MASS MEDIA

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1. Introduction and definition

The media of mass communication, or mass media for short, are agencies for the dissemination of information to large and anonymous audiences. In a narrow definition, which I shall adopt for the purpose of this article, the term “mass media” refers to the print media, such as newspapers and magazines, to the electronic media, such as radio and television, and to the online media on the Internet. The language of advertising is treated in a separate entry.

In a broad definition, mass media also includes all sorts of printed material such as pamphlets, books, magazines, manuals, directions for use, leaflets, billboard advertisements, and so on; mostly non-verbal information channels such as street signs or icons at airports or railway stations; electronic media such as computer disks or CD-ROMs; artistic forms of communication such as paintings, sculpture, architecture, music, and dance; records, CDs, tapes (cf. Biagi 1994; Faulstich 1994 for an analysis of some of these). These are all forms and channels of communication that convey messages to very large audiences which are to a large extent unknown to the originators of the messages.

Traditionally there has been a fairly clear opposition between mass communication, characterized by mass audiences, and interpersonal communication, characterized by very small groups of interactants. However, with the advent of the Internet new forms of communication have developed that blur this distinction. Public discourse and private discourse combine in interesting ways and lead to new
forms of personal broadcasting, for instance in the form of personal web diaries (also called weblogs or blogs) that attract very large audiences or of webcams that broadcast intimate views of private apartments and their inhabitants (e.g. Jennifer Ringley’s famous webcam that was in operation between 1996 and 2003).

The mass media in the narrow sense are a popular research area for many diverse disciplines, such as sociology, social psychology, semiotics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, communication studies and pragmatics. In this article I shall concentrate on those issues and methodologies that are particularly important for pragmatic and discourse analytical research. I shall not consider radio plays and television movies in all their variety of soap operas, situation comedies, drama, westerns, detective stories and the like.

In Section 2 of this article, I shall give an outline of the communicative situation that is common to all forms of mass media, in particular the producers, the audience and the asymmetric distribution of speaking/writing rights. In the third section I shall briefly consider issues such as manipulation and ideology in the mass media, and in section four, I shall look at conversations and other forms of dialogue that appear within the language of the mass media, that is interviews, panel discussions, talk shows, and the like. In the last part, finally, I shall briefly consider the diachronic potential of mass media research.

2. **The communicative situation**

The communicative situation of the mass media is characterized by (1) multiple originators who produce the media messages; (2) the periodicity and general accessibility of these messages to the public; (3) a dispersed mass audience, which receives the media messages simultaneously or almost simultaneously; (4) the unequal distribution of speaking or writing rights, which also imply a lack of feedback. In recent years media language has also been characterized by (5) an increasing delinearization and modularization. In the following I will focus on these characteristics in turn and assess their influence on the language of the mass media.
2.1 Producers

Traditional mass media messages are produced by very large production teams. This is certainly true for entire newspapers, or the output of television channels, but it is also true for individual texts or reports in newspapers, on television or on the radio, and it is true for online newspapers. There is a large production team behind virtually every single utterance that is broadcast on television or radio or that is printed in a newspaper. However, on the Internet many forms of communication have been developed in which private individuals regularly produce texts for a mass audience, for instance web diaries. In the following I shall introduce the traditional roles of media language production (on the basis of Bell 1991: 36–44).

The first role is the principal who initiates the communication process. In the media two types of principals can be distinguished: the business executives who represent the economic interests of the owners of a newspaper or a radio station, and the publishers who are responsible for the actual journalistic output. The former have very little direct influence on the language, while the latter make general prescriptions in that they determine a particular “house style”. The principal may also be understood in a somewhat wider sense to refer to the position or views on whose behalf a newscaster or interviewer, for instance, speaks. Even though an interviewer basically speaks on behalf of a particular TV or radio station, he/she can adopt a different position according to what interviewee he/she is dealing with. Interviewers often confront their interviewees with opposing views, thus talking for the principal of the interviewee’s critics or political opponents. Interviewees, too, do not speak on their own behalf in many cases but on behalf of an organization that they represent or on behalf of a public role which they occupy, such as member of parliament, president, or financial expert.

The second role of media language production is taken by the authors who have the most obvious influence on media language because they compose the actual words that are being used. Their version, however, is not independent of other influences since in most cases the authors will use a variety of sources for their texts, such as reports from press agencies, statements or press releases issued by government agencies or other organizations, notes taken from interviews with eye-witnesses and so on.
In the case of newspapers the third role is taken by the subeditors and editors who check and rewrite the output produced by the author. They may thus influence the language output on all levels from orthography, choice of words and syntactic structures to text organization.

The animators, finally, who play the fourth role of media language production, transmit the produced message. On radio or TV this includes the actual readers of a text but it also includes the camera people and the technicians who are responsible for the physical transmission of sounds and pictures from the source to the audience. In the press the concept of animator does not have a clear correspondence since the writing process is more complex. A newspaper text may start as a set of notes taken by a reporter during a press conference, continue as a series of computer files, prepared and worked on by type-setters (if they still exist), layouters, subeditors, editors and proof-readers, before it ends up as a printed text. All these people are involved in the process of turning the text into a physical reality and thus they take part in the role of animator.

Online diaries or weblogs are a new form of communication that has gained increasing influence in political discussions. They typically appear in the form of regular entries in reverse chronological order from most recent to oldest. While some weblogs are read by only very few people, others draw regular audiences of thousands of readers and thus qualify as mass media channels. However, such blogs are typically written by single individuals who combine all four roles of principal, author, editor and animator.

2.2 Periodicity and accessibility

Newspapers and magazines are published daily, weekly or in other regular intervals. Radio and television have many programs which they broadcast on a regular basis. Talk shows may be produced once a week or daily, and news programs may be broadcast several times a day or even hourly. This periodicity of mass media language has interesting consequences. Every new issue of a newspaper is in some sense a continuation of the previous issues. It may follow up the further development of events that were related in the previous issues, and the stories that are reported may presuppose a certain amount of background knowledge, for instance about current affairs, that may have been gained from previous issues. However,
each new issue of a newspaper also replaces all previous issues. Only the most recent issue is a relevant issue. This is particularly true for mass media that appear in short succession. A daily newspaper from yesterday or a news bulletin from several hours ago is no longer relevant. It is already superseded by more recent and therefore more relevant publications.

Mass media with longer publication cycles may remain relevant even beyond the appearance of their succeeding issues. There is, thus, an interesting correlation between the periodicity of a certain mass medium and the text types that it produces. The news flashes in hourly bulletins, for instance, differ in style and coverage from the reports in an hour-long news program, and they make different assumptions about the background knowledge of the audience. And in the same way there are differences in the news items of a daily newspaper and the long background articles in weeklies and monthlies (cf. Bucher 1994: 477).

Bell (2003) has shown how technology changed the time and place dimensions in the news reporting in the course of the twentieth century. He shows how the news of Captain Scott’s ill-fated South-Pole expedition in 1912 took months to reach the newspaper reading public of the time, while Peter Hillary’s South-Pole expedition nearly a century later in 1999 ended with a life broadcast. In 1912, the news about the fateful end of the expedition first reached New Zealand and was transmitted from there to London, and it was only from London that it was made public to the newspaper reading audiences around the world. In 1999, a New Zealand television station conducted a live telephone interview with Peter Hillary within minutes of his arrival at the South Pole. In the course of the twentieth century the time span between a newsworthy event taking place and its publication had drastically shrunk.

In online newspapers the concept of periodicity gives way to continuous updating. Publication no longer depends on fixed publication cycles but it follows the rhythm of the events that are reported. Some online newspapers have news tickers which provide up-to-the minute headlines. Live text commentaries published on the Internet may be seen as a further development of the reduction of the time lag between an event and its publication to a mass audience. Such live text commentaries, sometimes also called event trackers, are similar to live sports reporting on the radio and usually report sports events, such as league games, formula one racing or tennis matches. The readers get a minute-by-minute account of the events on the field or on the track.
The public accessibility of mass media also has a direct influence on its language. By definition, the output of the mass media is available to large audiences. Newspapers can be read by whoever wishes to purchase it, and radio or television programs can be received by anyone who tunes in to them with an appropriate receiving apparatus. But while the accessibility of newspapers, radio and television programs may be locally restricted, publications on the Internet are immediately available around the world wherever people have access to the necessary technology.

The easy accessibility of a vast amount of media language means that each individual can only consume a very tiny fraction of it. One issue of *The Times* contains about 100,000 words on its editorial pages alone, and the Sunday edition of *The New York Times*, which is much larger, weighs about two kilograms. But even such large newspapers shrink into insignificance in comparison to the amount of media language that is available through the Internet. Readers must necessarily be selective. In the same way many television stations broadcast virtually round the clock, while the individual members of the audience may watch for a couple of seconds only, before they zap to another station, or they may watch and listen for several hours.

As a consequence, media producers have very little idea about the background knowledge of their audience. They have to cater both for the regular and for the occasional audience. A listener may tune in only once a day to listen to a news bulletin and expects to be informed about the day’s events, while another listener has stayed tuned to this station for several hours and does not want to hear the same news items as in the previous hourly news bulletins.

### 2.3 Recipients

In mass communication, the role of the audience is very distinct from that in face-to-face conversations. The audience is very large and it is anonymous. The producers do not know and cannot possibly know — given its size — all the members of their audience or even a significant part thereof. However, in spite of the impossibility to know their audience personally, the producers of traditional mass media have a fairly clear idea of the typical members of their audience in terms of age, sex, socio-economic class and interests. The online media, on the other hand, can study
reception patterns of their products in a much more detailed manner. Online newspapers, for instance, can monitor click-rates to assess which of their articles and which of their sections are accessed most often, and they can monitor the origins (web domains) of their readers. But it is more difficult to get the socio-economic profile of a world-wide Internet audience.

Another characteristic feature of the mass media audience is its fragmentation. Individuals tend to receive media messages alone or in small groups. There is very little exchange among the receivers about the received matter. The fragmentation also applies at a higher level: different fragments of society receive different media of mass communication, that is to say they read different newspapers or magazines, they listen to different radio stations and they watch different television programs. And not everybody has access to the Internet.

For the producers it is important to know as much as possible about the audience of their messages. There is therefore a lot of research about viewing, listening and reading patterns. For sociologists and linguists media reception is an area of rich research opportunities.

There is not only a vast amount of text production involved in mass media; there is also a lot of mass media consumption. But it is still unclear to what extent the audience actually understands what it consumes (comprehension research in particular for news broadcasts, cf. Hardt-Mautner 1992, Lutz and Wodak 1987, and useful surveys in van Dijk 1988: ch. 4 and Bell 1991: ch. 11). D’Haenens and Jankowski (2004) investigated the difference of reading and recall of printed and online newspapers. On the basis of their data of the two Dutch newspapers de Telegraaf and de Gelderlander, they found the differences to be minimal. News consumption differs more as a result of the gender and the interests of the readers than as a result of the difference between the print version and the online version of the newspaper.

Bell (1991: 230–231) points out that it is important to distinguish between recall of information and comprehension of information, which can lead to two different types of misunderstanding the news: non-comprehension and miscomprehension. It is very difficult to assess whether a person has understood a certain news item. Understanding a news item involves remembering it to some extent. What can be tested empirically is how much informants remember of certain items that are played to them. However, a failure to remember a news item does not necessarily imply that it was not understood. Tests are often carried out with recorded news
items. This has the disadvantage of stripping the news items of their current relevance unless the items that are used are very recent indeed. If they are somewhat outdated by the time they are used by the researcher, they create the danger of a poor recall because the items fail to be relevant to the informants.

In general, people remember very little of what they see, hear and/or read on television, on radio or in the press. “What readers do is not so much remember news reports at all but rather construct new and update old models of the situation a news report describes. Recall, thus, is based on the partial retrieval of such models” (van Dijk 1988: 181, see also Straßner 1982: 312–400). Bell (1991: 233) concludes that “previous knowledge is the single biggest factor in news recall, whether this is tested by the day, by the week, or over a long period (...). Many separate studies show that those in the know are in a position to know more, that news is for the already initiated.”

There have always been a lot of speculations and investigations both in the mass media itself and in the relevant scientific literature on the effects of mass media consumption on its consumers (effect research). It has often been claimed that violence shown on television induces violent behavior among some segments of the viewing public. However, the situation is far more complex and cannot be accounted for with a simple correlation of cause and effect. Maletzke (1988) argues convincingly that the results of a content analysis (e.g. the fact that television shows a dangerous and corrupt world) cannot be correlated directly with research on the effects of television (e.g. the fact that heavy television viewers have a more pessimistic view of the world than light viewers) because a correlation does not say anything about the causality. On the one hand, television may be at least partly responsible for the pessimistic views of heavy viewers, but it may also be the case that people with pessimistic views are more likely to watch television.

While some news media, e.g. large national newspapers or publicly owned television stations, try to cater for a large and diverse audience, many news media cater for increasingly more specialized audiences. The vast number of media channels and the vast amount of media output makes it impossible for any individual to keep up with even a fraction of the available information. As a response the media target specialized audiences. There are television channels that specialize on the reporting of court cases or sports events and others who cater for the shopping needs of their audiences. Special interest magazines are published for people interested in gardening, bird-watching or marathon running. And media channels for larger audi-
ences organize their output into easily recognizable sections targeted at subsections of their audiences, such as sports, business and finance, book reviews or fashion.

Some online media channels go even further and allow their readers to customize their own newspaper. Such readers can create their own profile of preferences and as a result will be faced by an online newspaper that contains only those sections that are of interest to them. In addition to the selected news and sports sections, this may include weather information from precisely those spots around the world that this particular reader wants to keep up with, and his or her favorite cartoons.

2.4 Interaction and interactivity

Pragmatically most interesting is the asymmetric distribution of speaking/writing rights, which is typical for mass media communication. It is a one-way communication. In most cases, the audience cannot participate. It cannot influence the choice of topics, the speed of delivery or anything else. The only option of active intervention for the audience is to switch off or to switch over to a different text in a newspaper or to a different channel on television or on the radio.

Many mass media producers are obviously unhappy about this situation and employ various means to counterbalance it. Gerlinde Hardt-Mautner (personal communication) suggests that the main motive for media producers to feel unhappy about the asymmetry is that an increase in audience participation will improve audience appeal and therefore the competitive situation of the media channel concerned. When they do not have to fear competition because of a state monopoly, for instance, they do not feel unhappy about a passive audience. This may well be true but the main point in this context is that, for whatever motives, there are currently many attempts to overcome the asymmetry of the communicative situation. Three different levels may be distinguished.

The audience may be asked to participate or reciprocate in the communication by sending letters to the editor, or by taking part in phone-ins (also called talk-back programs), competitions, quizzes, etc. In these cases, the member of the audience may become active and speak or write. The British down-market newspaper The Sun, to give just one example, asks its readers “Got a story? Phone the Sun,” and gives three telephone numbers the audience can dial if they have a story.
In the same issue of *The Sun* there is a report on a television family program that has come under attack because of sexual innuendo used by contestants in the program. *The Sun* now asks its readers to give their opinion by dialing one number if they agree with the program as it is and another number if they disagree. And they ask their audience to take part in a competition, “Play your cards right” (*The Sun* April 13, 1995). These examples may be seen as an attempt by *The Sun* to redefine the communicative situation and to give their readers the feeling of having the right to participate in a symmetric conversation. In reality, however, this will involve only a very small percentage of the audience.

There is a second aspect to these endeavors to audience involvement. When a member of the audience takes part in a phone-in program, for instance, the radio announcer does not only talk to a large anonymous audience but he or she talks to an individual, and there is a second level of communication. It is a conversation with an overhearing audience. Such conversations are very popular and appear in many different forms in virtually all mass media channels, e.g. as interviews, talk-shows, panel discussions, etc. They give the audience the feeling of being (non-speaking) participants in a conversation, rather than being lectured at. These forms of conversation constitute a very interesting research area in their own right and are dealt with in some more detail below.

The third level of trying to overcome the unidimensionality of media communication is the direct address to the audience. It does not really overcome the asymmetry, but it gives the audience the feeling of being directly addressed, as when a radio announcer says to his or her audience “Stay tuned” before a commercial break. The frequent use of questions in newspaper headlines is a similar device to include the audience and to “talk” to the audience, e.g. in the headline “Has Andrew Parker Bowles found happiness at last?” or “Crime may be cut but do we really feel safer?” (both in *Daily Mail* April 13, 1995). The second of these headlines also includes the personal pronoun *we*, which is supposed to include the audience as well. The personal pronoun *you* is also occasionally used especially in advice columns, as for instance in the following headline from the *Daily Express* (April 13, 1995) “How to make the most of your GP”. These features of direct address are particularly common in down-market and mid-market newspapers.

In online media channels the interaction between the audience and the producers of the media messages but also the interaction between individual members of the audience with each other has reached a new dimensions (cf. Schultz 2000).
While in traditional newspapers the interaction between members of the audience is more or less restricted to reader reactions to published letters to the editor, many online media offer discussion boards and chat rooms in which readers can interact both with journalists, invited guests and experts, and other readers. Schultz (2000) restricts the term “interactivity” to this last type of interaction which goes beyond the mere feedback in form of polls, letters or even phone-ins (see also Bucher 2001).

Deuze (2003) provides a categorization of online journalism partly on the basis of the level of audience participation. He distinguishes between (1) mainstream news sites, which concentrate most on editorial content and are restricted to moderated participatory communication, (2) index and category sites, which consist of structured links to existing news sites, (3) meta and comment sites, and (4) share and discussion sites, which represent the other end of the spectrum with a focus on connectivity rather than editorial content and with unmoderated participatory communication.

2.5 Delinearization and modularization

The increase in the amount of information has led to an increasing modularization of mass media content. Newspapers are typically not read in their entirety from beginning to end, but selectively. Many newspapers present several stories on their front-page which are continued on later pages. Readers may start with a headline and the beginning of the story, and then follow a link to a later page. Very often stories are not presented as one linear article but as a non-linear ensemble of various textual and graphic elements. A story about recent events in the Middle East, for instance, may consist of a main article, a picture depicting the event, a map of the area, a text box that chronologically lists the main events that led to the current situation, and an interview with an expert. These information modules are linked in various ways and together they form a hypertext (cf. Jucker 2003, 2005). The result looks like a jigsaw leading to what might be called jigsaw journalism or, as Bucher (1996) calls it, “lego-journalism”, because the multitude of modules together with the increasing use of color may be reminiscent of colored building blocks.

Online newspapers are characterized by a much higher degree of delinearization and modularization. Windows on computer screens allow for much less information than a printed newspaper page. The entry pages of online newspapers,
therefore, typically consist of many links, small pictures and only very brief textual modules. These are all linked to more extensive modules that can be called up by clicking on the appropriate triggers. In addition, online newspapers often provide links to outside sources, the details of a scientific report, the full text of an important political speech, or long lists of disaster victims, all of which may have been published elsewhere on the net and may be too long to fit into the traditional printed newspapers.

In addition to the pictures and diagrams that are already typical of printed newspapers, online newspaper may also include sound files, animations and film clips. Thus they include elements that are typical of the traditional electronic media, radio and television. Online news sites that are run by traditional radio and television stations, on the other hand, include a lot of text to connect their sound files and film clips. There may indeed be a tendency for the different media channels to merge on the Internet. Online newspapers and cyber television stations resemble each other far more than print newspapers and traditional television stations, and they may merge even more in the foreseeable future (cf. Jucker 2003: 136, 2005).

3. Manipulation and ideology

The mass media is regularly and usually heavily criticized for being biased. The bias of the media can be shown on a macro level through content analyses. Such analyses have mainly been carried out by social scientists. Linguists, on the other hand, have tended to concentrate on the micro level of grammatical and lexical choices. A syntactic analysis may already reveal a latent bias in a newspaper report for instance (e.g. “The mugger was killed” instead of “The police killed the mugger”; van Dijk 1985: 4). And a lot of very interesting work has been done on an intermediate level under the label of “critical discourse analysis” (cf. Fairclough 1992, 1995a, 1995b; van Dijk 2001; and the papers in Wodak and Meyer 2001 and in Martin and Wodak 2003).

Language always carries both conceptual and affective meaning, but individual words may differ considerably as to the respective share of conceptual and affective meaning. On April 13, 1995 one British newspaper reported in an article on the lifting of a ban to exports of live animals that “activist Jill Phipps was crushed
to death by a lorry earlier this year” (Daily Mail p. 1), where another had “Fellow protester Jill Phipps died under the wheels of a lorry carrying veal calves outside Coventry airport in February” (Daily Express p. 19). The expression “crushed to death” has much more affective meaning than the more neutral “died”. Moreover, it mentions lorries as the agent and therefore the cause of death, while “died” leaves it to the reader to infer the cause of death (cf. several papers in van Dijk 1985; Fowler 1991; Lee and Craig 1992; Moilanen and Tiittula 1994; and van Dijk 1998).

4. Conversations for an overhearing audience

Media language always implies communication between the media producers and their audience. So far I have concentrated on this level, and as I have tried to show, the complexity of this communicative situation offers many challenging research questions for pragmaticians. This level I call conversation with the audience. However, I have already pointed out that many mass media channels try to overcome the unidirectionality of this communication by various means. One very popular means is to produce conversations for the audience. These may take the form of interviews, talk shows, panel discussions, or phone-ins. Even in printed form the interview is very popular in many mass media channels.

4.1 Pragmatic reliability of data

At first sight it may be doubted whether these forms of dialogue offer genuine data for discourse analysts and pragmaticians because they are always observed conversations and may therefore be taken to be staged and somehow less than “real”. However, they should not be taken as substitutes for dialogues in the real world. A phone-in program is not the same thing as a private conversation, and a panel discussion on television is not the same thing as a discussion without an overhearing audience. Thus, even if some of these forms of dialogue have closely corresponding forms in the real world, they have a typology of their own. They are best seen as partly staged and partly real (Burger 1991) and can only be analyzed in their own right as media dialogues.
A more serious drawback of this kind of data is the fact that it is often impossible to assess to what extent the dialogue has been edited before it is transmitted. It can be fairly safely assumed that interviews and discussions that appear in newspapers are fairly heavily edited and are therefore only marginally useful for pragmatic purposes, but many of the conversations for an overhearing audience that are broadcast by radio or television can be analyzed in their own right and offer a whole set of new research possibilities, such as the structure of news interviews (Jucker 1986; Greatbatch 1988, 1992), phone-ins (Leitner 1983), panel-discussions and talk shows (Linke 1985), etc.

However, the possibility of editing is always present even in live programs that are broadcast over radio or television. It is of course impossible to edit out ungrammatical sentences and non-verbal vocalizations such as hesitations or coughing, but the technology allows for far-reaching interferences in speaking rights. In a phone-in program, for instance, the caller’s line may be switched off for the audience while the anchor or a studio expert speaks, thus making it impossible for the audience (and the analyst using the recording) to hear back-channels, such as *mhmm* or *yes*, or attempts to get the floor by the caller.

4.2 Typology of dialogues for an overhearing audience

I have already pointed out that mass media dialogues that are produced for an overhearing audience may reflect dialogue types in the real world. But in their entire complexity they are unique because the fact that they are produced for an overhearing audience is not just incidental but a constitutive feature. For this reason they cannot be classified according to typologies of everyday conversations. They require their own typology.

Burger (1989) has introduced the concept of communicative circles for the electronic mass media. In a talk show, for instance, there is a conversation of two or more people who all take turns in speaking and listening. They constitute the inner circle. This conversation may take place in front of a live audience which may to a limited extent participate by applauding or cheering. This is the first outer circle. Finally, the conversation of the inner circle together with the applause of the first outer circle is transmitted to an audience which views the talk show on their television screens and constitutes the second outer circle.
Bucher (1994: 483) distinguishes three basic types of mass media dialogues: (i) unchaired discussions; (ii) chaired discussions with complementary participant roles, such as interviews (Blum-Kulka 1983, Heritage 1985, Jucker 1986); and (iii) chaired discussions with equal participant roles, such as panel discussions (Linke 1985). These basic forms may appear in various combinations, for instance in a talk show, where a host may interview his or her guests and then let them talk freely to each other for a while.

5. Diachronic aspects

The language of the mass media offers a lot of scope for diachronic investigations. Forerunners of the modern newspapers include the Acta diurna in ancient Rome. Published daily and hung in prominent places, they recorded important social and political events. Forerunners in England were the printed news books or news pamphlets that usually related a single topical event such as a disaster or a battle (cf. Brownlees 1999; Fritz 2001; Glüer 2000). The first regular newspapers appeared in Germany, Italy and the Netherlands in the first two decades of the 17th century. One of the first daily newspapers appeared in Britain in 1702. Government-imposed censorship, restrictions and taxes were at first a serious problem for the development of newspapers (cf. Sommerville 1996). Press freedom in the United States is laid down in the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution (1791). It is estimated that today world-wide some 60,000 newspapers exist with a combined circulation of almost 500 million. 8,000 of these newspapers are dailies. A third of all these newspapers are published in Europe, another third in Asia, and almost a third in North America. In comparison, very few papers are published in the rest of the world (South America, Africa and Australia).

Regular radio broadcasting started in the 1920s both in the United States and in Great Britain, and television broadcasting was introduced in the 1930s. However, it was only in the 1950s that other nations began television broadcasting on more than an experimental basis. In the 1960s television had already overtaken radio broadcasting in importance. In 1985, the A. C. Nielsen Company, which measures audience size, reported that less than two per cent of U. S. homes did not possess
at least one television set and about one per cent did not have a radio. The average television set was turned on for seven hours per day.

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the history of the mass media. Two early examples are Fritz (1993), who investigates syntactic features in relation to communicative tasks in early German newspapers; and the collection of articles in Biere and Henne (1993), which trace the development of German media language from 1945 to the present. In the meantime, several collections of papers have been published on the history of the mass media, e.g. Fritz and Straßner (1996); Ungerer (2000), and Herring (2003). Extensive diachronic newspaper corpora have been compiled at the University of Zurich (the Zurich English Newspaper Corpus, ZEN, cf. Fries 1994, 2001, 2002; Fries and Schneider 2000; auf dem Keller 2004) and at the University of Rostock (the Historical Rostock English Newspaper Corpus, cf. Schneider 2000).

References


