Colleen Cotter, News talk: Investigating the language of journalism.

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There is no shortage of linguistic approaches to journalism studies. In 2006 and 2007 alone, no fewer than six monographs (Bednarek 2006; Hutchby 2006; Conboy 2007; Montgomery 2007; Richardson 2007; Talbot 2007) were published

outlining in detail how analytical frameworks such as corpus analysis, conversation analysis, and critical discourse analysis can be used to examine, describe, and theorize the language of news media. Colleen Cotter's *News talk* is a welcome ETHNOGRAPHIC addition to this literature. Drawing on her experience as a journalist, journalism educator, and sociolinguist, Cotter highlights the discursive practices and communicative conventions behind news discourse in an attempt to foster dialogue and mutual understanding between journalists and applied linguists. As Cotter correctly observes (19), the combination of ethnographic knowledge and linguistic analysis is underrepresented in qualitative approaches to news language, and in journalism studies altogether I would add.

The book is organized into four parts that follow the genesis of a news story: journalistic values and norms (Part 1,) story selection (Part 2), story production (Part 3), and story presentation (Part 4). The three chapters in Part 1 outline Cotter's theoretical and analytical approach to news language. Attending to contexts of news production, professional structures, and the relationships between news practitioners and their communities of coverage, the author makes a case for ethnographic engagement with media texts, authors, and audiences. This is an approach that draws on sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and linguistic anthropology. Ch. 2 introduces the notions of craft and community, two central theoretical concepts in the book. Writing and reporting news stories is seen as an acquired set of literacy practices that index an operating standard: the craft ethos, a profession-internal identity of communicative competence. The community factor indexes journalists' commitments, engagements, and responsibilities to the people they cover. It is argued that the craft ethos and the community factor function as an ideological baseline for journalism. Building on the craft notion, Ch. 3 examines how journalists in training are socialized into the identities, skills, and values of their profession. Here, the author makes a compelling case for an apprentice model of professional socialization that spans news discourse (output norms, editorial skills) and news culture (objectivity concerns, sourcing issues).

The three chapters in Part 2 are devoted to news decision-making. Ch. 4 describes how news values govern journalistic practice heuristically (as "emic coordinators," p. 85) throughout the different phases of the news process. Drawing on fieldwork at *The Oakland Tribune*, Ch. 5 illustrates how story meetings function as arenas of struggle over discursive (decisions on story placement) and professional (what counts as good journalism?) capital. Ch. 6 argues that interaction is at the heart of journalism practice and theorizes the journalist-community relationship as a "pseudo-relationship," building on Daniel J. Boorstin's classic notion of the pseudo-event. In Part 3, the author turns her attention to the genre and stylistic conventions of newswriting, including story design (Ch. 7), the role of overt background information or "boilerplate" (Ch. 8), and notions of language standardization and prescriptivism (Ch. 9). The sole chapter in Part 4 looks at news

presentation and includes a self-reflexive case study of linguistic experts inter-viewed or otherwise quoted in the news.

As could perhaps be expected from a former reporter, *News talk* is written in a very lucid and engaging style. Key points at the start of each chapter increase the readability, as do the conclusions. Students will also appreciate the glossary and ap-pendices, in particular the analytical guide in Appendix 2. In contradistinction to the book's title and subtitle, *News talk* offers more than a linguistic analysis of spoken interaction. On the contrary, the bulk of the book's empirical data is drawn from print (and radio) journalism and fieldwork in American newsrooms, which have been understudied by linguists, as well as newsroom fieldwork in Ireland and the UK and Cotter's experience as a journalism educator. However, at a time when journalism is changing rapidly, the focus on mainstream institutions of print and radio journalism asks for follow-up editions that would include analyses of online news language and of alternative and non-Western forms of journalism, as Cotter suggests.

Pointing an ethnographic lens at journalistic practices and applying linguistic analyses, the empirical foundation for the book's core concepts of craft and community is solid and serves as an example of what an ethnographic analysis of situated language use does, and does well, namely "provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity" (Rampton, Tusting, Maybin, Barwell, Creese, & Lytra 2004:2). This I would argue is the book's main strength: it is an ethnographi-cally grounded explication of journalism's "interpretive dynamic" (231) that should appeal to both linguists and journalists.

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