

A GLIMPSE AT THE DISCOURSE OF NEWS VALUES¹

Crina HERȚEG

1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

Email: crina.herteg@uab.ro

Abstract

This book review analyses the monograph authored by Monika Bednarek and Helen Caple, *The discourse of news values*. The book is divided into four parts and it deals with theoretical aspects, empirical studies, and future research avenues. The goals of the book are to introduce the readers to the discourse of news values (hereinafter DNVA) and to promote research that brings together multimodality, discourse analysis and corpus linguistics. The authors acknowledge the fact that studies which combine multimodality, discourse analysis and corpus linguistics are rare and they explain this by the complexity of their undertaking. Bednarek and Caple draw on the interdisciplinarity of the book which brings together corpus linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis in analysing news media. The authors adhere to the definition of discourse as language in use and consider discourse as multimodal. The multimodal approach adopted by the authors differs from other approaches. The authors explain how corpus linguistics facilitates and is reflected in their analysis: while research that combines corpus linguistics and discourse analysis are quite frequent, the authors observe that research which blends multimodality, discourse analysis and corpus linguistics is quite rare. Throughout the book the authors

¹ Article History: Received: 15.08.2025. Revised: 08.09.2025. Accepted: 09.09.2025. Published: 15.11.2025. Distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License CC BY-NC 4.0. Citation: HERȚEG, C. (2025). A GLIMPSE AT THE DISCOURSE OF NEWS VALUES. *Incursiuni în imaginar* 16. IMAGINARUL ȘI ADAPTĂRILE TEXTULUI LITERAR/ L'IMAGINAIRE ET LES ADAPTATIONS DU TEXTE LITTÉRAIRE/ LITERARY ADAPTATIONS AND THE IMAGINARY. Vol. 16. Nr. 2. 355-363. <https://doi.org/10.29302/InImag.2025.16.2.17>. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

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examine news as semiotic practice, introduce and expand the concept of news values which contributes to discourse analysis and enables discourse analysts to take into account professional contexts of the news media texts under investigation.

The authors plead for extending discourse of news values by other researchers who analyse news discourse and hope that the book will represent a building block for future research.

Keywords: media linguistics; news values; multimodality.

The book introduces the concept of news values and investigates news as semiotic practice, thereby pinpointing the idea that news values contribute to discourse analysis. The Introduction highlights the main aims of the book, namely to introduce the readers to the discourse of news values, and to promote interdisciplinary research in the analysis of news media. Thus, it introduces the topic and its main concepts, it relates the concept of news to news reports disseminated by news organisations and it enumerates the types of news analysed throughout the book: hard news, soft news, research news. It further relates the term *news values* to the concept of newsworthiness. In addition, the authors mention news organisations which consider news values as part of the journalistic practice and study the multiple implications of DNVA in conveying the news to the target audience, i.e. the packaging of news and the integration of multimodality into the packaging of the news.

The areas of enquiry covered in the book pertain to a diverse range of interrelated fields, such as media linguistics, corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, multimodality, social semiotics, as the authors adhere to the definition of discourse as language in use and consider discourse as multimodal. This combination of approaches is known as corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis (CAMDA). The authors highlight that their multimodal approach differs from other approaches. They acknowledge that studies combining multimodality, discourse analysis and corpus linguistics are rare and pinpoint the complexity of their undertaking.

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Chapter 2 titled *News values* discusses the cross-disciplinary approach to news values. The first section of the chapter examines the literature review on news values pointing out Galtung and Ruge (1965) as the foundation on which the study of news values was built. The authors further identify the factors Galtung and Ruge (1965) proposed in the analysis of news values and highlight the criticism to this approach, namely the fact that it was deemed outdated as it did not pay heed to the visual. The section *The nature and status of news values* investigates the nature of news values and observes that several researchers produced new lists of news values as alternatives to those proposed by Galtung and Ruge (1965).

According to Bednarek and Caple, news values represent criteria that influence the decision making in news selection. They observe that linguistic research does not investigate news values and highlight that there is a limited number of linguists who tried to foster their own conceptualisation of news values. The chapter analyses interactions and connections that can be established among the dimensions of news values. It aims to fill the gap represented by the lack of linguistic and multimodal research and to establish a framework for the empirical analysis.

In Chapter 3 entitled *Discursive news values analysis*, the authors explain the discursive construction of news values and introduce their own list of news values. The authors further admit that their analysis and definition of news values rely on previous research on the topic, indicating Galtung and Ruge (1965). The chapter analyses Negativity and Positivity and shows that these news values are influenced by target audiences.

In brief, the chapter outlines the discursive aspect of news values and enumerates the news values proposed by Bednarek and Caple and by other researchers. The chapter pay regard to semiotic devices, such as photographs and images used in the construction of news events. Moreover, it reinforces the difference between online and printed newspapers pinpointing that these news outlets need and use different elements to construct news values.

Chapter 4 *Language and news values* discusses linguistic resources. In the subchapter *Towards an inventory of linguistic*

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resources the authors produce an inventory of linguistic resources employed when expressing news values. Their categories of news values are illustrated with linguistic resources and examples. Two caveats are identified, as follows: there is no closed list of resources to be used in expressing news values, and a close attention needs to be paid to the meaning potential of linguistic resources, to the target audience and to time/place of publication.

Furthermore, Bednarek and Caple construct the labels of Personalization building on previous research. They relate cultural nearness and cultural reference to Proximity and consider the temporal categories of tense and aspect as means of construing Timeliness. The chapter introduces an inventory of visual resources used to construct or reinforce news values. Due to the multifunctionality of language, not all the resources listed in the chapter must be taken for granted in construing news values. Context and co-text must be looked into before establishing whether the linguistic resources analysed construe news values.

Chapter 5 *Visuals and news values* aims to analyse photographs and visual resources that construct news values: cartoons, interactives, graphics. The authors identify and analyse similarities between language and image and show how images and linguistic resources work in similar ways to construct news values. They opine that the visual resources which constitute the news photographs have the potential to contribute to the construction of news values. Thus, two strands of analysis are adopted in the investigation of images: on the one hand, the image content, i.e. what is depicted in the image frame; on the other hand, the capture of the image, i.e. how the information is arranged in the image frame. Consequently, the authors consider that content, composition and technical affordances should not be analysed separately, as they influence one another.

Part 3 is entitled *Empirical analyses* and comprises three chapters. Chapter six *What is newsworthy about cyclists?* investigates news items about cyclists collected from quality and popular press published in American, British, and Australian newspapers. The analysis pinpoints that attitudes towards cycling

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vary across cities and countries. The authors' motivation for conducting corpus-based research on cycling and cyclists stems both from the reduced number of studies tackling news discourse about cycling and from their personal experience.

The section *Summary and conclusion* points out the limitations of the analysis, especially that the authors primarily focus on the analysis of the collocations of *cyclist*, whereas other nodes could have been analysed: *bike, cycle, helmet, lane, path*. Other limitations include directing the analysis toward the way newsworthiness is constructed around bike share schemes or cycling infrastructure, and the authors acknowledge they were not able to fully explore the correlation of frequency with social events.

In brief, the chapter identifies and demonstrates the connection between particular topics and news values. Considering the topic under scrutiny, i.e. cycling/cyclists, it is accounted for the idea that audiences are attracted by the cyclists' death and injury. The authors also explore the possibility of combining DNVA with other tools used in critical discourse analysis.

Chapter 7 entitled *Images, news values and Facebook* presents the second empirical study which applies DNVA and focus on the constructions of news values in visuals, investigating the way in which visual DNVA can be combined with aspects pertaining to news practice: the use of captions, image attribution. The chapter illustrated that DNVA can be used to examine journalism as social and semiotic practice. The section *Data and methodology* explains how the data was collected, describing the sources used and the way the analysis of images was conducted. Two sources are identified: news photography and stock photography, which differ in that the latter carries ideological meanings and it does not construct news values. The authors analyse news organisations that have a Facebook page, a Twitter account and a website, which are permanently updated, and discover the prominent news values and those which co-occur. In the sub-chapter *Variations across countries*, the authors observe that publications, countries and regions give preference to particular constructions and news values. In the Conclusion

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the authors confirm that the newsworthiness of news events is conveyed both linguistically via words, and visually via images which not only illustrate news events, but also construct news values.

To summarise, Chapter 7 investigates the way in which DNVA can be used to explore the construction of newsworthiness in images and analyses the sources of images which can be attached to the text.

Chapter 8 *'All the news that's fit to share': News values in 'most shared' news* presents the third empirical study where discursive news values is applied. It differs from the previous ones as it brings together the analysis of language and image and it illustrates how corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis (hereinafter CAMDA) can be applied in discursive news values analysis. The authors explain the methodology they applied in the analysis of images and headlines, they describe the small corpus which enabled them to combine quantitative and qualitative analysis. The authors identify the limitations of the analysis which consist of further qualitative analysis that was necessary because not all the lemmas are good predictors for newsworthiness construction. Another limitation is that news values may not be established by recurring word forms from the same semantic field, in this case the authors consider that qualitative analysis is very important. In the section *Visual-verbal patterns* the authors discuss the analysis of two semiotic modes: language and image and the way in which they intertwine to construct news values.

In a nutshell, this chapter demonstrates that both visual and verbal elements play an important role in the construction of news values and how CAMDA can be applied in discursive news value analysis: the visual and verbal elements can serve to reinforce each other, they either emphasise the same news values or they can clash with each other.

In Chapter 9 *Discursive news values analysis as an opportunity for diachronic and cross-cultural research*, the authors illustrate diachronic and cultural research. They acknowledge the synchronic focus they adopt in the book and consider it would be interesting to analyse the diachronic

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perspective and investigate both stability and change. Change can now be captured thanks to corpora, it is influenced by the socio-historical context, social, economic and political factors which impact on newspaper style and language. The authors pinpoint that newspapers digitise their archives which enable researchers to investigate change; however, the analysis must be conducted manually, as digitised archives maintain their original layout with the initial photographs.

The authors consider DNVA can be applied both to synchronic and diachronic research on news discourse. They highlight the research areas in which DNVA can be employed and suggest the development of frameworks when research is conducted in other languages than English.

In the chapter entitled *Reflections* the authors revisit the previous chapters and provide future research avenues. Further research proposals for the topics covered in Chapter 1 include the use of DNVA as a tool to produce different versions of news stories, to test them on audiences or to analyse audience reactions to different published texts.

The research avenues proposed with regard to Chapter 2 encompass extending the types of discourse to be analysed and the input materials such as interviews, press releases, photos, videos, reports, news, newsroom discussion, audience comments.

The research avenues Chapter 3 proposes refer to extending DNVA to study sensationalism and media panics, as the authors believe that by extending this analysis, researchers have to consider both the material and the discursive dimensions of news values.

With reference to Chapters 4 and 5 the authors suggest the extension of the outlets which analyse verbal and visual resources that construct news values and they include here broadcast news. The study of linguistic variation between different types of news is another idea for future research. The investigation of other semiotic resources such as typography and layout is necessary coupled with the investigation of the way multiple semiotic modes interlock in a very complex way.

The research avenues proposed in Chapter 6 join together DNVA and the analysis of attribution, transitivity,

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nominalisation, modality, appraisal/evaluation, figurative speech, social actor representation. The research avenues for the topics covered in Chapter 7 propose the analysis of other social media platforms. The future research avenues Chapter 8 advances pertain to the study of non-heritage news media, while Chapter 9 suggests additional avenues for future research, other than in the previous chapters of the book.

The authors praise the merits of extending DNVA to the analysis of news discourse and hope that the book represents a building block for future research.

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