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Alice Caffarel-Cayron^a & Elizabeth Rechniewski^a

^a Department of French Studies, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

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Exploring the generic structure of French editorials from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics

Alice Caffarel-Cayron* and Elizabeth Rechniewski

Department of French Studies, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

This article argues that the editorial should be a crucial object of research, both for the role it plays in constructing the ideological positioning of the newspaper syntagmatically (within a single issue) and paradigmatically (its coherence over time) but also as a prevalent example – one of the few examples in daily life – of text whose principal function is opinion formation and persuasion by argument. Drawing on linguistic analysis and specifically on the resources offered by Systemic Functional Linguistics, it contributes to the task of identifying key components of the generic structure of French editorials through the analysis of thematic progression, logical resources and evaluative meanings in the editorials of two French newspapers (*Libération*, *Le Figaro*) written at the time of the kidnapping of French journalists in Iraq.

Keywords: editorials; generic structure; French; ideology; systemic functional theory

1. Introduction

This article argues that the editorial should be a crucial object of research, as a prevalent example – one of the few examples in daily life – of a genre whose principal function is opinion formation and persuasion by argument. Drawing on linguistic analysis and specifically on the resources offered by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), this article contributes to the task of identifying the generic structure of French editorials through the analysis of thematic progression, logical resources and evaluative meanings. To illustrate our findings, we will discuss the analyses of two editorials taken from ideologically opposed French newspapers (*Libération* and *Le Figaro*) written in 2004 at the time of the kidnapping of French journalists in Iraq. These two editorials represent instances of the type of editorials found in French newspapers in general and present features that we have found across a range of editorials collected for a period of 3 months in 2004.

According to the French discourse analyst, Dominique Maingueneau, genres are “routinised discourses”, characterized by a certain recurrent, definable textual organization, that are functionally integrated into specific socio-historical contexts and that need particular kinds of support and context in order to succeed in their communicative function. They are “social activities” and as such are subject to a range of conditions if they are to succeed in their communicative aim, which involves a modification of the situation in which they participate (Maingueneau 1998, 51). Within SFL, there are two distinct but interrelated interpretations of the notion of genre. Martin (1992, 503) interprets genre as a level of context. Genres are interpreted as “social processes and their purpose is being interpreted in social, not psychological terms”. In Martin’s model, “text structure is referred to as schematic structure, with genre defined as a stage oriented social

*Corresponding author. Email: alice.caffarel-cayron@sydney.edu.au

process realised through register” (Martin 1992, 505). On the other hand, Halliday and Hasan (1985) do not model genre and register at the level of context, and both terms are often used interchangeably. However, the term genre is mostly used in relation to the structure of a text. Particular genres have particular elements of structure (Halliday and Hasan 1985), which can be described in terms of the generic structure potential (GSP) of a text. Halliday (1978) interprets register as the semantic correlate of a configuration of the situational variables of field, tenor and mode. In other words, Halliday interprets register as part of the linguistic system, where register stands for functional variation. Halliday (2002) points out that register may be seen either as variation or similarity depending on which end of the cline of instantiation the observer locates herself. Thus, from the (text) instance end, register is seen as a cluster of similar texts, while from the system end, register is seen as variation in the system. In this article, we will interpret genre and register as linguistic constructs rather than contextual ones, as the text is our unit of analysis, where text is defined as “language that is functional” (Halliday and Hasan 1985, 10). The two instances of French editorial texts presented here are interpreted as tokens of a particular register, genre or text type.

The three variables of the context of situation, Field, Tenor and Mode that characterize register are reflected in the configuration of semantic resources mobilized in text. A particular genre or register can then be defined through identifying the probability of finding a certain combination or co-occurrence of lexico-grammatical and semantic choices:

the labels for generic categories are often functionally complex: a concept such as a “ballad” implies not only a certain text structure with typical patterns of cohesion, but also a certain range of content expressed through highly favoured options in transitivity and other experiential systems (Halliday 1978, 145)

Genres do not suppose simply lexical and grammatical similarities in texts but characteristic “staging” or “sequencing” of texts:

Generic class membership appears to require semiotic similarities in the unfolding of social activity; [...] when texts of the same kind are generated, the participants involved in each text choose the same features from the genre systems. The selections are realized by sequences of functional generic structure elements which as unfolding structures are alike (Ventola 1995, 8).

In this article, we will focus essentially on the relationship between thematic choices, thematic progression and generic structure in order to identify the stages that are constitutive of the French editorial genre.

2. The editorial as a genre

2.1 Background

Editorials are of comparatively recent invention. Unlike the case with many traditional genres, we can date the emergence of editorials with some precision to the early nineteenth century. Before this time, the editor’s opinion permeated newspapers, mixing inextricably with the news (Smith 1978, 165). The idea that news should be reported objectively as information and that editorial comment be identified as such and confined to a certain space in the newspaper emerged gradually in the early nineteenth century, the earliest practitioner of the modern editorial or “leader” being perhaps Thomas Barnes of

The Times around 1815 (Murray 1966, 23). The use of the term “éditorial”, imitating the English word, came even later in France: the Robert dictionary dates it as 1852. (The term for editor is “rédacteur”.) This brief history allows us to identify several of the key functions of the editorial: not only does it present the stance of the newspaper but it serves to legitimize the objectivity of other areas of the newspaper – that is to say, opinion has supposedly been corralled into one section.

This distinction between editorials and other types of article in newspapers, and especially “hard news stories”, is underlined through characteristic features of the “paratext” of editorials and through the separation of roles within the news organization.

Thus editorials are clearly identifiable by elements of their “paratext”: the editorial occupies an unchanging, unique and singular place in the newspaper and is generally identified through a heading. Its position in the paper is usually a prominent one, at the top of the page or in a side column, always in its main section, often in the centre pages, aligned with the letters from the readers and opinion pieces, suggesting a dialogue within the newspaper and with the readers. Other characteristic features of editorials include their length: more than a column length would be unusual; their periodicity: the fact that they appear every day, in every issue; their titles: typically short, without a “lead”; and the absence of pictures or cartoons. Editorials are usually unsigned though they are more often signed in the French press than in the English. Such distinguishing features of editorials vary of course from culture to culture but the attempt to differentiate editorial text from other types of articles seems to be constant.

Organizationally, editorial and news staff are generally distinct in terms of function and in the power and influence they can exert in determining the political line of the newspaper: in this, their role has changed very markedly. The editor or editorial board, generally backed by a powerful proprietor, carries great weight in defining the orientation of the newspaper. The realities of ownership and control allow the imposition of an editorial line that reflects broader, external power structures. Except in a few exceptional circumstances (for example, *Libération* for some of its existence), editors are not answerable to, nor do they claim to represent the views of, the staff or the readers. The prerogative of the editor to dictate the line of the newspaper and to address the readership in an expository and even exhortatory manner is not contested, even though the views expressed may be. The question of who reads editorials, and who the implied public is, is an interesting one, since media analysts point out that few ordinary readers read the editorial. Does it provide an ideological framework for the journalists writing for that paper?

In order to provide a context and point of comparison for our analysis of the generic structure of editorials, we will start by summarizing the recent theoretical conclusions reached concerning the generic structure of other types of newspaper text, and in particular the structure of informational, “hard news” stories.

2.2 Editorials versus “Hard news”

It is widely agreed amongst analysts of the print news media that the generic structure of “hard news” stories consists in the relation of nucleus to satellites (Iedema et al. 1994). The nucleus is to be found in the headline and lead, while the development of the article consists of a series of associated items of information that can generally be characterized under the broad headings of elaboration, explanation, contextualization and appraisal, though under each of these headings finer distinctions can be drawn (White 1997, 115).

Each piece of satellite information refers directly back to the kernel of the “headline/lead” rather than to its immediate neighbour; the order of presentation is thus orbital rather than linear since the order of presentation of items of contextualization, explanation, etc., is less important than the repetitive referral back to the nucleus. According to the principle of “radical editability” (1997, 119), it would be possible to change the order of the satellites without fundamentally altering the interpretation of the event being proposed by the journalist because, White asserts, “the sub-components do not link together to build a linear semantic pathway by which meaning is accumulated sequentially” (118). The nucleus–satellite structure is sometimes referred to as an inverted pyramid: the progression is top-heavy in that all the important information is provided first and then elaborated in the subsequent segments.

“Hard news” stories are also characterized by an absence of interpersonal register:

The meanings typically avoided include explicit value judgements by the reporter about the morality, competence, normality etc. of participants, explicit evaluations of events and entities in terms of their aesthetics or emotional impact, inferences about the motivations and intentions of participants and contentious claims about causes and effects (White 1997, 107).

However White and others are quick to point out that this stance of neutrality and objectivity in fact glosses over the bias in the choices made by the journalist (and the sub-editor) of the stories to be covered, and in the slant given to their reporting via attitudinal tokens, etc. We analysed in a previous article the linguistic resources mobilized to carry the ideological positioning of two “news articles” on the same topic as the editorials we study here (Caffarel and Rechniewski 2008).

“Hard news” stories may be seen as lying at one end of the spectrum of articles to be found in newspapers, ranging from those that adopt a stance of neutrality and objectivity to those that are overtly opinion pieces. We are referring to a spectrum whose two poles are represented by “ideal types” – that is to say, at one end, the ideal-type of the “hard news story” would be one that not only adopts a nucleus/satellite structure but also entirely excludes interpersonal register and the language of appraisal, confines itself to “facts”, and does not have recourse to external spokesmen to indirectly import opinion and evaluation into the article. Such an article almost certainly does not exist in this pure form, and even if it did, it would not of course escape from the ideological positioning that underpins the choice of subject matter and of the nucleus. But it offers a clear contrast, in terms of the linguistic resources mobilized, to the ideal type to be found at the other end of the spectrum: the pure opinion or argument piece, where the author overtly adopts a personal viewpoint, using interpersonal and pragmatic language and appraisal inscription.

2.3 *The generic structure of editorials*

Teun van Dijk argues that editorials constitute one of relatively few forms of openly persuasive writing for the general public and that this function is recognized as such by writer and readers. The aim of the editorial, he argues, is to suggest to the reader a “preferred model” for interpreting the events discussed, from which, once this model is accepted as valid, certain pragmatic conclusions can be “logically” drawn (van Dijk 1996, 39). Van Dijk deplores the lack of theoretical attention paid to editorials: “There are virtually no book-length studies, and rather few substantial articles, on the structures, strategies and social functions of editorials.” He adds that those that exist are

often “practical and anecdotal”, written by practitioners rather than by media analysts (van Dijk 1). He proposes a model of the structure of editorials which he summarizes as follows:

- (1) summary of the event
- (2) evaluation of the event – especially of actions and actors
- (3) pragmatic conclusion (recommendation, advice, warning).

Similar tripartite structures are proposed by Bolivar (1994), who proposes that “the internal structure of editorials can be described in terms of three fundamental turns: (a) Lead, (b) Follow, and (c) Valuate which are realized by sentences”. Riazi and Asar (2000) suggest that Persian newspaper editorials essentially follow a similar tripartite structural pattern. Because of the possibility offered by an SFL approach to express this structure in more coherent form, as generic structure potential or GSP, we turn finally in this introduction to recent attempts to analyse editorials in these terms.

2.4 SFL studies of the generic structure of editorials

Hasan Ansary and Esmat Babaii describe editorials as a “Cinderella” genre – one that has been overlooked in studies of the print media, perhaps because editorials are rarely used in English language teaching and therefore have been ignored by the “TESOL industry” (Ansary and Babaii 2004, 9). The comparatively poor field of prior studies leads Ansary and Babaii to turn to the GSP approach formulated by Halliday and Hasan, an approach which seeks to identify the obligatory and optional rhetorical elements, sequenced in a particular order, that characterize a genre of communication. The obligatory elements define the genre to which a text belongs (see Halliday and Hasan 1985, 62]), while the optional elements may typically occur but are not essential to the recognition of the genre. It should therefore be possible to:

express the total range of optional, obligatory, and iterative elements and their sequence in such a way that all the possibilities and/or potential of text structure for every text appropriate to a specific Cultural Construction may be exhausted (Ansary and Babaii 2004, 6).

Their study of the GSP of editorials is based on an analysis of 30 editorials from the *Washington Post* (chosen because “representative of American newspapers”) selected “non-randomly” from a pool of 4 months of editorials published in 2003. They identify four obligatory structural elements, Run-on Headline, Addressing an Issue, Argumentation and Articulating a Position, that are present in 90% of the editorials in their sample. They appear in this order: $RH^{\wedge}AI^{\wedge}A^{\wedge}AP$.¹ The full equation can be codified as follows: $RH^{\wedge}[(BI).AI]^{\wedge}\{(IA)^{\wedge}A1^{\wedge}A2^{\wedge}A \dots \wedge(CA)\}n^{\wedge}\{AP1^{\wedge}AP2^{\wedge}AP \dots\}m$

The researchers conclude:

In sum, the GSP presented here is a condensed statement suggesting that an unmarked English newspaper editorial typically carries a headline and addresses an issue which may or may not require some background information occurring either before or after it. It then starts off an argumentation for or against the addressed issue by an initiation statement that is optional. It makes the arguments, and finally takes a position about the issue discussed. This latter process may reoccur. This is to say, an argumentation process begins with a series of arguments and ends with the articulation of a position. This process can then be repeated until the planned conclusion is drawn. (Ansary and Babaii 2004, 18–19).

In an article published in July 2010, Hossein Shokouhi and Forough Amin build on the GSP identified by Ansary and Babaii to examine the generic structure of Persian and English newspaper editorials, with the aim of testing whether consistent genre structure helps foreign language students to understand text. They conclude that the GSP of these texts can be shown as: $H \wedge [(BI) \wedge AI] \wedge [A \wedge (AS)] \wedge (CR)$.²

Shokouhi and Amin use slightly different identification to Ansary and Babaii to represent the stages: thus the final stage is referred to as AP (Articulation of a Position) in Ansary and Babaii, and as AS (Articulating a Solution) in Shokouhi and Amin. However, these latter authors conclude that their study of the GSP of Persian and English newspaper editorials has produced very similar results to those of Ansary and Babaii and of other studies: “The rhetorical structure of their material like ours revealed little variation across countries and languages.” (Shokouhi and Amin 2010, 394). We note however the relatively limited range of editorials analysed across countries and languages. Our own study uses the range of tools provided by an SFL framework to identify the specific textual generic features of two editorials from French newspapers, *Libération* and *Le Figaro*, and compares our findings to those of previous studies of English, American and Persian editorials. The aim of our study is thus to contribute to the cross-cultural analysis of the GSP of editorials through an examination of French editorials. Although Elizabeth Le has published a recent study of editorials from *Le Monde* (Le 2010), she does not identify the generic, schematic structure of the editorials, nor compare her findings to previous studies of this structure.

3. A contrastive analysis of two instances of French editorials

The two editorials in question, published in *Le Figaro* (9 January 2004) and *Libération* (31 August 2004), are highly emotionally charged as they respond to the kidnapping of two French journalists in Iraq in August 2004 and comment on the actions and responses of the government, the French population and Arab leaders. Although both articles communicate strong emotions in relation to the same situation, they do so by presenting very different theses and could even be interpreted as an intertextual set arising from the same situation, where the meaning of each can be read against the background of the other. Whilst *Le Figaro*'s thesis is that the French government is sparing no effort to obtain the release of the two journalists, using a strategy that has proved successful in the past, *Libération* offers a counter-thesis that mocks the French government's efforts and argues further that the condemnation that the kidnapping has generated across all communities (Muslim and non-Muslim) echoes the commitment by the kidnapped journalists to bridging the gap between the Arab and European worlds. The positions adopted by the two editorialists reflect the broader political orientation of the newspapers: *Le Figaro* promotes a centre-right position supportive of the then government (President Jacques Chirac; Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, both members of the UMP) while *Libération*, founded in the wake of May 1968, represents the views of a generally younger and more radical readership.

We will now explore the generic structure of both editorials, foregrounding the similarities and the differences between the two texts. Next, we will look at how the flow of information is carried through the thematic progression of each text and how these choices correlate with their generic structure.

3.1 Generic structure

In both editorials, the title appears to be a condensed version of the thesis or a preface to the thesis, typically realized as a nominal group, a simple noun in *Libération*: “Echo” and

a nominal group expanded by a prepositional phrase in *Le Figaro*: “Une méthode face à l’horreur”. The expansion of the nominal group in *Le Figaro* enables the expression of emotion from the outset.

Both texts begin with an orientation stage, which is attitudinal in nature. The orientation stage in *Le Figaro* is short and again more emotionally charged than in *Liberation* with the experience construed as attributive relational clauses, where the attributes are “une torture” and “horrible”. In *Libération*, we find highly nominalized themes that enable the journalist to evaluate the reaction of the population to the kidnapping. Each orientation is expanded by an elaboration that can be defined as restating in other words, specifying in greater detail, commenting or exemplifying what has been stated in the initial clause.

Following the orientation comes the Thesis. *Le Figaro* presents three main arguments followed by a conclusion of the result type. The first argument, presenting the past success of the French government in releasing hostages, serves as a background against which the other two arguments are made. In *Liberation* the counter-thesis, emphasizing the powerlessness of the government and ridiculing its claims to have any impact on the kidnappers, gives more weight to their own arguments that the mobilization of the Arab world and of the Muslim population in France and abroad offers the only chance of success. *Libération* ends with a conclusion that is a recommendation for action. These two editorials provides an illustration of the GSP of French editorials which consists of an attitudinal orientation followed by a thesis, a background argument and a number of arguments supporting the thesis followed by a conclusion that summarizes and evaluates the situation or is a call for action.

We will now explore how the thematic structure of the texts correlates with their generic structure as argued by Fries (1981):

[...] in argumentative or expository prose each sentence should follow logically from what has gone before. This implies in part that the point of departure of each sentence should relate in some way to what has preceded. If there are unexplained jumps in the sequence of starting points that implies that there are breaks in the argument. If the theme of a sentence indicates the point of departure of that unit, then the information contained in the themes of each sentence within a highly structured passage should reflect the structure of that passage (121).

Before going further, it is important to explain the notion of theme within SFL. Within the systemic functional model, the clause is interpreted as a multifunctional unit in which three different types of structures are mapped onto one another, the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual structure. The textual structure is realized by the systems of themes and theme choice in a text serves to guide the speaker/listener through the unfolding text so that s/he can process the information constructed by the interpersonal and ideational meanings. In Halliday’s words:

The textual component represents the speaker’s text-forming potential; it is that which makes language relevant. This is the component which provides the texture; that which makes the difference between language that is suspended in vacuo and language that is operational in a context of situation. It expresses the relation of the language to its environment, including both the verbal environment—what has been said or written before—and the non-verbal, situational environment. Hence the textual component has an enabling function with respect to the other two; it is only in combination with textual meanings that ideational and interpersonal meanings are actualized (Halliday 1978, 112–113).

Theme is most commonly defined as expressing “what the sentence is about” (Firbas 1987; see also Hagège 1978). This is because theme is often equated with topic. However, as theme within the systemic framework can include not only topical elements but also

textual and interpersonal ones, a broader definition is required. As Halliday (1994, 38) puts it: “Theme is the ground from which the clause is taking off”. In Matthiessen’s (1995, 531) words:

THEME is the resource for setting up the local context or local semiotic environment in which each clause is to be interpreted. This local context constitutes a particular status in the clause-thematic prominence. While all clauses occur in context, THEME is thus the resource for manipulating the contextualization of the clause.

The term “manipulating” describes precisely the process in which a journalist is involved when choosing particular element(s) as “local context” of a clause in order to make a point. This is what we will be exploring in the two French editorials under analysis. We will see that the choice of themes in both texts is not arbitrary but contributes to constructing both the global structure of these texts and the local structure of arguments whilst foregrounding a particular method of development which is essential to making these texts persuasive.

As mentioned above, three types of themes are recognized within SFL, textual, interpersonal and topical (experiential) themes. A topical theme is the only necessary theme in any clause with textual and interpersonal themes being optional. A topical theme is a theme that has a function within the transitivity structure of the clause. It is either a participant, a circumstance or a process. If the participant is also the subject of the clause, then the theme is said to be unmarked. If the theme is a participant other than the subject or a circumstance or a process (in a declarative clause) then it is said to be marked. Another type of marked theme relevant for our analysis is β clause in hypotactic clause complexes when preceding the α clause. A textual theme is a conjunctive marker creating a logical relation with the preceding (or following) clause or discourse. An interpersonal theme is typically an attitudinal, comment or modal adjunct expressing attitude or probability with regards to the proposition.

Both our texts show similarity in relation to their choice of theme types. Both have a majority of unmarked themes, i.e. the subject of the clause is also the theme of the clause. This is partly because they are expository in nature rather than narrative. Each text has a few explicit logical connectors mostly elaborating or expanding the main clause causally with conjunctions of purpose such as “pour” or condition such as “si”. There is only one interpersonal theme in the text, “au moins”, which brings the thesis to the fore following the initial orientation: The wait is torture but at least the country is doing everything it can. The interpersonal theme has the effect of bringing relief after the initial pain encoded in the orientation. However, apart from this interpersonal theme, attitudinal meaning is generally realized as nominalizations or qualities within nominal groups or as attributes in relational clauses as in the attitudinal orientation stage. There are two marked themes of the circumstantial type in *Le Figaro*, the first one marking the contrast between the situation today and what happened in the past and the second one in the conclusion marking the contrast between French Islam and the Islam of the kidnappers. A feature of both texts is to have dependent clauses functioning as marked theme, mostly foregrounding aim, purpose and condition. We have not analysed enough data at this stage to claim that this is a characteristic of French editorials but it is certainly something that we will investigate in the future.

Having looked at preferred theme choices in these two editorials, we will now focus on their thematic progression.

Danes (1974) identifies three patterns of thematic progression: Pattern 1 represents a linear progression where the theme follows from the preceding Rheme and so on; Pattern 2, a progression where each theme is derived from a more general macro-theme; and Pattern 3, a constant progression where the theme is kept from clause to clause as shown in Figure 1.

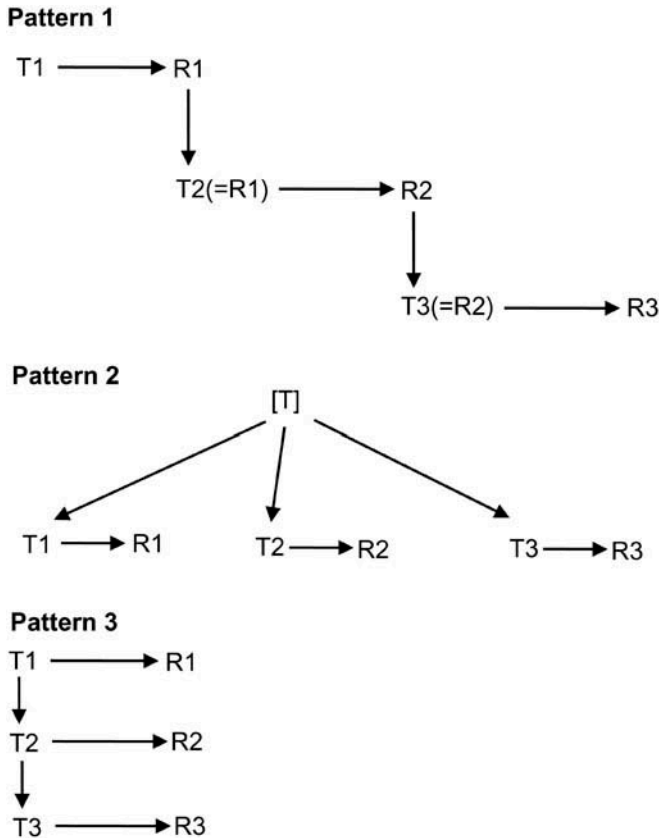


Figure 1. Danes' Patterns of Thematic Progression.

3.2 The thematic progression in the *Libération* editorial

The exploration of theme choices provides a methodological approach for understanding the structuring of a text and cohesion within a text.

Thematic choices in the *Libération* editorial clearly correlate with the structuring of information and contribute to the global organization of experiential content as well as to continuity and cohesion within and between each stage. The attitudinal orientation is essentially carried through with a constant pattern of progression referring to the “unanimous condemning voice”, which is then cohesively related to the two kidnapped journalists through a linear progression linking the Rheme of the last clause of the first elaboration to the theme of second elaboration by means of the referential demonstrative pronoun “*cela*”. In the final theme of that stage, “*nos deux confrères*” the possessive adjective, “*nos*” creates the connection between the text and the context of situation, emphasizing the emotional link between all journalists and the kidnapped journalists. This also creates the link with the Thesis stage where the emotion provoked by the plight of the journalists is foregrounded as theme. The method of development in the counter-thesis is built around a contrast between France and the kidnapers. The two elaborations within that stage are foregrounded by a marked theme realized as a β clause. All β clauses in the text have the function of challenging reality and clearly serve to structure the text, as shown at the beginning of the first argument and the conclusion. The first argument has the Arab leaders as theme and the second argument has a linear pattern where

the Rheme of the first clause is further developed in the following clause, itself a rhetorical question. The conclusion is linked to the preceding argument by means of the possessive adjective “leurs”. Personal reference within the thematic progression is one of the resources used to create cohesive harmony between the stages of this text.

3.3 *The thematic progression in Le Figaro editorial*

The attitudinal orientation has a constant progression foregrounding “the wait” as the point of departure which is then linked emotionally to the thesis by means of the interpersonal theme “at least” that provides a step forward to the theme of the thesis and the main arguments which revolve around “France” and the reaction of “everyone else”. The second argument begins with a marked theme “Today” providing a contrastive link with the first argument. The second argument focuses around the three main strategies of the government, foregrounding as theme the principal people involved in working towards the release of the journalists (the government, secret agents and diplomats). The final argument is linked to the preceding one by the use of the demonstrative adjective “ces” in “ces opérations extérieures”. This last argument is again organized around a contrast, this time between the kidnappers (introduced as theme in a β clause questioning their aims) and French Muslims that are theme in the second point of this argument. And this division between the two Muslim groups provides the theme to the conclusion which ends with a marked topical theme, “dans l’islam de la France” again foregrounding contrast.

Both texts appear to foreground a method of development based on contrast as a resource for making their point and scaffolding their arguments.

The relationship between the schematic structure and thematic progression of the texts is represented in tabular format in the Appendix.

4. Conclusion

Drawing together the preliminary conclusions arrived at in the course of this discussion and analysis, we conclude first that editorials, as a sub-type of the argumentative genre, are best analysed in terms of generic “stages” that each have clearly defined and differing roles to play in the overall text, contributing to an internal ordering that is essential to the effectiveness of their communicative function and their persuasive force. Because of their logical progression around arguments, these texts are characterized (as shown in the tables in the Appendix) by the use of a majority of enhancing hypotactic relations of the causal type as well as elaborations. Editorials use argument to persuade, they seek to convince the reader of “a particular reality” and through the analysis of logical, thematic and attitudinal resources, we were able to establish a GSP for French editorial text that consists of the following obligatory elements: an attitudinal orientation followed by a thesis, a background argument and a number of arguments supporting the thesis followed by a conclusion that either summarizes and evaluates the situation or is a call for action.

This last stage is an important feature of the generic structure: the editorial lays claim to the right to state the authoritative viewpoint, and even to call for action on the part of others, whether it be the government, the wider society, its readers, etc. It does this not through the assumption of personal engagement (as in the case of opinion pieces) but as the anonymous voice of authority or as the representative of an ill-defined plural (“we”).

Through this preliminary analysis of French editorials, using some of the tools offered by SFL, we have been able to arrive at a hypothesis about the generic features and generic stages of French editorials. Our hypothesis highlights a potential difference between the French and

English editorial genre, whereby French editorials state their position from the start in the “attitudinal orientation” stage whilst English editorials state their position at the end. This foregrounding of attitude at the start of the editorial seems to resonate with differences found in “Hard News” whereby French “Hard News” stories are considered to be less neutral and more opinionated than English-language “Hard-News”(White 2006). Moreover, we have found that the foregrounding of evaluative meanings across French editorials varies according to the ideological positioning of the paper. In particular, we have found that attitude is more prominent in *Le Figaro* compared to *Libération* (See Caffarel and Rechniewski 2009, 34). However, although we have found recurring features across a wide range of editorials of which the two articles presented here are instances, our conclusions regarding the generic structure of editorials and the degree of attitudinal orientation are preliminary and require further demonstration through the analysis of a more extensive corpus.

Notes

1. RH, Run-on Headline; BI, Background information; AI, Addressing an Issue; IA, Initiating Argumentation; A, Argumentation; CA, Closing the Argumentation; AP, Articulating a Position. In this GSP, the caret sign indicates sequence. The round brackets show optionality of enclosed elements. The dot between elements points to the fact that more than one option in sequence is possible. That is, BI may either precede or follow AI. The square brackets specify the restraint on sequence. So they here indicate that neither BI nor AI may follow Argumentation (A) process and AP. The braces with an arrow indicate the degree of iteration. Finally, the subscript (n) and (m) refer to the iteration of sets. Therefore, both the argumentation process and its follow-up AP may be repeated.
2. H, Headline; BI, Background Information; AI, Addressing an Issue; A, Argument; AS, Articulating a Solution. The round brackets in the above GSP indicate optionality of the enclosed elements. Therefore BI, AS and CR are optional and H, AI and A are obligatory. The dot indicates more than one option in the sequence.

Notes on contributors

Alice Caffarel-Cayron has been teaching French and Linguistics in the Department of French Studies since 1996. Her main research interests are the grammar and semantics of French, Discourse analysis, stylistics and the construal of symbolic meanings. She has developed a systemic functional description of the grammar of French that she has applied to the teaching of French, linguistics, discourse analysis and stylistics in the Department of French Studies. Her book *A Systemic Functional Interpretation of French Grammar* was first published by Continuum in 2006 and republished as paperback in 2008. She is currently conducting research on the language of Simone de Beauvoir and the impact her writings had on readers.

Elizabeth Rechniewski is an Honorary Senior Lecturer in the Department of French Studies, School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sydney. She has a long-standing research interest in nationalism and in the discourses that surround and support it in the media (several articles co-written with Alice Caffarel-Cayron), and in the political uses of the national past. She is currently co-Chief Investigator on the Australian Research Council Discovery Project: *Judging the Past in a Post-Cold War World*. Using a comparative lens, the project investigates on what grounds, by what means, through what media and to what effect, countries on the “front line” of the Cold War have sought since 1989 to reconceptualize their pasts and re-evaluate critical events and individuals.

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Appendix

Keys to reading Tables A1 and A2 are the following:

The first column in the Tables indicates the main stages of the generic structure of French editorials, whilst the second column specifies the internal structure of these stages. The third column represents the interdependency and logico-semantic relations (or clause complex relations) between clauses.

The annotations used for analysing clause complex relations are represented in the tables:

1,2,3: parataxis

α, β, γ : hypotaxis

+: extension; =: elaboration; \times : enhancement

‘: projection: idea; “: projection: locution

In a hypotactic relation, one clause modifies the other; ‘the modifying element is dependent on the modified’ (Halliday 1994, 218). In a paratactic relation, one clause is initiating, and the other is continuing. The system which offers the choice between parataxis or hypotaxis is named the INTERDEPENDENCY (TAXIS) system. (See Halliday 1994)

In addition to the two main ways of combining clauses, hypotaxis and parataxis, the clause complex system distinguishes between the different types of logico-semantic relation that link the clauses of a complex. The model presented here allows for the interaction of what will be called logico-semantic relations and parataxis and hypotaxis. The logico-semantic relation system distinguishes between two main types of relations: expansion and projection. (i) Expansion includes circumstantial relations but also apposition and addition. In SF descriptions, circumstantial relations are referred to as enhancement, apposition as elaboration and addition as extension. These meanings may combine with either parataxis or hypotaxis. (ii) Projection includes the traditional notions of direct and indirect speech, but it also includes direct and indirect thought. The combination of projection and parataxis corresponds to the traditional category of direct quoted speech (locution) or thought (idea), while the combination of projection and hypotaxis corresponds to the traditional category of indirect quoted speech or thought.

Bold: Unmarked topical Themes

Bold and underlined: Marked topical themes

Italic: textual themes

Italic and underlined: interpersonal theme

Table A1. "Echo" (*Libération*). Gérard Dupuy Tuesday 31 August 2004.

Thesis-prefix	Title	ECHO
Attitudinal orientation	Elaboration 1	<p>(1) L'unanimité dans la condamnation de l'enlèvement des deux journalistes français mêle un peu de soulagement à l'inquiétude. <i>The unanimous condemnation of the kidnapping of the two French journalists adds a little relief to the anxiety.</i></p> <p>(2a) L'implication des diverses composantes de la population musulmane dans ce rejet doit être soulignée, <i>The involvement of the diverse groups making up the Muslim population in this rejection should be emphasized.</i></p> <p>(2b) aucune voix n'y ayant manqué à la condamnation des méthodes du terrorisme.</p> <p>(3a) Cela est d'autant mieux venu <i>This is to be the more appreciated</i></p> <p>(3b) que nos deux confrères se voulaient, professionnellement, un pont entre les mondes arabe et européen. <i>as our two colleagues saw themselves, professionally, as a bridge between the Arab and European worlds.</i></p> <p>(4a) L'émotion suscitée par leur malheur fait écho à leur engagement journalistique,</p> <p>The emotion provoked by their misfortune echoes their commitment as journalists</p> <p>(4b) <i>en</i> favorisant une communication et un sens de la communauté au-delà des communautés dont l'avancée est précieuse. <i>by favouring communication and a sense of community beyond communities whose progress is precious.</i></p> <p>(5) Le gouvernement a déployé de son côté une activité diplomatique aussi visible que possible. For its part, the government has taken diplomatic action as visibly as possible.</p>
Thesis	Elaboration 2	
Counter-thesis		

(Continued)

Table A1. (Continued).

Thesis-prefix	Title	ECHO
Elaboration 1	1	(6) On ne doit pas s'illusionner sur la portée de ces gestes. <i>The effect of these gestures should not be exaggerated.</i>
	+2 + β	(7a) La France n'a rien à négocier avec les ravisseurs
	α	France has nothing to negotiate with the kidnappers (7b) <i>et, alors qu'ils ne pourraient être sensibles qu'aux menaces, and, although they could only be sensitive to threats,</i> (7c) <i>ils restent à l'abri de celles-ci. they remain sheltered from them.</i>
Elaboration 2	$\times\beta$	(8a) Pour croire que la politique irakienne du pays l'immuniserait contre les exactions des extrémistes, To believe that the country's policy on Iraq would immunize it against the demands of the extremists
	α	(8b) <i>il fallait sans doute autant de bêtise que de cynisme. required as much stupidity as cynicism.</i>
	Counter reason (au contraire) $\alpha;\beta \alpha =\beta$	(9) Rien ne permet de faire cette supposition concernant la politique suivie par Chirac avec éclat.
		Nothing allows us to make this assumption concerning the policy followed so dramatically by Chirac.
		(10a) On doit d'ailleurs remarquer
		Furthermore, it should be noted
		(10b) <i>que les ravisseurs sont liés à Al-Qaeda,</i> that the kidnappers are linked to Al-Qaeda,
		(10c) <i>qui n'a jamais exclu la France d'entre ses cibles potentielles. which never excluded France from among its potential targets.</i>
(Thesis) Argument	$\times\beta$	(11a) Si on ne pouvait attendre de protection particulière,
	$\alpha\alpha$	If no particular protection could be expected, (11b) <i>il faut en revanche constater, a posteriori, it must nevertheless be stated, a posteriori,</i>
	' $\beta \alpha$	(11c) <i>que bien de dirigeants arabes se sont mobilisés pour les otages français</i> <i>that many Arab leaders rallied for the French hostages,</i>

(Continued)

Table A1. (Continued).

	Title	ECHO
Thesis-preface		
Argument 2		<p>(11d) <i>comme ils ne l'avaient fait pour aucun autre avant eux, as they had never done for any others before them.</i></p> <p>(12) La présence de figures islamistes Frères musulmans ou salafistes parmi les soutiens sollicités et obtenus par les Français montre l'isolement des ravisseurs.</p> <p>The presence of Islamist figures Muslim Brothers or Salafists among the supporters called for and obtained by the French shows the kidnappers' isolation.</p> <p>(13) Ceux-ci pourraient-ils y être sensibles ?</p> <p>Could the kidnappers be aware of it?</p> <p>(14a) Même si on est convaincu du nihilisme radical de leurs convictions,</p> <p><i>Even if one is convinced of the radical nihilism of their convictions,</i></p> <p>(14b) <i>il convient, en tout état de cause, de faire tout ce qui est compatible avec la dignité et la raison</i></p> <p><i>it is fitting, in any event, to do all that is compatible with dignity and reason</i></p> <p>(14c) <i>pour obtenir la libération de Christian Chesnot et Georges Malbrunot.</i></p> <p><i>to secure the liberation of Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot.</i></p>
Conclusion: Recommendation		

Table A2. "Une méthode face à l'horreur" (*Le Figaro*). Wednesday 1 September 2004

Thesis-preface	Title	Une méthode face à l'horreur
Attitudinal orientation		<i>Method in the face of horror.</i>
Thesis	Elaboration	(1) L'attente est une torture. <i>The wait is torture.</i> (2) Il n'y a rien de plus horrible. <i>Nothing is more horrible.</i> (3a) Au moins a-t-on la consolation [[de savoir que le pays n' a ménagé aucun effort]] <i>At least there is the consolation of knowing that the country has spared no effort</i> (3b) <i>pour</i> arracher la libération de Georges Malbrunot et Christian Chesnot. <i>to secure the freedom of Georges Malbrunot and Christian Chesnot.</i> (4a) La France a renoué avec la méthode du «trousseau de clés» <i>France has renewed the "bunch of keys" method</i> (4b) <i>qu' elle</i> avait utilisée pendant la guerre du Liban. <i>that she had used during the Lebanese war.</i> (5a) Pour récupérer les otages de Beyrouth <i>To recover the Beirut hostages</i> (5b) les émissaires français avaient d'abord dû tourner toute une série de clés: celle qui ouvrait la porte syrienne puis que Damas contrôlait le pays; celle qui ouvrait la porte irakienne car Téhéran manipulait les chiites et, enfin, les multiples passe- partout donnant accès à la nébuleuse de factions qui se partageaient alors le fructueux marché des prisonniers occidentaux. <i>the French envoys had to first turn a whole series of keys: the one that opened the Syrian door; as Damascus controlled the country; the one that opened the Iranian door; as Tehran controlled the Shiites and, finally, the many skeleton keys providing access to the nebulous factions which at that time shared the fruitful market of western prisoners.</i> (6) Aujourd'hui , Paris mène de front au moins trois stratégies. <i>Today, Paris is directing at least three simultaneous strategies.</i> (7a) Le ministre des Affaires étrangères, Michel Barnier , a entrepris une tournée des capitales arabes. <i>The Foreign Minister, Michel Barnier, has made a tour of the Arab capitals.</i>
Argument 1	Aim	$\times\beta$
	Method	α
Argument 2	Point 1 (Strategy 1)	

(Continued)

Table A2. (Continued).

Thesis-preface	Title	Une méthode face à l'horreur
		(8) Personne n'a manqué à l'appel: l'Égypte et la Jordanie, le président palestinien, Yasser Arafat, et le secrétaire général de la Ligue arabe, Amr Moussa. <i>Nobody failed to respond to the appeal: Egypt and Jordan, the Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, and the Secretary General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa.</i>
	Elaboration 1	(9a) Tous ont répété <i>All repeated</i>
	Elaboration 2	(9b) <i>que la France</i> avait osé condamner l'intervention américaine en Irak; <i>that France had dared to condemn the American intervention in Iraq;</i> (9c) tous ont souligné <i>all emphasized</i> (9d) <i>qu' elle</i> n'avait jamais cessé d'affirmer <i>that France had never stopped affirming</i> (9 ^e) <i>que, pour apaiser le Proche-Orient,</i> <i>that, to bring peace to the Middle East,</i> (9f) il faut commencer par trouver une solution au conflit israélo-palestinien. <i>a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must first be found.</i>
Conclusion 1: Prediction	α	(10a) Face à cette mobilisation , les ravisseurs auront du mal <i>In the face of this mobilization, the kidnappers will have difficulty</i>
	$\times\beta$	(10b) à justifier leur ignoble chantage par l'alibi du combat contre la loi sur le voile. <i>in justifying their abject blackmail by the excuse that it is a fight against the law on the headscarf.</i>
Point 2 (Strategy 2)		(11) La France a doublé ce travail de relations publiques par une action sur le terrain. <i>France has paralleled this public relations effort with action on the ground.</i>
	Elaboration	(12) Les diplomates [qui se sont rendus à Bagdad] interviennent aussi bien auprès des autorités politiques que des personnalités religieuses, notamment le Comité des oulémas, principale organisation sunnite. <i>The diplomats who have gone to Baghdad are approaching political authorities as well as religious leaders, notably the Committee of the ulémas, the principal Sunni organization.</i>

(Continued)

Table A2. (Continued).

Thesis-preface	Title	Une méthode face à l'horreur
Point 3 (Strategy 3)	α	(13a) <i>De leur côté, les agents des services de renseignements ont fait jouer leurs réseaux On their side, intelligence agents have utilized their networks</i>
	$\times\beta$	(13b) <i>pour tenter d'établir une ligne de communication directe avec les ravisseurs. to try to establish a direct line of communication with the kidnappers.</i>
Elaboration 1	α	(14) La mosaïque irakienne ne se limite pas aux sectes et aux ethnies. <i>The Iraqi mosaic is not confined to sects and ethnic groups.</i>
	$=\alpha$	(15a) Il faut encore compter avec les tribus <i>The tribes must also be taken into account</i>
		(15b) qui , elles-mêmes, peuvent comprendre des membres de religions et d'origines nationales différentes. <i>who may themselves include members of differing religions and nationalities.</i>
Elaboration 2		(16) Seuls des experts, coutumiers des frontières flottantes des allégeances de ce pays, peuvent trouver leur chemin dans ce labyrinthe. <i>Only experts accustomed to the changing lines of allegiance in this country can find their way in this labyrinth.</i>
Conclusion 2: Evaluation?		(17) Il n'est donc pas étonnant que le général Philippe Rondot ait repris du service à 68 ans. <i>Arabisant et ancien de la DGSE, il avait participé aux tractations</i> <i>work. Arabist and formerly of the DGSE, he had taken part in the negotiations</i>
		(18b) <i>pour faire libérer les otages de Beyrouth to obtain the liberation of the Beirut hostages</i>
		(18c) <i>et réussit, en 1994, à capturer au Soudan le terroriste Carlos. and succeeded, in 1994, in capturing the terrorist Carlos in Sudan.</i>
Argument 3		(19) Ces opérations extérieures avaient été précédées d'une campagne de mobilisation en France particulièrement impressionnante. <i>These international operations had been preceded by a particularly impressive campaign of mobilization in France.</i>
Point 1	$\times\beta$ α	(20a) Si les ravisseurs avaient espéré diviser les Français <i>If the kidnappers had hoped to divide the French</i>
	$\times\beta$	(20b) <i>en relançant le débat sur le voile à l'école, by reviving the debate on the Muslim headscarf in schools.</i>
	α	(20c) ils ont manqué leur coup. <i>their shot has gone wide of the mark.</i>

(Continued)

Table A2. (Continued).

Thesis-preface	Title	Une méthode face à l'horreur
Point 2	α	(21a) Les musulmans français ont été les premiers à effacer leurs différences <i>French Muslims were the first to overcome their differences</i>
	$\times\beta$	(21b) <i>pour se retrouver dans la dénonciation unanime des ravisseurs. and unanimously denounce the kidnappers.</i>
Conclusion 3: Result	1	(22a) C'est le résultat paradoxal du drame des otages: <i>This is the paradoxical result of the hostage drama.</i>
	=2	(22b) dans l'islam de France , les extrémistes ont été contraints de se taire. <i>in the Islam of France, the extremists have been forced into silence.</i>