

# Trends in the Romanian Local-Regional Written Press

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## **Journalistic Style**

**T**HE STYLE of the regional written press could be circumscribed to the journalistic style. We can say that at the moment there is a tendency of press articles, of the news report type, to combine information and the opinion—superficial, shallow—of the journalist. Most of the time this subjective approach is presented through the use of adjectives—*beautiful, interesting, cute, captivating* event/play/book. For didactic reasons, in the table below I will try to synthesize the main characteristics of the journalistic style.

The style of the press must be a direct, clear, simple way for the reader to understand the text (Neamțu 2007). The style makes the reading attractive and turns the reader into an “indirect witness to the facts reported by the journalist” (Gaillard 2000, 126). The journalistic style must be simple and vivid. In the table below I summarize the main characteristics of the journalistic style, as identified by the French professor (ibid., 128–129).

Simplicity of the journalistic style	The concrete, precise character of the journalistic style	The vivacity of the journalistic style
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the dominant feature of the journalistic style.</li> <li>• It is the most difficult quality to obtain and it focuses primarily on vocabulary.</li> <li>• Grammatical simplicity requires avoiding the use of a difficult and verbose phraseology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is helpful for the rigor with which the information is to be treated.</li> <li>• The slightest trace of useless talk will distract the reader and “remove” him from the text.</li> <li>• Every sentence and almost every word must bring an element of information. Hence the importance of the selection and precision of each noun or adjective, of the systematic elimination of any vague or unnecessary adjectives or adverbs.</li> <li>• Avoid vague words, overused to the point of exhaustion, used on their own, without explanation: <i>fascinating, interesting, amazing, beautiful, cool, wonderful, marvelous, glorious, gorgeous, nice, feisty, funny, amusing boring, uninteresting, ugly, awful, unfunny.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplicity and precision give the style a certain vivacity.</li> <li>• Be lively, capture the reader, write in the present tense, inserting quotes, visual images and comparisons into the text.</li> </ul>

Andrei Pleșu, analyzing Romanian journalism, finds a “talkativeness in the style of the written press” (Pleșu 1997, 3). He distinguishes between two styles: the didactic style and the satirical style of writing. The *didactic style* reveals a delirium of competence and demagoguery. Positioned high above stupidity, the knowledgeable journalist gives advice. He’s worried, arrogant, priggish. The *satirical dominance* of the press discourse is that in which the journalist no longer pontificates pedagogically. He chooses a more relaxed style, full of insinuations. Vulgarity is the effect that accompanies this style. The journalist cultivates a colloquiality which is that of the tavern, in the analyst’s opinion.

Trying to conclude, I would say that the journalistic style must place the press article between the pleasure of reading and the accurate information of the reader (Neamțu 2007, 178). To say a lot in a few sentences and in the most attractive way possible, this is the secret of a successful text.

Therefore, the qualities of the press text are simplicity, sincerity and accuracy. Never look for a refined style, never use big words where ordinary words suffice. Go right into the essence of the problem. Stop after you’ve exposed what was to

be exposed, leave aside the conclusions or moralizing endings. Associated Press Style provides consistent guidelines for news writing. The guiding principles behind AP style are: clarity, accuracy, consistency and brevity (for more information see [www.apstylebook.com](http://www.apstylebook.com)).

## The Preference for News Articles and the Lack of More Complex Genres

**I**N THE years after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, in Romania it was texts that sold the newspapers. Today, in newspapers the image is gradually replacing a text that has become increasingly inconsistent. Established press genres, such as the report, the survey, the chronicle, the review of a book, film, concert, even the interview as a stand-alone genre, no longer exist or appear sporadically.

In the pages of the regional publications of Arad, we notice a preference for *news articles*. The lack of more complex genres is replaced by the opinion of the journalists. Not in a separate commentary article, editorially, but right inside the news. The information is infused by the subjectivity of the journalist, who wants to write more than a simple briefing on what happened, where, when, how, possibly why.

So, local journalists hardly master their subjectivity in their informative articles. The news is full of the journalist's impulses, sympathies, dislikes. The temptation to give lessons, verdicts in the news, is a mistake and must be avoided. Indignation and sympathy are translated into adjectival associations (crime/aggression is odious/abominable/horrible, unimaginable; a gesture is despicable/unforgivable etc.).

Phrases like: *Why, why on earth?*; *Friends know why!*; *Hey, what about this?*; *Until when, until when?*, usually featured at the end of the article or inside the news, should be avoided.

A simple cultural news story announcing the release of a novel is inflated by the journalist. Confessing that he has not read the book, the journalist talks about it and tries to rate the author. On the same principle, the news report on the opening of an exhibition is rife with appreciations regarding the painter, the journalist forgetting to provide useful information: where the event takes place, the theme of the paintings, who the painter is, etc.

Established genres such as reports, editorials or chronicles have disappeared from the landscape of the Arad local media, being replaced by news written in such a way that elements of subjectivity, specific to the opinion genres, are

melted into the body of the news text, written in keeping with the structure of the reversed pyramid.

The event is to take place in the future but the journalist anticipates the agitation of the launch, the grandiose atmosphere of the meeting. The simple event is blown out of proportion, exaggerated. It becomes a show, an unmissable event.

*There's going to be a lot of commotion at the theater on Thursday. On 22 March, at 6 p.m., in the Great Hall, of all places, comes the "Criminal Student." Eugenia Crainic, known by many of our readers as a journalist, today a spokesperson for the Arad County Institution, launches her first novel, a thriller, on 22 March, starting at 6 p.m.: "Criminal Student." This is not going to be your run-of-the-mill launch. Upstanding people are going to talk about the novel, the author promising us a royal treat.*

*And we are convinced of this fact because we know Eugenia Crainic and we are quite familiar with her overflowing energy and conquering style. The event will be presented by communication master Andrei Tigănaș, from Cluj-Napoca. From Germany, the writer Radu Țuculescu will come especially for the event. Otilia Țigănaș, Ioan Matiuț, Lazăr Faur and Vasile Dan will talk about the author. Actress Oltea Blaga will read passages from the novel, and the show will end with a mini-recital by Claudia Iuga.<sup>1</sup>*

Subjectivity is present in the written press both at the level of words and their adjective determinations, as well as graphically, given the preference for exclamation marks or numerous suspension points.

Sébastien Bohler (2008), a doctor of neurobiology and a journalist, talks about the effect called affirmative bias. When we hear a question on the radio or read in the newspapers a headline that comes in an interrogative form, there is a very good chance that they will become realities for our brains in the hours and days to come.

We turn interrogations into statements. If we have an interrogative title, like "Is the Mayor of Arad Corrupt?" there is a possibility that the reader will believe that the mayor is corrupt, even if the journalist did not say it directly. He or she just wondered if this was possible. Bohler writes that accusations, in an interrogative form, make their way into the reader's mind. And the person accused usually reacts, warning the journalist: "Please stop your insinuations." To which the journalist invariably replies: "Oh, but I've only asked a question."

Looking at the regional print media, I noticed that often, out of a desire to comment on information that appears in the news, the journalist uses a question especially in the title of the article, when the documentation is incomplete or is completely missing:

*Teenager Beaten by Three Cops in Arad?*<sup>2</sup>  
*Drugged Behind the Wheel on the Streets of Arad?*<sup>3</sup>  
*Dead in the House for Six Months?*<sup>4</sup>

## Grandiloquent Style and Dramatization of News Content

**A**N ANALYSIS of the articles in the regional press reveals the tendency of journalists to employ a grandiloquent style, out of a desire to dramatize the content of the news. Thus, the event assumes proportions far beyond its real limits. In the written press, exaggeration has always sold newspapers. A poor grasshopper in a cornfield becomes *the Moroccan grasshopper that invaded the orchard*. The catastrophic tone is amplified by magnified photos of the killer insect. Most of the time, in such situations, the journalist uses graphic fireworks designed to alarm the reader about the importance of the subject. Most often the journalist chooses a black color, a black background, black borders on the page of the newspaper.

In their endless pursuit of more readers and of sensationalism, journalists seek the insolent, the strangeness that horrifies, the outrageous events, being tempted to treat the serious information in a soft manner. Thus, we see large, appealing, screaming colored titles, which often have nothing to do with the reality presented.

## Colloquialisms in Press Language

**R**EGIONAL JOURNALISTS favor a relaxed style that draws on the living registers of the spoken language. This style is opposed to the style of the wooden language, employed before 1989 in Romanian press.

The requirement for using popular expressions stylistically, with ironic humorous touches, is to have “a special sense of appropriateness to the situation, the object, the communication register. Otherwise, the process might get out of control” (Zafiu 2001, 273). Professor Zafiu draws attention to a possible misunderstanding of such expressions, providing transcripts in order to illustrate the confusing orality:

*Extending the colloquial tone in the press creates a very serious danger: article authors might lose their knowledge of the differences between written and oral codes,*

*endorsing the false idea of orality as pure transcription. Orality, as we know it, is written with well controlled words, based on selection, on the elimination of redundancy . . . The rule of a well written text is to give the impression of orality, by adapting it to other conditions of communication, by removing it from the context (absence of facial expressions, intonation, of immediate corrections) and putting it back in: it is thus a suggestion, not a recording, an exact reproduction. (Zafiu 2001, 278)*

Ștefan Munteanu (2006), a linguist at Timișoara University, talks about “the ways of the spoken folk language” (46). *Hey!, ohh!, ooh, my!, get out of here!, you don’t say!, it’s true!* give texts a dramatic touch. Professor Munteanu thinks that there are vulgar words which make the language uglier: *dude/chick* (for boyfriend-girlfriend), *crappy* (when something is ugly, ineffective), *cool* (as opposed to *crappy*) etc. We could also add to the list: *awesome, neat, cooler, trendy*, words which have replaced the absolute superlative.

Here are a couple of news reports that combine, in a wrong manner for a non-satiric publication, information and commentary:

*The Cultural Center in Caransebeș, which is led by Colonel Ioan Cojocar, also known as Coajă, set the time of the ceremony for the Day of the Flag today at 14:30. When the meteorologists announce 40 degrees. Hey, Mister Coajă, we no longer have the draft!*

*Băile Călacea resort, situated between Timișoara and Arad, also has a beach. On Sunday, it was full of people and frogs. Aren’t frogs wanted for export? Especially this species.*

*He’s showing off became in the newspaper he is showboating. He was amazed became his jaw dropped. He is trying to fool you became he’s pulling the wool over your eyes.*

Those expressions appear in the pages of newspapers because of the desire to get closer, to directly engage with the reader. The more we see them in the written press, the more annoying they are.

Journalists embrace this style, which refers to the living registers of the spoken language, even in writing, as opposed to the style employed before the year 1989, when you could talk about immobility in narrations, a wooden language in the style of communication in general. Vulgar words prevail in the press discourse, the exoticism of the language attracts the audience: *kiss-ass, shameless whore, crappy boss, retard, faggot, bandit, sluts*, etc.

*He is nervous* became *he is pissing himself*.  
*He lost his temper* became *he blew a fuse*.  
*He failed* became *he screwed up*.  
 “The impostor syndrome” became *he is sheepish*.  
*He won’t keep quiet* became *he wouldn’t shut his trap*.  
 Things are no longer *far away*, they’re “*at the arse-end of space*.”

Journalists often prefer to use the word *to put*—*to put someone in the hospital, to put someone in a coma*:

*The mushrooms put a child in the hospital.*<sup>5</sup>  
*A man has been put in a coma by an automobile.*<sup>6</sup>

In a desire to write in a very interesting way, journalists abuse inverted commas and colorful expressions.

*“Sexu” and “Corcobauru” take five from mugging.*

*Prosecutor Florin Roman of the Arad Court has made available to us two files of former high school students who have been mugging other fellow students, using threats and intimidation.*

*Gheorghe Adrian Lazar, 20 years old, and Florin Barna, 19 years old, both from Arad, were operating in the children’s park, which groups of students were crossing on their way home. “Corcobauru” and “Sexu,” as the two were known, used to buy liquor with the stolen money or fenced goods. The “fatal” complaint regarding them was made on 3 October.*<sup>7</sup>

## Slang Elements in the Journalistic Style

**S**LANG INCLUDES a set of terms and phrases that are expressively charged, developing new unusual meanings, which are most of the time incomprehensible to those outside the small sociolinguistic circle in which they are used (Irimia 1999, 122). It is used by someone who does not wish to be understood by people who do not belong to a certain group. Professor Dumitru Irimia highlighted that using slang terms characterizes almost exclusively some socio-cultural groups, such as scholars or students, soldiers, prisoners etc.

The linguist Iorgu Jordan (1975) explained the use of slang by scholars and students by evoking adolescence, the age at which fantasy and the spirit of defi-

ance are exacerbated. Irimia also contends that using slang gives a teenager “the conscience of a free spirit,” it emphasizes the feeling of individuality, of personality, by concentrating the attention on the person using slang.

Linguists have described the slang of villains, thieves, of scholars and students, of sportsmen, of typographers etc. Professor Ilie Rad (1999) looked at the origins and evolution of slang, specifying that some slang words and expressions come from the common language, and mentioning that the speaker gives them new meanings, which are sometimes based on comparison, metonymy, or synecdoche: *pumpkin* for *head*, *filching* for *stealing*, *stove* for *wife*, *borscht* for *blood* etc. Rad distinguishes a certain category of slang, which comes from the regional idioms or from borrowings from other languages, such as *kaput* (from German, used for *broken*).

It seems that slang makes the spoken language more picturesque, expressive and exotic. For example, in writing student slang, expressions ironically translate aspects from the students’ lives: *fresh meat* (for *freshman*), *nail* (for a *very difficult exam*), *clueless* (*ignorant of the subject*), *chick* (a very beautiful *girl*), *buzz off* (do not disturb me), *to be given a third degree by a teacher* (being asked questions on all courses in an exam), *to doll up* (to dress up), *to eye* (to observe), *farebeater* (the one who travels by train without a ticket), *house painter* (an Arts student), *mason* (student attending sculpture courses) etc.

Here are a few examples of oral language in the newspaper:

He is not just “stupid,” he’s “dumb as a stump.”

She is not just “insane,” she’s “a whacko.”

He will not look at you “in confusion,” he will be “like a calf looking at the new gate.”

You don’t “delude yourself,” you “kid yourself.”

He won’t “give up,” he’ll “throw in the towel.”

He hasn’t been “scammed,” he has been “shafted.”

He won’t tell you to stop “wasting time,” he’ll tell you to stop “farting about.”

Something is OK or “cool” became something is “solid.”

He is not just “a drunkard,” he’s “a sponge.”

She doesn’t have “unusual ideas,” she has “a weird mind.”

He’s “talking nonsense” became he “beats about the bush.”

The assault on a young man is described as “he was beaten to a pulp” by “the number one machoman.”

## Sophisticated Expressions in Journalistic Style

I HAVE SHOWN above how journalists favor a relaxed style that appeals to the living registers of the spoken language. There is yet another trend in the written press, just as important, involving the presence of sophisticated expressions in press texts. I am referring here to the expressions in Latin, phrases that appear in the regional press, not only in the specialized, academic or cultural reviews.

Here are some commonly used expressions:

*Alter ego.* In the press I also found the expression *you're my right hand*.

A journalist who does not criticize is a *rara avis*.

*Alea iacta est* in the Liberal Party! It's the point of no return to the Liberal Party. The die has been cast.

*Deus ex machina.* President Emil Constantinescu was the solution *deus ex machina* for the leadership of the country.

*Ecce homo!* Francisc, *Ecce homo!*

*Marcel Ciolacu's Ex abrupto speech.* Suddenly, without any introduction, this is how the speech of the leader of the Social Democratic Party, Marcel Ciolacu, began in parliament.

The opposition presented *in extenso* the economic recovery program for the current year.

*Festina lente*, dear politicians.

*Divide et impera!*

*Errare humanum est.*

In these times of pandemic, to wear a mask and wash your hands often has become, for more and more of us, a *modus vivendi*.

*De gustibus non disputandum.*

Rescuers were able to retrieve *in extremis* the child's body trapped among the pipes on the construction site.

*Mea culpa.* It's my fault, I'm wrong. I also encountered the expression *mia culpa*, an invention of a journalist who did not know Latin.

We have postponed the results *sine die*.

*Dura lex.* The population fiercely resists these pandemic times.

*Cui prodest* all these demonstrations against pandemic restrictions?

The dramatic situation in Indonesia has been restored *manu militari*.

Romanian politician George Simion is *persona non grata* in the Republic of Moldova.

*In vino veritas.*

Debates in the Romanian Parliament have degenerated into xenophobic discourse, while discussions should be *sine ira et studio*.

Today it's our national poet's birthday, 15 January. And what we're proposing is a *memento*.

*Vivat, crescat, floreat. Vivat, crescat, floreat Mr. Mayor.*

The preference of journalists for sophisticated expressions is a way for them to stand out in front of the readers and show off their general culture. I have encountered Latin phrases in the regional press alongside colloquialisms, as in the title *Dura lex, sed lex, da' sediu canci!* (Dura lex, sed lex, but no company headquarters).

A preference for the Italian language can be seen in the sports reviews. We often encounter in the regional press Italian words, misspelled by journalists: *gazetta* (the correct word is *gazzetta*) or *azurro* (the correct word is *azzurro*). Here are other words taken from another language and transcribed in the style of the press: *azzurri* (players of the national football team of Italy), *squadra azzurra* (the blue team, Italy's national football team), *Il Calcio* (expression used in the press for the Italian football championship). An Italian term is also used when the team and the coach decide they don't want to talk to the press: *silenzio stampa at the national football team*. When there are Romanian players in foreign football championships, journalists called them *stranieri*. When the Italian tenor, Luciano Pavarotti died, the newspapers wrote on the front page: *Farewell, Grande Luciano!*

## Conclusion

**R**EGARDING THE style of the local Romanian written press, we can identify certain trends:

A preference for news reports and infotainment. The lack of more complex genres is replaced by the opinion of the journalists. Not in a separate commentary article, editorially, but right inside the news. The information is infused by the subjectivity of the journalist, who wants to write more than a simple briefing about what happened, where, when, how, possibly why.

Established genres such as reports, editorials or chronicles have disappeared from the landscape of the Arad media, being replaced by news written in such a way that elements of subjectivity, specific to the opinion genres, are melted into the body of the news, written following the structure of a reversed pyramid. The

main and oldest newspaper of Arad, *Jurnal arădean*, does not have an editorial and rarely features opinion articles (once or twice a month).

Subjectivity is present in the written press both at the level of words and their adjective determinations, as well as graphically, given the preference for exclamation marks, inverted commas and numerous suspension points.

Often, out of a desire to comment on information that appears in the news, the journalist uses a question especially in the title of the article, when the documentation is incomplete or is completely missing.

We notice an extension of the colloquial tone in local newspapers due to the journalists' desire to establish a rapport with the reader.

Vulgar expressions gain prevalence in the press discourse, as the rudeness of the language attracts the audience.



## Notes

1. Adriana Barbu, *Jurnal arădean* 30, 8035 (2018): 3.
2. Diana Duțu, *Jurnal arădean* 30, 8045 (2018): 6.
3. Ioana Costăș, *Jurnal arădean* 30, 8044 (2018): 6.
4. A. G., *Jurnal arădean* 28, 7671 (2016): 1.
5. Tibi Ettenberger, *Observator* 11, 660 (2007): 4.
6. Florina Ghile, *Observator* 11, 792 (2007): 5.
7. Lucian Valeriu, *Observator* 12, 1255 (2008): 4.

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## **Abstract**

### Trends in the Romanian Local-Regional Written Press

The living language of the press, the stylistic expressiveness of the texts, gives us countless topics of analysis. 33 years after the Romanian Revolution, the local written press in my hometown of Arad is continuously transforming in terms of both form and content. Affected by the market economy and the lack of serious investment, newspapers have had to restructure their staff and style. Right now, in Arad there are only two newspapers, *Jurnal arădean* and *Glasul Aradului*. A similar situation can be found in every major city in Romania. In my paper I will try to present several media trends in the local written press of Arad. My study focuses on the press in my hometown of Arad between 2018 and 2021. If we want to find out how a certain language looks today, a glance at the regional media offers the opportunity for countless analyses and reflections.

## **Keywords**

trends in regional journalism, Romanian local written press, newspapers in Arad