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News Schemata

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INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I examine and further elaborate the hypothesis that news reports in the press are organized by a conventional news schema. In previous work on the structures of news, I postulated that such a schema is a typical example of textual superstructures (van Dijk, 1980a, 1983a, 1985a, b). Such schematic superstructures are the conventional global form of a discourse. The global content that may be inserted into such a form is defined in terms of semantic macrostructures, which have been introduced to explain notions such as topic, theme, or gist of a discourse. Textual schemata, or superstructures (two notions that I use interchangeably here), order and categorize the topics of a text. For instance, the category of "Introduction," the caption for this section of the chapter, may be considered as a conventional schematic category of several discourse genres, such as scholarly papers and lectures. In news reports in the press, we usually find initial schematic categories like Headline and Lead. These conventional news categories are obvious and well known, but we should also ask whether the body of the report also exhibits schematic organization. If so, we should introduce other typical news categories, as well as rules for their ordering in an overall news schema. In addition, we should show how such categories are related to the global content, the thematic macrostructure, of news discourse. And finally, we should discuss how news schemata are exhibited in the actual surface structures of news reports in the press.

I indeed believe that it is empirically and theoretically warranted to assume that news schemata exist. They can be described as abstract structural properties of discourse, as representations, and as socially shared systems of rules, norms, or strategies for the use of news.

For most citizens, news is perhaps the type of written discourse with which they are confronted most frequently, and insight into its structures is therefore an important task of discourse analysis. Yet the study of news schemata is not merely an important contribution to the analysis of mass media discourse. It is relevant also for our understanding of the organization of written discourse in general. Many discourse types, such as stories, scientific texts, or documents, exhibit conventionalized schematic patterns. These not only play a role in comprehension and memorization, but also in processes of production. Once made "explicit, the rules, strategies, and categories of schematic organization of written discourse may play a role in the (normative) foundation of concrete writing programs for such discourse types.

The notion of textual schemata is not new, although as yet seldom applied to the kind of discourse we are confronted with daily: the news texts we read in our newspapers. Most earlier work on schemata in written or spoken discourse has dealt with stories. The structures of drama or novels have been analyzed, from Aristotle to the present century, from a literary point of view, but since the 1960s and 1970s several disciplines have focused on conventional narrative categories and their organization in stories (Propp, 1958; Communications, 1966). In the last decade there have been a vast number of studies, especially in cognitive psychology and Artificial Intelligence, that have examined the structural and cognitive nature of stories and investigated the comprehension of them. The notion of a schema in this research essentially goes back to Bartlett (1932), who uses it to refer to the mental organization of our accumulated experiences; that is, to the structure of our knowledge (Norman & Rumelhart, 1975; Schank & Abelson, 1977). Since this early work on memory for stories, the notion of schema has been used in many different senses, but it usually denotes some specific organization of knowledge. A rather fierce debate has arisen about whether stories have conventional, schematic categories, whether these can be described by some kind of narrative grammar, and whether such narrative schemata play a role in the production and understanding of stories (Rumelhart, 1975; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1978; Mandler, 1978; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Black & Wilensky, 1979; see van Dijk, 1980b, for a survey, and the commentaries following Wilensky, 1983).

Although I cannot go into the details of this debate, I of course take account of the major results of past work on narrative discourse,

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since stories and news reports have several properties in common (Thorndyke, 1979). My analysis also draws on my own earlier studies on discourse structures (e.g., van Dijk, 1972, 1977, 1980a, 1981) and the psychology of discourse processing (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983).

In my current research on news reports, I have paid detailed attention to the structures of domestic and international news, to the representations in the press of ethnic minorities and squatters, as well as to the processes of news production and comprehension (for details, see van Dijk, 1983b, 1984, 1985c). The data for my analysis of news schemata are partly derived from this empirical work, and involve hundreds of newspapers from about one hundred countries. Hence my conception of news schema is not limited to the newspapers of Western Europe.

There is increasing research into the nature of news in the mass media (see van Dijk, 1985c, for a survey). However, only a few studies have focused on the detailed discourse properties of news (Glasgow University Media Group, 1976, 1980, 1982; Hartley, 1982). Most work deals with news in terms of sociology, economics, or mass communication (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980). News discourse itself is seldom studied in its own right, so that no attention is paid to the detailed relationships between processes of news production, whether sociological or psychological, and the resulting structures of news reports. Similarly, comprehension or further processing by the readers has been neglected, although work in this area has received some more attention in the last few years (Findahl & Høijer, 1984, Høijer & Findahl, 1984). My analysis of news schemata should also be seen within the context of news processing by newsmakers and readers and the constraints of the production of news and its uses in social situations and institutions. The nature of news schemata can only be fully understood as a function of their role in the production and uses of news discourse in mass communication and society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Much like syntactic structures of sentences, the superstructures of discourse are defined by formal categories and a set of formation rules. These define which superstructures of a given genre of discourse are well formed. Thus, for stories, we postulate that a canoni-

cal narrative shema should at least feature a Setting, a Complication and a Resolution, in this order (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972). Similarly, argumentative discourse usually features several Premise categories and a Conclusion category; in the standard case the Conclusion follows (and follows from) the Premises. In news schemata the categories of Headline and Lead obviously precede the other categories. Canonical structures may be transformed by specific transformation rules. In literary narratives, for instance, we often find that a story begins "in *media res*," that is, with a fragment of the Complication or the Resolution. Also, in everyday argumentation, a Conclusion may precede the Premises that are given to support the Conclusion. These categories and rules are conventional for a given culture; stories of one culture may be more difficult to understand for those in a different culture (Kintsch & Greene, 1978; Chafe, 1980).

Schematic superstructures, thus, are conventional forms that characterize a specific discourse genre. They order textual sequences of sentences, and assign specific functions to such sequences. They are not directly related to words or sentences (or their meanings), since they organize higher level units such as "episodes" (van Dijk, 1982), a notion that we define below. We therefore need a link between a textual schema and its textual manifestation in words and sentences. This link is established in two steps. First, the global schema is filled with global content, much as the syntactic structures of a sentence are interpreted as semantic structures. This global content is defined by the topics or themes of a discourse and is theoretically accounted for by semantic macrostructures. Each episode—that is, each coherent sequence of propositions—of a text is assigned an overall macroproposition, which is in turn part of a hierarchically organized macrostructure. The macroproposition may be seen as a semantic summary of the whole sequence. Macropropositions are structurally identical to ordinary propositions, only their content is more abstract or general and they are derived from the propositions expressed in the text by macrorules. These rules delete, generalize, or construct detailed, local, or microinformation at a more abstract level, with the help of shared social information or scripts (Schank & Abelson, 1977).

Since macrorules link the semantic microstructure of sentences with the overall macrostructure of sequences of sentences, they represent the second step of the link between schemata and textual surface structures. Schematic categories such as Summary, Intro-



duction, Conclusion, or Resolution assign functions to macro-propositions that are inferred from sequences of propositions expressed in the sentences of a text or contained in the knowledge of the world that is necessary to interpret a text passage. The Complication of a story, for instance, may consist of many sentences, expressing many propositions, but it is only the whole episode that functions as a Complication, and not the individual propositions or sentences as such. To summarize: Each schema category is filled by one or more themes, and each theme is specified by an episode, which is finally expressed by a sequence of sentences (for details, see van Dijk, 1980a).

My abstract characterization of schematic superstructures is similar to the traditional approach of structural or generative grammars. I assume, however, that actual discourse production and understanding have a number of additional and specific properties. Instead of fixed categories and rules, a cognitive theory operates in terms of mental representations and flexible strategies (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). In a formal theory of textual schemata, the superstructure rules apply only to complete sequences of sentences. In actual production, speakers may start discourse production with a whole or partial schema at hand; the schema may control "top down" the formation of relevant themes and the production of sentences of each schema category. Similarly, when attempting to understand a text, a reader may before reading or after having interpreted only a few sentences, already guess which discourse genre is relevant. This guess amounts to the application of a strategy that provisionally actualizes the corresponding genre schema, which will then monitor further comprehension. The cultural nature of genre schemata guarantees that the relevant rules are shared by group members who know the genre, even when there are personal or situationally variable strategies for the application of the rules.

NEWS CATEGORIES

The theoretical framework outlined above also holds for news reports in the press. Newspapers are read daily by most adult members in our culture and in many other cultures. Readers recognize news reports as such, and are able to distinguish them from other discourse genres, including those in the same newspaper, such as the

comics, the weather report or the advertisements. This implicit knowledge is based on repeated personal experiences, as well as on socially shared categorizations. Part of this implicit knowledge of news reports is defined in semantic terms: News reports are about past events of a public nature, and often feature well-known political or social actors. We also know that news reports in the press are specifically marked as such, for instance by lay-out, headlines, place in the newspaper, and sometimes by category labels, such as "International News" or "Domestic News" ("Home News") on top of the page. In other words, news schemata are only part of our implicit knowledge about news discourse.

Although not all discourse genres may have a fixed, known schematic organization, those genres that are frequently used in a culture tend to develop specific conventional categories. Similarly, from a production point of view, most forms of discourse that result from professional and institutional processing exhibit fixed categorical properties, which allow the routine production of such texts. This is particularly true for news production. Many production constraints, such as types of sources, the nature of input texts, professional routines and values, or deadlines call for standardized production of news reports. Journalists operate with conventional, shared categories that define a well-formed news report. I consider some of these categories as they may appear in news reports and then apply theoretical analysis in the description of a number of concrete news reports. To follow the theoretical discussion, therefore, it is advisable that the reader first read the sample news items (see Appendix) and then revert to them during the explanation of the respective news schema categories.

Summary

Many discourse genres have an initial Summary category. Conversational stories often begin with some kind of summary or announcement, such as "Did I tell you about . . ." or "Did you hear . . ." (Labov, 1972; Quasthoff, 1980). Scholarly papers in many disciplines are routinely prefaced by a summary or abstract, often printed separately and marked by different printing type (italics or small type). Summaries are the verbalization of the underlying semantic macrostructure of a text. They express the most important topics or themes of a text; that is, what the text is about. Cognitively, initial



summaries have important strategic functions (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983; Kieras, 1982). They convey to the reader what the intended semantic macrostructure of the text will be, so that the reader need not construct this macrostructure from the sentences of the text, a bottom-up process that is much more difficult. Since the themes are already known and activate relevant knowledge in the memory, the interpretation of the words and sentences, as well as their local coherence, can be established much faster.

Summaries have similar functions for news discourse. In general, news reports are headed by a Summary that states the main event or events in two steps. First, the various headlines, such as the main headline, and possible upper and lower headlines, constitute the conventional category of *Headline*. This category is typographically marked by large bold letter type, and when the article is printed in several columns, the main headline is often printed across the columns. The *Headline* is literally "on top" of the news report, and its size and position are therefore important strategic cues for perception and attention processes. By means of headlines we identify, separate, attend to, begin, and end a news report. Semantically, the headline is defined in terms of the highest levels of the thematic macrostructure of the report: The headline expresses the intended highest macroproposition, and therefore signals what is the most relevant or important information of the news report. Cognitively, therefore, it is the information in the headline that monitors the further processes of reading and comprehension (Kozminsky, 1977; Schwarz & Flammer, 1979). Of course, since understanding is subjective, a reader may well construct a personal macrostructure by assigning different relevance to one or more other topics not mentioned in the headline. If a headline does not express in part the highest macroproposition of the news report, but rather some lower level detail, we may conclude that the headline is biased. Theoretically, we should distinguish between the schema category *Headline*, and the actual, physical headlines used to express the information inserted into the schematic *Headline* category. Indeed, the abstract category *Headline* may be realized by several actual headlines. Finally, headlines are often also stylistically marked; as incomplete sentences, with articles and verbs or auxiliary verbs lacking.

The initial Summary also contains a *Lead* category. The *Lead* features the fuller expression of the thematic structure of the news report, and often repeats the highest level macroproposition as it is expressed in the headline(s). Leads have initial position, under the

headlines, and are often also printed in larger or bolder type than the rest of the news story. In news formats where there is no special marking of the Lead (as in much of the English and American press), the Lead is expressed by the first sentence or paragraph of the news report, and it then has not only Summary function, but also Introduction function. According to the normative rules of newswriting, the Lead must express the major semantic categories of a news event: Who, What, Where, When, How, and so on (Garst & Bernstein, 1982). Obviously, this rule is not fully explicit, since Leads do not express all the information about participants, actions or events, locations, or other properties of news events. Lead information pertains only to the macropropositions of the text, and hence to main actors, main event, main location, and so on.

Often, newspaper readers only read the Summary part of the news report when they are skimming the paper. They interpret the major topics of the report, after which they may decide to continue or to stop reading the rest of the news report. Experiments have shown that readers after several days hardly recall much more than these main topics, even when they have read the whole news report (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983; Reder & Anderson, 1980; Reder, 1982). Since the Headline and Lead play such a crucial role in interpretation and recall, they are obligatory and crucial categories of the news schema.

Main Events

After the Summary in the Headline and Lead, the body of a news report should minimally feature what we may call a Main Events category. This category organizes all information about the recent events that gave rise to a news report. The information in the Main Events category forms the basis for news values such as elite nation, elite actor, negativity, and geographical and ideological proximity (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). There are strict constraints upon what counts as Main Event(s). The events in this category must have taken place (or have been discovered) within the limits of one or two previous days. If there are several events that are each worth attention and that together form one macroevent or episode, it is in principle the last important event that constitutes the major event and is given most prominence (the recency principle). This is especially the case if the earlier event(s) were already covered by other

media, so that primary attention given to them in the actual news report would be "old news," even if it is not old news for the readers.

Thus, in our case study of the reporting in the world's press of the assassination of President-elect Beshir Gemayel of Lebanon on September 14, 1982, it appeared that those newspapers, especially in Asia, that were too late to cover that important event on September 15 (because of time differences), paid more attention to the following invasion by the Israeli army of West Beirut, which occurred in the early hours of September 15, 1982 (van Dijk, 1984). The headline and lead in such a case downgraded the assassination to the major cause of the more recent event, by superheadlines such as **AFTER THE ASSASSINATION OF GEMAYEL**. In the Main Event category the invasion was mentioned first, and then the assassination of Gemayel. In other words, the news production constraints of deadline and periodicity lead to a recency preference in the decision about what is Main Event, and what are conditions, causes, or other previous events.

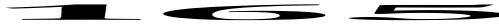
Since the events inserted into a Main Events category may be complex and may form a coherent sequence or episode of main events, the semantic content of Main Events may of course in turn be more complex and hierarchical, featuring major causes, major components, or various results. For instance, in the example just given about the assassination of Gemayel, the explosion of a bomb in his party headquarters is a major subtheme of the higher level theme of the assassination and simultaneously functions as the global information about the cause of Gemayel's death. Similarly, in many news reports about the assassination there is an important subtheme about the rumor that Gemayel had survived the explosion of the bomb. This subtheme is in turn hierarchically subordinate to the theme of his death, and at the same time an overall result of the explosion theme. There may also be several articles about the same major event. In that case, the other articles may be about some specific dimension of the main event, such as background, context, evaluation, and expectations. These dimensions will be chosen here as separate schematic categories of news reports. In other words, a news report may well feature Summary and Main Events only, and have its other standard categories treated in separate background articles. The intertextual coherence of this discourse cluster, as well as the functions of the articles in that cluster, are in that case also explained by the categories of the news schema.

Background: Context and History

Even short news reports usually give at least a minimum of background. I therefore consider Background as the next standard category of news reports. Journalists also routinely use this category when gathering, selecting, or combining source data for the final news report. Background may be supplied by news agencies, by reporters or correspondents who simply know such background from experience, by other media, or by documentation of various kinds. Specific newsmaking routines (phone calls, interviews, and so on) are followed to collect information for the Background category of the news report. The presence of background information is often considered a criterion for the quality of news, and that evaluation is evidence for the schematic appropriateness of a Background category in the news. In cognitive terms, background information is necessary for the reader to activate "situation models" from memory; that is, representations of accumulated personal experiences and knowledge about concrete situations (Johnson-Laird, 1983; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983; van Dijk, 1985a). The major goal of news understanding is to update such models and to relate the model to other news situation models. For instance, most press reports about the assassination of Gemayel also mention the facts that Gemayel had just been elected president, that Moslem and leftist groups opposed his election, and that he had made many enemies (even among Christian factions) during the civil war. In general, then, it is the background information that makes news events intelligible and that allows us to update our cognitive models of the world.

I distinguish between present and past backgrounds. The present background of a news event will be called Context. The Context covers all the information in the news report about the actual situation in which the main news event takes place. These are in general socio-political states of affairs, or current events during which the specific event takes place. Thus, Gemayel was murdered in the context of his election as president of Lebanon. Similarly, the media report events in El Salvador against the background of the present context of the civil war in that country. One might even distinguish between a very complex, structural context (such as a civil war or a famine in a country) on the one hand, and some actual other events on the other hand (such as demonstrations taking place during the visit of the President). In practice, Context is marked by textual indications of temporal or local co-occurrence, expressed by words

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such as *during*, *enwhile*, *at the same time*, or simply *in*. Main events that have little to do with each other, but which occur in the same context (the same situation, country, etc.) are sometimes reported in the same news report. For instance, in the news reports about the assassination of Gemayel, I also found sections about the 1982 Arab summit in Fez, or about Reagan's plan for the Middle East.

There may be a separate category of Previous Events, in which we find information about the events that have preceded the main news event that now become relevant as possible conditions or causes of the main event. Often such Previous Events are the Main Events category of earlier news reports. Temporally, Previous Events are restricted to events that precede the actual events by a few days to a few weeks. Together with Context, such a Previous Events category forms what may be called the Circumstances category for the main news events.

In principle, we can distinguish Previous Events from the History category. Temporally, History stretches back months or even years. Unlike Previous Events, it does not deal with the immediate causes of the main events. History is the past context that leads to the actual situation and its events. Thus, the actual news about Central America may feature historical sections about the involvement of the United States in that region during the last decades. Structurally, Main Events and Background belong together under a higher level category, provisionally called Events.

Consequences

The relevance and the importance of events are often measured by their consequences. The assassination of Gemayel was in itself a very important event, but the political consequences were even more serious: The presence or lack of an able successor decisively influenced the process of peacemaking in Lebanon and therefore in the Middle East. Journalists therefore often include a Consequences category in their news reports which covers information about the actions and events that immediately follow the main news events, and that may be seen as caused by the main events. Sometimes Consequences may become so important that they downgrade the actual main events within the same news story, or they receive attention in a separate article, much in the same way as Background. Structurally, therefore, they may be located at the same level as the

Events that are formed by Main Events and Background. Schematic ordering, however, is not always parallel to semantic ordering: Background mostly features information that is relevant for the Consequences category, but hierarchically and according to its canonical ordering the Consequence category comes later in the schema.

There is one standard subcategory of Consequences, namely Verbal Reactions. This category contains information about the routinely gathered and quoted declarations of immediate participants and in particular of leading national and international politicians who have opinions or comments on the news events. This category satisfies the news value that gives special prominence to influential politicians, and in most newspapers in the world emphasizes the prime importance of political news and political figures. But it also has strategic value. It allows journalists to objectively measure the political implications and evaluations of an event without themselves having to formulate them. In other words, it is a safe way to provide Commentary, and a strategically effective way of choosing and quoting those that satisfy criteria of newsworthiness or credibility. It is well known that not only the U.S. press, but also the press in other countries, routinely quote the official reactions of the U.S. president on international events. At the national level, the press tends to favor the declarations of the government or relevant cabinet ministers. In domestic news, speakers for important institutions, such as the police or the courts, specialists such as doctors, technicians, or professors, and other elite news actors that are either involved or found knowledgeable are routinely asked their reactions and are sometimes extensively quoted. I have found for instance that the Verbal Reaction category was the most extensive in the dispatches of news agencies, and one of the most extensive and stable categories in international news reports (van Dijk, 1985a). Indeed, news discourse is primarily about discourse. Most of its sources are textual, and most of the events and actions reported are also textual: Most political events, for instance, consist of talks, meetings, laws and legislative procedures, verbal fights, and so on. Accidents, crime, assassination, hunger, catastrophes, and the economy are of course not textual. Yet their news construction in the press is often embedded in the reported talk of the news actors involved: interviews with or reactions of eyewitnesses, responsible authorities, and politicians. Main Events, Background and Conse-

quences together constitute what may be called the complete news Episode, the core of a news story.

Comments

Finally, news stories often feature various Comments categories. Although there is a widespread journalistic ideology that facts and opinion should be separated, many news reports have implicit or explicit information that has evaluative dimensions. These may simply be speculations or expectations about what might happen next. Opinion in that case need not be personal, although it is necessarily political and ideological, because it presupposes beliefs and attitudes about mies and laws of a social, political, or cultural nature. If reporters write that after the assassination of Gemayel the future of Lebanon is bleak and peace is threatened, this Expectation presupposes a positive evaluation of the role of Gemayel as president of Lebanon. Although this evaluation may be shared by many others, including most news actors quoted, it still remains an evaluative part of the news report.

Yet there evaluations may remain implicit. The expectations may be derived only from what others say or from general knowledge about the political situation in a country. Therefore, it makes sense to introduce also an explicit Evaluation category under the Comments category. Here, the journalist explicitly formulates opinions (personal ones or those of the newspaper) about the actual news events. Thus, Expectations imply reference to future events, whereas Evaluation explicitly features evaluative expressions (*good, bad, unfortunate, controversial*, and so on) about the news events.

The Comments category is not obligatory. In this respect there may also be differences among types of newspapers, regions, cultures, and political systems. There are however more than enough examples to warrant the special introduction of a Comments category. As with the other schematic categories, this information may also be reserved for a special background or commentary article. Editorials have of course as their main function the formulation of the newspaper's expectations and evaluations of the events. Also, more personal reports from local or international correspondents about recent events may feature much more subjective information.

The News Schema Hierarchy

I have reviewed the major news schema categories, and explained their intuitive and more formal properties, both in terms of textual functions or expressions and in terms of cognitive and social news-making processes. The categories should now be placed in their hierarchical schema. In Figure 5.1, I have given an abstract example of such a news schema.

From this schematic representation we can see that the Summary and the actual news story should be kept apart at a rather high level of description: They indeed have quite different functions. Similarly, Comments should be distinguished from the actual Episode they are about. And the same holds for the lower categories mentioned above. I also have suggested that not all categories are obligatory. Minimally, we should have Summary and Main Events, although usually at least some Background information is also given, even when separate articles may be dedicated to such backgrounds. Some of the categories are recursive. That is, Episode and Events may be complex: One news article may be about several events, each with their own background and consequences.

The ordering of the categories follows by general rules and strategies of presentation. The schema in Figure 5.1 in this respect suggests a fixed order, but this is rather a structural tendency than a strict rule of order. Indeed, usually Main Events are treated first, and then Background, Consequences, and Comments. Sometimes important information from Consequences or some Context feature may be given first. Yet it is seldom the case that the news story starts with a long historical or contextual section, and only then presents the actual main events. This would be the possible structure of literary or everyday stories. News stories have a different structure: The main event is the most important information, and therefore should (1) be summarized in Headline and Lead, and (2) be presented first in the rest of the story. Context, History and Consequences may then follow in less strict order. Verbal reactions and especially Comments tend to occur toward the end of the article, even when an occasional element from them may be placed earlier. In other words, the schematic categories and their canonical ordering in the abstract superstructure of a news report are only one factor in the actual realization and expression of news discourse. Therefore, exactly how the news schema is actualized in news reports and how it is related to other textual structures, such as the

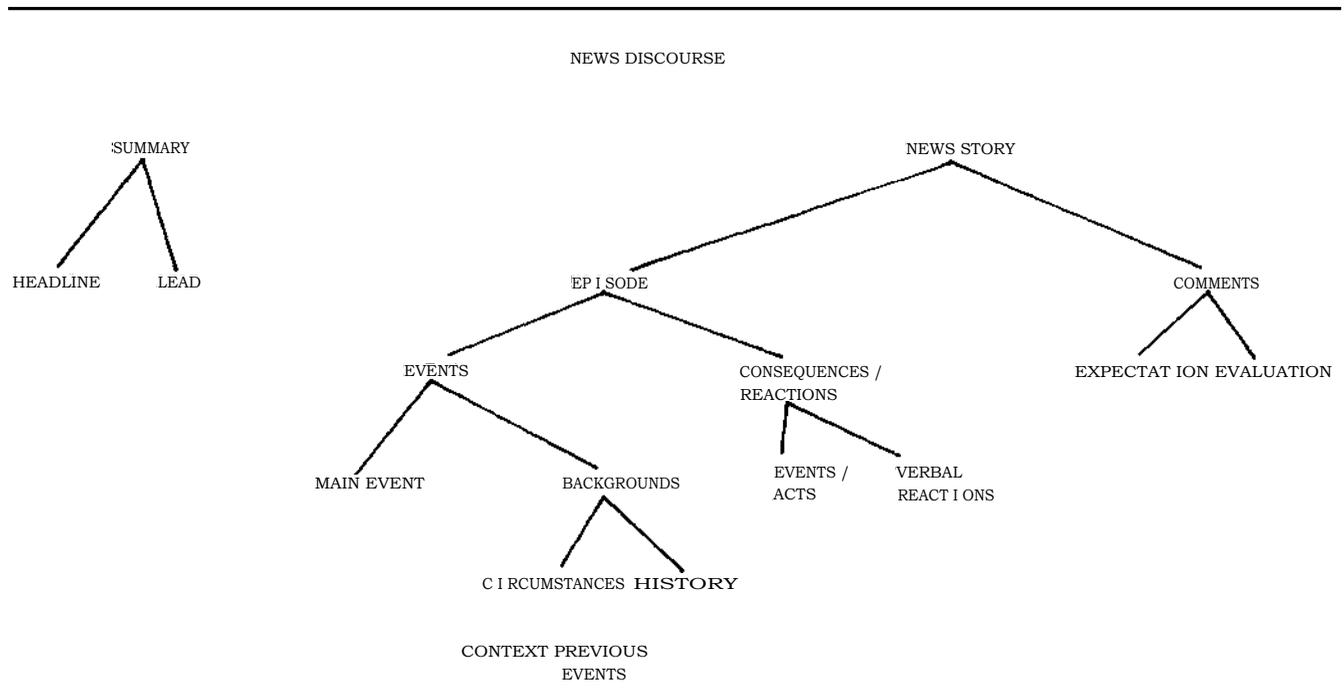


Figure 5.1 Superstructure Schema of News Discourse

overall thematic and relevance structures of the news, must be examined in more detail.

THE TEXTUAL REALIZATION OF NEWS SCHEMATA

It was suggested that news reports, unlike other story types, are not just organized to represent events in their chronological or causal order. Instead of a "natural ordering" of propositions (van Dijk, 1977; Levelt, 1982), we find what I call a relevance ordering. That is, throughout the headlines and lead and in the body of the story, we find the results of a general news production strategy that places first the information that is most important or relevant. The very separation between Summary and the actual news story is already one major factor in this relevance structure: Because the macrostructure defines the most important information, it is expressed first, as a summary, and from this summary the most important information is summarized again and placed in the headlines.

This ordering principle also characterizes the rest of the news story. Although the Main Event category tends to be actualized first, we do not get all the information from that category at once; that is, in one linearly ordered, continuous section. Rather, what we get is again the most important information of the Main Event (which often repeats the information in headlines or lead). Details of Main Event information may follow later in the article, after the realization of the higher level information from other categories. We first get some general Background information, the major Consequences (such as Verbal Reactions of the most prominent news actors), and possibly even first Comments. Then, the news article may revert to Main Events and deliver further, lower level information from that category. In other words, each category is realized in installments. Therefore, the relevance principle assigns what may be called a rather confusing zig-zag or installment structure to the news report.

The installment structure of news reports also affects the realization of their thematic structure. Each schematic category, as we have seen in Figure 5.1, dominates a hierarchical semantic structure, with macropropositions on top. This means that the thematic structure organized by the schema is also realized in installments, "top down":



The main themes are realized first (in Headlines and Lead), and then the main theme defining the Main Event, then the main theme of the Backgrounds, and so on. Usually, each textual paragraph, often consisting of one or a few long sentences, coincides with one installment of the combined thematic-schematic structures. The local coherence of news discourse may be rather fragile: Subsequent paragraphs or event sentences may not immediately cohere according to the usual coherence rules of discourse (van Dijk, 1977). We may jump from main event information to context or history, and from background to comments or consequences. Besides the natural left-right (cause-consequence) realization in the description of events, and besides the left-right and top-down realization of schematic categories, the relevance principle assigns an overall top-down organization to the text, such that in general all more important information is given first. In Figure 5.1, thus, we should read from top to bottom and from left to right, taking first the information high in the respective triangles, and then going from right to left back to the first triangle to express the next level.

This relevance ordering is the result of a general newswriting strategy. There is no fixed formal rule; variation is possible, depending on communicative context (interests, goals, personal or ideological relevance). For instance, in some examples of news stories, in particular in the popular press, we find a more narrative organization in the expression of events, a chronological ordering found in other kinds of storytelling. This creates the usual suspense about what will happen next, a narrative-rhetorical ploy to keep readers or listeners interested. Of course, stories about catastrophes, accidents, crimes, or other human interest events lend themselves better to such a narrative organization than complex reports about political situations and events. It is one of the reasons why the tabloid press prefers such news stories: They can be framed in a narrative schema.

An Example

To illustrate and further refine the theoretical framework sketched above, let us analyze a concrete example. Under the headline "U.S.-Backed Coalition Wins Grenada Election," the *International Herald Tribune* of December 5, 1984, published a brief report, taken from the Washington Post Service, about the elections in Grenada (see Example 5A). This news article also exemplifies how

Example SA From the *International Herald Tribune*, December 5, 1984

U.S.-Backed Coalition Wins Grenada Election

By Edward Cody
Washington Post Service

1 ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada — Herbert Blaize's New National Party was declared the winner Tuesday of parliamentary elections on this Caribbean island.

2 The party won 14 of 15 seats in the House of Representatives. The sweeping victory by the the coalition group, understood by most Grenadians to enjoy U.S. backing, represented an endorsement of the Reagan administration's invasion on Oct. 25, 1983, that crushed what remained of a Marxist-oriented revolution.

3 Mr. Blaize, 66, was sworn in Tuesday as prime minister and vowed to give the island's 90,000 inhabitants "that kind of security they have a right to expect."

4 Mr. Blaize, who concentrated his campaign on promises of stability, said at a news conference that the results represent a rejection by the Grenadian people of "postures of the extreme left or postures of the extreme right."

5 He promised to follow a moderate course designed to restore faith in government institutions after the abuses and eventual self-destruction of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop's leftist rule.

6 A revolutionary faction of Mr. Bishop's party overthrew and killed him, precipitating the U.S.-led invasion.

7 Mr. Blaize's main challenger, the

Grenada United Labor Party of former prime minister Eric Gairy, won the lone remaining seat. But the victor in that district, Marcel Peters, said after conferring with Mr. Gairy that he will resign because of allegations of voting irregularities.

8 The charges were matched by Mr. Bishop's remaining followers in the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement, which failed to gain a seat. They have accused Mr. Blaize of receiving help from the Central Intelligence Agency, apparently referring to funds provided by two private U.S. groups with ties to Republican politics and a third linked to the AFL-CIO.

9 Mr. Blaize dismissed the charges of irregularities as carping of "disgruntled wretches" who refused to accept defeat. He noted observers from the Organization of American States and the British High Commission for the Eastern Caribbean, on hand to guarantee fair balloting, reported no serious violations of procedure.

10[President Ronald Reagan, welcoming President Jaime Lusinchi of Venezuela on a state visit to Washington Tuesday, said that Mr. Blaize's victory "marks the first time that Marxist-Leninist government has been succeeded by a government that received its authority by a free election," United Press International reponed.]

news schemata and their realization may be influenced by the political or ideological perspective of the newspaper. The U.S. invasion of Grenada and the financing by the United States of elections on that island have been widely opposed in the Caribbean, South America, and Europe, and therefore constitute a controversial issue that may be covered in different ways. The different perspectives may manifest themselves in the general structure, style, semantic content (including selection and exclusion), and rhetoric as well, but I focus on the schematic structures. The analysis of the categories follows the order in which they occur in the news item. This means that, given the discontinuous (installment) nature of news categories, fragments of such categories may appear several times in our linear analysis of the news item. The reader may follow the analysis by simply taking each clause or sentence as a tentative unit of schema realization.

Summary: headline + lead. The headline summarizes the event of the victory of the NNP coalition in Grenada, an event that is also summarized, with a few more details, in the lead. One proposition that is part of the headline and that does not appear in the lead is that the NNP was backed by the United States, which, however, is a correct summary of another theme of the article. In the report that appeared in the *Guardian* of the same day we also see this emphasis on the role of the United States in these elections, this time both in the headline and in the lead (see Example 5B). That this role is relevant may also be inferred from the *Guardian's* leader article. Now, if we take the short report in *USA Today* of December 5, this prominence of the U.S. backing is no longer present in either headline or lead paragraph. Instead, the ideologically more positive term *moderate* is chosen to qualify the NNP and its leader. In other words, what is expressed as part of the Summary depends on what is the major topic of the news article, and on what the newspaper considers relevant and important information.

Main events. After the summarizing introduction of the headline and lead, the second paragraph of the *Herald Tribune* specifies the main events: elections for what legislative body, how many seats the winning party obtained, and the U.S. backing of the elections.

Background. The same paragraph, however, also delivers first installments of various types of background information. That is,

Example 5B From the *Guardian* [London], December 5, 1984

Reagan favourite sweeps Grenada

From Greg Chamberlain
in St George's Grenada

The US pronounced itself satisfied yesterday after Grenadian voters swept to power a rightwing coalition that Washington helped to put together on the Caribbean island.

The costaba, the New National Party (NNP), headed by Mr Herbert Blaize, who is 66 and severely crippled with arthritis, won 14 of the 15 seats in Monday's poll. One went to the conservative and populist Grenada United Labour Party of the authoritarian former prime minister, Sir Eric Gairy.

The victory was hailed by President Reagan as "an achievement of historic

The left-wing Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement (MBPM), backing the memory and programme of the prime minister murdered a week before last year's US invasion, won no seats and only 5 per cent of the vote. Only one MBPM candidate, the former army chief of staff, Mr

Eric Loulson, managed to save his deposit.

Sir Eric, with 36 per cent of the vote, suffered the biggest defeat of his stormy, 35-year political career. He had not campaigned personally and the very high 85 per cent turnout swamped his disciplined supporters.

The MBPM leader, Mr Kendrick Radix, claimed that the election had been rigged by the CIA. Outside aid, especially American, for Mr Blaize's party was given openly during the campaign. A large number of MBPM supporters, however, failed to vote.

Hundreds of celebrating Grenadians poured into the steep streets of this island as Mr Blaize's victory became known. He flew into the island yesterday from his constituency in Grenada's sister-island of Carriacou, went to church to give thanks and was later sworn in as Prime Minister.

Mr Blaize, a lawyer and deeply religious man, is

Grenada whose youth has been subjected to heavy politicisation and has come to expect energetic government since he last ruled it as prime minister in a more genteel and economically kinder world 17 years ago.

But his conservative business supporters are unlikely to be very interested in the NNP's campaign pledge that it will seriously tackle the island's high unemployment and continue some of the popular social programmes of the revolutionary Bishop regime.

Mr Blaize, who has hinted that he will crack down on the left and continue to purge its supporters from the civil service, says he wants US troops to stay on in Grenada for at least five years because he claims the left still have weapons hidden in the island.

But the US has said it plans to pull out its 300 or so remaining troops by Easter.

Jamaica, which has 150 soldiers here, also wants to withdraw for pressing financial reasons now that the election is over. However, the new Government may appeal to them to stay on, despite growing annoyance at their presence.

Leader comment, page 12.

Example 5C From the *Guardian*, December 5, 1984**Blaize the American way**

The United States inspired and organised the invasion of Grenada a year ago. Now it has inspired and organised the post-invasion election. The sweeping victory of the candidate which Mr Reagan favoured is hardly surprising. The surprise only is that the Reagan Administration should have found it necessary to commit so much money and diplomatic attention to achieving Mr

Blaise went in last October. It was said they would stay for a short while only. But a contingent has stayed until today. Though small in number, it is relatively large for an island as tiny as Grenada roughly the equivalent of having 125,000 American troops in Britain.

The United States forged the coalition of three parties which Mr Blaise leads, and subsidised his campaign. Private American

encourage a high turnout in the polls, a subsidy of about three dollars for every vote cast. Was this all necessary? The trauma of the murder of the former Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, and the virtual suicide of the revolution which he led were still too recent in most Grenadians' lives for his heirs to have commanded much support. Sir Eric Gairy's dictatorial rule was remembered too clearly. In the vacuum of Grenadan authority which the Americans found when they invaded, it was inevitable that the new government which eventually emerged would be the one which the invaders favoured, especially if they were still around at election time.

Every Grenadian knew that the only hope for investment in their impoverished island would be if they voted for the American candidate. The future flow of aid money and private US capital were dependent on Mr Blaise's victory, and it has now been duly recorded. After the upheavals of the last decade Grenadians have voted for a quiet political life, and the hope that as an undisguised American protectorate they will be luckier than the rest of the Caribbean's small islands. But as Grenada stumbles into the future, the crucial question is whether the United States is indeed as dependable as Grenadians wish it to be. Now that the United States has won the formal seal of approval for its invasion by being able to say that it established democracy, will it come forward with the cash? Or, in the aftermath of Mr Reagan's own election triumph, will Grenada be packed away like last summer's opinion poll ratings?

The social discontent and economic depression which first gave rise to Maurice Bishop's New Jewel Movement have not gone away. They remain as palpable as the potholes in the blank roads. For the United States to show that it has something to offer in the Caribbean, it will have to do more than arm an invasion and finance an decline. It must share something of its wealth.

Example 5D From *USA Today*, December 5, 1984

Moderate wins Grenada parliamentary vote

Special for USA TODAY

ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada — The New National Party (NNP) of Herbert Blaize, 66, was handed for an overwhelming victory over four other nea amid a heavy voter turnout in Monday's Grenadian parliamentary elections according

to early returns

An estimated 86 percent of the Island nation's 48,000 te tered voters chose bancaas In Granada', fi rst parliamentary election In eight years. The 15-seat Parliament will replace the country's 13-month old interim governing council. aludir

was installed alter last year's US.-led invasion toppled a radical Marxist junta.

Early returns showed that the moderate NNP, the party favored by the Rugen administrators to lead Granada, had captured 11 sets and was lead-

ing in three other caces.

Election supervisors said the NNP received about two-thirds of the vote. The Grenada United Labor Party of former Prime Minister Sir Eric Gairy, which lead by a slim margin ose district . received about 25 percent of the total vote.

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the U.S. role in the elections can be interpreted as part of the Context, which makes the victory of Blaize and his coalition intelligible. Also, Previous Events or History are re-presented here, namely, by brief reference to the U.S. invasion and its destruction of the "Marxist revolution." That the election results "represent an endorsement of the . . . invasion" is not properly part of the Context, but should be interpreted as part of the Comment, namely, as an Evaluation of the main event. We see that a single paragraph, or even a long sentence, may combine propositions that belong to different news categories: News schemata are indeed realized in discontinuous installments. Nevertheless, the overall top-down and left-right ordering is still respected: Summary, Main Event, Context, History/Evaluation.

Main events (continued). The third paragraph continues the main event by specifying further information (age) about Blaize, as well as the usual result of elections: the winner taking office. Similarly, a first installment of Verbal Reactions is given here, in the form of a quotation by Blaize. This declaration is further summarized in the next (fourth) paragraph. The newspaper focuses on what Blaize says about security and the rejection of extreme left or extreme right postures, which is precisely what *USA Today* conceptualizes as "moderate," a notion that also occurs in the next paragraph of the *Herald Tribune* report. A relative clause appended to the head noun "Mr. Blaize" in paragraph 4 provides a contextual flashback to the election campaign, whereas the contents of the declarations of Blaize at his press conference implicitly refer to the political background (History) of these elections. Again, we witness that news categories do not always appear in neat, continuous packages. The same happens in the next (fifth) paragraph, which within a summary of

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Blaize's declaration realizes both the routine plans for the future as well as a flashback to the historical background: Maurice Bishop's "self-destruction" and "leftist rule."

History. The central historical information appears in the sixth paragraph, and focuses on the assassination of Bishop and the U.S.-led invasion. Ideologically interesting is of course the fact that the verb "precipitating" indicates that the assassination itself was the cause of the U.S. invasion, instead of the U.S. fears that Grenada might move even further to the left. It seems highly unlikely that the United States would have intervened if Bishop had been assassinated by a right-wing, antirevolutionary faction. Besides the specific category of Comment/Evaluation, implicit evaluations may be expressed throughout a news discourse by the very choice of words denoting events, actions, and participants.

Main events (continued). Paragraphs 8 and 9 specify further details about the main events. The declarations and accusations of the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement refer to some important features of the context: the financial and other help of various U.S. organizations. Paragraph 9 may be seen as part of the Main Event--as the usual verbal results of election victories--or as part of the Verbal Reactions category. At the same time, the reaction of Blaize against the allegations of the two losing parties are in a sense lower level consequences of the act of allegation itself.

Verbal reaction. The final paragraph, marked by square brackets and coming from a different source (UPI), provides the classical international reaction category: Reagan's comments on the election. Its rhetoric is stereotypical: A Marxist-Leninist government is contrasted with the notion of free election. The brief reference to the visit of the Venezuelan president merely serves as the context for Reagan's declaration.

This brief analysis has demonstrated that most of the conventional news categories are present in the report on the elections in Grenada. Only a Consequences category seems to be absent, although we might take Blaize's election speech as such a consequence of his election. But I interpret it as an integral part of the Main Event, since according to our conventional knowledge (our script) of elections, it is customary that participants in elections give comments about the elections. Similarly, the declarations may be

taken as domestic Verbal Reactions to the main event, as opposed to the international Verbal Reactions we find in the last paragraph. The analysis also shows that the canonical ordering of Summary, Main Events, Context, History, Verbal Reactions, and Comments is more or less respected, although this may happen in a discontinuous way. Third, despite the overall ordering of news schemata, Background and Comments may be mixed with Main Event information. Fourth, the Main Events category itself is realized throughout the entire article, top down, from the high level victory topic, to the specifics of who won what, who lost, and what their reactions were. Fifth, stylistic choices of words may also reveal, throughout, implicit ideological evaluations of the events. Thus the winner and his U.S. allies are associated with concepts such as "security," "moderateness," and "freedom," and the elections are characterized as "fair" because of the presence of external (objective, that is, noncommunist) observers. Of those who lost, the Bishop party is associated with Marxist-Leninism, killing, self-destruction, and so on. No negative evaluations are given of Gairy's right-wing party. On the contrary, allegations of voting irregularity are met by the single winning representative of that party by a magnanimous offer to resign if the allegations prove to be correct. In other words, the implicit Evaluation of this news report also appears in the semantic rhetoric of Contrast in the description of the major participants: The moderate is associated with positive evaluations, the right-wing extremists are not negatively characterized, and the left wing is associated with several negative concepts.

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE UNSAID

The ideological nature of discourse in general, and of news discourse in particular, is often defined by the unsaid. Information that could (or should) have been given is selectively left out. Even in a brief account of the historical and contextual background, one might have mentioned the popular support for the Movement of Maurice Bishop, and what Bishop did for the population at large, such as serious attempts to reduce unemployment. Instead, this movement is merely qualified as Marxist-Leninist, and no clear distinction is made between it and the small faction that assassinated



Bishop. Similarly, no reference is made to the devastating policies and practices of former premier Gairy. We find no mention of the worldwide condemnation of the U.S.-led invasion as an unjustified form of armed interference with the internal affairs of an autonomous state.

That such absent information is not necessarily left out because of routine constraints on news processing, such as space, deadlines, or lack of information, is shown by the different contents, style, and schematic structure of the *Guardian* report about the same event. Similar but more critical is the categorization of the winning coalition as being "Reagan favourite" in the headline. Different, however, is the political placement of the winning coalition as "right wing" in the *Guardian*, and "moderate" in *USA Today* and the *International Herald Tribune* (in an article derived from the *Washington Post*). Interesting for our schematic analysis is that the Verbal Reaction category appears first in the *Guardian*, namely, the U.S. satisfaction with the result of the election. This topicalization of the Verbal Reactions category may function as a signal of the opinion (of the *Guardian*) that not the election itself, or its winner, but the U.S. backing and the realization of U.S. goals in Grenada are the most important. This hypothesis is confirmed by the explicitly critical analysis given in the *Guardian's* leader article on the one hand, and by the rest of the news report on the other. Indeed, former prime minister Gairy is qualified as "authoritarian." The relevance of the U.S. reaction to these election is also signaled by the fact that Reagan's verbal reaction figures rather prominently in the third paragraph (after its first summary in the Lead).

The *Guardian* also provides more details about Main Events and especially Context. More information than in the *Herald Tribune* is given about the winning candidate and about the fact that hundreds of Grenadians celebrated in the streets. Most significant, however, is the information that Blaize's conservative business supporters are unlikely to be very interested in reducing the high unemployment rate, and that the Bishop regime had popular social programs. This information is absent in both *USA Today* and in the *Herald Tribune* (*Washington Post*) report. And finally, the unabashedly pro-U.S. policies of Blaize are specified by the information that he will "crack down on the left" and "purge" the administration of pro-Bishop people, while inviting American and Jamaican troops to stay "despite growing annoyance at their presence." In other words, the report in the *Guardian* provides much more, and for many readers

more balanced, information about the political history and context of these elections. It places more emphasis on the American role in the victory of Blaize, qualifies Blaize as conservative and pro-American and not as "moderate," as the U.S. newspapers do, and also briefly mentions the positive aspects of Bishop's revolution. Apart from style and local meanings, these differences are also apparent in a different realization of the schematic structure: Significant Verbal Reactions may *be* put in initial lead position, and contextual and historical background may become more extensive. Also, the *Guardian* explicitly formulates a Comment/Expectation category, featuring the expectation that Blaize's business supporters are not likely to be interested in the reduction of unemployment. Indeed, neither *USA Today* nor the *Herald Tribune* pays attention to what these results will mean for the well-being of the people of Grenada, except for their participation in "historic, free elections" in a pro-U.S. and U.S.-dependent state. Details of these implications are spelled out in the *Guardian* leader. None appear in the *Herald Tribune*, whereas *USA Today* has no Context, History, Verbal Reactions, or Comments at all, except for the brief clause which says that a U.S.-led invasion toppled a "radical Marxist junta." In this respect, news reports in the widely distributed *USA Today* resemble the dominant Main Event structure of international news in the European tabloid press, which often lacks background information too, thus reducing news to headlines of (mostly spectacular) events.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has shown that news reports in the press may be analyzed in terms of a conventional schema, consisting of a number of hierarchically ordered categories. These superstructural categories assign functions to overall semantic macrostructures, and include a general Summary, Main Events, historical and contextual Background, Consequences, Verbal Reactions, and Comments. They are acquired, known, and used by journalists; they cognitively organize, top-down, the production of news reports; and they signal the organizational constraints on the processing of source discourses into the final news text. It seems plausible that habitual newspaper readers have implicit knowledge of such categories. Although such knowledge has been demonstrated for other discourse types, espe-

cially for stories, the experimental evidence for such knowledge of newspaper categories is still to be established. Finally, it emerges that it is a specific property of news reports that the schematic superstructure categories are not realized continuously in discrete linear units. Rather, the overall relevance structure imposes a left-right and top-down installment organization, in such a way that in each category the most important information is given first.

This analysis of the schematic structure of news reports contributes to a systematic and critical analysis of the functional organization of the topics in news discourse—for instance, by providing a discovery procedure for the categories that are present and those that are lacking in the news: In formal tercets, this analysis provides an evaluation procedure for "well-formed" news reports. Obviously, this is only one aspect of a proper evaluation of the adequacy of news discourse. It does not specify what information should be given in the Main Events, Background, or Comment categories. For *such* an evaluation one would need to draw on political, historical, and sociocultural knowledge, as well as a critical ideological perspective. Yet, the formulation of superstructure rules does allow us to notice when specific transformations of the canonical schema occur, which then may be interpreted for special examples. Finally, I briefly suggested that specific, ideologically relevant properties of news schema organization should be linked with a thematic, stylistic, and rhetorical analysis. Although both local and global semantic content are of primary importance in a systematic and critical analysis of the news, the form of news discourse also plays an important role.

Although this analysis of news schemata is based on an extensive empirical data base, and the theoretical discussion develops earlier work on discourse schemata, it goes without saying that further work on news and news schemata is imperative. First, we need to examine many more examples from different types of newspapers and from different countries and cultures. News in the tabloid press and in the so-called quality press seems to be organized in rather different ways. We need to know which of the categories and rules are obligatory, and which are optional, and in which respect installment strategies may be different for such different types of newspapers. Second, it is possible to distinguish between different sorts of news reports. Background news articles, for instance, may not have the same schematic organization as proper news reports: They may only pay attention to Background or Context information. Third, both a theoretical and a practical problem exists in the degree of "canon-

icity" of news schemata. If we assume that news reports are organized by hierarchically related categories, but the actual texts only show a strategically variable, discontinuous, installment structure, the respective rules and categories are not simply a description of the manifest structural units of the news report, but rather of some abstract underlying structure. Further theoretical work is necessary to develop an appropriate framework for this kind of discontinuous schematic organization. Fourth, the relationship between schematic superstructures and other structures of news, such as the thematic macrostructure and the organization of clauses and sentences, needs further attention. For instance, we may assume, as for stories, that categories are marked in the text by specific expressions, meanings, or syntactic features. This local management of news schema categories must be examined in further detail. And finally, the cognitive and social implications of the nature and uses of news schemata require further attention: In which respects are the schemata (consciously or unconsciously) used by journalists in news production, and what exactly is the role of schematic categories when we read news reports? How are the schemata acquired, and how is their active use reproduced in routine newsmaking processes? This is to say that most empirical work on news schemata is still on the agenda.

Although this chapter is about news schemata, its results as well as its unresolved problems are also intended as a contribution to our understanding of written discourse in general. We have found evidence for the assumption that conventional, frequently used discourse types may display fixed schematic patterns, and that these may be described in terms of categories and rules, as well as by effective realization strategies. News reports in this case additionally show the particular feature of relevance-dependent installment structure. The question is whether other discourse types may also exhibit discontinuous expression of underlying schematic categories. This raises the more general issue of the role of transformations in a structural theory of discourse schemata. Finally, we have found that news schemata are subject to effective strategies and not only to rules. That is, in the actual production and understanding of news, many other levels of structure (global meanings, relevance, local meanings, and so on), as well as contextual constraints, cooperate in the resulting structure or cognitive representation of news reports. For other discourse types, too, it is important to show how different levels of analysis are cooperating in the integration of

textual structures and their uses in the communicative context. The analysis of written discourse types, then, is no longer a purely structural enterprise. Rather, the dynamics of production and understanding and their textual consequences require a more flexible, strategic approach, which at the same time enables interdisciplinary integration with cognitive, communicative, and social models of discourse and discourse use.

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