



Recension

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Sergeant, Jean-Claude. 2011. *L'anglais du journalisme : comprendre et traduire*. Paris : Éditions Ophrys Traduction, 214 p. ISBN 978-2-7880-1257-8.

This 215-page manual has been written for the benefit of journalists, students of journalism and students of English who have to read, analyse and translate the written press in English. Among Jean-Claude Sergeant's many objectives, the first is to pass on the know-how required by any reader trying to read and understand a press article in English. Given the many subtle cultural and linguistic references that pose a challenge to the non-native speaker, the author presents the different tools and skills necessary for anyone seeking to translate such a document, highlighting the pitfalls and how to get round them. At the same time he stresses the need to learn the essential grammar and vocabulary points that appear in the press article.

This book begins with a four-page introduction, followed by two main parts, each one divided into several chapters and sections. The first part, "*Culture et langage de la presse anglo-saxonne*", includes six chapters taking up eighty pages. The first chapter, "*Les coulisses du métier*", examines the history and the development of the written press in Britain and the United States. It goes on to explain the ethical code said to exist in English-language journalism before describing the different sections that can be found in a newspaper. This information helps the reader to place the "Anglo-Saxon" press in its own time context and to have a better understanding of the layout and presentation of a British or American newspaper.

The second chapter, "*L'article de presse en anglais : construction et écriture*", explains the rules to be followed when writing an article in English. It highlights headlines, a key aspect of the English newspaper article, offering many pertinent examples of the various types of headline one may come across. The author goes on to clarify the subtlety and the complexity of this particular style of writing, with its various references and puns.

The third chapter focuses on the famous tabloid, *The Sun*, in "*The Sun et l'univers bipolaire du Sun*". Through this detailed case study of the most widely read newspaper in Britain, the author explores the style and methods used by the popular press as a whole. In each section he goes over the different aspects of British tabloid journalism. First, he assesses the way in which this paper seeks to mobilize public opinion. Then he analyses the popular crusades launched by *The Sun* in the name of the public good, an old tradition in the British popular press. The next section reveals how *The Sun* stages popular events in order to back up a crusade, such as the infamous "*Chirac est un ver*" campaign in 2003 which vilified

the French President's "cowardly" decision not to send troops to Iraq. In the subsequent section, the author develops the notion of the fun side of these crusades, claiming that *The Sun's* often irreverent use of humour to put across a message suggests it does not take itself entirely seriously. In "*Les ressorts du calembour*", the author illustrates the very common usage of puns or plays on words, often inspired by or based on the consonance of people's names. These puns can be found above all in headlines or captions. In the following section, the reader learns that the tabloid press tends to adopt a very familiar attitude when dealing with public figures, be they politicians or stars; for example, David Cameron is often referred to as "Cam", and his wife Samantha as "Sam". In "*Hyperbole et dramatisation*", the reader discovers that this tabloid style leads to a use of hyperbole that serves to dramatise an event, such as by the use of capital letters, bold print, etc. Finally, "*Les bons et les méchants*" explains the very black and white aspect of *The Sun's* style of describing groups or individuals, thus making it easier for the reader to identify which sort of person or social group they are reading about. The "good guys", often depicted as heroes, are those who defend and protect the public, for example soldiers or firemen. The "bad guys" are those who defy authority (e.g., the young) or abuse society (e.g., benefit seekers), or particularly paedophiles.

The fourth chapter of the book, "*Clichés, métaphores et références culturelles*", considers how, despite the rules governing writing style that all good journalists are supposed to respect, several linguistic devices are often employed in the British press, including clichés, cultural references, metaphors and stereotypes. The author presents a list of the most commonly used clichés in the written press. Though by no means exhaustive, this offers a clear and detailed idea of the language used in the British and American press. The author translates each term and, where possible, an equivalent cliché is given as well as a contextual explanation. The reader is then offered an alphabetical guide to the list of metaphors which commonly figure not only in the written press, but also on the radio and on television. Once again, each term or expression is explained in context, translated and accompanied by a concrete example. Finally, the most commonly occurring references, be they cultural, classical, biblical or literary, are listed in the same way. By putting together these lists of clichés, metaphors and references, the reader gleans a highly rich series of terms, not all necessarily accessible for the French reader. Thus the reader is given access to the tools required to decipher an article in English.

The fifth chapter, "*Emprunts, calques et faux amis*", gives a short history of the use of "loan" or borrowed words and terms, and defines the meaning of the notion of a loan word. The borrowed term is described as the transfer of a word or group of words from one language to another. This is the result of a specific intention or plain laziness on the part of the journalist. It may be a technical term, taken from a specific context, for instance finance, the media or sports. It may also afford a certain prestige to a programme or article, for example reality TV shows in France that take English titles, like "Loft Story" or "X Factor".

The reader then discovers a series of terms borrowed from French and German, which allow him/her to grasp the contextualization, diversity and frequent usage of

such terms. The section on “copies” describes how certain terms are taken directly from English and increasingly used in the English sense of the term, quite different from the original French term, for instance “*arguer que*” and “*insister que*”. The author then deals with the question of false friends and the problems these pose for non-native readers; there is either narrowing, whereby only one sense carries over with the loanword, or they lead to semantic confusion. A list of the false friends found in English language journalism is provided. Each term is translated alongside a clear example and the semantic difficulty it may raise, particularly since no simple equivalent necessarily exists in French.

This first part concludes with a summary of the various points it raises. The author reviews the pitfalls and risks faced by the reader or translator, highlighting the need for a very good knowledge of both the English language and current affairs, and concluding that it is thus essential to be able to place the facts covered in their proper context.

The second part of the book comprises thirty texts taken from the press in Britain and the USA. Several different types of document are studied, namely fourteen articles, twelve editorials and four pieces written by a correspondent. The titles examined include five British national daily quality newspapers, *The Guardian* (7 texts), *The Independent* (3 texts), *The Financial Times* (3 texts), *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* (1 text each); one British national daily tabloid, *The Sun* (1 text); one American daily quality newspaper, *The International Herald Tribune* (2 texts); two British Sunday quality titles, *The Observer* (1 text) and *The Sunday Times* (3 texts); one international weekly news magazine, *The Economist* (7 texts); and finally one British weekly magazine specialising in journalism, *Broadcast* (1 text). The various articles cover a wide range of subjects: British, EU and international politics, social issues such as health or education, economics and financial affairs, and journalism.

In each case, the source is introduced, its national and/or international standing is discussed and the context in which the text was written and the choice of the actual subject are explained. Alongside each is a box giving the key words or expressions that appear in the text. The author elucidates these key words and places them in context or explains their subtleties or complexities, which may cause difficulties for the translator. Finally, a translation is given for each article.

The appendices to the book include two lists of spelling variations that exist between British and American English for certain words, first for proper names and second for everyday vocabulary. These lists are very helpful particularly for the translator. They are followed by a bibliography and an index.

The author of this manual sets himself a very ambitious target: to illustrate the art of reading, understanding and translating the nuances and complexities of the British and American written press. Thanks to the excellence and clarity of the explanations, definitions, and translations proposed, as well as the numerous aspects of the questions that he enumerates, with virtually no stone left unturned, he succeeds in doing so. Henceforth, the French reader will be able to use this reference in order to get to grips with the mysteries of the English press article.

Nevertheless, one or two constructive criticisms could be made. Given the importance attributed to *The Sun* newspaper in a whole sub-chapter of the first part of the book, it is a shame that the author only analyses and translates a single

article from the famous tabloid in the second part. Indeed, it is the only example of an article from a tabloid publication covered in this section. Among the thirty texts selected for translation, there is a sense of imbalance, as nearly half of them, fourteen in fact, are taken from just two sources, *The Guardian* and *The Economist*. It would have been interesting to see some more articles from the other quality papers studied.

A number of perhaps inevitable typos can be found: p. 46, "Paul McGrath", rather than "McGrath"; p. 48, "Court: sex register is unfair", rather than "in unfair"; p. 58, "to bark up the wrong tree" ("up" is omitted); p. 72 "elusive" rather than "eleusive"; p. 201, "Andreas Whittam Smith" rather than "Andrea". Also the expression "to bite the bullet" on page 58 means to accept something unpleasant, or inevitable, rather than to swallow one's words.

Despite these minor criticisms, this manual is a valuable contribution to the study and understanding of the Anglo-Saxon press.

