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> The Appraisal Framework and Analyses of Journalistic Discourse

## The Appraisal Framework and Analyses of Journalistic Discourse Objectivity, Subjectivity and Attitudinal Positioning

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### THE INITIAL CHALLENGE: EXPLICATING NOTIONS OF JOURNALISTIC SUBJECTIVITY

Linguists with an interest in journalistic discourse have long been challenged by the apparently popular view that at least some types of news reporting can and should be 'objective'. This, of course, is the notion that news journalism should confine itself to the 'facts' of the matter and 'accurately', 'impartially' and 'disinterestedly' report what has happened and been said. That this notion is often taken for granted is evidenced by the fact that the legislation which dictates the functions of Australia's national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, states that its board must 'ensure that the gathering and presentation by the Corporation of news and information is accurate and impartial according to the recognized standards of objective journalism' (*Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth), s 8). What is entailed in the notion of 'objectivity' is, of course, widely contested in academic settings, with many holding the view that the concept is of little value, that it misleadingly asserts an impossible separation of the observer from her/his individual subjectivity. Certainly, within journalism studies there have been forthright challenges to the notion of 'objective journalism'. Thus Schudson noted that 'objectivity in journalism ... came to be looked upon as the most insidious bias of all. For "objective" reporting reproduced a vision of social reality which refused to examine the basic structures of power and privilege. It was not just incomplete ... it was distorted. It represented collusion with institutions whose legitimacy was in dispute' (

1981 (<https://www.bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008133>)

: 160). In similarly rejecting the notion of journalistic objectivity, Dennis and Merrill contend that every news report is always 'judgemental, value-loaded, incomplete, and distorted as to reality. That is the nature of journalism. That is the nature of any kind of communication' (

1984 (<https://www.bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008049>)

: 106).

The need to deal in a theoretically principled way with the notion of journalistic objectivity, and its counterpart, journalistic subjectivity, arose when I was involved in the 'Write It Right' research project for the New South Wales Disadvantaged Schools Program in the early 1990s. I was part of a team, with Rick Iedema, Susan Feez and James Martin, given the task of developing linguistics-based media literacy resources for secondary school media studies teachers. The stated objectives of the project were as follows:

to research the nature of literacy demands within and across industrial sectors [in this case the demands of the news media industry] and relate these findings to literacy demands in the NSW secondary curriculum Key Learning Areas. The primary goal of the project was to give secondary teachers the tools to analyse and teach explicitly the language associated with their subject areas.

--(Iedema, Feez and White 1994 (<https://www.bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008105>): 5)

Given the prominence of the notion of 'objectivity' in community debates about the nature and standing of the news media, it was obviously one of the concepts which the project team would need to deal with. We might, of course, have simply followed the lead of scholars such as Dennis and Merrill (as cited above) and basically proposed that teachers entirely discount the possibility of an 'objective' news report, that is, simply proposed that news reports are 'judgemental, value-loaded, incomplete' and probably 'distorted as to reality'. But this might well not have resonated with teachers, given that it is so widely taken for granted (even in legislation) that there is 'objective journalism'. More importantly, to do so would be to ignore the fact that there appear to be clear linguistic differences, at least in some cases, between the supposedly 'objective' reporting of 'hard news' and the 'subjective' interpretation, evaluation and argumentation of journalistic commentary and analysis. Although, as linguists, we might broadly agree with Dennis and Merrill that, like all texts, all news reports are 'judgemental, value-laden and incomplete', this did not mean that we wanted to simply lump together all news journalism as equally 'subjective'. Yes, we did recognize that news reports could be 'persuasive', could function to position readers to adopt a particular interpretation of events. But at the same time, we did not want to forgo the opportunity to provide insights into the potentially distinctive linguistic properties associated with such texts being held to be 'factual', 'accurate' and 'impartial'.

Our plan was to explore patterns in the choice of language in journalistic texts by which certain meanings are 'favoured' or 'disfavoured' (appearing more often or less often than in other settings) and to determine whether there were any correlations between these patterns of semantic favouring/disfavouring and the sub-classifications deployed by the news media itself, for example, 'hard news', 'analysis', 'commentary/opinion' and 'human interest'. In terms of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory, was 'hard news' reporting a register (or sub-register) of journalistic language which differed from, for example, the register/sub-register of journalistic commentary in ways which might account for the perception that 'hard news reporting' was the domain of journalistic 'factuality', 'impartiality' and 'disinterestedness'?

The available linguistics-informed journalistic discourse analysis literature available at the time focused largely on the potential of the news report to influence public opinion and perception. This literature typically was concerned, for example, with exposing the 'slantedness' of particular news items, with uncovering the ideological workings by which selected news reports sustained social hierarchies and inequalities, naturalized prejudicial stereotypes, covertly promoted the interests of the wealthy and powerful, and so on (see e.g.

Fowler et al. 1979 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008081>)

;

van Dijk 1988 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008139>)

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Fowler 1991 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008078>)

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Fairclough 1995 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008072>)

). While this was, of course, important work, it tended, as indicated, to be directed at uncovering the ideological underpinnings of individual news items. We needed to be able to offer more general understandings of the persuasive potential of news reporting as a verbal style or register, while at the same time also offering some suggestions as to why it might, nevertheless, continue to be held to be 'objective'.

## EXPLORING A LINGUISTIC BASIS FOR THE 'OBJECTIVE JOURNALISM' VERSUS 'SUBJECTIVE JOURNALISM' DICHOTOMY

This meant that, in our estimation, there was little prior literature on which we could draw for our purpose of providing teachers with an account of those linguistic properties which underlie the perception that certain news items are 'objective' even while those news items can be shown to favour particular value-laden interpretations and attitudinal positionings. We also needed to be able to account in a systematic way for the differences in the communicative working of news reports versus the explicitly subjective modes of journalism, that is, journalistic commentary.

Over several months the project team started to outline elements of an account of the resources of evaluative meaning making in English which would come, initially, to be known as 'appraisal theory' and subsequently as the 'appraisal framework'. As systemic functional linguists, our discussions were located in the account provided by the theory of those meaning-making resources associated with what is termed the 'tenor' of a text. Tenor is one of the three parameters of variation which, according to SFL theory, condition the language options taken up by speakers/writers in any given communicative event: tenor, field and mode (

Halliday and Hasan 1987 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008087>)

: 26). Tenor is a matter of who is involved in the communication, the relationships which hold between participants, their social roles, their statuses, their identities, their degree of intimacy and so on. Naturally, therefore, we viewed the question of the basis on which a text might be viewed as more or less 'objective' or more or less 'subjective' as likely to be associated with tenor, with those meanings which serve this interpersonal function. If the 'subjectivity' of a text is a matter of how the speaker/writer is revealed as personally involved in the communication, the perspective or personal orientation they bring to the text, then presumably a text viewed as 'objective' might be one in which mechanisms are deployed by which the 'who' of the text is obscured, by which the personal perspective they bring to the text is backgrounded in some way.

Specifically, we turned to the then recent work by

Poynton (1989) (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008130>)

in which she had proposed that a key parameter of variation in the 'tenor' of a text (the 'who' of the text) was what she termed 'affect' – referring to what Halliday (

1978 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008084>)

: 33) had described as the 'degree of emotional charge' in the relationship between participants. Poynton was proposing that affect, as construed in language, can be either positive or negative and permanent or transient. At the time of our project, Poynton's account of affect had recently been developed further by Martin (

1992 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008108>)

: 533–6) into a more delicate taxonomy of 'affectations', in which affectual responses, as construed through language, are classified as either positive or negative, as directed at self or other, as a 'surge' of emotion or a 'disposition' to an emotion state, and then as one of the following subtypes: 'discord' (negative) versus 'satisfaction' (negative); 'insecurity' (negative) versus 'security' (positive); 'frustration' (negative) versus 'fulfillment' (positive) (

Martin 1992 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008108>)

: 534).

In this we saw a potentially useful line of enquiry, a line which might focus on what was central to both Poynton and Martin's accounts – that one key aspect of tenor (the 'who' involved in the text) was a matter of choices speakers/writers make in conveying positive or negative attitudes. Accordingly, it seemed fruitful to explore ways in which journalistic texts functioned to convey positive or negative attitudes, to position the reader to take a positive or negative view of events and those involved in these events. Might it be that different subtypes of news journalism deploy in different ways meanings by which such attitudinal assessments are conveyed, or make use of different types of attitudinal meaning? In developing some answers to these and related questions, the project team laid the foundations for the appraisal theory/framework mentioned above.

## PATTERNS OF POSITIVELY/NEGATIVELY ATTITUDINAL MEANING MAKING IN JOURNALISTIC DISCOURSE

We were concerned, therefore, with investigating what might be typical patterns in the way news journalism texts positioned the reader to adopt positive or negative viewpoints of events and participants in those events. We surveyed a wide range of texts from Australian newspapers and news radio broadcasts, spanning those which presented as 'straight' or 'hard news' reports, those which were labelled 'analysis', and those which were clearly labelled commentary or opinion.

The following extracts from the texts which we collected for analysis are illustrative of the differences we immediately observed in the ways in which different news items positioned readers/listeners attitudinally.

Extract 1

[Radio 2UE, 11/8/1992, 8 a.m. news bulletin]

The Government and the ACTU [Australian Council of Trade Unions] will meet in Canberra today to thrash out a new wages agreement before next week's budget. Lyndel Curtis reports:

There's been speculation the wages package will involve a rise of \$9 or \$10 a week, for those workers who haven't had rises through enterprise bargaining deals. However the amount hasn't been finalized and the unions say the discussions will also involve social wages such as Medicare and child care. As well the unions are expected to seek a commitment on varying tariff cuts in the textile, clothing and footwear industry, if employment is hit hard by the changes. [continues]

Extract 2

[Radio 2UE, 11/8/1992, 8 a.m. news bulletin]

The Chamber of Commerce says it's ridiculous but the federal government and the ACTU are to agree on a national pay rise when the country is going through the worst recession in 60 years. It's expected both sides will agree today to a wage rise of between \$8 and \$10 a week for Australia's 7.7 million workers. The Chamber's chief economist, Brent Davis, says we simply can't afford a wage rise at the moment. [continues]

Extract 3

[*Sydney Morning Herald*, 10/18/92, p. 11]

Spotlight on Bush's House Party

By Pilita Clark, Herald Correspondent

HOUSTON, Monday: All the glitzy balloons and brass bands ready to be unleashed for this week's Republican National Convention suddenly looked rather small and dowdy yesterday as attention was diverted to the showdown looming between President Bush and Iraq's President Saddam Hussein.

And that is a pity, because this year's convention was shaping up to be one of the most interesting Republican gatherings in a long time.

Usually it is the Democrats who strain desperately, and unsuccessfully, to disguise their inner tensions and divisions at convention time. For the past two presidential elections, for instance, the Democratic nominee's attempts to placate the Rev Jesse Jackson have provided lively sport for onlookers.

But this year the two major parties appear to have swapped roles. The Democrat's convention in New York last month was notable for its general harmony and unified support for its nominee, Mr Bill Clinton. [continues]

Extract 4

[*Sydney Morning Herald*, 19/10/92, p. 4]

A Cheap Slur on Childless

by Adele Horin

Dr Hewson's [then Leader of the Opposition in Australia's federal Parliament] insensitive remarks imply that the significant proportion of Australians who are childless cannot be trusted. They are somehow morally inferior to parents, and the men in particular are not 'full-blooded'. He also assumes that just because people do not have their own children they do not like children. [continues]

Extracts 3 and 4 obviously include meanings which position readers to adopt positive or negative viewpoints. Extract 3 was labelled 'analysis' by the newspaper and extract 4 was located in the paper's op-ed (i.e. commentary) section. They are both texts in which the journalist author is overtly attitudinal in announcing her own personal evaluative assessments of events and people. Thus Horin, in extract 4, positions the reader to take a negative view of 'Dr Hewson' on the basis of her estimation that he was 'insensitive' in his remarks and Clark, in extract 3, positions the reader to take a negative view of the Republican convention on the basis of her estimation that it came to appear 'small and dowdy'. She also opines that, in the past, the Democrats have been 'unsuccessful' in 'disguising their inner tensions'.

In extract 2, the attitudinal positioning and the journalist author's role in this is rather less straightforward. Certainly, the author does offer an explicit attitudinal assessment of the country's economic circumstances as 'the worst recession in 60 years', but the negative assessment of the wage rise being agreed to by the government is attributed to external sources – to the 'Chamber of Commerce' who reportedly assesses it to be 'ridiculous' and to the chamber's chief economist who reportedly assesses it to be unaffordable. As well, the author juxtaposes the government agreeing to the pay rise with the observation that it is taking place during 'the worst recession in 60 years' – a juxtaposition which presumably has some potential vis-à-vis the reader's view of the pay rise. There is some complicating, therefore, of the journalist author's role in any attitudinal positioning of the reader in the sense that it is an external 'expert' source who passes judgement on the pay rise, not the author. Similarly, while the author does juxtapose the pay rise with the current adverse economic circumstances, this is not, of itself, an explicit authorial assessment by the author of the pay rise decision. If the reader does end up forming a negative view of the pay rise and those involved (the government and trade unions), this is arguably the outcome of the reader inferring certain negative conclusions, and is not the result of any negative assessments being overtly advanced by the author.

Extract 1 seems free of any attitudinal positioning on the part of the journalist author (or anyone else) vis-à-vis the wage rise and those involved in agreeing to it. It would seem to be unproblematically 'factual' in reporting the details of the wage agreement, its timing, to whom it will apply and so on. There is perhaps a hint of an authorial attitude in the use of the term 'thrash out' to describe the negotiations between the government and the trade unions. Perhaps there is a suggestion in this use of this term that such negotiations will be difficult or fraught (so presumably not a positive experience for those involved), but this does not lead to any obvious positive or negative assessment of the wage rise decision itself or those involved in this 'thrashing out'.

In making such observations, we came to the view that it would be useful in analysing news journalism texts to track patterns with respect to the extent that attitudinal assessments were (1) explicitly asserted by the journalist author, (2) attributed to external sources and (3) activated indirectly through observations which invite the reader to make attitudinal inferences. In the following I will consider what flowed from these observations first in terms of the project's concern with the subjectivity-objectivity dichotomy and second in terms of the subsequent, continued development of appraisal theory.

On the basis of news items exemplified by extract 1, it is possible to conclude that some news items do not in any obvious way act to position the reader attitudinally vis-à-vis the events being described nor any of the participants involved in those events. This is with respect to the journalist author's own observations and assertions, the observations/assertions of any quoted sources and with respect to any content which might have the potential to trigger attitudinal inferences on the part of the reader. Thus extract 1 reports the decision by the government to approve a wage rise without any positioning of the reader to view the decision or those involved in a positive or negative light. There is thus a basis for regarding such a report as 'objective', to the extent that it is free of any attitudinal positioning vis-à-vis the event under consideration. This is not, however, to suggest that the version of events offered is in some way value free or that it is not reflective of a particular value-laden way of understanding and interpreting the world. It is 'subjective' in being one of many ways of reporting this news – but one of any number of possible 'versions of events'.

In contrast, texts of the type exemplified by extract 2 could hardly be treated as 'neutral' or 'impartial' in the manner of the type of text exemplified by extract 1. As discussed, it does have the potential to position the reader attitudinally – to take a negative view of the wage rise and those engaged in agreeing to it. On the other hand, as also noted, the journalist author does not present as personally advocating this, refraining from explicitly stating a position on the matter. Thus, the attitudinal positioning is more indirect. What conclusions then should be drawn here in terms of notions of journalistic objectivity and subjectivity and, in turn, what are the implications for developing those parts of the SFL theory of language which are concerned with subjectively evaluative meanings and the construing of interpersonal relations? Our solution with respect to outlining for teachers the communicative workings of such texts was to propose that they entail what can be termed a 'strategic impersonalization'. This is achieved by the author refraining from overtly contributing to the attitudinal workings of such texts and presenting as 'just' reporting the views of 'relevant' external spokespersons and reminding the reader of the 'fact' that at that time Australia was experiencing a serious economic downturn. In this, of course, items exemplified by extract 2 stand in obvious contrast with texts exemplified by extracts 3 and 4, where there is no such 'impersonalization'. Thus, we could point to the need to attend to the potential of these two key aspects of this type of reporting (quoting and reporting of attitudinal charged 'facts') to function attitudinally, even while the journalistic author can remain in the background, so to speak.

In the materials the project team prepared for teachers, the attitudinal functionality of these two features was obviously noted and discussed. With respect to instances where 'factual' reporting of actions and events may function to imply an attitudinal assessment, we proposed the notion of the attitudinal 'token'. We explained such 'tokens' in the following terms.

Society establishes a set of connections between certain behaviours and certain [positive/negative attitudes]. Physical violence, intentionally misleading others, for example, are classed as wrong, while donating to charity or going to the rescue of people in danger are associated with positive values. By describing such events, the author attaches the corresponding [attitudinal assessments] to the text.

--(Feez, Iedema and White 2008 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008075>): 213)

Thus 'attitudinal tokens' are meanings which are not of themselves lexically attitudinal but which, on account of the cultural frames on which they rely, have the potential to imply or activate an attitudinal assessment. For example, by reporting that the government has agreed to grant workers a pay rise during a serious economic downturn, extract 2 invites the inference by the reader that the government has acted irresponsibly. Whether or not the reader reaches such a conclusion will be, of course, dependent on her/his reading position – the particular ideologically charged cultural frame s/he brings to the text.

In the materials the team prepared for teachers, we made some progress in accounting for these 'tokens': the linguistic mechanisms by which attitudinal assessments may be 'invoked' in this way. This account has been developed substantially in subsequent years in many publications (see e.g.

White 2006 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008162>)

2016 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008184>)

; Hood and Martin 2007 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008099>)

; Hood 2010 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008096>)

; Don 2016 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008061>)

2018 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008066>)

).

The observations the team developed re the potential for attribution to function attitudinally were relatively limited. These were developed in subsequent work on what is now termed the ‘engagement’ system in the appraisal literature – an account of the resources by which the speaker/writer engages dialogistically with prior utterances on the current topic and anticipates responses to what is being asserted (see

White 1998 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008142>)

2000 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008145>)

2003 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008147>)

2010 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008144>)

2020 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008190>)

2021 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008195>)

). In this work proposals are developed as to how the journalistic author may ‘neutrally’ attribute viewpoints and versions of events to external sources, may attribute so as to ‘distance’ the authorial voice from such quoted material, or may indicate its alignment with that material via attributions which ‘endorse’ attributed propositions. In later work, I have explored additional mechanisms by which attributed material can be ‘favoured’ or ‘disfavoured’ so that the reader is positioned to view attributed content as credible and well-founded or, alternatively, to question its credibility and well-foundedness (

White 2012 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008179>)

; see also

Paula 2011 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008120>)

). Along similar lines,

Hao and Humphrey (2012) (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008090>)

developed an account of the mechanisms by which the quoted sources themselves may be ‘burnished’ or ‘tarnished’.

In terms of issues around the notion of ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ journalism, texts exemplified by extracts 3 and 4 were predictably unproblematic. The authorial presence associated with explicit authorial attitudes provides obvious grounds for treating them as ‘subjective’. They represented the ‘opinion’ side of the ‘facts versus opinion’ dichotomy so widely alluded to in discussions of journalistic ‘objectivity’.

In terms of the development of appraisal theory/appraisal framework, the meanings we observed in these types of texts were crucial in the development of the account of attitudinal meanings now available in the appraisal literature. The types of attitudinal assessment we observed here made it obvious that the notion of ‘affect’ as formulated by Poynton would need to be wider than the category of ‘emotion’. There are no meanings in the above texts which in an obvious or direct way report the emotional responses or states of either the journalist author or of participants in the news events under consideration. ‘Affect’ (or Halliday’s notion of ‘emotional engagement’) would need to be extended to incorporate positive/negative assessments of human behaviour and character, since evaluations of this type are obviously central to this type of journalism. Along similar lines, Martin’s formulation of affect did not obviously encompass the kinds of attitudinal meanings operating in these extracts, oriented as it was to characterizing and taxonomizing emotional states and reactions. As a consequence, we proposed a second system of positively/negatively attitudinal meanings, to stand beside Martin’s system of affect, what we chose to term the ‘judgement’ system: meanings where human behaviour and character are positively/negatively evaluated by reference to social norms.

The taxonomy, as set out in the report published at the conclusion of the project, was as follows.

**Table 16.1. The System of Judgement**

<b>Judgements to do with social admiration or contempt</b>		
<i>Social esteem</i>	<i>Positive (admire/be captivated by)</i>	<i>Negative (hold in contempt/pity)</i>
Normality (usuality)	normal, outstanding, lucky, remarkable	peculiar, odd, eccentric, unlucky, abnormal
Capacity (ability)	competent, powerful, graceful, witty, fashionable	weak, incompetent, stupid, foolish, incapable, unfashionable
Tenacity (inclination)	plucky, heroic, curious, resolute, self-reliant	cowardly, rash, apathetic, obstinate, vexatious, lazy, servile, complacent
<i>Social sanction</i>	<i>Institutional praise</i>	<i>Institutional blame</i>

Judgements to do with social admiration or contempt		
Veracity (probability)	honest, frank, real, genuine, credible	deceitful, fake, bogus, dishonest, deceptive
Propriety (obligation)	right, good, ethical, kind, generous, loyal, forgiving	wrong, evil, sinful, mean, cruel, greedy, arrogant, corrupt

Source: Based on

Iedema, Feez and White (1994) (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008105>)

, revised and updated in

Feez, Iedema and White (2008) (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008075>)

This taxonomy has undergone some refinement and modification in later formulations (see e.g.

Martin 2000 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008111>)

;

White 2002 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008151>)

;

Martin and White 2005 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008117>)

).

Of note here is that, as indicated in the above table, we divided the types of judgement into two broad categories: 'social sanction' versus 'social esteem'. Our positing this division arose from the observation that, while the full array of subtypes might be observed in an opinion piece and commentary (where the author presents as the unrestrained adjudicator of human behaviour and character), there is a subset of journalistic items where the author seems only to offer assessments of social esteem. Extract 3 exemplifies texts of this latter type (explicit authorial assessment confined to values of social esteem). These were often those items which were labelled 'analysis' or where the author was identified as a 'correspondent', that is, a journalist with expertise in a given subject area or 'round'. We observed that the attitudinal assessments advanced in these 'analysis' or 'correspondent' pieces involved evaluation of the competence, strength or skills of human agents ('capacity'), their psychological disposition ('tenacity'), and whether their behaviour was to be viewed positively or negative for being usual or unusual ('normality'), but not assessments as to whether the human agent was a 'good' or a 'bad' person, or as to whether the behaviour was 'right' or 'wrong'. That is to say, these 'correspondent' texts avoided having the author pass judgement as to the honesty of the human agent ('veracity') or their ethics ('propriety'). It seemed, therefore, that the journalistic authors of commentary/opinion pieces (e.g. extract 4) are 'authorized' to make assessments of a type which have the highest interpersonal charge, that is, assessments where the social norms referenced are typically codified in either secular or religious laws/codes. In contrast, the assessments typically deployed in the 'correspondent' pieces have a slightly lower interpersonal charge, assessments of the laudability/illaudibility of behaviour rather than assessment of ethical 'rights and wrongs'.

In observing the patterns of use of attitudinal meanings in texts exemplified by the four extracts, we were thus in a position to propose what we termed the system of 'journalistic voice' by which we grouped texts according to whether (1) there was no or infrequent explicit authorial judgement ('reporter voice'), (2) explicit authorial judgement was largely confined to the social esteem values of tenacity, capacity or normality ('correspondent voice'), and (3) explicit author judgement was unconstrained, ranging across values of both social esteem and the social sanction values of veracity and propriety. This account has subsequently been elaborated (

White 1998 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008142>)

;

Martin and White 2005 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008117>)

), with additional systems of evaluative making being seen to be implicated. This line of enquiry, in which texts are classified by reference to patterns of use of different types of evaluative meanings, has been taken up and modified for analyses of 'voice', 'style' and discursive persona in a range of discourse domains, including, to name just a few, the discourse of history

(Coffin 2009) (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008046>)

, the discourse of academic English

(Hood 2010) (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008096>)

, the discourse of online discussion groups

(Don 2007) (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008055>)

, the discourse of real estate advertisements

(Pounds 2011) (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008125>)

and the discourse of film reviewing

(White 2008) (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008168>)

. Additionally, the framework we developed initially for English has been applied to journalistic discourse in a range of languages (see e.g.

Thomson and White 2008 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008136>)

).

It is of interest to note that in the materials produced by the project, in our analysis of extract 3, we classified ‘small and dowdy’ as an evaluation of ‘this week’s Republican National Convention’ as an instance of the judgement value of capacity, and the assessment of ‘this year’s convention’ as ‘interesting’ as an instance of judgement/normality. Today we would classify these as instances of the attitudinal sub-system of appreciation (

Martin and White 2005 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008117>)

: 56). The appreciation system encompasses positive/negative assessment of entities, situations and processes by reference to aesthetics and social value – contra the system of judgement which involves assessments of human behaviour. Appreciation was not recognized as the third sub-system of attitudinal meaning until a few years later, through the work of Joan Rothery on the language of the visual arts (see

Martin 2000 (<https://www-bloomsburycollections-com.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350109322&tocid=b-9781350109322-chapter16&pdfid=9781350109322.ch-16.pdf#b-9781350109322-0008111>)

: 175). It is telling that, not having identified appreciation as a sub-system, we managed to cram an aesthetic assessment (*dowdy*) and an assessment of perceptual impact (*interesting*) into a system designed to deal with assessments of human behaviour. We managed this via a line of reasoning by which, for example, to characterize the Republican’s convention as ‘dowdy’ was to evaluate its organizers as lacking the ability to produce something more vital and engaging. Subsequently we would recognize this as a negative appreciation of the Republican convention which, in turn, might function to imply a negative assessment of the capacity of those who organized it. Thus, it was subsequently recognized that an explicit appreciation might function as a ‘token’ of judgement.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have endeavoured to demonstrate how insights from Systemic Functional Linguistics could be applied to the challenge of providing media studies teachers with a more nuanced understanding of the widespread notion that there are two types of news journalism – the objective and the subjective. I demonstrated that it was possible to account for this belief via an understanding of the language features of the different modes of news coverage, and specifically by a linguistic account which can recognize a regime of ‘strategic impersonalization’. I demonstrated how, in tackling this challenge, the Write It Right project provided the impetus for subsequent thoroughgoing explorations of the resources for evaluative meaning making, with outcomes not just for understandings of the communicative workings of journalistic discourse but for discourse studies more widely.

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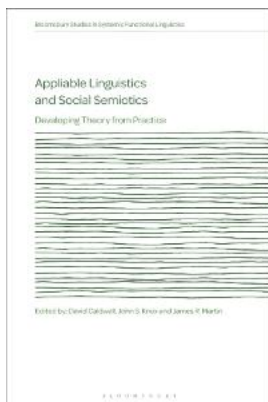
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