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LINGUISTIC FORMS OF HOME VIEWING BETWEEN SCHEDULE AND OTT

Abstract: This paper proposes to observe the linguistic forms by which it is possible to translate and interpret the fruition of audiovisual content in the domestic context, between linear broadcast schedule and on-demand streaming portals. In line with Louis Hjelmslev's linguistic theory, the two devices are observed through their syntagmatic and paradigmatic nature, emphasizing how they differently relate the content they convey by generating different forms of audiovisual discursiveness. Through this differentiation it will then be possible to account for the different valorization at play first in the schedule device – which prioritizes the linguistic/positional value – and then in the streaming portal – in which the phenomenological value proposed by A.J. Greimas comes into play. This comparative reading, in addition to returning to a formalization of the modes of viewing across devices, allows us to introduce a reading of the regimes of interaction that come into play at the time of the fruition of differentially conveyed and valorized content.

Key words: Television studies, Media semiotics, Streaming studies, Linguistic, Media studies, Platform studies.

INTRODUCTION

In a complex and stratified context of domestic and individual audiovisual consumption, in which it is harder and harder to put a clear division between linear, on-demand and other forms of the media industry configuration, it becomes crucial to find a key to investigate the structural borders that identify the different domains of the *Meidascape*

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(Casetti, 2018); we assume here that these borders are strictly connected to the immanent linguistic structures within the ways in which medial interaction is configured between the spectator and the two main domestic audiovisual devices: the television schedule and the streaming portal.

In this paper, after a brief, but necessary, reconnaissance of the epistemological fields which this work enters into dialogue with, and after a presentation of the methodological apparatus adopted, we will move on to illustrate the discursive forms related to the schedule device, emphasizing its effects of subjectification and the modes of viewing inscribed in it.

The same will be illustrated in relation to the streaming portal, adopting a comparative perspective with the intention of systematizing the viewing modes and discursive configurations, to obtain a coherent subjective figure of the on-demand viewer.

In conclusion, the linguistic forms of viewing devices will be shown as polarities of a dynamic system within which a wide set of case histories are identifiable, increasingly hybridized, in a condition that tends to overcome the traditional media dimension.

The aim is to return a solid theoretical and linguistic basis on which to rest a more specific analysis of the consequences of the variably intended intersubjective relationship underlying the media encounter in the contemporary audiovisual market.

THE MEDIA STUDIES EPISTEME

In the field of Media Studies there has been a redefinition of the analytical dynamics of the objects observed (Lotz, 2014), since both the openness to a serialization of media languages (Pescatore, 2018) and the dissemination of products disengaged from any medium due to digitization (Jenkins, 2008) have given rise to a universe of content whose life is no longer dictated by traditional rules. At the same time, on the part of the users, there has been the evolution of an “on-demand culture”, (Tryon, 2013) capable of breaking down the established structures of times, spaces, and modes of viewing, going on to undermine at the foundations market arrangements that have seen their inevitable reconfiguration (Re, 2017).

From an analytical point of view, we have begun to speak of Narrative Ecosystems (Pescatore 2018): discursive conformations within which products are only a part of the entire underlying media experience and whose expansion is as unpredictable as it is no longer strictly regulated from above; in this context, traditional systems such as broadcast television (Lotz, 2014; Barra, 2022) have had to enter into dialogue with new forms of content fruition and access, in a logic of mutual exchange in which each operator's goal is to maximize the value of the individual product.

Clearly, all this has led to the rupture or weakening of traditional liturgies of value, with, for example, the sharp redefinition of distribution windows (Doyle, 2016), with enormous repercussions on the entire supply chain, as the current U.S. screenwriters' strike shows us.

In this lies a renewed interest in audiovisual distribution studies (McDonald, et al, 2021), which rest on the observation of digital media infrastructures, true materializations of the new geographies of the audiovisual imaginary (Blum, 2013). Through the opening of the on-demand market to a programmatically global dimension, each site of consumption becomes in turn a site of production, with the construction of “glocal” dynamics with considerable impact on the entire market image.

It is through an understanding of this new nature of distribution that a study of the forms immanent to the functioning of the devices through which the fruition of content occurs and is discursivized becomes necessary.

In all this, the approach adopted here is the ethnosemiotic one (Marsciani, 2007; Mazzarino, 2022), which makes it possible to observe objects, behaviors and spaces through a structural analytical lens, capable of tracing back to textualized forms (Lancioni & Marsciani, 2007) the different value occurrences that can be recognized. In this way, through spatial and value conformations, it will be possible to identify the subjective figure underlying the two devices and, consequently, the forms of interaction between them (Landowski, 2006), which are fundamental at the moment when practice takes a generative form.

FORMS OF MEDIA PRACTICES – THE SCHEDULE

In front of the television schedule device (Barra 2022), we witness a fruition with a substantially flowing nature: regardless of the quantity of channels available to the viewer, among which he can freely “jump” in a choice that may be of the order of a paradigmatic one, the predominant dimension is and remains that of the syntagm, because every single content consumed on any channel goes to position itself within a single and unstoppable flow that can hardly be segmented through recognizable contours. In fact, the schedule flow is highly nuanced and punctuated by paratextual forms – commercials, for example – that in many cases are indistinguishable from the programs themselves, creating a single linear and temporally directed, as well as enhanced, discursive configuration.

In the schedule, in fact, the predominant value is the linguistic one of a Saussurian matrix (De Saussure, 1916): a program is not worth in absolute terms, but positional, that is, depending on the place it occupies within the temporal scan of the television day, and in relation to the products that precede and follow it. This syntagmatic effect, given by a

positional valuation of a radically recursive nature – that is, repeated across days, weeks, seasons – leads to a dynamic of oriented interaction that, in Landowski’s terms (2006), we can call “Programming”, given by appointments that condition expectations and activities of viewer presence.

Adding to this, the flow nature of the TV schedule strongly acts on the modes of viewing: when the device is on, the viewer cannot unsee – sure, he can ignore, but the flow keeps going – whereas if the device is off, obviously, the viewer cannot see, despite the fact that the flow does not stop and is simply unwatched.

From the point of view of the spectatorial subjectivity, the interaction of Programming combined with the modes of viewing just described returns a subjective figure of the order of the simulacrum (Greimas & Fontanille, 1991): the subject is deprived of virtuality which is preliminarily attributed to it by the viewing device that frames a fiduciary expectation of which programming is the guarantor.

FORMS OF MEDIA PRACTICES – THE PORTAL

In the case of the portal (Lotz, 2017), the flow is replaced by a condition that tends toward an environmental configuration (Villani, 2023b), in which the scopic nature of fruition is flanked by a strongly phenomenological tactile one, to the point of having a very dense discursive efficacy: every action that is performed within the portal, every single touch, has a transformative consequence vis-à-vis the entire consumption experience (Villani, 2023a); all this is made possible by a datification of activities that is realized in an interpretation oriented by algorithmic engines that move and shift contents following a logic of value different from that of the schedule (Fisher, 2022).

The predominant value in the portal, in fact, is the phenomenological value of Greimasian matrix, that is, the value that is generated in the encounter between a narratively oriented “I” and “You”: the portal proposes contents to its user based on a propensity derived from the reiteration of fruition, of the *encounter*, in a form of “choice” that shows itself as strongly paradigmatic.

From the point of view of interaction, again in Landowski’s terms (2006), one is faced with a regime of Adjustment, which takes the form of a reshaping of the portal to follow the tastes of its user (Frey, 2021) and, on the part of the viewer, an increasing knowledge of the catalog through the fraction of contents that is made available to her or him. The portal, moreover, posits a radically different mode of viewing than the schedule: within it, in fact, it is indeed possible to be able to see, but, at the same time, it is possible to be able *not* to see, limiting oneself to the increasingly recurrent habit of spending more time choosing what to watch rather than watching anything at all.

The subjective figure returned by the portal gains a greater virtual component than that of the schedule, due to the strongly phenomenological nature of the practice underlying it, returning a “Spectral” subjectivity in Derridean terms (Derrida, 1993): the subject is complete and is originated from the dialogue relationship between the viewer and the portal; continuously changing, it becomes the result of meaning in its making during fruition.

PLENITUDE OF MEDIA CONSUMING

It should be clearly emphasized that these forms of consumption are formal patterns that fit into much more nuanced practices, going on to configure polarities of interaction that often intersect with each other (Eugeni, 2015; Casetti, 2015): in current programming schedules, in fact, we find grafts of portals (Wolf, 2015; Barra, 2022), just as in portals we see several occurrences of streams. This is because domestic audiovisual consumption is part of a larger ecosystem of viewing modes – a plenitude, in a sense (Bolter, 2019) – in which contents inhabit multiple channels simultaneously, rendering the condition of traditional mediality radically outdated and forcing the identification of increasingly multifaceted and interchangeable forms of fruition.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, recapitulating what has been pointed out so far, after an initial presentation of the epistemological frame of Media Studies in which this formalization fits, and after specifying the reasons and potentialities of the ethnosemiotic approach used, we observed the television schedule as a discursive model with a syntagmatic nature, capable, through its Programming, of configuring a simulacral spectatorial subjectivity, that is, entrusted to a fiduciary expectation that deprives it of virtuality; then observing the portal, it was seen how in on-demand consumption the syntagmatic dimension is replaced by a paradigmatic prevalence, in which the phenomenological enhancement of products is realized in an Adjustment interaction between the portal and its user, generating a fully formed and autonomous *spectral* spectatorial figure, capable of choosing up to the point of being able to actually see anything at all. In conclusion, it was pointed out that all this is a snapshot of a formal condition whose realization is often nuanced and co-present in individual fruition practices, requiring the analyst to have an observational capacity that is strictly transmedial in nature and placed on multiple devices.

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JEZIČKE FORME IZMEDJU LINEARNOG RASPOREDA EMITOVANJA I STRIMING PLATFORMI U KUĆNOM KONTEKSTU

Rezime: Predmet ovog rada su jezičke forme pomoću kojih je moguće prevesti i interpretirati realizaciju audiovizuelnih sadržaja u domaćem kontekstu, između linearnog rasporeda emitovanja i striming portala na zahtev. U skladu sa lingvističkom teorijom Luisa Hjelmsleva, ova dva uređaja se posmatraju kroz njihovu sintagmatsku i paradigmsku prirodu, a posebno se naglašavaju načini na koje različito povezuju sadržaj koji prenose generišući različite oblike audiovizuelne diskurzivnosti. Nakon što utvrdimo ove razlike moći ćemo da objasnimo različitu valorizaciju prvo u linearnom rasporedu – koji daje prioritet jezičkoj/pozicionoj vrednosti – a zatim u portalu za striming – u kojem se javlja fenomenološka vrednost koju je predložio A.J. Greimas. Ovo uporedno čitanje, pored vraćanja na formalizaciju načina gledanja na različitim uređajima, omogućava nam da uvedemo čitanje režima interakcije koji stupaju na scenu u vreme realizacije sadržaja koji se različito prenosi i valorizuje.

Ključne reči: studije televizije, semiotika medija, studije strimovanja, lingvistika, studije medija, studije platforme

Datum prijema: 31.8.2023.

Datum ispravki:

Datum odobrenja: 7.11.2023.