of the principles of cooperation and linguistic politeness.

Generally, the participants in television programs mainly use verbal strategies of positive politeness, by virtue of seduction and entertainment function of television, thus achieving what Charaudeau called the "illusion of conviviality" (2005). We identified a relatively small number of acts of verbal impoliteness; this is justified by the fact that the dialogues take place in public, inside the institutional space of television, and also by the participants' desire not to give rise to a conflict that could damage their public image (*face*).

Our thesis, "The Dialogue in Audio-Visual Media" is intended as a useful contribution to conversation analysis in the context of television. Without claiming to have exhausted the defining elements of televised dialogue, we intended to point out the characteristic elements of verbal interaction in television programs.

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