

Online press and types of readers. Responses from the public and recognition logics in comments to the news of the Argentinian newspaper La Nación

Prensa online y tipos de lectores. Respuestas del público y lógicas de reconocimiento en los comentarios a las noticias del diario argentino La Nación

NATALIA RAIMONDO ANSELMINO, Conicet, Universidad Nacional de Rosario,
Universidad Abierta Interamericana, Rosario, Argentina. (nraimondo@conicet.gov.ar)

ABSTRACT

This article examines, from a socio-semiotic perspective, the different response logics from readers to the enunciative strategy of an Argentine online newspaper –lanacion.com.ar, online edition of the daily *La Nación*–, through the investigation of recognition grammars present in the comments to the news media. As a result of the analysis of a total of 3578 comments from readers, constants were identified in responses from the audience to the enunciative strategy of lanacion.com.ar, and significant recurrences allowed inferring a set of recognition logics, namely, the discrimination of types of readers: Integrated faithful reader, excluded faithful reader, dissident reader, and critical reader.

Keywords: discourse, press, reader, recognition logic, online newspapers, participation, mediatization.

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina, desde una mirada sociosemiótica, las distintas lógicas de respuesta de los lectores a la estrategia enunciativa de un periódico argentino online –el diario lanacion.com.ar, edición digital del matutino La Nación–, a partir de la indagación de las gramáticas de reconocimiento presentes en los comentarios a las noticias del medio. Como resultado del análisis de un total de 3578 comentarios de lectores, se identificaron constantes en las respuestas del público a la estrategia enunciativa de lanacion.com.ar, recurrencias significativas que permitieron inferir un conjunto de lógicas de reconocimiento, es decir, la discriminación de tipos de lectores: lector fiel integrado, lector fiel excluido, lector disidente, y lector crítico.

Palabras clave: discurso, prensa, lector, lógicas de reconocimiento, diarios online, participación, mediatización.

•How to cite:

Raimondo Anselmino, N. (2014). Prensa online y tipos de lectores. Respuestas del público y lógicas de reconocimiento en los comentarios a las noticias del diario argentino La Nación. *Cuadernos.info*, 34, 183-195. doi: 10.7764/cdi.34.535

INTRODUCTION

The study field known as *online journalism* exists for almost two decades and, as some authors point out (Masip, Díaz Noci, Domingo, Micó Sanz & Salaverria, 2010; Raimondo Anselmino, 2012b; Meso Ayerdi, 2013), one of the latest trends in it has been the increasing importance given to questions about the participation of the public in the press. The anniversary of the first decade of digital journalism production, back in the year 2005 became a key date for the diffusion of early work on web participation (Gillmor, 2004; Bowman & Willis, 2005; Martínez Rodríguez, 2005; Quadros, 2005; Varela, 2005), partly because of the growing proliferation of user generated content (UGC, in English), which was amplified significantly by then with the consolidation of the blog empire. Five years later, between late 2010 and early 2011, a new turn in reflections on public participation in the press began to unfold, motivated, in this case, due to the consolidation of the space that allows readers to comment on the content of the news, as well as by the force of the impact of the seism produced by social networks on the Internet (cf. Raimondo Anselmino, 2012a).

Today there is no doubt that if there is something that is clearly transforming, while the press changes, is the reader; therefore, it is urgent to lead investigations that engage in studying the production of meaning that takes place in the field of *online* newspaper reception. Nonetheless, it could be said that it is a field unstudied in a systematic way and that, it is worth mentioning, has been far more explored by consulting firms and media companies than by the own academic field of communication studies.

The relevance of the present paper rests, above all, in its intent to begin to fix the deficiency mentioned before, examining, from a socio semiotic perspective (fruitful when studying complex production of meaning phenomena, such as those that take place within the framework of mass media), the different logics of reader response to the enunciative strategies of an Argentinian *online* newspaper, (the *online* edition of the newspaper *La Nación*, lanacion.com.ar) by exploring speech recognition grammar present in comments to news of said media. This work was carried out in the framework of a doctoral investigation that has as its

objective to study the bond between newspaper/reader in the Argentinian *online* press, through the analysis of the areas of intervention and participation of the reader¹.

It should be noted that *La Nación* [*The Nation*] is one of the most traditional morning newspapers of general information with nationwide coverage in Argentina, and is considered part of the so-called key referent newspapers (Traversa & Steinberg, 1997), while also being among the most visited sites in the country (Alexa, 2013). This medium was also the second Argentinian daily to inhabit cyberspace (the first was the morning regional *Los Andes*), on December 17, 1995.

In short, this article intends to demonstrate that it is possible to use logics of recognition for analysis to identify a possible typology of readers of a digital newspaper from the study of responses of the public that crystallize in the news comments. Also, as we will see later, the construction of this typology, although pertinent to a particular analyzed medium, brings us closer to understanding the peculiar configuration that the public from *online* newspapers assumes today, frankly more hybrid than that of daily printed newspaper.

Accepting that newspaper headlines are relevant agents in constructing reading citizenry (Valdettaro, 2008) and, therefore, in the development of the public sphere (Habermas, 1999), the intention is to contribute to discussions that are presently taking place both about the current media system conditions and the relationship of it with the wider social and political context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We begin this section by pointing out, as proposed by Valdettaro (2008), that the “transformations of different medial formats are not autonomous, but primarily derive from the key changes in the system understood as a totality” (p. 40). Adopting this point of view, from the end of the 20th century it has been possible to note, inside the mass media system, a series of modifications to the classical press methods concerning, above all, the way in which the relationship between the newspaper and the reader is built (Valdettaro, 2005; Becerra, Marino & Mastrini, 2012). From the point of view of the

effects on the social bond, “the classical utopian ideal of critical and argumentative democracy” (Valdettaro, 2008, p. 42) of modern public opinion subject to reason, of which the press was held as a guarantor, is put into question. Such transformations – it must be clarified – were motivated first by the development of what Carlón (2004) defines as the device of live TV and, later on, by the new logics inherent to Internet that, as stated by Verón (2013), are profoundly altering “the relationship of the individual actors (...) with the media phenomena”(p. 279).

In this framework, one of the emerging phenomena in the field of studies on *online* press is given by the exponential development, in the course of a few years, that the discursive materiality assumed, even though it was already present in the newspapers for some time – after the publication of traditional letters to the editor or letters from readers – it did not, by no means, the place that it has today, in the interfaces of the digital newspapers, the *areas of intervention and participation of the reader*.

As proposed by Raimondo Anselmino (2012a), the denominated areas of intervention and participation of the reader are those instances of an *online* newspaper where the activity of the reader materializes. The *spaces of intervention* of the reader (on which this article will not stop) are those areas of the newspaper which in some way are operated or permeated by the activity of the reader, from any kind of action they do that leaves an imprint on the interface of the newspaper – with the exception of the production of statements: reading ranks, polls, vote on articles, etc. These differ from the spaces of participation, which are those where the reader can manifest itself discursively producing statements, as for example in the letters from readers, forums, blogs, or – here is the central space for this article – news comments. The latter are defined, according to Sal Paz (2009), as “discursive medullary genre (...) since it organizes and re-signifies other genres when it is embedded inside”(p. 342).

The newsreaders’ comments space became popular especially since the year 2007, moment in which it was incorporated by much of the world’s most prestigious digital points. Subsequently, and very gradually, the first results of research that gave said participation tool deep thought began to be published. The same investigations, oddly enough, and despite coming from various academic fields and of studying newsreaders’ comments in published news of newspapers from

different countries, have a peculiarity in common: in the majority of the cases (García de Torres, Martínez, Cebrián, Rodríguez & Alhacar, 2009; Singer & Ashman, 2009; Ruiz, Masip, Mico, Díaz Noci & Domingo 2010; McCluskey & Hmielowski, 2012; Milioni, Vadratsikas & Papa, 2012; Navarro Zamora, 2013) they are works that exclusively use content analysis.

Unlike those investigations, the one outlined here does not focus on content level (the text level) but rather in the modalities of “telling” (level of enunciation). This is so because, as it has been anticipated in the introduction, this study relied on a particularly fertile semiotic perspective to address the complex production of consciousness phenomena, such as those that take place in the context of mass media, and that is usually referred to as socio-semiotics. It’s the *theory of social discourses* (Verón, 1998), which in its articulation with the Luhmannian systemic theory promoted by Boutaud and Verón (2007) has stepped up its versatility to delve into the “relationality of relations” (Luhmann, 1998, p. 34) that occur between the system of mass communication (Luhmann, 2000) and the human environment or system of the actor (Boutaud & Verón 2007).

From this point of view, which conceives the discourse as an organized system of articulated meanings and shapers of social consciousness (Verón, 1998), a discourse analysis that inquires about the *modalities of enunciation* and *discourse strategies* of production of meanings is proposed. As for the latter, Verón (2004) defines the discursive strategies as the “changes witnessed in the interior of a same type of speech” (p. 197) or of the same type of product. As it has been carefully analyzed in another work (Raimondo Anselmino, 2011), the strategy carried out by each newspaper helps construct its personality (which is differentially distinct from the one that other competitor newspapers assume) and, therefore, helps to shape the way in which the medium relates to their recipients. The notion of discursive strategy is linked to another term of equal value: *reading contract*. Both concepts are associated with the way in which each medium manages to build its uniqueness over its competitors. “The purpose of this contract (...) is to build and maintain the habit of consumption” (Verón, 2004, p. 223).

Also, in accordance with the perspective referred to socio-semiotics, “the analyst of the discourse can be interested either due to the conditions of generating a

discourse or a type of discourse, either by the readings that the speech has undergone, meaning its effects” (Verón, 2004, p. 41). Asking oneself about the *recognition* of a specific speech requires trying to unravel what are the determinations that define the restrictions of its reception.

As already indicated in previous works (Raimondo Anselmino, 2010; 2012a), the onscreen display of the press - and with it, the emergence of the spaces from the reader's discourse materializes in the newspaper - brought coupled new possibility of recognizing the recognition. The distinctive features of the significant materiality of the digital corpus *online* today allow recovering, at the same time and in the same space - the interface of the newspaper-, not just the speech grammar production generated by the newspaper, but also certain speech recognition grammar of themselves. This is possible thanks to the presence of signs of the reading activity - as *footprints* of the productive conditions - that are evident in the spaces that effectively allow the intervention, programming and participation of the reader to emerge. Although it is worth clarifying that, given that from this theoretical-methodological perspective the act of reading is inherently intractable, “the study of recognition is *more of a study of the reader than of the reading, based on the analysis of the reader's discourse*” (Verón, 2004, p. 209; accentuated by the author).

On the other hand, the concrete analysis of newsreaders' comments to news published in *La Nación* is drawn from the perceptions about the discursive device of this newspaper that Biselli (2005) proposed in his study about the reading contract of the covers of print edition that, as it was widely analyzed by Sidicaro (1993, 2004), historically represented the liberal-conservative thought. This can certainly be useful to explain, later on, the relationship established between the field of significant effects available in production and the concrete effects that can be seen in recognition. Biselli (2005) says:

the front page of *La Nación* imposes from the graphics an order, stability and cohesion that not only connotes an ideological position, but seeks to tame the always chaotic world of the newsworthy (...) and in a compatible space make dissimilar traditions of which the newspaper wants to be owner and defender and different images of itself that seek to consolidate and impose its readers from the very same cover. (p. 107)

According to the author, there are certain susceptible features of the printed version of this newspaper – such as the still preserved “sheet” format, the distinctive quality of the paper and printing, or the location of the main header - that associates it with what he calls the *tradition of book culture*, while at the same time, it gives a space to an inevitable *media tradition* - which manifests itself, for example, in the importance given on the cover to the photographs or in the publication of “any news for the general public” (Biselli, 2005, p. 111). Such tension, we will later see, is transferred to the comments of some readers of *lanacion.com.ar*, particularly from those who assert themselves as regular readers of the newspaper.

For its part, the digital edition of *La Nación* has tried, through their various redesigns, to translate to the web the quality that was so characteristic of it in its printed edition, no longer conforming to that “rigorous compliance to an unalterable design” (Biselli, 2005, p. 107) that characterized its paper circulation but, rather, adapting to the logics imposed by the Internet environment and thus relegating some share of the stability that embellished the brand (Valiente Noailles, 2010). The fact that to establish a distance with the paper edition it has modified its logo in the redesign published in 2008 is just one example of this. However, and apart from the foregoing, *lanacion.com.ar* seems to remain, in the Argentine media ecosystem, “the newspaper (...) that tries the most to sustain the tradition of the serious journal (...), that most attempts to continue defining its role in line with a public sphere subjected to the argumentative reason” (Biselli, 2005, p. 113), proposing a contract from which the medium continues to try to position itself as a *forum for doctrine*² and a firm representative of an “intellectual reflection with explanatory vocation” (Sidicaro, 2004, p. 91).

As noted in Raimondo Anselmino (2012a), even though *La Nación* was the first Argentine newspaper of national reach to be *online*, it did it, at the beginning, without incorporating any participatory instance for more than one year - not even the traditional letters from readers. Even though little by little the newspaper was incorporating some spaces of intervention and participation of the reader, the first significant step in this regard was recently given with the 2001 redesign, when it began to develop the Participation section, and the quantitative and qualitative leap occurred in 2007, when the newspaper became – according

to what they say - in the first medium of the world to open all their news to feedback from its users. From then on, the space for the reader's comments became their style brand in terms of strategy of participation: around that instance all of its relationship politics with the more active audience sector is woven, drawn from other resources such as the arrangement of medals to distinguish participative readers, the users' ranking or the highlighted comments. The users' ranking - which was implemented in 2009 and is already discontinued - was a tool by which the newspaper distinguished five users who have reached the gold medal level. Moreover, the sector of Highlighted comments, still functioning, consists of a tab from which, in the interior of each article, the listing of the comments made by users who have silver and gold medals can be accessed.

Much of these resources are intended to control the communicative audience flow, since at this point it is known that the use the readers-users make of the comments' section tends to be far from what was initially expected initially by the medium (Raimondo Anselmino, 2012a).

One of the attempts of *La Nación* which took place in the middle of November, 2010 was the launch of the Users' qualification program, through which to "the best commentators" are awarded, distinguishing them with gold, silver or bronze medals, in accordance with the score each one of them gets, established through a calculation that takes into account different variables: the number of comments, the percentage of rejected posts, average responses and positive votes obtained and the percentage of relevant reports. Finally, in their struggle to achieve that the user would come out of their anonymity, *lanacion.com.ar* also resorted to *online* social networks, promoting the ability to relate the account of a user of the site to their Facebook profile. Thus, the comments from readers who opt for such alternative are also published in the personal wall of the popular social network.

METHODOLOGY

As previously noted, the analysis presented here set out to identify, characterize and classify the speech recognition grammars in the discourses of the readers-users that are materialized in the space of the news comments. As the purpose of this socio-semiotic research is not, at all, of a quantitative nature – not even the discrimination of logics of recognition intends to be exhaustive, given that, for example, those specific to readers who do not participate in the newspaper are not

taken into account -when selecting the set of discourses to be studied, it was not considered necessary to build a *sample* that allows to infer properties of all of a population but rather, to form a *corpus*. This corpus, in this case, was composed of all the comments in a set of a dozen news articles (chosen at the rate of three per year, between early 2007 and late 2010, period in which the study was conducted) and in total amounting to 3578 posts/statements of readers.

On the other hand, as this analysis is part of a bigger research which aims to investigate the bond newspaper/reader, for the formation of the corpus of readers' comments it was decided to select news that had the particularity of either announce changes or redesigns of the site, reflect on *online* press, or turn the participation of its readers in an issue. Thus, responses from the public that are crystallized in the news comments also have a peculiar characteristic: they converse about the newspaper and its processes or products, and can therefore be included within what Braga (2006) called *media criticism*. This is so because, to define the criteria of delimitation of the corpus, we considered it relevant pick up the proposed by Braga (2006) regarding to the *social response system*.

In his book *A sociedade enfrenta sua mídia* [Society faces its media], Braga (2006) describes a social system that is not normally perceived and whose uniqueness could not be subsumed neither by the producing subsystem or the reception subsystem; It is a third system inherent to media processes concentrating response activities, i.e., those audience-generated discourses starting from the "stimuli produced initially pela mídia [by the media]" (Braga, 2006, p. 28) and that, when making the social reactions flow around media processes and products, meet a specific systemic function of feedback. Within the framework of such a system, the author places a particular type of response from the audience, which he denominates media criticism:

podemos dizer que críticas midiáticas são trabalhos explícitos sobre determinadas produções da mídia, baseados em observação organizada de produtos, com objetivos (expressos o implícitos) determinados por motivações socioculturais diversas e voltados para o compartilhamento, na sociedade, de pontos de vista, de interpretações e/ou de ações sobre os próprios produtos (ou tipo de produtos), seus processos de produção e/ou seu uso pela sociedade. (p. 71) [We can say that media criticism is explicit critical work on certain media productions based on observation of products, with organized objectives (expressed or implicit) determined by various socio-cultural motivations and facing the sharing, in society, of points of

view, of interpretations and/or actions on the products themselves (or type of products), its production process and/or its use by society]. (p. 71)

The notion of *media criticism* then becomes, thus, central to understanding the delimitation criteria of the corpus of study: given the type of news selected, all of the readers' comments present in them can be identified as *responses* from the public that effectively returned to the medium and have as a peculiarity that they are about the medium, their products or processes.

Listed below are the news chosen, specifying the dates of publication of each one, title and number of comments received (indicated in parentheses):

- 15/07/2007: *La Nación abre todas sus páginas a los lectores* [La Nación opens all its pages to the readers] (224)
- 10/10/2007: *Premian a La Nación por la creación de comunidades online* [La Nación is awarded for the creation of online communities] (4)
- 28/11/2007: *El futuro de la prensa está atado al futuro de Internet y a la innovación* [The future of the press is tied to the future of Internet and to innovation] (8)
- 28/06/2008: *El nuevo lanacion.com* [The new lanacion.com] (592)
- 06/07/2008: *Como aprovechar mejor el nuevo lanacion.com* [How to better use the new lanacion.com] (47)
- 23/11/2008: *Los lectores de lanacion.com rechazaron la estatización de las AFJP* [Readers of lanacion.com rejected the nationalization of the AFJP] (419)
- 15/08/2009: *El futuro de los diarios en Internet* [The future of online newspapers] (18)
- 23/09/2009: *Los usuarios de lanacion.com destacados de la semana* [This week's leading users of lanacion.com] (140)
- 27/12/2009: *La Nación estrenó su Redacción integrada* [La Nación launched integrated writing] (42)
- 23/04/2010: *Cumpleaños del suplemento en el país de Twitter* [Birthday of the supplements in the country of Twitter] (19)
- 29/04/2010: *La batalla cultural* [The cultural battle] (231)
- 18/11/2010: *Calificación de usuarios en lanacion.com* [Lanacion.com users' ranking] (1834)

Located in the methodological framework of socio-semiotics, this research focused in unraveling the relationships established between the field of possible meaning effects available in concrete production and the

concrete effects that can be seen in recognition, since, as Boutaud and Verón (2007) explain: "on the one hand, each discourse product is a configuration of possible semiotic paths (...) [and] on the other hand, each speech recognition grammar can be characterized as a set of rules that trigger certain paths (...), to the detriment of others" (p. 5).

Regarding the analytical procedure, one need not add that studying said speech recognition grammars implies, inevitably, analyzing the enunciation of the reader—meaning carrying out a discourse analysis that devolves to the level of the enunciation, identifying those *regular enunciative operations*, i.e. Forms of speech whose operation is relatively constant "and that, consequently, give some stability to the support/reader relationship" (Verón, 2004, p. 179). Again, in the words of Verón (2004): "semiological analysis aims to identify and describe the operations that (...) determine the position of speaker and, consequently, that of the recipient" (p. 179). Likewise, and in parallel to this work, as Verón says, the identification of operations can only come from variations. Given that discourse analysis is "essentially interested in the differences between speeches" (Verón, 2004, p. 49; noted by the author), our research fell on systematic disparities between speeches, thus outlining different types of readers. In short: "It is trying to describe, in a discursive set, all operations that define a systematic and regular difference with another discursive set, considering as a hypothesis that both are subjected to different productive conditions" (Verón, 2004, p. 53).

As a result of the analysis of speech recognition grammars of 3578 comments from readers of *La Nación*, certain constants and invariant disparities in the answers from the public to the enunciative strategy of lanacion.com.ar were identified. These recurrences allowed inferring a set of logics of recognition, i.e. the discrimination of types or categories of readers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: COMMENTS TO THE NEWS IN LA NACIÓN^B

From the analysis of the comments of readers of lanacion.com.ar, four different logics of recognition were distinguished which, as already stated, do not pretend to be thoroughgoing, and that we have decided to denominate in the following manner:

- Integrated faithful reader;
- Excluded faithful reader;
- Dissenting reader;
- Critical reader.

The **first and the second** logic stated are very close together, because both refer to a reader-participant that have an affinity with the editorial line of *La Nación* (already referred to in the theoretical framework) which is recognized as part of the “community of readers”, which usually is - or was – also a reader of the print version of the newspaper, and whose attachment to the medium is part of the inherited cultural consumption.

The strength of the bond that seems to have been established between certain readers and the newspaper may be materialized in explicit appeal to the community of readers that *La Nación* vigorously works to consolidate - at least on the discursive level-, within the framework of its reading contract and of its participation strategy. It is an allusion that could not be found in the comments of the enunciators who presented themselves as openly opposed to the editorial line of the newspaper.

That is to say, the first and second logic of recognition refer to a type of speaker for who the weight of tradition is as important as it is to the newspaper, which often materializes in the express mention of a “heritage” or “legacy” of reading that transcends generations and is perpetuated in time. For example:

(196 - 06/28/2008) **mariano2010**: In my family we are the fourth generation who read *La Nación* (...)

(198 - 06/28/2008) **pipiola**: (...) my father always read his newspaper and was truly a very faithful follower and here I am, following in his footsteps, in a different way (...)

Both types of readers also conceive the possibility of participating in the comments space as an extension of the “Republican” character of the newspaper that today, more than ever, they consider allows them to exercise their role of “citizens”. These readers who related to the proposal of the newspaper are those who vindicated the Republican roots of *La Nación* - that of a “tribune of doctrine” - and denote as “democratic”, “brave” and “inclusive” the initiative of the newspaper to allow them to comment on all the news. For example:

(21 - 07/15/2007) **d_luzuriaga2007**: I join the praise of other readers to the initiative. With a bold use of new technologies this apparently “conservative” newspaper creates a forum for old fashioned opinion which is democratic and revolutionary. (...)

(40 - 07/15/2007) **idebchaco**: *La Nación*, unique guide of democracy, could not give a better example of what the participation of citizens in the thinking and action of the Republic means. No doubt, many officials will “suffer” because of this. (...)

What differentiates one from the other *faithful reader* is that the first - the integrated faithful reader- considers that changes that permanently alter lanacion.com.ar interface are part of an editorial project that works to provide the best to its users. For example:

(76 - 07/15/2007) **dichter**: Without a doubt, an initiative that requires the unanimous approval of the usual readers of *La Nación* and which comes to confirm the reasons why we have chosen this medium when it comes to inform us. I infer that this derives from the involvement of *La Nación* in the 60th Congress of the W.A.N., and shows that it is an innovative medium, attentive to the new trends and desires of its readers. (...)

For its part, the second type of faithful reader - excluded faithful reader- resists such innovations because it perceives them as alien to the tradition of the newspaper. This last category of reader says to feel continually expelled from the site, without recognizing itself in the values - defined as “popular”, “youthful”, “postmodern” - which, from their point of view, the above changes would promote. For example:

(162 - 06/28/2008) **seagull14**: It is like all modern. Modern-ous. Or postmodern-ous, if you prefer. Just as one is getting used to managing and locating data, news and sections, Wham! EVERYTHING CHANGES. A kind of thousand steps retreat. The Conservatives have no place in cyberspace. Already I'm afraid to open the newspaper tomorrow and see that it is different from today's (...)

(28 - 06/28/2008) **tomasvicchi**: (...) the design of the website at first glance doesn't impress me well, it seems too similar to the most read morning daily... (...) I believe that the readers of LN would prefer something more in the line of foreign newspapers of the same segment rather than blend in with other local media...

These comments that perceive the change of design as a “loss of identity” - which even according to some readers would make the newspaper increasingly similar to *Clarín*, a local competitor that is not even allowed to be mentioned- are joined with expressions of rejection such as “it is just one more blog”, “it isn't a newspaper”, “it is not my newspaper” or “it has lost style”.

Although since the end of the year 2008, within the discourses of readers that circulate in the comments space, the term “user forum”, which seems to appeal equally to any type of enunciator, who frequently label themselves as “readers” – self-categorized as “everyday”, “recurring”, “regulars” - it is frequent to find those manifesting a forthright affinity with the editorial line

of the newspaper and whose bond with the medium seems to be based on the relation initiated once with the daily print newspaper, whose representation in the discourse of these readers coincides with the image *La Nación* is trying to build (and which is enunciatively linked with the values of “quality”, “seriousness” and “objectivity”). For example:

(484–06/28/2008) **lilianacabezali**: I've always been a reader of *La Nación*, mainly for its seriousness and independence, objectivity and excellent journalists, as such and as people. Today, in the age of Cybernetics, I continue following those who inform me, from the computer, obviously, since they have never forgotten their principles (...)

There have been as well notorious opportunities where the discrepant enunciators, who are built as faithful to the editorial line of the medium, define themselves as open opponents of the current Government presided by Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, which somehow illustrates the adversative tone that in many cases present the discourses circulating in the space of newspaper comments. For example:

(127- 11/18/2010) **derosario**: I am totally anti k! But I did not go into even half an article to speak ill of Nestor when he had already died... (...)

It is worth clarifying that the term *adversative* used here is in the sense attributed by Verón (1987, p. 16). Although there is no intention in suggesting the inclusion of the readers' comments into the political type of discourse, we do believe possible asserting that in many of the studied speeches one can see, clearly, a controversial dimension, of frank confrontation with the positions proposed by an “other” that is considered an enemy, adversary.

The **third logic** is, precisely, that of the *dissenting reader*, i.e. that reader-participant who openly expresses its lack of affinity with the editorial profile of the newspaper, and that although it considers itself a “forum-user”, it does not recognize itself as “reader” of *La Nación*, due to the negative values it would represent. Although an active participant of the comments' space, it feels part of a “minority” within it. For example:

(150 - 11/22/2008) **megustaunmonton**: You can't expect something else from the readers of LA NACION. THEY LONG FOR THE GENOCIDAL DICTATORSHIP! WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? They care little about losing if argentina and the government lose.

However, it is clarified that, in fact, there are many readers who do not relate to the editorial line of *La Nación* and despite their opposition to the newspaper, are differentiated as participatory and assiduous readers who conform to the rules of the site. These enunciators use the collective “readers” to designate a “them” of which they do not feel part of, even when on several occasions the user profile from which the comments comes holds a medal (gold, silver or bronze), meaning that it is a frequent and participatory site user. However, it has been observed, during the analysis of the comments, that these discrepant dissidents are those who accumulate most votes in their comments.

This type of feedback, the dissident enunciator was found, especially, in the news concerning the nationalization of the AFJPS⁴ (November 23, 2008) and the system for user rating the newspaper undertook (November 18, 2010), or on the op-ed signed by Beatriz Sarlo (April 29, 2010). There it could be seen, in addition, that criticism of the newspaper and the disqualification of the “readers” of it unleashed on many occasions the response of those who fell defined by said collective, causing the exchange and controversy between the different types of readers. For example:

(3 - 11/22/2008) **cdmaya**: I love the hysteria of the argentinian right, it really amuses me, what the readers of la nacion is irrelevant in the group of all the citizens and predictable as well.

(#23 - 11/22/2008) **ejdevillegas**: If it is irrelevant what the readers of *La Nación* think why write in this forum. What a boring life you must have to be amused by the argentinian right and love their hysteria.

It must be noted that between the two first types of readers and the third, opinions, or appreciations often appear polarized: you are either in favor or against; it is “anti-k” (anti-Kirchner) or “pro-k” (pro-Kirchner). On one side and the other it is current the designation of the *counter-recipient* – a category that refers to the negative recipient of a controversial speech, that is “excluded from the collective identification” (Verón, 1978, p. 17)-from completely derogatory and disqualifying appellations, such as “forum user K”, “ñoki”, “cyber kk”, “caveman”, “goriforista”, etc. Also, both “sides” accuse each other of using the *report abuse* as a tool to silence and censor the opposite view:

(125 - 11/22/2008) **Laly34w**: chiquitines KK (because of the brain I say!) keep reporting my messages I will take the time to post it again as many times as it is necessary and if this not enough I will get a solicitation, but as I'm sure that I said nothing bad, or aggravating, (...)

(#1 125 - 11/22/2008) **nachost_2**: I ran out of bullets, if not I would report you for idiot.

(#2 15 - 09/23/2009) **strasbourg**: What happens is that there are people reporting others only by transmitting the nick. I have read comments reported or with many negative votes in which it is impossible to even vote (...)

The report is a tool that allows skilled users (i.e., those that hold any medal) report abuses of the standards in the comments' space standards.

On both sides there is, also, a continuous criticism to the system of moderation proposed by the newspaper and the figure of the moderator is qualified with epithets like "that friend of purism which is always on the look-out", "the Torquemadas of the newspaper", or "Scissor hands friend".

On the other hand, there are also rampant allegations of "inadequate" use of the comments' space by "paid commentators" or "hired", charges which can already be found early on since mid-2007, and which were multiplied with the passage of time until its moment of greatest exposure in 2010. Although, it is worth clarifying, the presumption of the existence of "paid commentators" is not a unique phenomenon of the Argentinian media arena (cf. Ruiz et al., 2010). For example:

(631 - 11/18/2010) **Exterminator**: Mrs. of LNOL: did you not find out that very own Chief of cabinet has GANGS of paid guys dedicated to write in blogs and also in forums, especially of LNOL and PERFIL, including other media which allows this practice? Did you find out that underneath the very own Pink House there are 60 guys that are dedicated to continuously monitor what is written and said in the different media?

The clash between both categories of readers – faithful readers, on the one hand, and dissident readers on the other - is so strong that the fact that they agree on anything calls, immediately, for attention. This happened, for example, with criticisms triggered by the Users' Rating System implemented by *La Nación* at the end of 2010, which was massively rejected by readers:

(#27 64 - 11/18/2010) **algunidia**: after today I am not going to comment any more 'cause they ruined the forum and I am not going to read the newspaper because I would read it in the

Forum... but before I go I want to congratulate la nación for achieving the impossible... put us all in agreement... k and anti k agree this system is crap.

(445 - 11/18/2010) **toquegolyfiesta**: The medals system is peculiar. They wanted to promote discord among the commentators, and it has backfired on them. For example, since the beginning of this system, I'm back to agreeing with a kirchenrista. That did not happen since the day in which Don Nestor Kirchner said that Dr. Carlos Menem was the best President in history. More so, I have agreed yet again with a duhaldista, even if my old mom is still waiting for the dollars that she deposited. E, unheard of, I have been in agreement with a radical. *La Nación*, going backwards!

Finally, **the fourth logic** announced as the *critical reader* was designed because it refers to that reader-participant that enunciates from a "middle position", which does not feel represented by the polarizing in which both the faithful reader and the dissenting reader incur. Its positions tend to be, in consequence, more moderate than the rest of the enunciators with a greater presence of evaluative opinions rather than emotional insights-. For example:

(38 - 04/28/2010) **flecher**: I look at 678 sometimes and I also see tn and truthfully I do not see the difference regarding the bottom line, which is show reality in the way that best suits the bosses. The difference is in the way, 678 is more direct and vulgar and TN (and the big media in general) are more subtle and hypocrites. Although they are losing the subtleties lately. I did not vote K in any election and shall not vote for them unless they reach a runoff with Macri, Reutemann's or De Narvaez. I think no medium is independent and to be more or less informed you have to listen to the two campaigns. For me, the K did some good things and in others they "boo" at them, bad. And I have no doubt that they are corrupt and hopefully someday they will be sent to prison.

(366 - 11/18/2010) **Eduomca**: Taking into account that there is a major polarization (pro Government - anti-Government), whenever any "independent" as I think against or in favor of an action of the Government or an opponent, we receive negative votes of any of the two sides. Associate qualification of the user to its "popularity" seems quite unfair and the result, little serious.

As you can see, a reference is made here to the taxonomy proposed by Charaudeau (2003) to account for two types of modalities of reflective judgments: on one side, the *opinion* and, on the other, the *appreciation*. The first involves the calculation of probabilities and,

therefore, is the “result of a hypothetical judgment upon a favorable/unfavorable position (...) it is a testament to the point of view of a subject about a knowledge” (p. 112). The second, on the contrary, comes from “a reaction of the subject against a fact (...) there is no calculation of probabilities but immediate reactive attitude” (p. 112). The latter then involves, therefore, the emotional universe: “against a fact the subject feels, identifies, expresses a positive or negative opinion, but in no case makes a calculation” (p. 112). Each of these reflective judgments involves a different type of linguistic activity, and Charaudeau (2003) clarifies, they “come from two inverse movements: the opinion about the fact as intellectual evaluation and appreciation from the fact as an affective reaction” (p. 113).

CONCLUSION

As explained at the beginning of this work, the analysis developed throughout the article fits into a general line of work that conceives the headlines of newspapers as relevant actors in the development of the public sphere, highlighting the role the press played in the construction of reading citizenships. As a result, it is considered that the study of the changes made in the press not only updates our knowledge about the development of the contemporary cultural industries and their audiences, but also allows unraveling the potential impact of these mutations in the development of the political and social functions that this medium has historically met.

In this framework, the purpose of this paper has been to address a semiotics area in particular: the meaning in reception. We sought to reconstitute, from the discourse of readers present in the news comments of the digital edition of the newspaper *La Nación*, certain speech recognition grammars that, as Verón (2004) well says, they are “always several, since in a given device of enunciation a single effect is never produced, but always several, according to recipients” (p. 182). This resulted in a typology of readers that discriminates between integrated faithful reader, excluded faithful reader, dissenting reader and critical reader.

On the other hand, in general, and beyond this differentiation of logics of recognition, in the research carried out it was observed how, in many cases, the readers-users explained in the comments the reasons for their participation. In this way, readers valued the possibility provided by *La Nación* for:

- Getting to know points of view of other readers and expand the information provided by the newspaper;
- Share with others their own ideas;
- Or simply, have a catharsis.

These three aspects are summarized in the following two comments selected to illustrate the above:

(20 - 07/15/2007) sweaterazul: the news as it appears in the media is the tip of the iceberg. Thank you to *La Nación* for allowing it to be seen and manifest the submerged part of the iceberg, which is the largest, which is the opinion of the readers. To some of us, it is useful as catharsis; to others it illustrates the opinion of readers better informed and with greater clarity of thought. Thank you again for allowing it.

(85 - 11/18/2010) arcoiristuc: normally I read the article and then some comments. If I can contribute, I do. Sometimes when I'm a bit with the blues, I amuse myself with the comments made. Now the ranking, I don't like. I think that people do not make the comments to win a prize but to exchange ideas, opinions, and sometimes anger that gears up to the situation in which we are immersed by misguided policies enforced from the State.

It is left to add that the physiognomy of the public constructed from the classification of the logic of recognition in these pages, coincides with the characterization made by Mancini (2011) of the so-called *hybrid audiences*. Meaning, we are effectively in front of a type of audience clearly more hybrid than the audience of the press newspaper, a group already formed not only by those who choose a certain newspaper *online* by affinity with the editorial line of the same, but also including those who arrive to the site forwarded by randomized algorithms of a search engine, by the suggestions of their affinity group, or by the added value provided by the medium in terms of participation.

Therefore, it seems possible to argue that one of the central contributions of this work is that it allows witnessing how the group of consumers who can be identified as an *online* newspaper public has acquired a different constitution to the one presented by the consumers of the press newspaper. In particular, the set of readers participating in a newspaper commenting on the news, in addition to have this newly designated hybrid quality, is characterized by forming a peculiar community that in certain moment assumes *-mutatis*

mutandis—some of the singularities that Jenkins (2009, 2010) gives to media *fans*.

Even though this is one aspect that required to be addressed with greater in-depth in future research, it can be noted that readers involved in news comment spaces are part of a collective of media consumers who possess one greater degree of participation in the contents of the newspaper than the rest of the audience. They are readers that, also, sometimes tend to be qualified as “activists”: as well as the *fans* who Jenkins (2009; 2010) describes: they come together to protest the closure or the unexpected outcome of their favorite series. It was also noted during this investigation that the readers-users of the newspaper *online* are likely to question certain decisions of the medium - redesigns, changes, etc. – that they consider at odds with their

respective tastes and interests. For example, many readers of the site - belonging to the different identified *types* - organized actions to express their disagreement regarding the program “User ranking of lanacion.com” from which the newspaper decided to award medals to “featured users”. Among the tactics of protest, three stood out: a “comments strike” that was held on November 23, 2010; concealment of the Medal awarded by the newspaper; and the repetition in each comment with the phrase “No CyR” (No to “calificación” [qualification] and rankings).

In summary, the foregoing reveals that, as Verón (2013, pp. 275-276) said, when studying some of the dimensions that media reception can assume today, we are confronted with phenomena of a greater complexity than the one often assumed by our theoretical models.

FOOTNOTES

1. Doctoral thesis entitled “El vínculo diario/lector en los periódicos *online*. Análisis de los espacios de intervención y participación del lector en los diarios argentinos *Clarín* y *La Nación*” [“The relationship between newspaper/readers in *online* newspapers. Analysis of the areas of intervention and participation of the reader in the Argentine newspapers *Clarín* and *La Nación*”, presented and defended at the Doctorate in Social Communication at the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations, National University of Rosario (Argentina). This research was conducted with funding from two postgraduate scholarships granted by the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (Conicet) [National Council of Scientific and Technical Investigations].
2. “*La Nación* será una tribuna de doctrina” [“*La Nación* will be a forum for doctrine”] was the motto proposed, since its inception, by its founder Bartolomé Mitre, who, moreover, was the President of the Republic Argentina between 1862 and 1868.
3. Comments from readers are cited without any syntax and spelling correction, indicating the number assigned to it, as seen at lanacion.com.ar’s interface and then the date of the news to which it respond and the nickname of the user. The presence of the sign # before the number of comments demonstrates that it is one response to another comment. Some too extensive comments will be reproduced only in part, pointing out the trim with the indication: [...].
4. Here reference is made to the Administradoras de Fondos de Jubilaciones y Pensiones (AFJP) [Administrators of Retirement and Pensions Funds] and the nationalization of the funds which took place in Argentina at the end of the year 2008, during the first term of the President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

REFERENCES

- Alexa (2013). Top Sites in Argentina. *Top Sites (By Country)*. The Web Information Company. Recuperado de <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/AR>
- Becerra, M., Marino, S. & Mastrini, G. (2012). *Mapping Digital Media: Argentina*. Open Society Foundations. Disponible en <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/mapping-digital-media-argentina>
- Biselli, R. (2005). La portada de *La Nación* como dispositivo discursivo. *La Trama de la Comunicación*, 10, 105-115. Disponible en <http://www.redalyc.org/pdf/3239/323927060020.pdf>

- Boutaud, J.-J. & Verón, E. (2007). Du sujet aux acteurs. La sémiotique ouverte aux interfaces. En *Sémiotique ouverte. Itinéraires sémiotiques en communication*. París: Hermès Science. Traducción al castellano de Gastón Cingolani, con el título "Del sujeto a los actores. La semiótica abierta a las interfaces", para la cátedra Medios y Políticas de Comunicación, Área Transdepartamental de Crítica de Artes, Instituto Universitario Nacional del Arte, Buenos Aires, 2008.
- Bowman, S. & Willis, C. (2003). *Nosotros, el medio. Cómo las audiencias están modelando el futuro de las noticias y la información*. Reston, VA: The Media Center at The American Press Institute.
- Braga, J. L. (2006). *A sociedade enfrenta sua mídia. Dispositivos sociais de crítica midiática*. São Paulo: Paulus.
- Carlón, M. (2004). *Sobre lo televisivo: dispositivos, discursos y sujetos*. Buenos Aires: La Crujía.
- Charaudeau, P. (2003). *El discurso de la información. La construcción del espejo social*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- García de Torres, E., Martínez, S., Cebrián, B., Rodríguez, J. & Alhacar, H. (2009). La agenda de los usuarios. Un análisis de la participación en la página principal y la sección local de *Elpais.com* y *20minutos.es*. En P. Herrero, P. Rivas & R. Gelado (Coords.), *Estudios de periodística XIV. Periodismo ciudadano, posibilidades y riesgos para el discurso informativo: comunicaciones y ponencias del X Congreso de la Sociedad Española de Periodística, Salamanca, abril de 2008* (pp. 287-300). Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca.
- Gillmor, D. (2004). *We the media. Grassroots journalism by the people, for the people*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly.
- Habermas, J. (1999). *Historia y crítica de la opinión pública. La transformación estructural de la vida pública*. Barcelona: Gili.
- Jenkins, H. (2009). *Fans, bloggers y videojuegos. La cultura de la colaboración*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Jenkins, H. (2010). *Piratas de textos. Fans, cultura participativa y televisión*. Madrid: Paidós.
- Luhmann, N. (1998). *Sistemas sociales. Lineamientos para una teoría general*. México: Anthropos Editorial.
- Luhmann, N. (2000). *La realidad de los medios de masas*. México, D.F.: Universidad Iberoamericana / Barcelona: Anthropos Editorial.
- Mancini, P. (2011). *Hackear el periodismo. Manual de laboratorio*. Buenos Aires: La Crujía.
- Martínez Rodríguez, L. (2005). La participación de los usuarios en los contenidos periodísticos de la red. En G. López García (Ed.), *El ecosistema digital: modelos de comunicación, nuevos medios y público en Internet* (pp. 269-332). Valencia: Servei de Publicacions de la Universitat de Valencia. Artículo disponible en <http://www.ufrgs.br/limc/participativo/pdf/participacion.pdf>
- Masip, P., Díaz Noci, J., Domingo, D., Micó Sanz, J.-L. & Salaverría, R. (2010). Investigación internacional sobre ciberperiodismo: hipertexto, interactividad, multimedia y convergencia. *El Profesional de la Información*, 19(6), 568-576. Disponible en <http://bit.ly/RbMU2n>
- McCluskey, M. & Hmielowski, J. (2012). Opinion expression during social conflict: Comparing online reader comments and letters to the editor. *Journalism*, 13(3), 303-319. doi:10.1177/1464884911421696
- Meso Ayerdi, K. (2013). Periodismo y audiencias: inquietudes sobre los contenidos generados por los usuarios. *Cuadernos.info*, 33, 63-73. doi: 10.7764/cdi.33.515
- Milioni, D., Vadratsikas, K. & Papa, V. (2012). "Their two cents worth": Exploring user agency in readers' comments in online news media. *Observatorio Journal*, 6(3), 021-047.
- Navarro Zamora, L. (2013). La interactividad en los géneros periodísticos de los cibermedios. *Razón y Palabra*, 84. Disponible en http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/N/N84/V84/09_Navaro_V84.pdf
- Quadros, C. (2005). A participação do público no webjornalismo. *E-Compós* (Revista da Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação), 4, 1-17. Disponible en <http://www.compos.org.br/seer/index.php/e-compos/article/viewFile/56/56>
- Raimondo Anselmino, N. (2010). Formas de pensar la relación de los medios con su público: reflexiones preliminares de una investigación sobre diarios digitales. *Questión*, 1(23). Disponible en <http://sedici.unlp.edu.ar/handle/10915/32453>

- Raimondo Anselmino, N. (2011). O ocaso do modelo intencional: como pensar a noção de 'estratégia discursiva' sob o olhar sócio-semiótico. *Semeiosis* (São Paulo), 2.
- Raimondo Anselmino, N. (2012a). *La prensa online y su público. Un estudio de los espacios de intervención y participación del lector en los diarios argentinos Clarín y La Nación*. Buenos Aires: Teseo.
- Raimondo Anselmino, N. (2012b). Un repaso por los estudios sobre la prensa sobre la prensa on-line en el ámbito académica nacional. *Questión*, 1(33), 235-348.
- Ruiz, C., Masip, P., Mico, J.L., Díaz Noci, J. & Domingo, D. (2010). Conversación 2.0 y democracia. Análisis de los comentarios de los lectores en la prensa digital catalana. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, 23(2), 7-39. Disponible en http://www.unav.es/fcom/comunicacionsociedad/es/articulo.php?art_id=360
- Sal Paz, J. (2009). Comentario de lector: género discursivo estructurante de los 'nuevos medios'. En *Actas del IV Coloquio Argentino de La IADA*, La Plata [documento inédito].
- Sidicaro, R. (1993). *La política mirada desde arriba. Las ideas del diario La Nación, 1909-1989*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana.
- Sidicaro, R. (2004). Consideraciones a propósito de las ideas del diario La Nación. En C. Wainerman & R. Sautu (Comp.), *La trastienda de la investigación* (3a ed. ampliada, pp. 79-96). Buenos Aires: Lumiere.
- Singer, J. B. & Ashman, I. (2009). Comment is free, but facts are sacred: user-generated content and ethical constructs at The Guardian. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 24(1), 3-21. doi 10.1080/08900520802644345
- Traversa, O. & Steimberg, O. (1997). *Estilo de época y comunicación mediática*. Tomo 1. Buenos Aires: Atuel.
- Valdettaro, S. (2005). Prensa y temporalidad. *La Trama de la Comunicación*, 10, 97-201. Disponible en <http://www.latrama.fcpolit.unr.edu.ar/index.php/trama/article/view/124/120>
- Valdettaro, S. (2008). Algunas consideraciones acerca de las estrategias del contacto: del papel a la in-mediación de las interfaces. *Revista LIS, Letra, Imagen, Sonido. Ciudad Mediatizada*, 1, 39-46. Disponible en <http://semioticafernandez.com.ar/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/3-LIS1-Contacto-SV.pdf>
- Valiente Noailles, E. (2010, 3 de enero). Entre la tradición y la novedad. *La Nación*. Recuperado de <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1217813-entre-la-tradicion-y-la-novedad>
- Varela, J. (2005). Blogs vs MSM. Periodismo 3.0, la socialización de la información. *Telos* (Madrid, Segunda Época), 65. Disponible en <http://telos.fundaciontelefonica.com/telos/articulocuaderno.asp?idarticulo=7&rev=65.htm>
- Verón, E. (1998). *La semiosis social. Fragmentos de una teoría de la discursividad*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Verón, E. (2004). *Fragmentos de un tejido*. Buenos Aires: Gedisa.
- Verón, E. (2013). *La semiosis social, 2. Ideas, momentos, interpretantes*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Natalia Raimondo Anselmino, Argentinean, holds a Ph.D. in Social Communication from the National University of Rosario (UNR) and is a researcher at CONICET (National Council of Scientific and Technical Research). She teaches in the degree in Social Communication of the UNR and in the degree in Graphic Design of the Inter-american Open University (UAI). She is a member of the academic committee of the Center for Research in Mediatizations (CIM, UNR), where she develops research tasks in the field of semiotics of the mass media, with the press as a privileged object of study.