Rhetoric of Leadership
Retoryka przywództwa

RECENZJA/REVIEW

KATARZYNA MOLEK-KOZAKOWSKA
UNIVERSITY OF OPOLE, POLAND
molekk@uni.opole.pl
orcid.org/0000-0001-9455-7384

Review/Recenzja: Monika Bednarek and Helen Caple *The Discourse of News Values: How News Organizations Create Newsworthiness.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

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The Discourse of News Values: How News Organizations Create Newsworthiness. **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.**

This book publication by the team of two Australia-based scholars of media/communication studies and linguistics is a 320-page long theoretically grounded empirical research devoted to grasping the multimodal features of popular news texts and their social media remediations. It is the latest installment in their decade-long cooperation that aims to capture the discursive and visual mechanisms that allow some types of information to be represented and "sold" as "news" by media organizations. The approach has been called Discursive News Values Analysis (DNVA) and is here enhanced methodologically by a combination of analytical tools labelled as "corpus assisted multimodal discourse analysis."

This project is worth drawing attention to because it seems to be of high scholarly and social relevance. It enables a better understanding of how language resources and images are recruited to present some events as news, which in turn may be used for the critique of the ideological investments behind the dominant patters of representation. Its results could well be used to enhance critical media literacy education and add a new dimension to journalism training. For media-oriented scholars, the book offers a valuable theoretical review and empirical verification of the strategic potential of some linguistic and visual devices that are capable of (1) attracting the attention of a mass audience, (2) presenting a given skewed version of social events as legitimate and common-sensical, or (3) influencing the belief systems and attitudes of news consumers to help convince them to accept the proposed solutions. The latter point is especially valid for contemporary rhetorical criticism of mediation.

The volume starts with a comprehensive introduction in which the authors justify their approach and characterize the type of discourse analysis of journalism they propose. They also explain key terms and acquaint the readers with the methods they use. Part I elucidates the theoretical model of DNVA and its grounding in previous research. Part II provides the "toolkit" for the analysis of newsworthiness

across the textual and visual modes. Part III reports on results of applying DNVA in three case studies – one devoted to the topic of cycling/cyclists across English-language news media, one to the Facebook feeds provided by news organizations, and one to news values of Facebook posts most frequently shared by users. Part IV includes authors' extensions which illustrate how DNVA can potentially be applied in diachronic or cross-cultural studies of journalistic practice and reflections on the merits and limitations of their approach. The publication is appended with tabularized information on tools, sources or results of the studies as well as a handy index.

The authors make a point of the fact that, to study news values, one needs to look at various semiotic modes that are drawn from by news providers to construe a given representation of the social event, notably its interrelated textual (headline, opening paragraph, copy, caption) and visual (photography, infographics) affordances and conventions. Secondly, such studies could involve comparisons within and across the modes and should use various analytic procedures and tools (and their combinations) to arrive at replicable results and verifiable conclusions. The authors not only advocate but also showcase the uses of triangulated methods that involve quantitative or corpus linguistic analyses (e.g., frequency, collocation, key words and n-grams, range and prototypicality, statistical testing) and qualitative components that enable interpretations based on concordance, clustering and dispersion analysis. Such an approach is claimed to allow validated identification and interpretation of dominant textual patterns. It is worth underlining that, in the case studies presented, the authors pay special attention to making their samples representative of the news phenomena they study and provide detailed information (in the book and on the devoted website www.newsvaluesanalysis.com) on their sampling and coding procedures. This is aimed at reducing biases and researcher subjectivity. Additionally, the results of each specific stage of analysis are presented in a clear and accessible way through tables, figures and graphs that not only illustrate the exhaustiveness of each study, but also allow a smooth processing of the results and may inspire others to replicate such research designs with different corpora.

The central concept of the book is that of news value, which the authors introduce, discuss from various disciplinary positions, and critique if the models proposed by previous scholars seem to simplify or conflate the multiple dimensions of newsworthiness. This is done in chapter 2 and 3, which comprise the theoretical part of the book. Bednarek and Caple insist on distinguishing between material, cognitive, social and discursive dimensions of newsworthiness, and show their preference for a constructionist approach. They focus on the previously neglected sphere of research on "how news values are communicated through discourse" (p. 43).

Their framework – DNVA – is fine-tuned to assess how specific events can be rhetorically enhanced to be constructed as newsworthy in published stories. In this part, they offer a list of news values for DNVA, provide their definitions and illustrate how these values are operationalized and realized in news discourses. The labels they will use throughout the book are: Aesthetic Appeal, Consonance, Eliteness, Impact, Negativity, Personalization, Positivity, Proximity, Superlativeness, Timeliness and Unexpectedness. The authors are conscious of the fact that these news values tend to be differently realized or articulated/prioritized in various social contexts and that different audiences may indulge in various readings of news texts.

Part II of the book involves "translating" the theoretical model of DNVA into concrete analytical frameworks. This is done by providing inventories of linguistic (chapter 4) and visual (chapter 5) resources that are "typically allocated to a specific news value according to their meaning potential, typical usage and function" (p. 78). The authors use extant studies of news discourse and their own previous publications, as well as recent examples of topical news extracts, in order to demonstrate how lexical, grammatical, compositional and semiotic resources are recruited to construe newsworthiness. Even if these operationalizations offer just one way to analyze the rhetoric of newsworthiness within the scope of the "preferred" reading positions, this part is an indispensable "toolkit" for any researcher wishing to apply DNVA in their own studies of either print or online journalistic practices.

Chapter 6 is a collection of linguistic analyses of an international English-language corpus of news articles on cyclists/cycling that span for a decade. Notwithstanding certain limitations arising from the construction of the sample and the procedures used for this analysis, the major observation emerging from the case study is that cycling is represented as newsworthy when it is related to Negativity (accidents, crime, altercations), and to Personalization, Superlativeness, Timeliness and Proximity. Despite the variety of themes and frames in the coverages, cycling is essentially presented as risky, which may reduce the overall likelihood of people taking up cycling, thus diminishing the environmental, economic and health benefits which this way of transportation offers (p. 167). At the same time, such a representation elevates the position of cycling on a political agenda, which might influence future decisions on cycling infrastructure and promotion. This chapter is an essential reading for critical rhetoricians.

Chapter 7 reports on a case study that traces emerging news practice of directing news traffic from Facebook (and Twitter) to news organizations' webpages. The visuals-oriented DNVA conducted here illustrates varied tendencies in using images in Facebook news feeds across countries and news outlets. The research

shows high scores for Eliteness, Personalization, Proximity and Negativity in the corpus of 1,100 visuals from 22 organizations, and spotlights the "attracting" role of Positivity in the visual mode, even when the news item is relatively negative (e.g., death, accident, misfortune). It also discusses the ideology-laden applications of stock photography. Arguably, the (cheaper) choices to use stock photo images instantiate a tendency to generalize and accustom audiences to less realistic and more stereotypical and symbolic representations, which should in fact be questioned rather than naturalized. This chapter is especially relevant for the practitioners of visual rhetoric.

Chapter 8 traces news items that were frequently shared via social networks and analyses their multimodal features. With a specially designed database of images and corpus-linguistic processing of texts, it has been possible for the authors to correlate the dominant features and identify the main patterns of packaging news that later turn out to be viral. Acknowledging the enormous variety of audience characteristics that underline the process of sharing and the variegated practices of how news outlets' choose to construe newsworthiness, the authors confirm the importance of traditional news values routinely applied by heritage organizations, but also notice the rise in audience interest in positive and unexpected news items. Their focus is also on patterns of language resources replicated "across texts" rather than on the meaning construction within one text. To map this, a corpus--assisted multimodal discourse analysis seems to be a perfect tool. This chapter is particularly relevant for those interested in digital rhetoric.

In Chapter 9 the authors share some of their "pilot analyses" and look at how DNVA can be applied to diachronic research projects that, for example, trace newsworthiness practices over time and map the evolution of journalistic practices of "rhetorically" anchoring public attention. Another dimension for future research could be oriented towards cross-linguistic and cross-cultural analyses of news values. A question could be asked how one global event or phenomenon (e.g., terrorism) tends to be mediated in various languages and countries and what is the degree of overlap or specificity in representing it to various audiences. Chapter 10 (Reflections) provides a handy recapitulation of the points made throughout the book and offers a chance to view news values research in a broader perspective of interdisciplinary work that has both a descriptive (empirical) orientation and an emancipating (critical) capacity to showcase the constructed nature of news and news production practices in the contexts of digital media literacy and journalism education.