Discursive News Values

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Abstract:

The present research implies the different approaches that are adopted by many linguistics to describe news values in journalism and communication research, with the focusing on new approach called discursive which allows researchers to systematically examine how particular news and events are constructed as newsworthy , what values are emphasized in news stories, and, how each news values is constructed linguistically.

Conceptually, they encompass not only the newsworthy aspects of happenings or news actors but also external aspects that impact journalism practice, such as the influence of proprietors or advertisers, meeting deadlines or competition among news providers to get exclusive stories.

Some view news values as existing in the actual events and people who are reported on in the news, that is, in events in their material reality (a **material approach**). Others conceive news values as existing in the mind of journalists (a **cognitive approach**). News values are also constructed in the discourse involved in the production of news (a **discursive approach**). This third perspective with the aims of demonstrating what a discursive approach to news values can be added to the two others theoretical and analytical perspectives.

Key words: news values, journalism and communication research

INTRODUCTION

1.1 News as Discourse

News discourse has a long history of being explored in a variety of disciplines including journalism, sociology, linguistics and semiotics, because its study "has much to offer to the different disciplines on whose territory it touches" (Bell 1991:5). For any researcher interested in exploring news discourse, it is helpful to be familiar with some of the most important approaches to news values, and in the present research, the researcher will touch upon major approaches in Media / journalism and communication studies. The study of news reports in the press is one of the major tasks of discourse – analytic media research.

Sociolinguistics concerns about news discourse tend to centre on correlation between style and social factors .In other words , to what extent is there a correlation between features of news discourse and the presumed social status of audience of such discourse ?.

This kind of research is closely connected to Bell's (e.g.1991) and Jucker's (1992), study of news discourse. They both found that newspapers targeting different group of audiences, also use different types of apposition patterns. For instance, newspaper targeted at the (upper-) middle classes (such as the Times, the Guardian) deleted fewer determiners than newspaper targeted more at working classes (such as the Daily Mirror, the Sun): the latter newspaper had more instances of naming expressions in the form businessman John Morris rather than the businessman John Morris. In other words, the language of newspaper varies depending on target audience. Bell calls this audience design, meaning that "news casters are designing their speech for their audience" (1991:121). In the context of different media form, Bell (1991:110-22) investigates linguistics differences between radio stations in New Zealand, Conboy (2002) takes a sociolinguistics approach to the language of journalism across time.

1.2   Defining News Values / Discursive News Values

While the concept of news values originated outside linguistics (Galtung and Ruge, 1965), some – although not all – linguistic scholars who research news media have also provided definitions. These scholars consider news values as principles of selection, professional criteria, cognitive constraints, audience preferences, and qualities of items: (Bednarek ,2015)

- "principles of inclusion and exclusion may be summed up under the heading of news values" (Montgomery, 2007: 5);
- news values are "the criteria employed by journalists to measure and therefore to judge the 'newsworthiness' of events" and to "select, order and priorities the collection and production of news" (Richardson, 2007: 91);
- news values are "the values by which one 'fact' is judged more newsworthy than another" (Bell, 1991: 155);
- news values are constraints that "have a cognitive representation" (van Dijk, 1988: 121), providing "the cognitive basis for decisions about selection, attention, understanding, representation, recall, and the uses of news information in general" (van Dijk, 1988: 119);
- "news values are the (*imagined*) preferences of the expected audience"   (Richardson, 2007: 94,);
- news values are "the qualities that make a news item 'newsworthy'" (Cotter, 2010: 67).

However, linguists have included different aspects of the news process under the heading of news values. As Table 1 shows, van Dijk (1988) and Bell (1991) take a broad approach and include a variety of economic and newsgathering aspects. This contrasts with Bednarek and Caple (2012a: 41) and Caple and Bednarek (2013), who restrict the item *news values* to Bell's classification of "values in news actors and events". They agree with Cotter (2010: 80) that factors such as space, content mix, deadlines and others are best treated as "factors other than newsworthiness" which impact on news production. The

remainder of this article makes use of the term *news values* in this narrow sense.

van Dijk (1988: 120)	Bell (1991:156-160)	Caple and Bednarek (2013)
"news values formulated in the economic terms of news production":e.g. sales/subscriptions, budgets, amount of advertising, limitations of space, beliefs/opinions of news actors and the public, number of reporters, agency subscriptions, competition		The selection factors of news: *any* factor or criterion impacting on whether or not an event gets covered or a story becomes published, not necessarily values
"closely tied to the social routines of newsgathering and organizational production": periodicity/deadlines, news organization into sections, accessibility of sources (elites)	Values in the news process: continuity, competition, co-option, composition, predictability, prefabrication	
	Values in news actors and events: negativity, recency, proximity, consonance, unambiguity, unexpectedness, superlativeness, relevance, personalisation, eliteness, attribution, facticity	news values: values relating to newsworthiness of events and actors

Table 1 Aspects to news values

Following Bednarek and Caple (2012a), this article takes a **discursive** approach on news values, albeit with a focus on language and excluding other semiotic resources. Newsworthiness is thus treated as a quality of news media talk and text, and news values are conceptualized as the criteria of 'newsworthy' for actors and events as constructed through linguistic resources. Most previous comments on the relationship between language and news values (Bednarek, 2006a; Bell, 1991; Cotter, 2010) appear to suggest that news values exist independently of language or prior to the news text and/or assume a mono-directional process, one where news

values 'drive' or become 'embedded' in language. In contrast, referring to news values as 'constructed' or 'established' emphasizes the constitutive dimension of texts.

In what Fairclough sees as the dialectical relationship between texts and society/culture, where "[t]exts are socioculturally shaped but they also constitute society and culture, in ways which may be transformative as well as reproductive" (Fairclough, 1995: 34). It is also in line with the assumption that cognitive representations are "(re)produced as well as (re)constructed by social practices" (van Dijk, 1998: 228), including discourse. Using the words 'construct' or 'establish' aims to emphasize the 'bottom-up' aspect of social reproduction, where social practices sustain, continue and change the system (van Dijk, 1998: 229), without denying that there is also a 'top-down' aspect of social reproduction. In sum, this constructivist approach is not intended to be anti-cognitivist, anti-material or anti-ethnographic, but rather presented as complementary to existing approaches.

Finally, the definitions aim to take into consideration contextual factors such as the time and place of publication and its target audience, since all news values are "situationally sensitive" (Montgomery, 2007: 6). For instance, a news story that mentions *New Zealand* will construct Proximity in a newspaper published in Australia with an Australian target audience, but not in a newspaper published in Germany with a German target audience. A reference to an event having happened *on Sunday* will construct more Timeliness in a news story published on the following Monday or Tuesday than one published on the following Friday.

2. DISCURSIVE NEWS VALUES

2.1 The Criteria of Worthiness of Discursive News Values
The criteria for selecting newsworthy events and facts, known as the criteria of newsworthiness or news values, consist of a group of elements by which the information apparatus deals

with the superabundance of information that , in all kinds of ways ,pours into the journalistic environment every day. If they are analyzed as an organizational whole, news values can be seen as a logical framework that explains aspects of the production situation in the newsrooms.

The process of describing news values according to the worthiness of events ,for instance , Galtung and Ruge (1965) themselves distinguish three processes: *selection* (events that satisfy news factors will be selected); *distortion* (once selected, the news media accentuate what makes news items newsworthy), and *replication*, meaning that selection and distortion occurs "at all steps in the chain from event to reader"**.**

Galtung and Ruge (1965) discovered that when the frequency of an event is related to the frequency of appearance of the news carrier, its chances of becoming news are higher. They conclude that the more an event satisfies certain conditions, the more easily it will be chosen as news item. They established (12) criteria / factors which are as follows: factors of *frequency, threshold,* including *absolute intensity* and *intensity increase, unambiguity, meaningfulness* including *cultural proximity and relevance, consonance involving both predictability* and *demand, unexpectedness including unpredictability* and *scarcity, continuity* and *composition*. (in McGregor, 2005)

What is important to emphasize in the classification made by Galtung and Ruge are primarily the two news values described as **"** *references to countries''* and *''references to elite people''*. This was the first time that academics had identified the power to occupy space media of stories about countries and rich and important individuals. Under the criteria of "personalisation", the authors show the emphasis given by the mass media to individual actions that could serve as examples to the public and which became recognized within the "human interest" category. Also, under the category "negativity" they showed the value of bad news.

In his discussion of experiential interviews, Montgomery argues that they give audiences "a version of what we might think, see, or feel if we too were close up in some way to the event" (Montgomery, 2007: 159). In discursive news values analysis, the researcher, therefore interpret contributions by victims or their relatives as constructing the news value of Personalisation. Stories featuring affected individuals can thus be contrasted with more abstract stories, presenting viewers with statistics about press freedom.

The main criteria would be the *interest* and *importance* (Caple and Bednark, 2013: 208-228). The importance of the fact/ event is thus linked to 4 values:

- The status and level in the hierarchy of individuals taking part in the newsworthy event,
- The impact on the country and our national interest,
- The number of people involved(either actually or potentially in the events and,
- The relevance and significance of an event in relation to the future developments of a specific situation.

The *interest* would be linked to subjective decisions such as , e.g., the image the reporter has of the public and his ability to offer it material worth reading. In this category, we can place human interest, which has been cultivated since the profession began.

Criteria related to the *product:* this refers to the availability of events and its qualities as an informative product, such as *brevity, objectivity, and novelty.*

Criteria related to the *medium:* this refers to the evaluation of the newsworthiness of the event in terms of its possibility of providing 'good material".

Criteria related to the *public:* these concern the idea reporters have of their audience. Shoemaker and Cohen (2006)

Criteria related to the *competition:* scoops exclusive interviews and special sections. (see Bekius:2003).

Criteria related to the value of *facticity*: a good story needs fact(e.g. names, locations, numbers and figures). (see Bell:1991).

Criteria related to the *Reference to sex*: Harcup and O'Neill (2001:261-280) also made news offer, with special attention for the entertainment offer available in newspaper.

Criteria related to the *Reference to events that are visually accessible and recordable*: McGregor also proposed news values reflecting the modern way of news selection, with the focus on T.V. news.

Criteria related to *the notion of significance*, by demarcating for sub –dimensions: *political*, *economical*, *cultural* and *public* significance. (See Montgomery (2007: 122) points out that the language of correspondents is often evaluative, and he argues their talk is about "doing being interesting", by which he means sounding lively and engaging. However, it is clear from this example that the talk by correspondents is *also* about establishing newsworthiness. This would be in line with Montgomery's observation that correspondents who are interviewed in a bulletin news programme "will be invited to give an assessment (or, maybe, an explanation) of the significance of the news material" (Montgomery 2007: 199) – if we consider newsworthiness a key aspect of the significance of the news material.

2.2 Different Approaches of News Values

Like other values, news values can be considered to have cognitive, social and discursive aspects (as explained in details below): In van Dijk's (1998: 262-286) words, values are culturally "shared mental objects of social cognition"; they are "applied by social members in a large variety of practices and contexts", and discursive strategies may establish, select, or emphasis specific values. While van Dijk makes these points about values in general, we may also consider *news* values to have these three dimensions (cognitive, social, discursive). In addition, a fourth dimension can be recognized: a 'material'

dimension. Each dimension corresponds to a different research perspective on news values, as suggested in Table 2.

Material: an event in its material reality holds potential news value	*What are an event's potential news values?*
Cognitive: news workers and audience members have beliefs about news values and newsworthiness	*What beliefs do news workers and/or audience members hold about news values?*
Social: news values are applied as selection criteria in journalistic routines and practices	*How do news workers apply news values as criteria in selecting what events to cover and publish?*
Discursive: news values can be established/constructed or negotiated through discourse	*How are news values communicated through discourse, pre-, during, and post-news production and in news products*

Table 2 approaches of news values

However, in much news values research, these four dimensions are not clearly distinguished, and at times conflated. "discussion of news values sometimes blurs distinctions between news *selection* and news *treatment*" (O'Neill and Harcup, 2009: 171,). Montgomery (2007) notes that "the epistemological status of the 'factors' [news values] is somewhat ambiguous" (Montgomery, 2007: 10).

A handful of linguists have referring to the three approaches of news values, which we call **social**, **cognitive** and **discursive.** The present research deals with the discursive perspective only.

2.3 Discursive Approach

Most researchers take a cognitive perspective on news values, conceptualizing them as beliefs (or criteria), 'intersubjective mental categories' (Fowler,1991:17), "rules or codes" (Allan 2010:72) or "internalized assumptions" (Cotter, 2010:56) that people hold / apply about qualities / aspects that make something newsworthy. Such beliefs about newsworthiness may at times vary according to the individual concerned: every journalist and every editor will have a different interpretation of what is newsworthy, because it's such a subjective process" (Rau, 2010:14).

In theory, a discursive perspective can be applied to the various phases of the news process: from story conceptualization, story construction, and story position to evaluation of the reporting (see Cotter, 2010: 73).

The discursive news values used in this article are **Timeliness, Consonance, Negativity, Impact, Proximity, Unexpectedness, Superlativeness, Personalisation and Eliteness, as defined below (section 3)**. The organizing principle behind their conceptualisation is Ockham's Razor, which states that we should use no more explanatory concepts than are absolutely necessary. This means that related concepts are included in one general news value rather than establishing an additional value for each related concept.

Thus, van Djik's (1988) Novelty (in the sense of 'newness') is included in Timeliness, which covers a range of time-related concepts that are mentioned in news values research, including newness, recency, immediacy, and currency. Similarly, Montgomery's Conflict is included in Negativity, in agreement with van Dijk and Bell, who list conflict as an example of Negativity rather than postulating it as a separate news value. This is also the case for Bell's Attribution, which is included in Eliteness, because it relates to the eliteness of sources. To give a final example, Montgomery's Intensity/Discontinuity seems to refer both to an 'intense' event or 'a sudden deviation from the norm'. The former is covered in Superlativeness, while the latter is covered in Unexpectedness. The aim is a general framework of the basic underlying values. From a discursive perspective, we can conceptualize news values in terms of how newsworthiness is constructed or established through discourse (both language and image). In the following headlines for instance:

- Oil spill disaster New Zealand's **"worst in the decades"**
- India may face its **worst** financial crisis **in decades** as rupee retreats.
- North sea oil spill **"worst for a decades"**

The comparisons (in bold) simultaneously construe the news values of Superlativesness, Negativity and Novelty. Such language is part of conventionalized repertoire of expressions that are used again and again to construe an event and its actors as newsworthy .Thus, the headline below all refer to different men – all construed as "most wanted" –with the aim of increasing the superlativeness of the respective story:

- NSW 's **most wanted man"** evades capture.
- The Second **Most Wanted Man**.
- Doku Umarov: Russia's **most wanted.**
- India awaits paperwork to send **'most wanted' man** to UK.
- Hunt ends for **most wanted man**.

This approach is in line with the wide spread view of media researchers (including those who regard news values as assumptions, rules or criteria) that news is a construct. In the approach to "news making", we have on one hand the organization of the work of the newsroom and on the other hand, professional culture. Together, these two components determine the concepts of the news- product and the conditions in which it is put together. The "group of elements by means of which the apparatus of information controls and manages the quantity and type of events that will be the basis of news selection" is called by (Caple and Bednark,2013:194-208) "newsworthiness", understood as being "characteristics which events should have (or present to the eyes of journalists) in order to turned into news". The definitions and choice of what is newsworthy is directed by the "executable nature" of the information product, "being carried out in conditions of restricted time and resources."

It is important to point out that the two perspectives (cognitive and discursive) are not separate, nor are they mutually exclusive (see Bednarek and Caple, 2012). Further, even researchers who treat news values as journalistic selection criteria and who are interested in who events are turned into

news may use analysis of news texts to gain insight into these criteria, frequently using content analysis (e.g. Harcup and O'Neill,2001).Finally, We believe that the concept of news values can be applied both to selection criteria and to textual treatment, offering us complementary perspectives on newsworthiness, but agree that the different perspectives need to be clearly distinguished.

3. ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE NEWS VALUES

3.1 The Analysis of Discursive News Values

Discursive news values analysis is concerned with how language and other semiotic systems establish newsworthiness. I provide here an updated summary of linguistic resources that have the potential to construct these nine news values, with more complete versions published elsewhere (e.g. Bednarek and Caple, 2014):

1. **Timeliness** (timely in relation to publication/broadcast): indications of newness or change (*fresh, new, latest, for the first time...*); explicit time references (*today, yesterday, within days, now...*); implicit time references (*continues, ongoing, have begun to...*), references to trends.

2. **Consonance** ([stereo] typical): News should be consonant with socially –shared *norms, values, and attitudes*.

3. **Negativity** (negative aspects): The event is negative for the news publication's target audience, for example (*environmental disaster, crime, act of violence, opposition, conflict, controversy, ect*), other references to negative happenings (e.g. *the breaching of socially approved behavior*).

4. **Impact** (having significant effects or consequences): review of important words (*momentous*...); indicate to real & hypothetical important events.

5. **Proximity** (geographically/culturally near): The events are geographically or culturally near the news publication's target audience.

6. **Unexpectedness** (unexpected aspects): evaluations of unexpectedness (*different, ...*), references to surprise (***shock** at people just really **can't believe it**...*);

7. **Superlativeness** (of high intensity or large scope/scale): *words like (super, severe, ...),* references to growth/escalation (*growing, raised...*).

8. **Personalisation** (having personal or 'human' face): The event has a non-elite actors.

9. **Eliteness** (of high status or fame): The event (reference to elite persons such as politicians or film stars, the elite nations of First World are judge more newsworthy than the non-elite nations of the South.).

A further difference is that Impact is included, rather than Relevance. Relevance, as defined by van Dijk seems rather vague ('relevant for the reader'), while there is overlap with Proximity in Bell's definition, since he includes 'closeness' to the audience's experience. Note also Montgomery's use of the term *Proximity/Cultural Relevance*. It seems a better solution, then, to avoid the relatively general term *relevance* altogether, and to restrict Impact to effects or consequences, while both geographical and cultural closeness are included in Proximity – which indeed has the meaning of 'closeness' or 'nearness'

Further concepts that are excluded are Facticity, Presupposition and Unambiguity. While there is no doubt that facticity is important in the language of news, it is excluded here because of our focused definition of news values (cf. section 1). Facticity does not concern actors or events; rather its truthfulness/factual status, or the credibility of the news organisation, and might thus be considered a 'meta'-value (Bednarek and Caple, 2014: 152). This can be gleaned from Bell's (1991: 158) definition: "the degree to which *a story* contains the kinds of facts and figures on which hard news thrives: locations, names, sums of money, numbers of all kinds" (italics mine). Thus, I would say that a story is (constructed as) factual and reliable through the use of numbers, etc, rather than a reported event. Presupposition and Unambiguity are also not concerned with news values in a narrow definition but rather with presupposed information and news writing objectives.

This list should not be taken as an automatic checklist and analyses must take into account context and use. This means paying close attention to the meaning potential of the linguistic resource as it is used in the news story, as well as to the intended target audience. Further, the list applies to prototypical news stories (rather than say, business or sports news or letters to the editor, obituaries, current affairs programs, etc) and additional resources for broadcast news bulletins may need to be added, as most previous work was undertaken on print news. For instance, I have not yet explored sound features such as stress/emphasis, intonation, prosody etc (but see van Leeuwen 1984, 1992).

Two examples will be used to briefly illustrate how a discursive news values analysis of published/broadcast news stories might proceed, using radio news podcasts.

Example (1)

In an **unexpected** development **no** bodies **have been found** inside **Christchurch**'s **quake-ravaged** cathedral (Radio New Zealand Morning Report, Midday News for 5 March 2011)

In example 1, the evaluative adjective *unexpected* and the negative determiner *no* establish the development of events as contrasting to what one would have expected to happen (Unexpectedness). In addition, references to *Christchurch* construct the happening as geographically close to the New Zealand target audience. The use of the present perfect (*have been found*) suggests that the event has recently been completed (Timeliness) and the intensified adjective *quake-ravaged* encapsulates the negative impact of the earthquake on the cathedral, simultaneously constructing Negativity, Impact, Superlativeness.

Example (2)

Correspondent: **Tokyo is a city well-known for its work ethic** but for another day company owners told some employees to stay home to conserve electricity. (NPR 7 A.M. News Summary, 18 March 2011)

In example 2, the use of the timeless present and the reference to general knowledge (*is well-known for*) refer to received knowledge around Tokyo in particular and the Japanese in general (the stereotype of being hard-working). This establishes Consonance, which is, however, immediately countered through use of a contrasting statement introduced by the conjunction *but*. This contrast establishes the news value of Unexpectedness, since the event is in contrast to what one would expect the 'hard-working Japanese' to do.

The aims of discursive news values analysis of news stories are at least two-fold: one, to comprehensively analyze what values are emphasized or de-emphasized in news stories; second to identify *how* news values are constructed linguistically (e.g. via recurring phraseologies, figurative devices, rhetorical strategies). Examining how events are

endowed with newsworthiness by the news media shows which aspects of the event are emphasized, and reveals the shape in which events are packaged for news consumption by audiences. As well as the ways that constructed the values, provides insight into news as linguistic practice (Potts, Bednarek and Caple, 2015).

3.2 The Roles of Audience in Discursive News Values

There is some debate about the extent to which journalists write *for* the audience and how informed they are about that audience. For instance, Green (1999) notes that the conditions in Australian newspaper newsrooms are not conducive to implementing audience research successfully, and Ewart's (1997) study of an Australian regional daily newspaper found that journalists have ideas about "typical" readers, but "say they did not generally consider readers when writing stories, but thought more about the editorial hierarchy and its members' reactions" (Ewart, 1997: 93). On the other hand, Bell (1991), a former journalist turned linguist, provides empirical evidence for what he calls *audience design* (how linguistic style is adapted to a news outlet's readership), which can also be seen in the linguistic differences between the 'popular' and the 'quality' press (Bednarek 2006a: 203). It is also clear that audience metrics (including information about most clicked, viewed, liked, shared, etc.) are influencing 21st century newsrooms (e.g. E. Bell 2015).

To give an example, certain target audiences might perceive particular happenings as negative, while others would not (e.g. immigration, carrying a gun, marriage equality, deregulation of university fees, cycling infrastructure). Other events would probably be evaluated as negative by many (death, famine, crime). When considering news values it is thus important to consider the target audience, even if this may not always be a unified group – especially when controversial issues are concerned or issues that are relevant to particular sub-groups. Often, the news text will give clues how the

audience is positioned (for further discussion of this issue see Bednarek & Caple, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

This paper explores how discourse analysis can be used to investigate the construction of newsworthiness in news media talk via the establishment of nine news values: Timeliness, Consonance, Negativity, Impact, Proximity, Unexpectedness, Superlativeness, Personalisation and Eliteness. It compares linguistic approaches to news values and discusses cognitive, social, and discursive aspects of news values

This article concerns discursive news values analysis or the question of how we can use linguistically-informed discourse analysis to explore the construction of newsworthiness in news texts. It builds on previous joint research (Bednarek and Caple, 2012a, b, 2014), but addresses some issues that have not yet been explored in great detail, with a particular focus on the role of audiences and broadcast news.

This article has discussed a range of issues around discursive news values analysis that have remained relatively unexplored so far. In addition to other aspects, which can show us both how sources are identified and how their talk is integrated. As Clayman puts it, "embedding practices constitute fundamental journalistic tools-of-the-trade, for it is through them that reporters and their audiences jointly construct the sense and import of reported speech" (Clayman, 1990: 100). It can tell researchers how news values are integrated, structured, presented and packaged in the form of consumable news products for audiences and how news organization position themselves within discourse. Such analysis enables us to see whether audiences engage with the voice and authority of sources or of the news organization (Bednarek and Caple, 2012a: 214) –In this article the researcher have only focussed on language and have primarily used examples from broadcast

news. Clearly, devices other than language also play a role in constructing newsworthiness and need to be taken into account when investigating the packaging of events as news (Caple, 2013b). As well as the different ways in which newsworthiness is constructed across print, radio, TV, online and mobile news and into how the different resources and affordances of each medium are exploited to establish and package events as 'news'.

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