

# **Cross Cultural Representations of “Otherness” in Media Discourse**

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# Media Discourse

- Enjoys a **privileged and prestigious position** in our culture's hierarchy of values.
- It is the most pervasive/widespread discourse that literate societies are exposed to.
- People watch and read news because they **think** *“news” is reality*. The implication is that if you are exposed to the news, you are more knowledgeable about social facts.

# Media Discourse

**A Neutral Construct**

*(Objective Representation of Facts)*

**OR**

**A Cultural Construct with Values**

*(Includes an Element of Evaluation through Words  
& Pictures)?*

# Media Discourse

- Has a **social, political and educational** role.
- It is through news that people **make connections, try to understand** and **explain** how reported events relate to society as a whole.
- **It is an ongoing narrative retold by many voices.**
- **News** = a **Recontextualisation of an Event**, **a Cultural Construct that Encodes Pre-Determined Values, Socially and Culturally Determined, a Partial, Ideologically Framed Report of an event.**

# Recontextualisation

(van Leeuwen, 1993)

- The concept of “News” embodies the assumptions that:
    1. *The information is new*
    2. *The source of the information is neutral.*
  - **BUT** News producers are social agents in a network of social relations who reveal their own stance towards what is reported.
  - **HENCE**, Media Texts are **Recontextualisations** that always add evaluation to the social practice they describe.
  - This is done through:
    1. *Substitution*
    2. *Deletion*
    3. *Addition*
- What determines newsworthiness? Please list the criteria.*

# Criteria of Newsworthiness

- **Frequency**/Time Taken by the Event
- **Magnitude**/ Size of the Event
- **Unambiguity of the Event** (Categorisation)
- **Meaningfulness** and Cultural Proximity
- **Unexpectedness**/Rarity/Unpredictability of an event
- **Continuity**/Running Story (Crime Investigation)
- **Reference to Elite Persons/Nations**
- **Personalisation** (Is there a Face to the stories)
- **Negativity & Crisis**

# Process of Legitimation

1. **Modality (Truth Value/Credibility)** - Using the “voice of experts”, Picture/Video Editing (*trick effects/alteration/combination/photogenic/aestheticism/colour/focus/depth*)
2. **Adding of an Evaluative Element to Social Practices** (Through *Multi-Modal Perspectives & Lexical Choices*)
3. **Involves Substitution, Deletion and Addition**
4. **Represented according to the Goals, Values and Priorities of that Communication** *e.g. to Reinforce the Distance between “Us” and “Them”.*

# Ideological Discourse Analysis in News

- **Ideologies** – constructed from **Group-Defining Categories** e.g. *Identity/Membership, Activities, Goals, Norms, Values, Resources.*
- Tend to feature **group-relevant, self-serving selections of fundamental socio-cultural values.**
- Tend to feature:
  1. **Axiomatic propositions** (e.g. *“Men & Women are Equal” (Feminist Ideology), Economic Pragmatism in the Singapore Context*)
  2. **A Polarising structure between US & THEM.**



# Ideological Discourse Analysis in News

- **Dominant Groups** – Use ideologies to legitimize their power & manufacture consensus.
- **Oppositional/Dominated Groups** – Organizes the Social Representations needed for resistance and change.
- **Freedom Fighter vs. Terrorist**
- **Personal Cognition** – Mediates the link between Discourse and Ideology (*Note the broad and complex range of Mental Factors - personal history, accumulated experiences, personal beliefs, principles, motivations, emotions, unique personalities*).

# Ideological Tools: Discursive Strategies

- **Positive Self Representation** vs. **Negative Other Representation**
- ✓ **Negative Lexicalisation** – *using strongly negative words to describe the action of others*
- ✓ **Hyperbole** – *strongly exaggerated descriptions*
- ✓ **Compassion Move** – *showing empathy to victims to enhance the brutality of the other*
- ✓ **Apparent Altruism** – *has a disclaiming, positive self-representation function*

# Ideological Tools: Discursive Strategies

- **Positive Self Representation vs. Negative Other Representation**
  - ✓ **Apparent Honesty Move** – *combines positive self presentation with negative other presentation (purely strategic and rhetorical).*
  - ✓ **Negative Comparison** – *To emphasise bad qualities of the “Other” via comparison with a generally recognised bad person.*
  - ✓ **Concretization** – *Acts described in detail with concrete, visualisable terms.*

# Ideological Tools: Discursive Strategies

- **Positive Self Representation vs. Negative Other Representation**
- ✓ **Alliteration** – *Phonologically-based Rhetoric e.g. “Domestic Dissidents” vs. “Foreign Foes”*
- ✓ **Norm and Value Violation** – *emphasising that the “other” violates the very norms and values that we hold dear.*
- ✓ **Presupposition** – *that our good values and their bad practices are general knowledge and commonsense that do not need assertion.*

# Activity Time

- Analyse the transcript of the following You-Tube Videos:

1. *“George Bush 2002 State of Union Address”*.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpXpxixwwEo>

2. *“George Bush 2002 State of Union Address” – “Axis of Evil” Speech*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DqHylcsO8E&feature=related>

3. *“George Bush ’s Speech – Freedom and Fear are at War*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMj9g6WRLfQ>

- Analyse the Transcript of Bush Announcing Iraq Invasion

# Activity Time

- Identify **the Elements of Recontextualisation** in the speech.
- What are the **Ideological Tools** that are employed?
- In **Groups of 4-5**, please find the **transcript of a political speech** from the **current Singapore GE** online e.g. YouTube/TOC – and analyse it using these Ideological Tools.
- Is the Media a **Cultural Construct** or a **Neutral Entity**? Are there any implications on our daily consumption of the news? Support your answer with evidence apart from the given texts.

# Activity Time

1200-1215: Recap of Ideological Tools/ Practice

1215-1230: Discussion for Practice Task

1230-1300: Selection of Political Speeches/ Media Texts

1300-1330: Group Presentations