Construing the reader: A multidisciplinary approach to journalistic texts

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Abstract
In order to compare the relationship between the intended aims of journalists and the journalistic texts produced, this article develops further the notion of the reader in two directions: first, as an intended ‘model reader’ of a media concept that is collectively construed in the editorial process and, second, as a ‘construed reader’ that is analyzed from the texts. Media concept and model reader are concepts and tools for making visible and analyzing the goals, values, content and organization of work in media organizations, whereas with the concept of a construed reader it is possible to assess the texts as outcomes of the editorial process and in this way compare them with the intentions. The construed reader in the text is analyzed from the viewpoint of cognitive grammar theory and its ‘dimensions of construal’ in which ‘specificity’, ‘focusing’ and ‘perspective’ are used as linguistic tools for analysis. The case study data come from a Finnish third-sector magazine.

Keywords
cognitive grammar, construed reader, dimensions of construal, discourse analysis, Finnish, focusing, implied reader, intentions, magazine texts, media concept, media studies, model reader, perspective, specificity

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Introduction

The relation between the intentions of journalists and the outcomes of journalistic texts is seldom approached in the same research as consideration is often only given to the intentions within texts. To analyze this relationship, we use a multidisciplinary method which takes into account the multilayered nature of journalistic texts as a context, as well as perspectivation as omnipresent in language structures. Our focus is on the mediating concept of the reader.

The reader is not studied as the actual reader, but as a construction from two different viewpoints: first, in the frame of journalism research as an intended ‘model reader’, which is collectively constructed in the editorial process (Aitamurto, 2013; Helle and Töyry, 2009: 520; Johnson and Prijatel, 2013); second, in the frame of linguistics as a ‘construed reader’, created by linguistic expressions and which can be studied with text analysis. The linguistic analysis is based particularly on cognitive grammar theory (see Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008; Verhagen, 2005, 2007) and its concept of ‘dimensions of construal’.

This dual approach first takes into account the explicated intentions of the journalists creating the texts and then analyzes how the intended reader is construed by the texts. Thus, we don’t just analyze the intentions in the texts as is often done in discourse analysis (e.g. see Thompson, 2012). Our data come from the renewal process of a Finnish third-sector magazine, Mielenterveys (‘Mental Health’), which wanted to improve the content and visuals of the magazine. The focus is more on the methodology of analyzing the relevant interpretations of texts and the intentions of the newsroom than on a comprehensive account of how the journalists succeeded in addressing their intended reader. The editorial office of the magazine is seen here as a knowledge community (Van Dijk, 2012: 601) that constructs a common ground (Clark, 1996) by agreeing on the model reader.

In the next section, we discuss the two reader concepts of the construed reader and the model reader, and we introduce the basic idea of the implied reader from literary studies on the basis of which we have developed our reader concepts. Then we describe the data and research methods. Linguistic analysis of the construed reader of the magazine texts follows this, and finally we discuss the theoretical and methodological relevance of our methods and results.

Theoretical background: Construing the reader

In multidisciplinary research with a mutual focus, the central concepts need to be deconstructed and discussed explicitly (Baker, 2006; Klein, 2008; Wockson et al., 2006). In our case, the most important concept is the recipient of a communicative situation. Both of our main concepts for the recipient – the model reader and the construed reader – are rooted in the concept of the ‘implied reader’ from literary research (Eco, 1979; Iser, 1974, 2006; Phelan, 1994; Richardson, 2007; Rimmon-Kenan, 1983). The image of an implied reader mirrors the values and attitudes that are constructed by the text.

In linguistics, the focus of interest has turned from language as a system to the functions of linguistic structures in actual language usage, which brings into focus questions
of context and interaction. Cognitive linguistics is a broad paradigm with a strong emphasis on human conceptualization in explaining language ability and communication (e.g. Evans and Green, 2006). For our purposes, it offers a detailed way to analyze the reader positions in texts. Recently, perspectives of force dynamics (Talmy, 1988, 2000) and cognitive grammar (Langacker, 2008) have been adopted in critical discourse analytical studies (Hart, 2011, 2013; Marin Arrese, 2011) and in cognitive poetics (Harrison et al., 2014; Stockwell, 2009).

Within cognitive grammar, we apply its ‘dimensions of construal’ (DoCs) (Langacker, 1987: 116–137, 2008: 55–89; Tabakowska, 1993; Verhagen, 2007). The basic claim is that the organization of conceptual content is included inextricably in the meaning of an expression. For example, every expression implies a certain position from which the situation is construed, and the organization between the observer/expresser and the observed/expressed. The DoCs are context-sensitive characterizations of this conceptual structure, and include parameters such as specificity, focusing and perspective. The dimensions allow a systematic scrutiny of linguistic data in their context because the dimensions link to the different aspects of language from grammar to discourse.

In sociolinguistics, ‘audience design’ (Bell, 1984) refers to the positioning of a specific audience group as the speaker’s main addressee. When adjusted to the study of written discourse, the focus still remains on the relation of the writer and the real audience, and relies almost exclusively on the text itself in finding clues as to how audience groups are imagined and positioned in relation to the writer (Thieme, 2010: 40). However, we are interested in studying both the aims of the writers and how they can be analyzed from the written texts.

Also, in the field of journalism and media studies there is a growing interest in practices of journalism (Cottle, 2003; Paterson and Domingo, 2008). One research tradition with an emphasis on intentions in the production of media texts follows Goffman’s (1974) idea of framing, and from which viewpoint journalists typically present their topics (Reese, 1990; Reese et al., 2001). Further, ethnography in newsrooms has revealed contesting intentions and ways of addressing the audience in media organizations (Cottle and Ashton, 1999; Helle, 2000, 2010).

**Implied reader and literary studies**

Reception theory and reader-response criticism readings of the implied reader focus on reading processes, reception and interactional aspects of reading. In these theoretical frames, the implied reader can be seen from two slightly different angles that correspond with our two reader concepts.

First, our use of the construed reader is close to the implied reader, which is a virtual image of an addressee that evolves from the text during the reading process (Eco, 1979: 10; Iser, 1978, 2006: 65–66). The implied reader/construed reader can be found by analyzing what kind of knowledge and orientation or stance the text requires from or offers to its reader.

Second, the implied reader has also been described in relation to the objectives of the texts. This implied reader refers to an image of an addressee who reads the text ‘the right way’ (Eco, 1979: 9–10; Iser, 2006: 60–63; Richardson, 2007: 267–268). The model
reader concept we apply (see Helle and Töyry, 2009) is close to these interpretations. Interestingly, Iser also returns to intentionality when he assigns a social mission to literature, in the sense that literary texts also pose historical or social questions for their readers (Iser, 1978: 212, 2006: 60–63) – this also forms a link to ideologies of journalism. Contrary to most literary texts, journalistic texts address some predefined audience, and this kind of intentionality – either explicit or implicit – involves the types of intentions taken into account in this article.

The construed reader and cognitive linguistics

The construed reader refers metonymically to the act of understanding a text: to study the construed reader means to seek out appropriate and reasonable options for coherent understandings and interpretations of a given text. Other, similar terms presented in a discourse analysis framework have been ‘putative reader’ (Martin and White, 2005: 95) and ‘reader-in-the-text’ (Thompson, 2012; Thompson and Thetela, 1995). O’Halloran’s (2003) notion of an ‘idealised reader framework’ focuses on reading for gist strategies in the hard news genre.

The concept of DoCs refers to a collection of processes by which a representation is built in the actual language use. In other words, linguistic choices organize different ways to talk and think about a state of affairs, and the meaning construction can be analyzed by applying a combination of DoCs. Depending on the data and tasks, the dimensions can be applied with different levels of detail, and DoCs provide a systematic way to analyse how different topics are handled in texts.

Langacker’s (2008) list of DoCs includes four main dimensions, each of which can be further divided into more fine-grained ones. The main dimensions ‘specificity’, ‘focusing’ and ‘perspective’, with its two sub-dimensions ‘semantic roles’ and ‘objective vs. subjective construal’, are used in the following analysis of texts.

The Cognitive Grammar DoCs pay specific attention to the perspective from which the text is construed, and the way the writer invites the recipient to jointly attend the conceptualization from a certain angle (Verhagen, 2005: 17–18, 159–161, 2007: 59–60). They also include a methodology for analyzing in detail how different knowledge frames are utilized in texts. First, they provide the means to analyze how different readers with different expertise may be able to interpret the texts. Second, the DoCs pay attention to the relationship between what is explicitly stated in the texts and what is left implied. Readers’ ability to ‘fill in the gaps’ while processing texts has been a main issue in both literary and journalism studies (e.g. Iser’s (1978, 2006) ‘deficiencies’ of a text, and the applicability of Goffman’s (1974) ‘framing theory’), as well as in discourse studies (e.g. O’Halloran, 2003: 230–247; Van Dijk, 2008: 86–95).

There are also other characterizations of the dimensions (Croft and Cruse, 2004: 43–46; Hart, 2011; Talmy, 2000: 40–84; Verhagen, 2007). An important classification is presented by Talmy (1988, 2000), in which ‘force dynamics’ is presented as an independent dimension. Force dynamics focuses on describing how the knowledge frames of physical, psychological and social forces work in the structure of language, for example in expressions concerning causation (for their application in critical discourse analysis, see Hart, 2011). In our analysis, aspects of force dynamics come up via the dimension of
perspective, particularly the semantic roles described by the action chain model. From the discourse point of view, Van Dijk’s (2008) ‘context models’ provide characterization of schemas and processes underlying discourse processing. Context models (including such aspects as level of knowledge, participant categories, spatio-temporal settings) control discourse production and comprehension, and also take into account the intentions of writers, as well as their construals according to the target audience. However, they are less directly connected with language structure, and therefore we propose that the DoCs increase our knowledge about how people use language to describe the ‘world’, which in discourse studies is said to be an area that ‘we know as yet quite little about’ (Van Dijk, 2012: 598).

Model reader and media concept

Literary theory provides the concepts of an ‘implied reader’ (Iser, 1974, 1978) or a ‘model reader’ (Eco, 1979: 7) as a text’s overall projection of a reader role. We have adapted these terms in developmental projects of editorial offices and newsrooms (Helle, 2010; Helle and Töyry, 2008, 2009). In that context, the model reader is neither a character of the text nor a real person, but a fictive reader for whom the editorial office or newsroom as a collective agrees to focus the content. The model reader is a central concept in analyzing and developing the three different levels on which the ‘media concept’ (Helle and Töyry, 2009) is formed and produced. The first level includes the goals of the publisher, reader needs, technology and the journalistic culture; the second the architecture of the organization and the media product. The third level includes everyday practices and journalistic tools, and it is at this level that the strategy of media organization is realized.

The model reader, as a synthesis of the most desirable readers, might include demographic definers like sex, age, education, workplace, but also a condensed idea of the model reader’s lifestyle and individual needs. Negotiations about the definition of a model reader are typically part of the creation process of new media concepts or the development of existing media titles. Therefore, the model reader is not the average reader – for example, in the case of women’s magazines, their implied reader is typically younger than the median reader, and in the case of teen magazines, she is older than the median reader (Helle and Töyry, 2008).

To sum up, the model reader is a tool for analyzing and discussing inside media organizations the often implicit notions of the desired model reader, business models and standards of journalism. In practice, journalists have more or less consciously imagined their audiences. This has become clearly visible in newspapers and magazines as the media field has become more and more fragmented and content has been targeted at specific audience segments (Napoli, 2003, 2010; Niblock and Machin, 2007).

Data and methods of analysis

A new model reader for the Finnish magazine *Mielenterveys* (‘Mental Health’) was developed by the editorial office of five journalists, together with the writers of this article, in a Media Concept Laboratory in 2008–2009. The magazine is published by The
Finnish Association for Mental Health. The main reason for the developmental effort was the falling circulation. The existing media concept was analyzed and a new model reader created during nine Laboratory meetings with the editorial office and the first three authors of this article. The process involved negotiations and discussions to create a common understanding of the values and goals of the publisher and the editorial office, and of how to attract new readers with improved content.

After discussing the goals of the Mental Health Association and the magazine in the first few Laboratory meetings, in the fourth meeting each of the journalists made a suggestion about their preferred model reader. These varied from ‘ordinary member of the association’ to experts in health care and political decision makers. In the fifth meeting, the editorial office agreed on a new model reader and then developed a page plan and story types to fit it. The new model reader, ‘Veera’, was to help create a focus on the intended recipients. ‘Veera’ was a 35-year-old who held a mid-level professional position in developing health-care services. She had a BA degree, was change oriented and sensitive to social injustice. She was also concerned about her own ability to manage the stress caused by the demands of her work.

A structured page plan and a variety of new story types were created to be supported by a new division, as well as by a planning and editorial process. The redesigned magazine was to contain interesting new viewpoints, critical approaches and evaluations as well as a dialogical voice. Previously, the magazine was aimed at a variety of recipients such as mental health volunteers, politicians, families of patients and members of the association. Until the 1980s, the magazine was aimed at experts in medicine and psychology, and professors, for example, contributed scientifically oriented articles.

In-depth thematic sections were to be the backbone of the renewed magazine content, and targeted particularly at Veera. A themed section would consist of several articles in the middle of an issue and could run from 8 to 13 pages out of a total of 48 pages in each issue.

To assess the outcome of the renewal process, we conducted a detailed analysis of topics and linguistic structures by applying the cognitive grammar DoCs. In this article, we focus on the themed sections of all six issues published in 2010, following the relaunch of the magazine (a total of 62 pages; about 20% of the content – see Table 1). The content was produced mostly by journalists, but some of it was commissioned from experts in the field.

We now turn to a detailed analysis of the construed reader with illustrative examples from the magazine.

**Tracking the construed reader**

**Specificity and focusing**

When analyzing the construed reader with cognitive grammar DoCs, we apply the three main dimensions: specificity, focusing and perspective. We focus on selected linguistic constructions. The study of a given text starts by analyzing the topics, main characters and issues in that text. This basic analysis is done by using specificity and focusing, which provide a means to analyze presumed knowledge frames. Different lexical and
constructional choices in texts activate different images, different qualities and amounts of information, as well as different background knowledge. The dimensions of specificity and focusing are tools to scrutinize these choices, and describe the level of knowledge construed for the reader. Specificity refers to the level of density and granularity with which a situation is characterized (Langacker, 2008: 55; Tabakowska, 1993; Verhagen, 2007: 51). This dimension includes the means to analyze in detail how much information an utterance activates in a given context. It also includes a categorizing function.4

The concept of focusing explains further the quality of knowledge frames activated in the text (Langacker, 2008: 57). This dimension includes the means to study the effects of choices between different words and grammatical constructions used to describe different states of affairs. All utterances require implicit knowledge frames as their background to be understood in specific contexts. An important aspect concerns the division between which parts of the knowledge frames are backgrounded and which foregrounded. Next, we apply these two dimensions to naming (Example 1) and to the use of terms (Examples 2, 3). In any magazine, an important choice concerns the naming of people referred to in the texts:

This time help is needed for 19 clients. There is a 19-year-old girl potentially at risk of violence because of the code of honor, an asylum seeker in his fourties, a 22-year-old physically disabled student, an 81-year-old lady whose husband of the same age has suddenly died after 60 years of marriage, a mother of an 18-year-old who attempted suicide.

The choice between nouns such as asiakas (‘client’) and potilas (‘patient’) is important. The word ‘client’ evokes the idea of an actor choosing and using facilities offered by different service providers, whereas ‘patient’ evokes the frame of a target of health care and its aims. Choice between these lexemes is a somewhat delicate matter in Finland, and Mielenterveys seems to avoid the direct use of either of these as it usually exploits an indirect type of reference.

In addition to referential and expressive function, lexemes also contain categorizing effects (Lakoff, 1987; Langacker, 2008: 25–26, 165). By lexical categorizing, like choosing a specific word for a certain object and at the same time expressing something about its classification, the writer also evokes a knowledge frame that affects how the reader may understand the text. This kind of schema-based categorization is a manifestation of both specificity and focusing, and naming and categorizing in discourse are thus related to the interlocutor’s level of knowledge.

Jargon and specialized vocabulary evoke fine-grained knowledge frames. A highly specific expression, like a professional term, is rich in intentional sense but its extension is narrow. Depending on the viewpoint, a professional term either conveys or requires a lot of background knowledge. In this respect, the story type and syntactic structures of a text play an important role in construing the reader’s knowledge. For example, argumentative, expository and popularizing texts and text types tend to exploit jargon differently. An argumentative text type may present terms as given (without explanation or clarification). In this way, jargon conveys a knowing reader who has access to the knowledge frame presented. On the other hand, introductory or expository text types typically include categorizing, identifying and characterizing clause types which are used to explain terms and concepts (Werlich, 1983).

In our data, however, the texts are mixtures of introductory and other text types rather than pure examples of argumentative texts. Some of the texts also contain expository chapters with technical terms, where a specific term can be mentioned and briefly explained, but is not elaborated on. In Example 2, in a three-page story about mental violence, the term EMDR is mentioned for the first time on the final page, in which the subtopic is the importance of a therapy.

(2) Henkisen väkivallan uhrien auttimisessa on usein hyötyä EMDR-terapiasta osana muuta terapiatyöskentelyä. EMDR on lyhennys englanninkielisistä sanoista Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. (Mielenterveys 1/2010, p. 20)

Helping the victims of mental violence with EMDR therapy is in most cases useful in addition to other therapy work. EMDR is an abbreviation for the English words Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing.

The term is introduced in the first sentence of a paragraph in a rheme position. Then the abbreviation is opened by the copula construction, but the method denoted by the
concept is not explained, and its applicability as a therapy process is explained on a general level by only one sentence. The reader is not expected to understand thoroughly how EMDR works, and this is also supported by the location of this piece of information at the very end of the story. Thus, the construed level of knowledge required in this specific discourse pattern is not that of an expert in therapy techniques. The model reader Veera was not supposed to be an expert in psychology or medicine as she was an administrator in health-care services. In line with this, the vocabulary in our data is generally quite casual. However, a semi-professional vocabulary is widely used. By this, we refer to terms that have a specific meaning in certain fields (the social sciences, psychology), but are quite commonly used when mental health issues are discussed. This can be seen as an indication of the wide process of medicalization in western societies, which of course influences the reader position created in a magazine like Mielenterveys.

In the magazine, an interesting feature concerns the ambiguous usage of several semi-professional terms, which may activate different readings depending on the expertise of the construed reader in the themed sections. For example, the coherence of one of the texts in a themed section concerning juveniles’ ill-being is partly dependent on the different readings of the semi-professional terms varhainen puuttuminen (‘early intervention’), ikätasoinen kehittyminen (‘age-related developmental stages’) and varhainen kiintymyssuhdemalli (‘early attachment model’). The text in Example 3 is based on recent research in the field. One of the key terms is introduced by the copula sentence $X$ is $Y$.

(3) Vahva mielenterveyttä suojaava tekijä on myös varhainen kiintymyssuhdemalli. (Mielenterveys 4/2010, p. 18)

The early attachment model is one of the strong protective factors for mental health.

The Finnish term is a compound noun, which is a sign of the term status of the word, even for a non-professional reader. If she does not know the frame of the term in developmental psychology, she may interpret it according to her everyday experience: ‘early attachment to someone is a strong protective factor for mental health’. In this way, she gets a coherent reading of the sentence in its context. However, for an expert reader this term invokes the frame of psychology and more specifically attachment theory. Therefore, an expert reader might face problems with the hyperonym level of this term. The term has several hyponyms, some of which suit and some of which contradict the context of the sentence. The expert reader might expect that the hyponym ‘secure attachment’ would have been used instead of the hyperonym. As a matter of fact, the construed reader with expertise would find it difficult to make a coherent reading of the sentence.

In the same text, other terms also occur several times within similarly vague clauses. For example, the term early intervention wavers between ‘an intervention by professionals’ and ‘everyday attention to other people (by all adults)’. In some cases, this kind of ambiguity may serve as a resource for journalists to address different readers, whereas in this text the vagueness of terms causes inconsistency for a knowing reader.

In addition to compound nouns, the copula construction $X$ is $Y$ is relevant in addressing the construed reader (Karvonen, 1995). It often functions at the same time as definitions and as a transition sentence into a new subtopic, although the transition can be done
rather implicitly, as in Example 3 (for functions of transition sentences in relation to reader position, see Makkonen-Craig, 2011). It also suggests that the construed reader accepts the definitions and categorizations as such. In our data, there are also categorizations which are not self-evident, but are context-dependent or even erroneous, as in Example 3.

The effects of focusing and specificity are also guided by the magazine concept as a whole. For example, the reader first sees the cover of the magazine where the title ‘mental health’, story headlines and visual decisions introduce the topics and therefore provide a presumption of the genre and the model reader, which all function as a background for the more specific meanings construed in the text. All the text in the 2010 volume addresses Finnish mental health in some form or another, for example different mental health problems, healing and recovery, as well as the organization and funding of treatment.

Analysis based on specificity and focusing shows that the construed reader, in relation to knowledge frames, proves to be more like an enthusiastic layman or an assistant worker in the field rather than an actor high up in the medical-psychological and social policy field of mental health. However, the consistency of knowledge frames evoked by the usage of expert terms varies somewhat, as in Example 3.

**Perspective**

Values and ideologies offered to the construed reader can best be scrutinized by the dimension of perspective. By definition, it refers to the global relation between ‘viewers’ and the situation being ‘viewed’ (Langacker, 2008: 73). It thus refers to the interlocutors in discourse, the communicative situation and the position of interlocutors in relation to the observed situation and to each other. Perspective therefore encompasses the speaker’s/hearer’s stance in several ways. It includes the organization of situations from a given point of view, for example spatial arrangement, but also ideological ordering. More specific dimensions of perspective also differentiate between implicit and explicit construals. Next, we will focus particularly on how texts address the reader in relation to the ideology of the magazine, and limit our study to the two most important dimensions: semantic roles, and the subjectivity and objectivity of a construal.

**Semantic roles.** This dimension leads to a detailed linguistic analysis of the semantics of verbs and their syntactic arguments of subject and object. Subject and object can be illustrated via the ‘canonical event model’ in which they participate in the ‘action chain’. In this chain, the subject as the source of energy represents the semantic role of the active ‘agent’, whereas the object as the influenced participant represents the role of the ‘recipient’ or ‘goal’ (Langacker, 2008: 355–366). The particularity of analysis depends on the goals of a given study. For example, in our data the basic level analysis of ‘the action chain’, with a few roles such as agent, recipient, experiencer or goal, gives promising results (see also Hart, 2013). A profound discussion of semantic roles is given by Frawley (1992).

Analysis of the recurrent castings of participants illustrates the stance of the construed writer and reader by also revealing some unspoken construals. In our data, professionals
working in the social and health care/welfare field are most often marked by an agentive semantic role, while customers and patients are constantly portrayed in the less active roles of recipient and experiencer, more like participants who experience and stand as objects for actions (as in Example 1 earlier). Typically, in clauses with the syntactic subjects of non-professionals (e.g. asiakas (‘client’) or mielenterveyskuntoutuja (‘recovering mental health patient’)), predicate verbs are either evaluative or categorizing (‘be’, ‘stand for’), cognitive or communicative (‘to consider’, ‘to feel’, ‘to describe’), or are verbs describing the healing process (‘to go through’, ‘to ask for help’). In addition, non-professionals are often referred to using quantitative properties. To conclude, their sphere of agency is narrower in the field and reflects their low position in the power hierarchy.

This interpretation of casting of participants is not based on verb semantics only, but also on the division between constructions creating specific versus generic or non-specific reference: we focus on this issue in the next section with examples of Finnish zero-person constructions, passive constructions and nominalizations.

**Subjective and objective construal.** Cognitive grammar’s notion of perspective has two poles: the subject and the object of construal (Langacker, 1991: 129–130, 2008: 77; Verhagen, 2007). The subject of construal equates to the conceptualizer, an abstract representative of the speaker/writer in the meaning organization of an utterance. The object of construal is the situation as it is construed by linguistic expressions. All elements of conceptualization can be construed objectively or subjectively. The division between objective and subjective construal can be illustrated by the ‘stage model’. Following the optimal viewing arrangement, an objectively construed entity is explicitly expressed in an utterance and is therefore ‘onstage’, whereas in subjective construal the entity is implied and put ‘offstage’, belonging to a knowledge frame evoked by an expression.

From the reader’s viewpoint, expressions of obligation and necessity are important. Finnish passive and zero-person constructions have no syntactic subject argument, and they create personal reference that is not explicit but which has to be construed from the context, relying on the knowledge frame of the reader.6 Modal zero-person constructions also convey a strong intersubjective function, since the implicit experiencer is interpreted to include the speaker/writer and the recipient. Therefore, zero constructions expressing obligation and necessity offer the recipient a position to identify with the implicit subject referent, but do not directly oblige the recipient to act (Laitinen, 1995, 2006). These clauses are often translated into English by using the generic one or you.

As frequent as the constructions of obligation and necessity are in our data, the striking feature is the implicitness of referents in charge. In our data, there are two main types of obligations conveyed by impersonal constructions. First, political obligations are implicitly directed at society and decision-makers. In Example 4, such obligations are formed by zero (i), passive (ii) and nominalization (iii, literally ‘for preventing’). In Example 4, zero and passive clauses also include conditional mood, which increases the effect of non-specified targets for obligations.

(4) Harvat saavat riittävän ajoissa tarvitsemaansa riittävää tukea. (i) Olisi tärkeää kohdistaa enemmän resursseja varhaisen tuen järjestämiseen muun muassa kouluissa ja oppilaitoksissa,
jotta nuorten ongelmat ja oireet (ii) **voitaisiin tunnistaa** varhaisemmin tilanteiden pitkittymisen ja huonontumisen (iii) **ehkäisemiseksi**. (*Mielenterveys* 5/2010, p. 27)

Few [youths] receive the support they need early enough. More resources (i) **should be targeted** at organizing early support, especially in schools and educational institutions, so that the problems and symptoms of young people (ii) **could be recognized** earlier in order (iii) **to prevent** the situations from protracting and degenerating.

Second, there are also obligations for which the magazine promotes joint responsibility for all levels of the community. This is often done by using schematic NPs with broad extensions, like ‘adults’ or ‘members of the community’:

(5) Aikuisen tehtävä on tukea nuoren elämänhalua, mutta samalla tunnustaa myös kuolemanhalun olemassaolo. (*Mielenterveys* 4/2010, p. 20)

It is the adult’s role to nurture the youth’s zest for life while recognizing the co-existent wish for death.

The existence of political obligations reflects the aims of the magazine as representing a third-sector organization. In this way, the magazine also construes a reader with a social conscience, but, on the other hand, does not require too much from her in terms of action. By directing obligations at large groups of people, such as all adults, the magazine promotes voluntary work and therefore creates a reader who is interested in and capable of participating in the field of mental health.

**Results: Model reader and construed reader**

Through the dimensions of specificity and focusing, we have analyzed the required level of knowledge of the reader. The usage of jargon particularly shows the construed reader as working in mental health-care services, not as a patient or an expert in medicine or psychology, and this was also the goal of the editorial office. However, the usage of terms in some texts is imprecise (Example 3), which may confuse a truly expert reader. Perspective analysis also strengthens the result that the construed reader is a health-care professional. The agent positions provided by the text are typically given to professionals in the mental health-care system, and the reader is addressed by specific linguistic constructions such as zero person to identify with the agents in the texts. Non-professionals are treated as objects or recipients, not as actors.

In addition, perspective analysis shows that texts often include demands for action or responsibility for improving mental health care. Because of their unspecified character they invite the reader to agree with the claims, but they do not oblige the reader to act politically or to take responsibility for change (see Example 4). Therefore, the magazine produces a critical voice, as planned, but it is quite careful in expressing political arguments.

Using the two reader constructions provided a way to analyze how the model reader is negotiated and constructed in the editorial office – instead of it remaining an implicit and heterogeneous object of work – and how the model reader and the construed reader are related in the texts. It also provides a way to analyze what is missing from the texts.
The model reader Veera emerged mostly as the construed reader of texts, but the journalistic intentions were not completely realized. The new concept of the magazine was supposed to provide for Veera both professional knowledge and information to support her personal well-being as her work was quite demanding emotionally. However, when analyzing the issues published in 2010, the thematic sections did not contain any stories with a well-being theme, nor did the theme appear in any other parts of the volume that were analyzed.

The reshaping of the magazine concept using the model reader Veera meant changing the level of knowledge that was expected to be above the level of a layman but below the level of a medical expert. However, it takes time for changes in newsroom and journalistic content to become a routine everyday practice, so it is not surprising that analysis of the construed reader revealed inconsistencies in the use of professional terms, causing some ambiguity or vagueness in construing the expected background knowledge, and thus leaving the expected level of knowledge oscillating between professional knowledge frames and interpretations based on everyday experience.

Discussion

By opening up the concept of the reader in a multidisciplinary framework, we have shown how the relation between intentions and published journalistic texts can be analyzed and compared. We developed further the classical notion of implied reader into two applicable reader concepts for analyzing intentions and outcomes. The construed reader studied by the DoCs provides a flexible and theoretically solid toolset for doing systematic text analysis, which takes into account the multilayered nature of journalistic texts as context including production, values and organization of work. In addition, perspectivization shows up as omnipresent in texts.

Journalism research using the model reader and other concepts of the Media Concept Laboratory method makes visible the often implicit and divergent journalistic intentions and conceptualizations of the audience, which has become important for media organizations in the ever-more fragmented media field. The new model reader was negotiated and finally agreed on in the Media Concept Laboratory. This explicit description functions as a counterpart for systematic comparison with the construed reader from the texts. When used together, the model reader and the construed reader provide a tool for understanding and improving journalistic texts.

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Notes

1. ‘Coherence’ is a multidimensional concept and is not to be restricted as a feature existing in a text, but is rather a process where the reader/hearer is an interpreter guided by discourse (e.g. Gómez-González and Taboada, 2005; Van Dijk, 1977, 2012).

2. The four main dimensions formulated by Langacker (2008) are ‘specificity’, ‘focusing’, ‘prominence’ and ‘perspective’. The most important sub-dimensions include ‘selection’,
‘foregrounding’ vs. ‘backgrounding’, ‘composition’, ‘profiling’, ‘subjectivity and objectivity’ and ‘temporal processing’. ‘Semantic roles’ are not included in Langacker’s list of dimensions, but according to Langacker they are conceptual archetypes pertaining to how speakers visualize everyday experience (c.f. Langacker, 1991: 284, 2008: 355–356), and thus they can be adopted as manifestations of perspective. We have included them in the list as they are essential in text analysis and easily compatible with original dimensions of construal.

3. Eco’s ‘model reader’ equates to Iser’s ‘implied reader’, though with different wording.

4. Background knowledge is described in cognitive linguistics by several concepts: ‘figure/ground alignment’, ‘cognitive domains’, ‘image schemas’ and ‘frames’; for the relationship between these different concepts, see Croft (1993) and Onikki (1994).

5. The principle that all language use is ‘perspectivized’, produced from some point of view, is in cognitive grammar terminology referred to by the concept of construal.

6. Finnish passive is one of the inflectional forms of verb paradigm, whereas the zero-person construction contains a third-person singular verb form without an overt subject.

References


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