

Allan Bell

The Language of News Media

(περίληψη: Γιώργος Σαμαρτζής)

Written by a linguist who is himself a journalist, this is a uniquely account of the language of media news.

Allan Bell emphasizes the importance of the processes which produce media language, as stories are moulded and modified by various hands. He stresses it is indeed stories that journalists and editors produce, not articles. These stories have viewpoint, values and structure that can be analysed. He is concerned, too, with the role of the audience in influencing media language styles, and in understanding, forgetting or misconceiving the news presented to it.

Based in the frameworks of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, this book draws together a growing research literature and informs it with the author's own immediate observations and experience as both journalist and researcher.

Allan Bell has been both making and studying media language for many years. He has worked as a journalist and editor in a daily new service, weekly newspaper and montly magazines. He has researched media language in several countries, especially New Zealand and the United Kingdom. He is an Honorary Research Fellow at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, combining his research there with work as a freelance journalist and media consultant.

Media and Language

i) Why study media language?

1. Accessibility of media as a source of data for some language feature we want to study
2. Interest in the way the media use some language feature, also found in ordinary speech
3. Interest in media's role in affecting language in wider society
4. Interest in what media language reveals as a mirror of the wider society and culture
5. Interest in how media language affects attitudes and opinions in society through the way it presents people and issues
6. Availability, media language is easier to collect than conversation. It is 'there' in large quantities
7. There's no such thing as the famous...Labov's "Observer's Paradox", since media language is already intended for mass public consumption

Media language can tell us things both about media and about language.

ii) Media language research and the disciplines

The study of media language has much to offer to the different disciplines on whose territory it touches: linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, semiotics, communication studies, sociology and social psychology.

The basic issues of communications research were encapsulated by Harold Lasswell in 1948: "Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?"

This is compared with a prescription for the sociolinguistic enterprise: "Who speaks what language to whom and when?" (J.Fishman 1965)

iii) Themes of the book

The book does not aim to introduce linguists to media research. We can draw out three themes that run through the volume:

1. The importance of the processes which produce media language
2. The notion of the news story
3. The role of the media audience

Researching Media Language

i) Universe and Sample

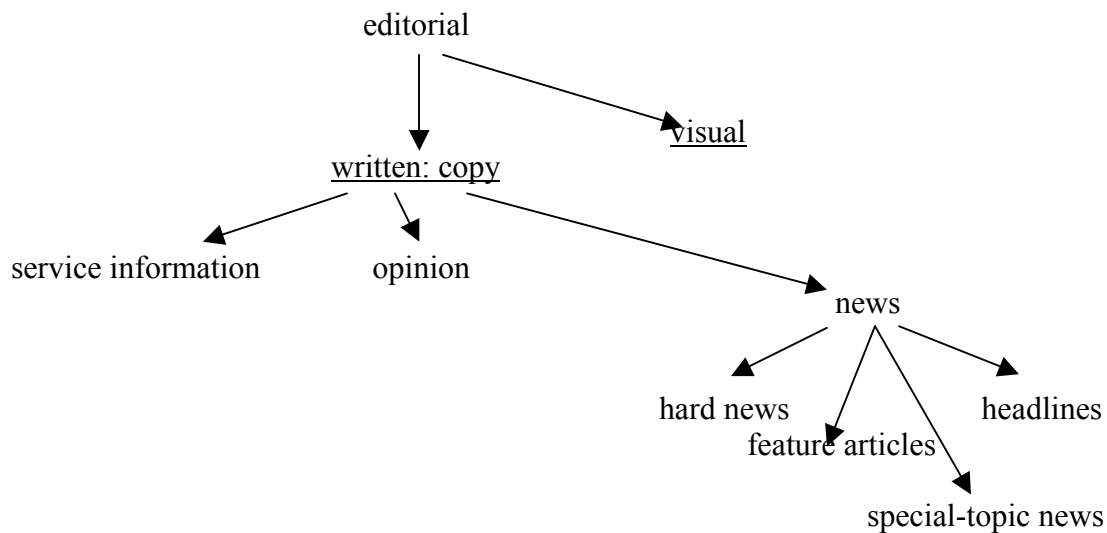
The kind of samples that they used to gather the data ranges from recordings of many months of broadcast news, or stories from a hundred different countries, to just a single news clip or radio programme.

Decisions on gathering a corpus of media language are requires in three main areas:

1. The *genres* are the particular kind of media content in which you are interested- news, classified advertising, game shows, weather forecasts and so forth
2. The media *outlets* are the publications, television channels or radio stations which carry the content
3. “*Outputs*” are what the media outlets produce- specific newscasts, advertisements or programmes- and the time period to be covered.

ii) What’s news: defining genres

In a newspaper, everything other than advertising is called “**editorial**”.



Details:

- service information: lists rather than continuous copy / e.g. sports or business pages.
- opinion : “editorials” or “leaders”, a statement of the newspaper’s own views on an issue, usually on an inside page / e.g. columns, letters to the editor and reviews.
- special-topic news : e.g. sports, racing, arts, computers.
- headlines, crossheads or subheadings, bylines, photo captions.

Newsworker’s basic distinction is between *hard news* and *features*.

Hard news is their staple product: reports of accidents, crimes, announcements and other events which have occurred or come to light since the previous issue of their paper or programme and it is the place where a distinctive news style will be found.

Features are the most obvious case of soft news: longer articles covering immediate events. They provide background, sometimes ”editorialize” and are usually bylined with the writer’s

name. In features, journalists are allowed more liberty of style and many features are written by non-journalists.

For both newsmen and researchers, the boundaries between hard and soft news are unclear.

Special-topic news: appears in sections of the paper explicitly flagged for their subject matter. They are generally produced by separate groups of specialist journalists under the control of the editor.

→ Different media have different ratios of advertising to editorial copy: In some newspapers news makes up a majority of the content, but more often advertising predominates. News can occupy a surprisingly small proportion of some newspapers (e.g. Blockbuster Sunday editions of American Papers). With broadcast media the news always occupies a small proportion of airtime.

Where news copy comes from:

Most news outlets carry far more news originated by other organizations than by their own journalists. Almost all international news derives from the “*Big Four*” news agencies: Reuters, Associated Press, United Press International and Agence France Presse.

Domestic news from beyond an outlet’s immediate geographical area comes mainly from internal news agencies.

A large proportion of news which appears to be produced by local reporters is primarily the work of press offices working for companies, government departments or other organizations.

Most countries have their conventional subdivisions of the press:

New Zealand, daily press i) metropolitans ii) provincials

United Kingdom, i) national ii) regional

A further subdivision -particularly strong in Britain but acknowledged in many other countries- is between the “*quality*” and “*popular*” press (Guardian, New York Times, Le Monde and the Frankfurter Allgemeine versus the rest). Most nations lack a true national daily press because of the difficulties of nationwide distribution.

The media react to research

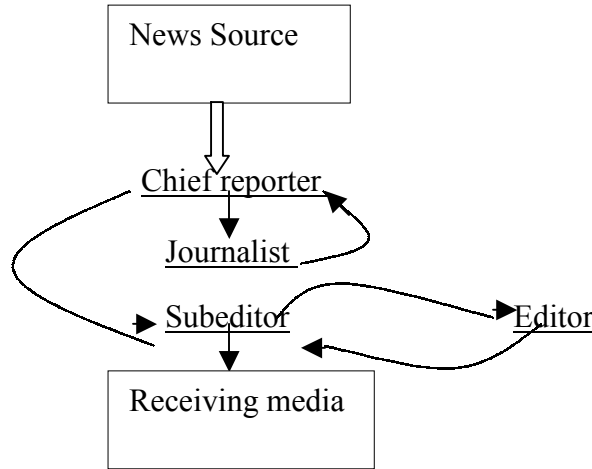
There is one feature of researching the media which still manages to surprise even experienced practitioners: the porcine reaction of media personnel.

If there is any one institutional disease to which the media of mass communication seem particularly subject, it is a nervous reaction to criticism, a reaction that puzzles us, for it is the media themselves which so vigorously defend principles guaranteeing the right to criticize. Sometimes the reaction can be extreme enough to jeopardize the conduct of publication of research. The likelihood of reaction should not drive media language researchers away, but rather forewarn us on how to approach media organizations and present our research to them with care.

The Production of News Language

The news is seldom a solo performance. News media offer the classic case of language produced by multiple parties. Media audiences are large and multilayered, ranging from the interviewer whom a newsmaker addresses face to face, to the absentee mass audience, which itself consists of different segments.

The path of a news story within a small newsroom (Medialink newsroom):



The number of people who have handed the copy –and therefore been in a position to modify the language- is by no means unusual.

The cyclical nature of the process in a small newsroom where staff are constantly interacting makes it difficult to identify whose hand has produced which language forms. In larger newsrooms the flow is correspondingly more complex.

Roles in producing language		
Hymes	Goffman	Bell
Sender	Principal	Principal
	Author	Author Editor
Adressor	Animator	Animator

Applied to the media, these roles are intended to identify the language function of *newsworkers* (with the overall term “newsworkers” we describe all those who are regularly involved in overseeing, writing or editing news).

News is not “just the facts” but the product of organizational structures and professional practices.

In principle all the roles can be united in one person, in news production as in other situations. In large organizations the roles are in fact divided and subdivided, with titles multiplied to match.

Roles in producing news language

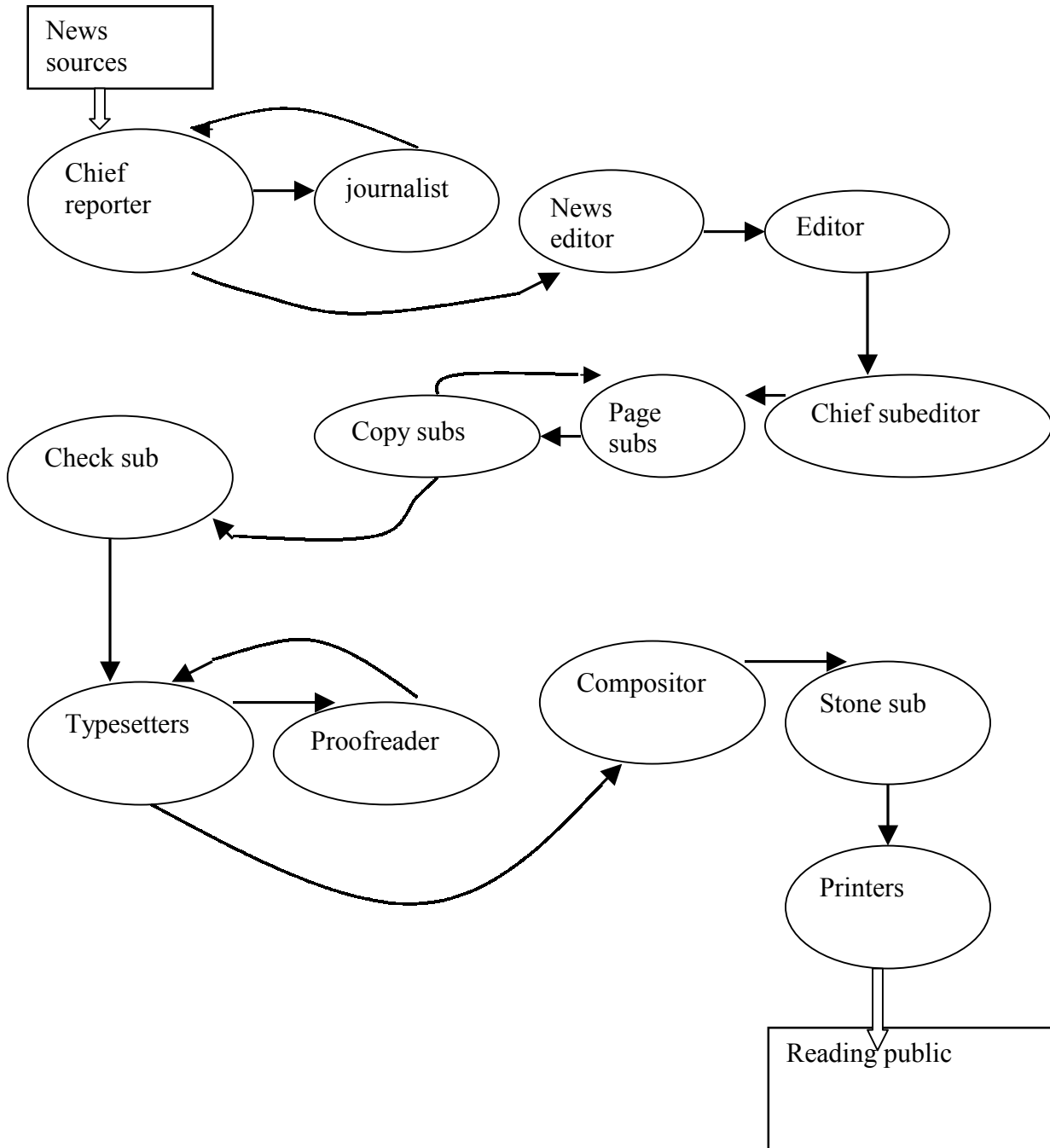
Roles	Subroles	Newsroom position	Language function
<i>Principal</i>	Commercial: Business institution	Proprietor Managers	No direct, overt language input
	Professional: news institution	Editorial executives	General language Prescription, rare Specific prescription
<i>Author</i>	Author	Journalist	Generates news language, responsible for original syntactic and discourse form
<i>Editor</i>	Overseer	Chief reporter (press) Chief subeditor (press) News editor (broadcast)	General & specific language prescription
	Copy editor	Subeditor Copy editor News editor (press)	Modifies language, responsible for its intermediate and final form
	Interpreter	News editor (press) Subeditor Duty editor (broadcast) Newsreader/ Newscaster	Responsible for prominence and presentation – order, headlines, graphological form
<i>Animator</i>	Transmitter	Newsreader Typesetter Proofreader Compositor	Responsible for accurate phonological/graphological transmission
	Technician	Printer Sound technician Camera operator	No language input Keeps channel open and noise-free

Authors: Journalists are the professionals whose daily occupation it is to produce news language. Journalists are authors, but they are not as original as may appear. Firstly, they are not the only people who generate news copy. Nevertheless, the title “journalist” labels those whose central job it is to write news. My description of the journalist as sole originating author of stories is an extreme idealization. The way in which journalists insert already existing text into their stories is only one example of a basic feature of media communication: embedding. The journalist is therefore as much a *compiler* as a *creator of language*. (A newspaper byline is no guarantee of authorship in our sense).

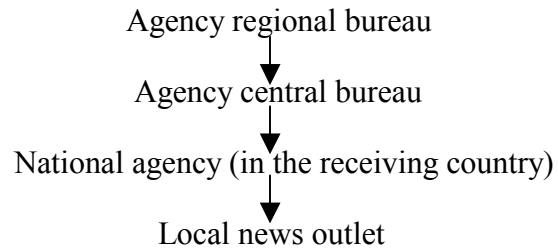
Editors: Just as it is the journalist’s occupation to generate news language, the copy editor’s profession is cutting and modifying that language.

The processing of news involves the complex and rapid movement of copy among individuals within a newsroom.

- *News processing in a local paper (The Dominion, Wellington's morning daily):*

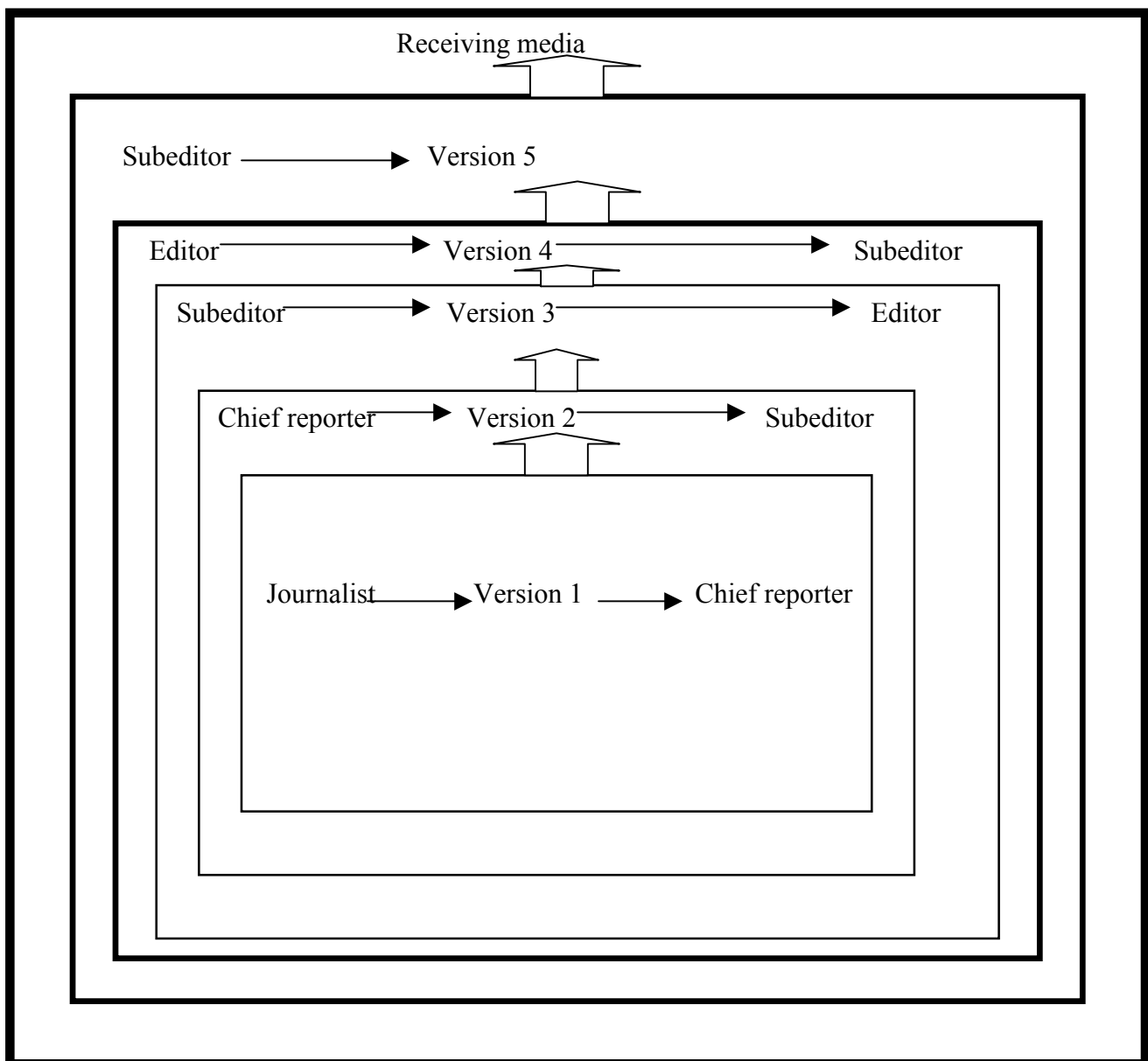


The news production system reveals its real complexities with international news. The average international news item published anywhere in the world has probably been through at least four separate newsrooms:



- At each stage there are copy editors with the right to change the language.
- The flow of international news is massive as well as intricate.

If we view the process (of production of news language) as layered in the vertical dimension rather than segmented horizontally, we regard all earlier versions of a story as *embedded* within the final text. Each successive handling of the copy produces a potentially different text, which is input to the next stage of the process:



Authoring and Editing the News Text

We have seen that journalists rely primarily on other people's accounts of events in their authoring of stories... "Something is so because somebody says it"

Journalists draw on both spoken and written inputs for their stories.

Class the input sources:

- Interviews (face to face or by telephone)
- Public addresses
- Press conferences
- Written text of spoken addresses
- Organizationally produced documents (reports, surveys, agendas, etc.)
- Press releases
- Prior stories on a topic
- News agency copy
- The journalist's notes from all of the above inputs (especially the spoken ones).

Journalistic wisdom holds that there is no substitute for talking to a newsmaker. The documentary inputs are of two main kinds: those already written as news, and those not written as news.

Journalists favour written sources which are already prefabricated in an appropriate news style and therefore require the minimum of reworking. These are of three kinds: news agency copy, press releases and prior stories on the same topic.

News media feed voraciously of each other's stories. This means that news language is frequently recycled. A large proportion of news is talk about talk.

Van Dijk (1988 b:133) found that *selection* and *deletion* were the main strategies used in dealing with input texts, with some summarization Allan Bell adds the reproduction of source material, the generalization and particularization and the restyling and translating.

Editing is the process by which one text is transformed into another text which is different in form but congruent in meaning. In mass communication, editing is institutionalized and professionalized, offering an ideal site to study the process.

Editing usually consisted of deleting sections of a story, adding basic explanatory material and cleaning up spelling mistakes and stylistic problems.

Editing changes:

- a) Information deletions are very common and generally take out information which the copy editor apparently considers superfluous. Van Dijk (1988a, 1988b) found that deletion was the most common operation for news agency to undergo.

e.g. his research into a new modeling technique → his research
a third girl, Josephine Kona Burton, 20, masseuse → a third girl aged 20

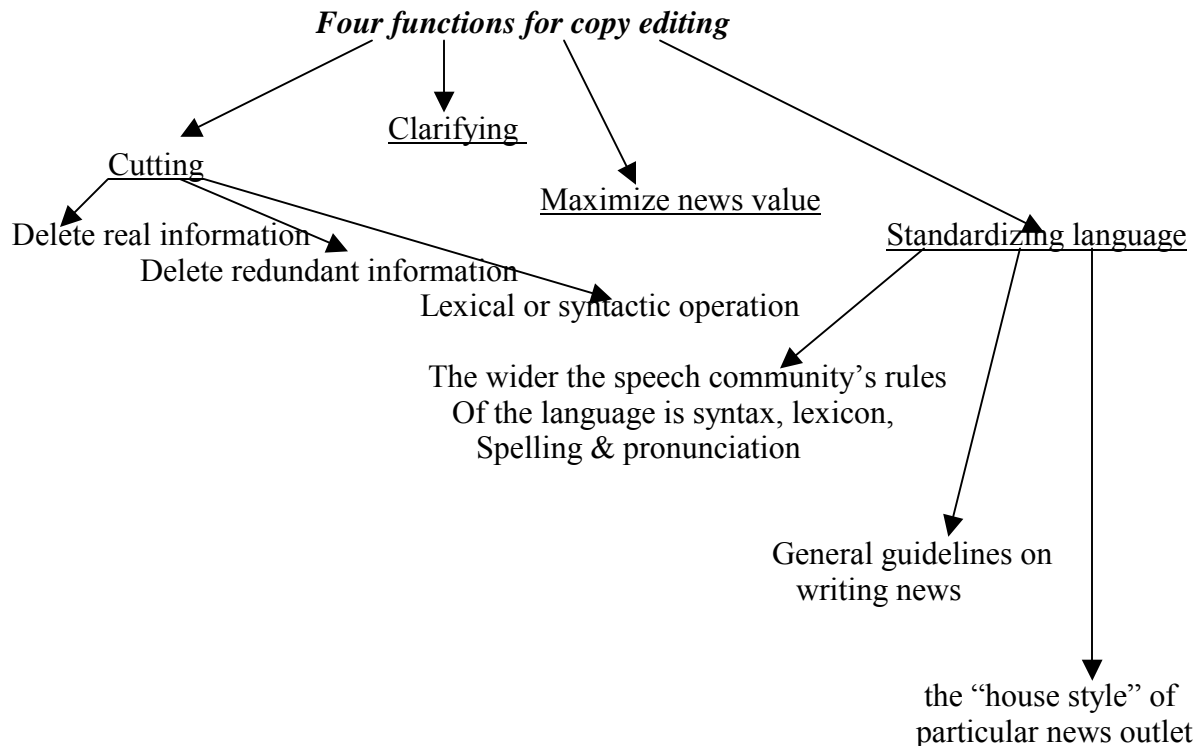
Skilful deletion has left behind a sentence with a very different syntactic structure, but still well formed and requiring no repairs at all.

b) Lexical substitutions replace one or more words with alternative items.

e.g. modify → change
 leader → head
 in the past 10 years → in the last decade

c) Syntactic editing rules

- Technology on editing: the few studies which have compared electronic and hard copy editing practices agree that electronic editing takes longer than pencil on paper but is more accurate.



- Choosing an alternative lead is just the most obvious way in which a story can be reordered to maximize its new value. Lead and order are the most important aspects of getting the most out of a story. General advice on news writing is found in texts such as those issued either by elite outlets such as The Times or by news agencies.

The Audience for Media Language

The audience is arguably the most important and certainly the most researched component of mass communication. Media live by the size and composition of their audiences.

In one formulation, six out of seven characteristics of mass communication focus on the audience (McQuail 1969a:7):

- Large audience relative to other communication situations

- Public accessibility of mass media content
- Heterogeneity of the audience
- Simultaneous contact with widely separated individuals
- One directional flow and impersonality of mass communication
- The mass audience as a creation of modern society

Broadcasters operate from moment to moment with no assurance that they even have an audience.

Burger (1984:30): "If it is difficult to say who the sender is in mass communication, it is much more difficult to say who the communicator is actually communicating with".

Audience members can be anywhere that technology, physical conditions and social custom permit.

Audience members are separated not just from the communicator but from each other. The members of the mass audience, however, remain isolated from the communicator and each other.

As well as the *disjunction of place*, there is often a *disjunction of time* between communicator and audience. Broadcast technology closes the gap, but even so most broadcast content is recorded rather than live.

Although **feedback** is not absent from the mass communication process, in few cases is the audience member on equal terms with the communicators.

The audiences exercise their main influence on the media just through being the audience or by deciding to be someone else's audience.

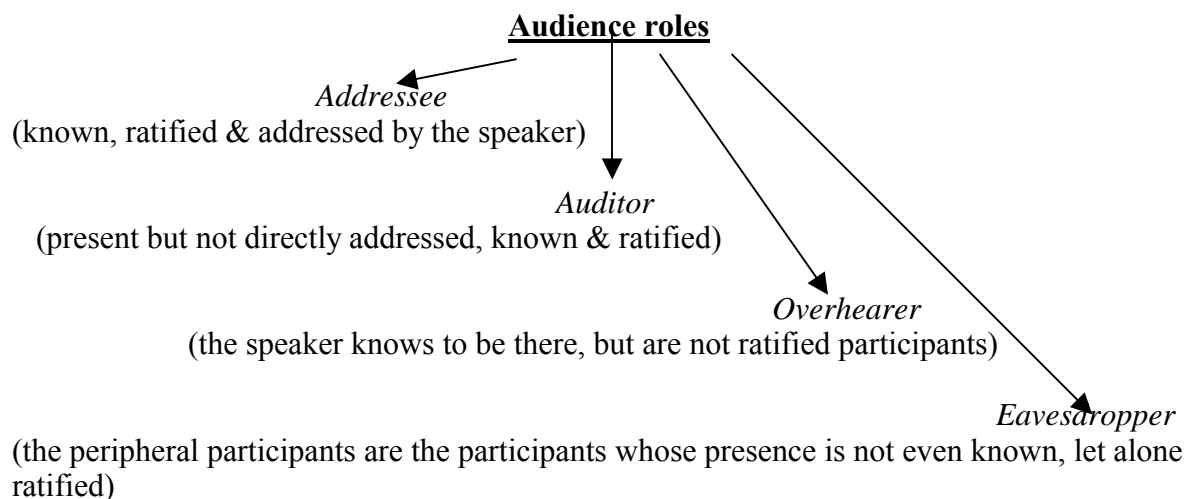
Mass communicators have only the haziest concept of what kind of people make up their audience. *Isolation* from the audience is a characteristic of mass communicators. Ironically, the more "mass" the medium, the greater the isolation.

Principals, editors and animators are largely housebound. The stay-at-home nature of most newswriters' jobs keeps them out of contact with the audiences with whom they are communicating.

The "missing link" between media producers and consumers is *professionalism* (Schlesinger 1987:106). Mass communicators are interested in their peers not their public. Fellow communicators and co-professionals are their *salient audience*.

Professionalism involves a consensus among communicators about how they should address different kind of audiences.

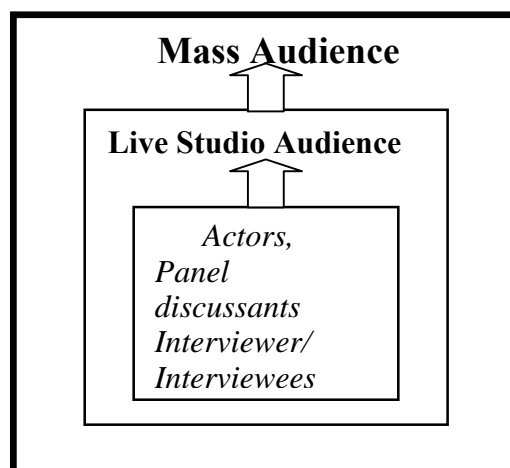
Ignorance of the audience is no barrier to formation of a stereotyped image. We may suppose that it is even an aid.



Mass communication is for the mass. One of its defining characteristics is that it is available to everyone, but there are limits to this availability... those beyond the limits, usually the young, are **eavesdroppers** in the classic sense if they do read or view the forbidden material. Between the addressee and the eavesdropper is a finely graded continuum of *audience segments*.

Quite commonly the formats of the live and mass performances are combined. We see that a TV comedy was “recorded before a live audience”. This creates a triple layering of play, live audience and mass audience.

Audience layering in mass communication:



Details:

- The role of the editors, producers, technicians and others is not make their own verbal contribution but to facilitate communication of others' contributions to the distant mass audience. These people function simultaneously as both audience and communicators. Studio audiences are both audience to the central event of an interview or play, and communicators in so far as their reactions are themselves transmitted.

- The technicians are the most obvious example of the communicator as audience. This is not surprising since mass communication requires technology and technology requires technicians. Their presence in the audience for mass communication is in fact required for the communication to take place at all. While technicians function as audience at the embedded level of communication, they are themselves simultaneously communicators to the mass audience.
- The editor roles such as news editor or chief reporter are journalists' closest, and arguably most important, audience.
- The animators are an important audience.
- The authors are also audiences of their own production.
- Newsworkers in parallel positions in rival media are a significant and conscious audience for producers –probably the most salient audience of all, with the news world's value placed on getting a story first, before rivals.
- The news outlet's principals are a significant audience/producer group. } They are able to
- The final group-audience are the newsmakers themselves. } "interfere" with
the process/ *post hoc* audience.

Media try to break out of their *isolation* and *lack of feedback* and to overcome the usual limits of media communication.

Communicators are in a sense *slaves to their audience*: Members of the audience have the power to switch off, to refuse to buy, to reject a media outlet. On the other hand, they are helpless. Audience power becomes effective only if exercised en masse, which is beyond the influence of the individual media consumer.

Radio offers by far the best example of the audience as communicators: the usual way of incorporating the audience, in radio, is through telephone.

Stylin' the News: Audience Design

Different media regard different things as news. Still more obvious are the contrast in presentation. The differences in content and visual styles are paralleled in the language used.

Style in language:

The foundational research on *style shift* was Labov's pioneering sociolinguistic study on the stratification of English in New York City (1966, 1972a). Since then sociolinguists have been accustomed to differentiate the inter-speaker and intra-speaker dimensions on language variation. The inter-speaker or "social" dimensions has been correlated with differences in the measurable social characteristics (age, gender, social class) of a person – the speaker. Audience design proposes that the intra-speaker variation can be primarily correlated with the attributes of the hearers. That is, speaker design their talk for their hearers. The essence of style is that speakers are responding to their audience.

Audience design suggests that communicator's strategies will sometimes be *responsive* and sometimes "*initiative*" (Bell 1984b): that is, speakers are often primarily responding to their audience in the language they produce. But they also on occasion take more initiative and use language to redefine their relationship to their audience.

- Within the media, some genres are more prone to response and others to initiative.
- The more formal genres (newscasting) are towards the responsive end of the scale.
- Advertising/on-air discussions are more prone to communicator initiative.

Accommodation theory:

Crudely characterized, speech accommodation theory proposes that speakers accommodate their speech style to their hearers (Giles&Povesland 1975). The main findings in this field make it clear that speakers respond primarily to their audience in *designing their talk*. The theory was largely developed to analyse and account for how speakers modify their speech in the complex dynamics of interpersonal encounters where one moment's speaker becomes hearer the next moment. Accommodation theory also attempts to specify the motivations which lie behind use of particular accommodative strategies. Approval seeking has been recognized as a prime motive in accommodation. This is very powerful in mass communication, where we assume that communicators are always in some sense trying to win the approval of the audience (McQuail 1969b). Another prime motivation in mass communication is the concern for receipt of a clear signal.

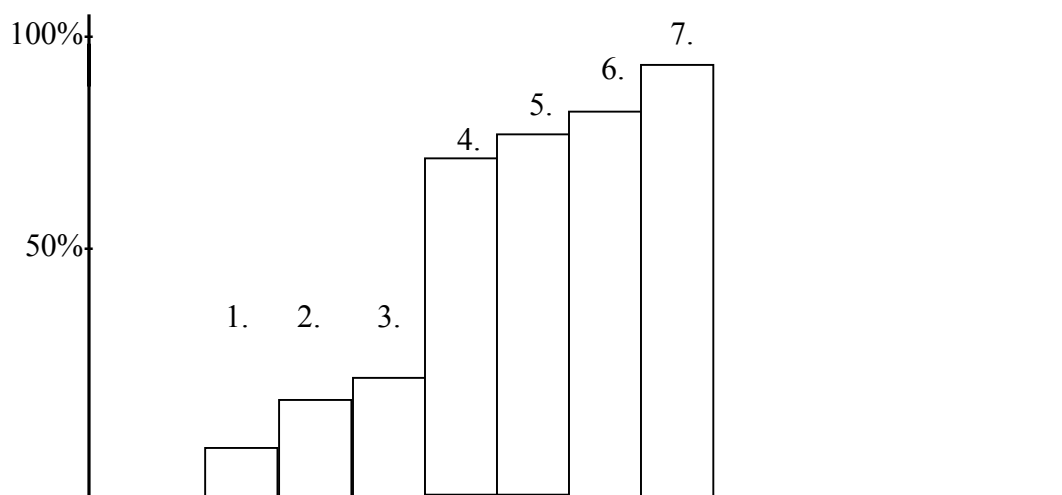
The audience accommodates: Assuming that audience membership usually signifies approval of communicator style, it follows the media attract the audiences which suit them. If the communicator is unsuccessful in accommodating to the audience, *the audience will do the accommodating. If the style does not shift to suit the audience, the audience will shift to style that does suit.* The communicator will then have an audience which was unintended but whose composition in fact suits the style – or conceivably no audience at all.

Style and audience in the British press

We can initially examine how style suits a news outlet's audience by means of just one linguistic variable. A rule characteristic of news language is to *delete the determiner* in appositional naming expressions.

- e.g. [the] Australian entrepreneur Alan Bond
 [a] Spanish tourist Josefa Morelli
 [his] fellow left-winger Bob Cryer

The *figure* below displays the percentage of determiner deletion in seven British daily newspapers in 1980:



{ 1: Times, 2: Guardian, 3: Telegraph, 4: Mail, 5: Express, 6: Mirror, 7: Sun }

What we see: - the three “quality” newspapers delete very few determiners

- the four “popular” papers delete most of the determiners.

...we find that papers are grouped according to their **readership profiles**. They are graded and rankings correspond almost exactly to the social status of their readerships.

The close reflection of audience status in linguistic style is no accident. The determiner deletion variable is diagnostic of the social stratification of a news outlet's audience. In another country and another medium, the same patterns reappear. Data from several samples between 1974 and 1984 on New Zealand radio stations show a similar good correlation between determiner deletion and audience status.

Audience design in New Zealand radio

Bell conducted studies on news style of Auckland radio. In his research he included five radio stations that broadcast news in Auckland city. The five stations were differentiated by both program content and audience membership.

His study argues that differences which may be identified between the news styles of Auckland's radio stations are the *result of differences in audiences and their values*. Bell

assumes that membership in a station's audience evinces general approval of that medium, its content and its communicators' style.

According to Bell, the strongest evidence for audience design looks not at different newscasters on the one station, but at one newscaster on different stations. In Bell's study, there were some single newscasters that were heard on two different stations and Bell says that this shows a *remarkable and consistent ability to make considerable style shifts to suit the audience*.

Bell concludes that the physical setting of the communicator in the studio, and the audience anywhere at all, is the same regardless of the station. The topics of the news are broadly similar across the stations. News thus clearly falls on the responsive dimension posited by audience design.

What is happening here is that individual newscasters are *converging* towards a common style of speech targeted at the audience. This is evidenced in the notably narrow scatter of newscasters from each station. As part of the audience design process, there is a consensus at work among a station's newscasters over what is a suitable style for their particular audience. Individual differences are minimized and speakers tend to cluster around the station mean frequency for the variable, giving content to the notion of a "station style" which is designed for its audience.

Editing copy for style:

Copy editors in some sense "know" the target level in their own station's copy, "know" the frequency of deletion in external input copy and apply editing rules to shift the input towards that target. The further a station's target level is from that in the input copy received, the higher will be the level of application of the editing rule needed to adjust that frequency.

→ As a corollary to this, copy editors never apply a rule to delete determiners from incoming copy. Their move is always to reinsert the determiners and never to delete more, because their target is a lower level of overall deletion.

→ The more remote the point of origin of copy is, the less likely its style is to be like that of a recipient news outlet's. external news is written for a wider and potentially different audience from that of any one of its recipient news outlets.

Variable editing rules thus function to shift the style of the input text closer to the style, which the station deems suitable for its kind of audience. This shows how *a number of divergent styles can be derived from a single text* and how *different media outlets achieve different linguistic styles*.

Talking strange: Referee Design in Media Language

We saw in the previous chapter how style can vary within media language according to a number of factors such as the audience of the particular medium. This is the "**responsive**" **dimension of style, which we have characterized as audience design**. But there is another dimension, which is termed as "initiative" dimension (Bell 1984b). Here the style shifts itself initiates a change in the situation rather than resulting from such a change.

In *responsive style shift*, there is a regular association between language and social situation. *Initiative* style shift is essentially a redefinition, by the speaker, of the relationship between speaker and audience. The baseline from which initiative shifts operate is the style normally designed for a particular kind of addressee.

The referees:

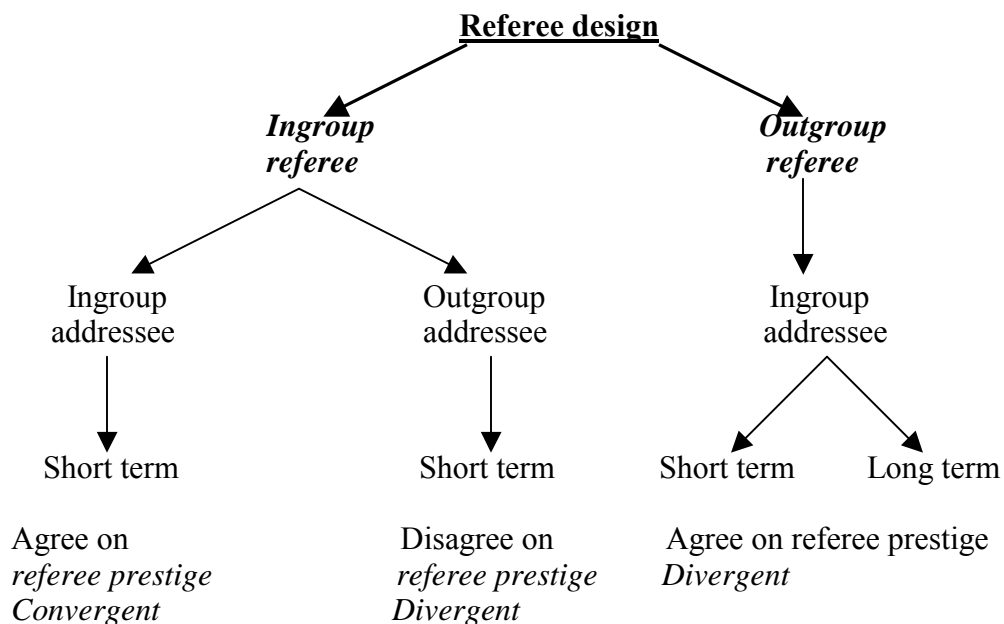
Speakers can persuade or convince someone intimate to them by shifting to the style or language one would normally address to strangers. Such shifts appear to be powerful just because they treat addressees as if they were someone else.

This someone else I term the “referee” (Bell 1984b). In referee design speakers diverge away from the style appropriate to their addressee and towards that of a third party, a reference group or model. **Referees** are *third persons not physically present at an interaction but possessing such salience for a speaker that they influence language choice even in their absence*.

Referee design arises in a range of media genres. Referee design does occur in some features of news language, but the news is mostly audience designed. In other genres, referee design of some kind is very common. Especially in radio, there is a conscious attempt to “foreground the interpersonal”, to build a relationship between presenter and audience.

→ Referee design is a rhetorical strategy by which speakers use the resources available to them from their speech community (Bell 1990).

We can categorize and characterize referee design in several ways:



The division into *ingroup* and *outgroup* referees is fundamental (Bell 1990).

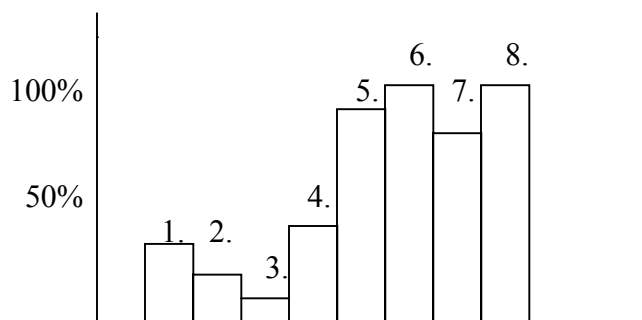
- Ingroup referee design sees you as speaker shifting to an extreme level of the style of your own ingroup.

- Outgroup referee design also represents the claiming of an identity. But it differs in its social structure and linguistic effects. Here speakers lay claim to a speech and identity which is not their own but which holds prestige for them. They *diverge* from the language code of their ingroup-and thus from their own usual speech-towards an outgroup with whom they wish to identify.

While all other classes of initiative shift are by nature brief, outgroup referee design can be long term, even institutionalized. **Diglossia** is the classic case. In *Ferguson's* original

definition (1959), the prestige or “*High*” form in diglossia is not native to any group in the speech community.

→ How the referee design operates in the degree of determiner deletion in American and British prestige media (1980-1982)



1. BBC-1 Television, 2. ITN Television, 3. The Times, 4. Guardian 5. CBS Television, 6. ABC Television, 7. New York Times, 8. Washington Post

The dichotomy between them is absolute. The four British media delete a maximum of 10 per cent of determiners. The American media delete 75 per cent or more of the determiners. In fact, we have **British versus American news style**.

With such *polarization* between the two main international varieties of English, it becomes possible that *different media within other countries may adopt one or other model as their target – their “referee”*. (This has happened for New Zealand media that orientate towards British linguistic norms...of course media change their orientation referee models over the years).

Common to all referee design (except that with an ingroup addressee) is the absence of direct feedback, because referees are not present in a speaker’s actual audience. That has crucial consequences for a speaker’s performance. The speaker lacks access to the outgroup, and therefore has no adequate model of outgroup speech. The result is that speakers never acquire full fluency in the High language (Ferguson 1959), although they may use it regularly.

Advertisements:

The function of advertisements is an initiative one –to persuade, challenge, seize the audience’s attention, tell an anecdote. The language in them is used to simulate distance or intimacy of relationship.

Advertising is, together with news, the *principal genre common to all daily media*. Its use of language is highly creative, the well-made advertisement appeals to sophisticated linguistic skills. We may decry the commercial intent of such linguistic play, but the skill and impact are undeniable.

Perhaps the most striking employment of linguistic resources in advertising is the use of a language, which is not understood by the advertisement’s target audience. So, foreign languages and non- native dialects (depending on the country) are both used in advertising.

Telling Stories

Journalists do not write articles. They write stories. A story has structure, direction, point, and viewpoint. An article may lack these.

Journalists are professional story-tellers of our age. Stories can be divided into hard news and soft as we saw earlier.

Comparing news stories and personal narratives:

The importance of the lead or first paragraph in establishing the main point of a news story is clear and has been analysed earlier. The lead has precisely the same function in news as the abstract in personal narrative. The lead as summary or abstract is obligatory in hard news, where in personal narrative it remains optional.

Press news has headlines as well as lead paragraphs. The headline is an abstract of the abstract.

The lead paragraph is the journalist's primary abstract of a story.

There are no headlines in news agency copy, from which most published news derives. Nor do journalists put headlines on their own stories (that is the work of subeditors).

Orientation: In personal narrative, orientation sets the scene, in news stories such orientation is obligatory. For journalists *who, what, when and where* are the basic facts which concentrate at the beginning of a story.

Evaluation: In personal narrative, evaluation is what distinguishes a directionless sequence of sentences from a story with point and meaning (Labov 1972b:367). News stories also require evaluation to establish the significance of what is being told, to focus the event, and to justify claiming the audience's attention. The lead paragraph is a nucleus of evaluation, because the function of the lead is not merely to summarize the main action. The lead focuses the story in a particular direction. It forms the lens through which the remainder of the story is viewed. *Until a journalist finds what to lead a story with, the story remains unfocused.* It is an article but not a story and may be rejected or rewritten by editors as a non-story.

Resolution: The personal narrative moves to a resolution. News stories often do not present clearcut results. When they do, the result will be in the lead rather than at the end of the story.

One kind of news does follow the chronology of the personal narrative more closely: sports reporting. *Sport makes good news just because there is always result.*

Coda: Nor is there a coda to the news story. In personal narrative it serves as an optional conclusion to the story, to mark its finish, to return the tense from narrative time to the present. None of these functions is necessary *in the newspaper, where the next contribution is another story.*

News values

We cannot separate news form and news content. The values of news drive the way in which news is presented.

→ **Values in news actors and events:**

- *Negativity*
- *Recency* (Bell 1983): the best news is something, which has only just happened.
- *Proximity:* geographical closeness can enhance news value (related is Galtung & Meaningfulness).

- *Consonance*: the compatibility of a story with preconceptions about the social group or nation from which the news actors come.(people have a mental script for how certain kinds of events proceed).
- *Unambiguity*: the more clearcut a story is, the more it is favoured.
- *Unexpectedness*: the unpredictable or the rare is more news worthy than the routine (closely related is *Novelty*-“New” is the key word of advertising).
- *Superlativeness*: the biggest building, the most violent crime gets covered.
- *Relevance*: the effect on the audience’ s own lives or closeness to their Experience.
- *Personalization*: sth that can be pictured in personal terms is more newsworthy than a concept.
- *Eliteness* of the news actors
- *Attribution*: the eliteness of a story’ s sources can be crucial in its news chances.
- *Facticity*: the degree to which a story contains the kinds of facts and figures on which hard news thrives (locations, names, numbers of all kinds).

→ **Values in the news process:**

- *Continuity*: once sth is in the news, it tends to stay there. (News breeds news)
- *Competition*: every news outlet wants an exclusive.
- *Co-option*: a story which is only tangentially related can be interpreted and Presented in terms of a high-profile continuing story.
- *Composition*: editors want both a mixture of different kinds of news and some Common threads.
- *Predictability*: if an event can be prescheduled for journalists it is more likely to be covered than if it turns up unheralded.
- *Prefabrication*: the existence of ready-made text, which journalists can take over.

→ **Values in the news text:**

- Clarity
- Brevity
- Color

→ **Galtung & Ruge (1965) propose two principles concerning how news factors operate:**

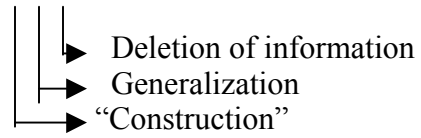
1. News factors are not independent but *cumulative*. That is, a story is more newsworthy if it registers on more than one factor.
 2. Lack of one factor can be compensated for, by possessing another.
- News factors have a wide applicability in analyzing what makes news.

Macrorules

Two of the most useful of van Dijk’s analytical contributions to the study of news discourse, are the: macrorules and “news schemata”.

News stories are composed of “macropropositions”. A discourse will usually contain several topics. Topics are structured within the discourse. The structure is derived from the discourse by “macrorules”. These come in three main kinds and reduce the information in a discours to its gist or kernel – that is, summarizing.

- There are three types of macrorules:

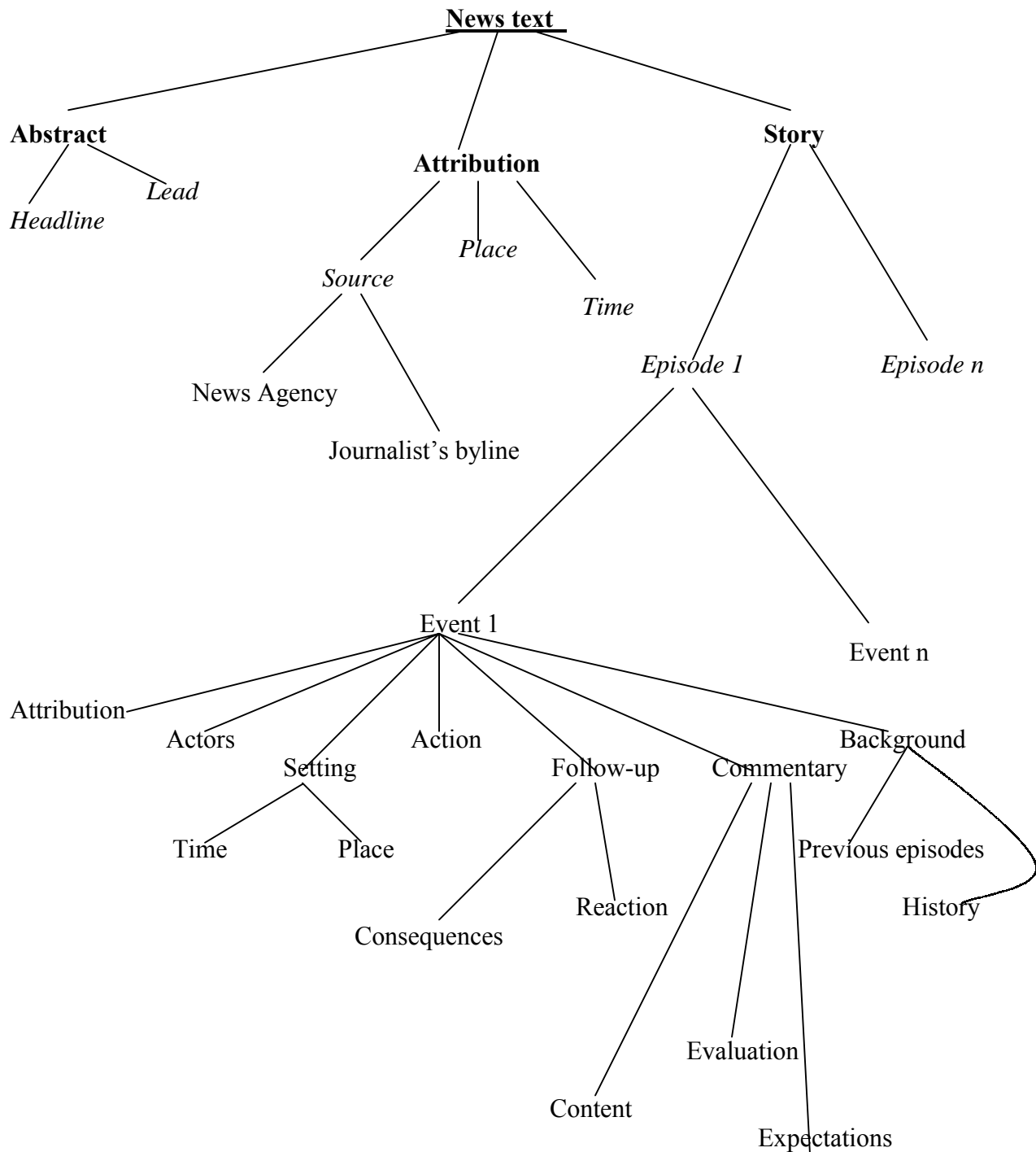


- Van Dijk terms the syntactic structure as “news schemata”.

News schemata are syntax of news stories, the formal categories into which news can be analysed and their relations to each other. Different types of text, like news and personal narratives, have different schemata. Different languages or cultures may have different schemata for similar genres.

The structure of news stories →

The structure of news stories:



- Outline model structure of news texts. There can be a number of Events or Episodes. Follow-up and Background categories can have Episodes embedded into them. Headline and Lead pick up components from the story itself. Categories such as Attribution or Setting can be components of either an Event or an Episode.

Languages & the Media, Berlin, Germany. 3,570 likes · 36 talking about this. Languages & The Media is a biennial international conference dedicated to...
See more of Languages & the Media on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Languages & the Media on Facebook. Log In. Forgotten account?
2. Researching Media Language. 2.1. Universe and sample. 2.2. What's news: defining genres. 2.3. News outlets. 2.4. News outputs. 2.5. Pitfalls, shortcuts and the wrong way round. 2.6. The media react to research. 3. The Production of News Language. 3.1. Many hands make tight work.
First introduction to the language of the news media. Author is both a journalist and a linguist - draws on first hand experience and observations as well as on research. Wide range of international examples. Series. Language in Society. ABOUT. About us.