University of Kent
Copyright Notice

Staff and students of this University are reminded that copyright subsists in this extract and the work from which it was taken.   This digital copy has been made under the terms of a CLA licence which allows you to:

- access and download a copy;
- print out a copy;

This Digital Copy and any digital or printed copy supplied to or made by you under the terms of this Licence are for use in connection with this Course of Study.   You may retain such copies after the end of the course, but strictly for your own personal use.

All copies (including electronic copies) shall include this Copyright Notice and shall be destroyed and/or deleted if and when required by the University.

Except as provided for by copyright law, no further copying, storage or distribution (including by e-mail) is permitted without the consent of the copyright holder.

The author (which terms include artists and other visual creators) has moral rights in the work and neither staff nor students may cause, or permit, the distortion, mutilation or other modification of the work, or any other derogatory treatment of it, which would be prejudicial to the honour or reputation of the author.

Course of Study: FI587/FI601 - Extreme Cinema

Name of Designated Person authorising scanning: Gill Woodhams

Title: Analysing Semiotic choices

Name of Author: Machin,

Source: Machin, David, and Andrea Mayr, How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction, 2012 pp.30-56

Name of Publisher: Sage

ISBN: 9780857028914

2

Analysing Semiotic Choices:
Words and Images

Introduction

In this chapter we begin to introduce the toolkit for analysing the way that people make semiotic choices in language and visual communication in order to achieve their communicative aims. Here we look at the simplest form of analysis by considering how authors make choices in individual semiotic resources, in terms of individual words and individual visual elements and features. Each of these kinds of resources can allow the author to set up a basic shape of a social and natural world through their speech, text or image. It allows them to highlight some kinds of meanings and to background others. These authors will use combinations of visual and linguistic elements, depending upon their affordances, to best accomplish what they wish to communicate. Through this process, those meanings they wish to convey may not be communicated so much overtly but in a more subtle way that requires analysis to be careful in order to reveal its precise nature.

One of the most basic kinds of linguistic analysis carried out in CDA is a lexical analysis. This means simply looking at what kinds of words there are in a text. In other words, we ask what vocabulary an author uses. Do they tend to use certain kinds of words and avoid others?

A number of writers have described the significance of this kind of analysis showing that different lexical, or word, choices can signify different discourses or set up different 'lexical fields'. These discourses or fields will signify certain kinds of identities, values and sequences of activity which are not necessarily made explicit.

Van Dijk (2001) describes CDA precisely as the study of 'implicit or 'indirect meanings' in texts. These are the kinds of meanings that are alluded to without being explicitly expressed. He explains this implicit information 'is part of the mental model of ... a text, but not of the text itself. Thus, implicit meanings are related to underlying beliefs, but are not openly, directly, completely or precisely asserted' (Van Dijk, 2001: 104). The study of simple word content, the highlighting of a lexical field, is, as we shall see one way we can begin to reveal these underlying beliefs.

A lexical field, Fowler (1991) points out, is like the map an author is creating for us. A map is a 'symbolic' representation of a territory. The signs it uses indicate areas of interest, areas of salience where on the actual terrain there may be none. Maps made for different purposes will carry different features, so a map for geological features will differ from those made for motorists. A map maker may include political boundaries that may be largely ignored or resented by the people who live there. So the map maker in each case is foregrounding some features and suppressing others. What exactly is included and excluded, how areas are defined, what is shaded and not, where boundaries are placed is a matter of the interests of the map maker. The point is that '[t]he meaning and structure of the map are not governed by the physical characteristics of the landscape, but by the structural conventions appropriate to figuring the territory for a specific social purpose' (Fowler, 1991: 82). We can think of the lexical choices used by an author or speaker in the same way, governed by certain types of preoccupation or specific social purposes.

This observation can apply equally both to texts and images. One of the simplest kinds of analysis carried out in Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis is iconographical or iconological analysis. This means we explore the way that individual elements in images, such as objects and settings, are able to signify discourses in ways that might not be obvious at an initial viewing. We ask which visual features and elements are foregrounded and which are backgrounded or excluded.

However, it is important to note that in visual communication semiotic resources are used to communicate things that may be more difficult to express through language, since images do not tend to have such fixed meaning or at least the producer can always claim that it is more suggestive and open to various interpretations. In news reports, for example, it is possible to show a photograph of a Muslim woman in traditional clothing, wearing a veil next to an article on Muslim-related issues. But it is not possible to say 'All Muslims look like this'. Visual communication, by its nature, tends to be more open to interpretation, which gives the author some degree of manoeuvre not permitted though language use. They can use the image of the Muslim woman in traditional clothing to place the story in a broader discourse about clashes of culture and values. But this is done implicitly through visual semiotic resources.

Visual and linguistic semiotic resources have different affordances. In other words, they are more suitable for different kinds of purposes. For example, in the previous chapters we considered the photograph that was part of an article in *Cosmopolitan* magazine. In this case, we can ask how it was that the setting and colours helped to encourage the viewer to think about certain kinds of identities and values in a way that language could not have done. How did these choices contribute to the mapping out of women's lives and identities that were being created for the reader which were different from that of language? As with the image of the Muslim woman, discourses are communicated implicitly. We are not told 'this is what you will look like at work', but the image serves to bring particular associations of glamour and modernity

to bear on the story. Being able to analyse the work done by semiotic choices, such as props, setting and lighting, allows us to be more specific about exactly what is communicated and how.

Van Leeuwen (2000), drawing on the work of Barthes (1977) and Panofsky (1972), has also shown the value of looking at images for the way that individual elements and features can communicate implicit or indirect meanings and that they too can be thought of as mapping out a terrain driven by certain preoccupations. Later in the chapter we will be looking at a set of tools for analysing the way that those who produce visual discourses are able to draw our attention to certain aspects of images.

In this chapter, we first look at studying lexical choices in language. In the second part we look at visual choices, returning to some of the same texts to consider how these two modes communicate together.

Word connotations

To begin with we can analyse the basic choice of words used by a text producer. Simply, we ask what kinds of words are used. Is there a predominance of particular kinds of words, for example? In this process we assume that, since language is an available set of options, certain choices have been made by the author for their own motivated reasons. For example, if I choose to call where I live a 'building', 'an address' or a 'family home', it immediately brings certain sets of associations. What if a news item headline was one of the following?

'Youths attack local buildings'

'Youths attack local addresses'

'Youths attack local family homes'

In the last of these sentences, the lexical choice suggests something much more sacred than the first two, something much more personal. The words 'family' and 'home' suggest something safe and stable that is cherished in society. Of course families are not necessarily something so wonderful. Families can also be demanding, overwhelming, oppressive and destructive. But combined here with 'home' it signifies a discourse of the family as something safe, stable and common to all of us. It communicates something that should be protected and therefore produces greater moral outrage than the first headline. Without making the case overtly, the discourse created signifies associated identities, values and likely sequences of action. The writer has not commented overtly on the morally outrageous behaviour of the youths, but this is signified through the associations of home and family since these words tend to carry particular connotations in a particular culture. So these connotations help to place these events into particular frameworks of reference or discourses.

We can see the way that lexical choices place events in discourses in the following extract taken from an East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) document. EMDA is one of a number of regional organisations set up in Britain by the former New Labour government to 'regenerate' parts of the country that were suffering from a number of issues, such as poverty, unemployment, urban decay and interracial tensions. We can ask what kind of discourse the words we find in the text realise, what kind of world they constitute and what kinds of interests they serve.

EMDA 'mission statement'

The vision is for the East Midlands to become a fast growing, dynamic economy based on innovative, knowledge based companies competing successfully in the global economy.

East Midlands Innovation launched its Regional Innovation Strategy and action plan in November 2006. This sets out how we will use the knowledge, skills and creativity of organisations and individuals to build an innovation led economy.

Our primary role to deliver our mission is to be the strategic driver of economic development in the East Midlands, working with partners to deliver the goals of the Regional Economic Strategy, which EMDA produces on behalf of the region.

I am committed to ensuring that these strategic priorities act as guiding principles for EMDA as we work with our partners in the region and beyond to achieve the region's ambition to be a Top 20 Region by 2010 and a flourishing region by 2020.

When we read reports by these developmental agencies it is rather difficult to get any concrete sense of what they actually do. But maybe this is not the point of these texts.

A lexical analysis of the text reveals a predominance of words such as 'dynamic', 'innovation', 'competing', 'creativity', 'strategic', 'ambition', 'challenges', 'goals' and 'strengths'. When discussing what might seem like straightforward matters of unemployment or poverty, there is no mention of these things nor is there a mention of how they are to be addressed. And the actual social actors involved are also absent, i.e. the unemployed, the poor, those appointed to develop solutions and those who will bring these into fruition. Rather, we find 'partners' and 'stakeholders'. Reading more of the texts on the EMDA website, we find that these in fact seem to refer to the poor, council workers and businesses as a collective, although the poor are never overtly named.

These kinds of terms, Chiapello and Fairclough (2002) point out, come from the language of business rhetoric, which they describe as the empty rhetoric of corporate-speak. The result of referring to issues such as poverty as a 'challenge', the poor as 'stakeholders' and solutions in terms of 'creativity'

and 'innovation' can conceal what the actual problem is and therefore what the solution could be. What these terms do instead is connote a sense of business-like activity and 'drive'. Words like 'stakeholders' connote that those taking action are those who have a vested interest in the outcome or those that control it, although exactly who will do something, who actually has responsibility, is concealed. For Fairclough (2000) this language serves to conceal where the actual responsibility lies, which is with the government and the fundamental nature of social organisation.

In fact, poverty and unemployment in the East Midlands is partly due to changes in economic policies pushing Britain into the global economy and allowing industries that formerly created employment to shift to other parts of the world where labour is cheaper (Levitas, 2005). In certain areas, whole sections of the population live in families where there have been no workers often for three generations. While terms like 'creativity', 'innovation' and 'knowledge economy' sound exciting and active, they will not help us to deal with fundamental structural issues. And calling them, along with the local councillors and businesses who are to provide solutions, 'stakeholders' further obscures power relations. By constantly using terms like 'stakeholders', it becomes unclear as to who will act, and at the same time gives a sense that it is the poor who must take shared responsibility and action. This mixture of rights and responsibilities was a key part of New Labour discourse (Levitas, 2005). Of course, as Fairclough (2000) explains, this is precisely the point, as we are distracted from real causes and necessary solutions. It is simply by looking at the kinds of words found in a text that we can draw out the discourse that is being communicated. In this case, regional authorities are represented through a discourse of corporate businesses, although this is not openly stated.

These kinds of lexical choices are now typical of the way that any private or public organisation will position itself. Most universities, health authorities, hospitals and schools now have a 'vision' or 'mission statement'. The very fact that such organisations feel required to declare they have a 'vision' rather than simply an 'identity' or a 'role' indicates the pervasiveness of corporate-business language. The term 'vision' connotes 'ambition', 'looking ahead' and 'lofty ideas'. In former times it would have been sufficient for a university simply to state that it was concerned with ideas, to celebrate, disseminate and push the boundaries of knowledge and science, and simply to educate, thereby playing a part in a better and more sophisticated society. Even in the 1980s there was a sense in Britain that universities were simply essential to the functioning of a healthy democracy. We can see something of the way this has disappeared in the opening paragraph of Loughborough University's mission statement:

> Loughborough University is a dynamic, forward looking institution, committed to being a centre of excellence in teaching, learning and enterprise. We have much to be proud of – surveys in the media

constantly rate Loughborough as a top university. In June 2006 the Times Good University Guide ranked Loughborough University the sixth highest university in the UK. (Loughborough University website)

We can see in this case that the university is marketing itself in terms of being 'dynamic' and 'forward looking'. What is interesting in terms of CDA is to ask why these terms have become so universally accepted. In the previous chapter we asked why a young woman in a bar used the word 'scary' to speak about herself. We thought about the way this reflected changes in the role of women yet also a lingering need for her to express her sexual agency. In CDA it is assumed that language and society are deeply intertwined. They are not to be thought of as separate entities. Linguistic activity is social practice. Language use should be treated as part of social processes. Why did this young woman not want to go around boasting about being 'responsible' or 'compassionate'? These two terms both sound like very good qualities to have. But these are not, as far as the woman is concerned, part of the discourses that have become widely shared for indicating that women have desirable and credible levels of agency and personality.

We can ask what the consequences would be in a society where certain concepts of identity become valued over others, where identity categories of compassion and responsibility gain negative connotations as opposed to 'independence' and 'scariness'. Machin and van Leeuwen (2007), in an analysis of women's lifestyle magazines, show how women always act alone and strategically, whether it is in relationships or at work. They appear to have no ties of interest to any kind of wider community, apart from their shared strategic solutions to getting a man or winning prestige socially or at work. They certainly appear to have no responsibility for anyone apart from their own pleasure and status. Machin and van Leeuwen suggest that these are ideal identities for aligning women to the interests of consumerism.

We can say the same about the way Loughborough University is described. Why should 'dynamic' and 'forward looking' be desirable qualities? Both connote movement and lack of stasis. So 'change' is clearly regarded as positive, whereas 'stability' appears to be less so. Likewise, in our contemporary society, 'speed' is also highly prized. Things that are done quickly and technology that allows more urgency are presented as good in themselves. But why should this be the case? If we are always 'forward looking', does this mean that we are not attending to the present? If we do things quickly, again does this mean we are not attending to the actual process of doing it or doing it haphazardly? If 'innovation' is good, does this mean that what we already know should always be quickly discarded? This trend appears to be reflected in the way that Human Resources run training programmes in businesses and in public sector organisations. In our experience, employees at their annual appraisals are encouraged to think about their training requirements, often

by those who have no idea about the jobs that these people do, whereas before it was those who had considerable experience in a profession who were seen to have the expertise.

We can see a similar set of lexical choices on the homepage of a British National Health Service website:

Vision and Values: Heart of England NHS Trust

As a large Trust, with four hospitals and a number of satellite units, we have the power to make a real difference to the lives of patients and our fellow workers. As part of the Organisational Development programme, staff from across Heart of England met and discussed values for the Trust going forward. These are the values by which we already live and work in the Trust; the values that help us achieve our mission:

To improve the health of people by pursuing excellence in healthcare and education

To achieve this mission, the Trust lives by five values:

Cherishing

Excellence

Finding a Way

Innovation for Advancement

Working Together

We see terms such as 'innovation', 'excellence', 'vision', 'power' and 'values', but none of these terms is explained. One of their values is 'excellence', but what does this mean? What is the Trust excellent in? The main question we can ask here is why should a health Trust need this language? Does a hospital not simply have to make people better? And why should we want to worry about staff 'working together'. If we are ill, we just want to be offered the best possible healthcare.

The linguistic and visual semiotic choices, which we analyse later, used on the Trust website need to be understood in terms of the broader changes in the British health system, which was established as a state-run, free-to-use healthcare system. Pollock (2006) has documented the way that the emergence of 'Health Trusts' was part of a trend to cut state funding and the corresponding influx of private finance and the need to generate profits. The health service is being effectively privatised and broken up into hundreds of competing companies where a vast range of companies provide finance, buildings, maintenance, repairs, laundry, catering, portering, nursing, etc. Hidden behind all the lexis of vision concepts, the health service is being dismantled and privatised with corporations cherry-picking the most lucrative areas and pushing the balance of care in the direction that is most profitable. Pollock

(2006) describes the increasing loss of equal access and common universal standards and shrinking services.

As the health services become run increasingly on business models, so the language through which they communicate becomes characterised by empty business rhetoric. Changes are concealed behind the language of 'vitality', 'excellence', 'vision' and 'cooperation'. Later in the chapter we will be looking at the way that these kinds of organisations also use visual resources to communicate the same set of ideas.

Overlexicalisation

Another way of describing what is going on in the EMDA text, with its seeming overemphasis on terms that connote movement and change, is 'overlexicalisation'. Teo (2000: 20) explains that overlexicalisation 'results when a surfeit of repetitious, quasi-synonymous terms is woven into the fabric of news discourse, giving rise to a sense of overcompleteness'.

Overlexicalisation gives a sense of over-persuasion and is normally evidence that something is problematic or of ideological contention. So in our analysis of a text, we would find overlexicalisation where there was an abundance of particular words and their synonyms. This would point to where the persuasion was taking place and the area of ideological contention. Two simple examples are:

Male nurse

Female doctor

We can ask why these job titles require elaboration in terms of gender. In this case, of course, it signals a deviation from social convention or expectation. But these are always cues to the dominant ideology. In other words, it is still expected that men are doctors and women are nurses.

Achugar (2007) gives a typical example of the way that enemies can be overlexicalised:

Certainly our Armed Forces victorious in the battle against the unpatriotic forces of Marxist subversion were accused of supposed violations to human rights. (*El Soldado*, April 1989)

Here the Armed Forces are battling against '*the unpatriotic forces of Marxist subversion*'. Such overlexicalisation, or excessive description, indicates some anxiety on the part of the author. Here it appears necessary to justify the 'supposed violations of human rights' by the Armed Forces.

In the case of the EMDA text above, we can see that there is an overlexicalisation of words that communicate deliberate and energetic action, such

as 'dynamic', 'innovation', 'competing', 'creativity', 'strategic', 'ambition', 'goals' and 'strengths'. This overuse suggests that something is problematic here. In this case, the aim is to connote a sense of vibrant activity where in fact little is being done at all to combat the structural problems, with EMDA given the impossible task to solve these. Unemployment, inequality and poor social inclusion can only be dealt with by major policy changes at a central government level that would involve changing the way our society is organised in relation to the economic context of global capitalism.

Suppression or lexical absence

As we can find overlexicalisation in texts, we can also find suppression, where certain terms that we might expect are absent. Below there are two short texts. The first is an international news agency feed received by a news organisation, Independent Radio News (IRN). The second is the text after IRN had reworked it for broadcast for one of their clients, based on knowledge of their client's listeners through the need to prove that they are able to target specific consumer groups for advertisers. Since we have the original text we can more easily show what the journalist has decided to remove or suppress from the text. We can ask, therefore, what are the main changes of discourse in the rewrite?

> APTN feed as received by IRN, 18 September 2003:

> One of the few suspects to express remorse over his alleged involvement in last year's bombings on Indonesia's Bali island arrived at court on Thursday to hear his sentence. Ali Imron is facing a possible death penalty, but prosecutors have asked that he receive 20 years in prison because he has shown regret and cooperated with investigators. Imran's older brother Amrozi bin Nurhasyim, and another key defendant, Imam Samudra, already have been sentenced to face firing squads for their roles in the attack, which killed 202 people – mostly foreign tourists.

> IRN rewrite:

> A man's been jailed for life for helping to plan and carry out the Bali bombings. Twenty-six Britons were among more than two hundred people killed in the attack in October last year. Ali Imron was spared the death sentence handed down to other suspects because he expressed remorse and co-operated with the Indonesian authorities.

IRN has, of course, simplified the story in order to reduce ambiguity. Such stories in radio news have to be delivered in very short bursts. But it is revealing to look at how the one above has been changed. This has been done in a number of ways, but for the present we can attend specifically to a number of important lexical changes or omissions. In the original text we find many legal

terms, such as 'alleged', 'prosecutors', 'defendant'. These have been removed from the rewrite. In fact the original text has been generated from a court report, as is standard in news gathering of crime. But the rewrite has omitted all legal reference. The journalist may have believed that listeners to this particular radio programme would not be interested in legal information. But the effect is that we are no longer required to think about *whose* court or under *whose* jurisdiction this event is taking place. This becomes one more story in the war on terror, where the journalist has inserted information about the number of Britons killed – a story about evil-doers being caught. Clearly, on the one hand this could be explained through the needs for simplicity and for ease of understanding. But on the other it is nevertheless important and revealing to ask what has been left out or added and what ideological work this does.

In the IRN example we conveniently had the original text so that we could show clearly what had been deleted. But in the case of any text we can ask what lexical items are missing that we might expect to be included. In the example of the Heart of England NHS Trust text, there is no mention of illness, of caring or of medicines. Instead of caring for people we have terms such as 'make a real difference to the lives of patients' and 'cherishing'. If we are ill, will our first concern be to be 'cherished' or for someone to 'make a difference' to our lives? Would we not rather want to be reassured that there are enough facilities and staff to make us better quickly? If there are absences in terms of activities, elements or participants, then we can think about why it was the case that the text producer did not want us to think of these. Of course where services are being privatised and expensive ones being closed down, where there are money-saving job freezes and ward closures, more ambiguous claims couched in a more positive-sounding language need to be made.

Structural oppositions

Halliday's (1978, 1985) theory of Social Semiotics explains that words mean not only on their own but as part of a network of meanings. Vocabulary also makes distinctions between classes of concepts. So we find structural oppositions in texts. This is an important part of understanding this kind of language analysis and it also underpins much of the visual toolkit we present later in the book.

In language, these oppositions are opposing concepts such as young–old, good–bad, or democracy–communism. Often only one of these may be mentioned, which can imply differences from qualities of its opposites without these being overtly stated. Or this particular word can bring with it associations from its related clusters of concepts. So if a particular participant in a news text is described as a 'militant' or an 'extremist', we can fathom that such a person acts in the opposite manner expected of a 'citizen' or a 'member of a

community'. As in the case of 'youths attack local family homes', a set of ideas around what 'youths' are and are not can be activated.

When such oppositions are more overtly included in a text, we can talk of 'ideological squaring' (Van Dijk, 1998), which means that opposing classes of concepts are built up around participants. This may not necessarily mean that the participants are overtly labelled as 'good' or 'bad', but rather that this is implied through structuring concepts. We can see how this use of opposi-tions, both overt and implicit, works in the following item from the British newspaper *The Sun*. In this text we are never told why the events take place, nor are the participants overtly evaluated as 'good' or 'bad'. Evaluation takes place through the oppositions. The image here is also very important and plays a crucial role in setting up oppositions. This will be analysed below and in more detail in the remaining chapters.

Figure 2   On patrol ... British soldier in Helmand province

Our boys blitz Taliban bash (*The Sun*, 31 December 2007)
BRITISH commandos launched a devastating blitz on the Taliban – as the evil terrorists held a party to celebrate Benazir Bhutto's murder.

The dawn raid was staged after messages were intercepted about the sick knees-up in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

Royal Marines crept into position as the fanatics partied the night away just hours after Ms Bhutto was killed in Pakistan.

The bash was being held in ruined compounds a few hundred yards from Our Boys' remote base in Kajaki.

Ragtag Taliban sentries tried to hit back with machine gun fire – but stood no chance against the heroes of 40 Commando's Charlie Company.

Bloodthirsty

The terrorists were pounded with mortars, rockets and heavy machine guns.

Two bloodthirsty revellers trying to creep towards Our Boys in a trench were spotted by thermal-imaging equipment – and targeted with a Javelin heat-seeking missile.

The £65,000 rocket – designed to stop Soviet tanks – locked on to their body heat and tore more than a kilometer across the desert in seconds.

Troop Sergeant Dominic Conway, 32 – who directed mortar rounds – grinned: "It must have had quite a detrimental effect on their morale."

Sgt Conway, from Whitley Bay, Tyneside, said of the Taliban lair: "It used to be their backyard and now we've made it ours."

In this text we find very different sets of word choices used to represent the two sides, the British commandoes and the Taliban. At no point does the text overtly state who is good and bad or why this is. But the structural oppositions or 'ideological squaring' clearly indicate how the participants should be evaluated.

The British soldiers are described as 'our' side: 'British commandos', 'Royal Marines', 'Troop Sergeant', 'heroes of 40 Commando's Charlie Company' and on three occasions 'Our Boys'. These are described in terms of professional rank and organisation in ways that connote pride: 'our boys' and 'heroes'. In contrast, the Taliban are referred to as 'their' side: 'the Taliban', 'evil terrorists', 'fanatics', 'Ragtag Taliban sentries' and 'bloodthirsty revellers', 'animals' who are based in a 'lair'. These connotations are of disorganisation, through terms like 'Ragtag' and 'revellers', and of irrationality, through terms like 'fanatics'. What often lies behind such stories are local people who oppose the occupation of what they perceive as their territory. Western armies are often present in part to protect economic and strategic interests of Western governments. Yet here we are provided with no political or social context, only good and bad participants.

The lexis which is used to describe the actions of the two sides is also of the same order. The British soldiers 'carry out a dawn raid', 'staged an attack', 'crept into position', 'spotted', 'targeted', 'designed', 'locked on to' and 'directed'. All these terms suggest precision, careful focus and organisation. In contrast, the Taliban are described thus: 'held a party', 'sick knees-up', 'partied the night away' and 'bash'. This is to emphasise their inappropriate and unprofessional attitude to killing, although at the end of the text we find that Troop Sergeant Dominic Conway, 32, himself takes a somewhat callous attitude to the deaths where he is described as grinning and gloating "It must have had quite a detrimental effect on their morale." There is also a clear sense that the British are described as being decisive as they 'launched a devastating blitz', 'spotted by thermal-imaging equipment'. In contrast, the Taliban are twice described

as only 'trying': 'tried to hit back with machine gun fire' and 'trying to creep towards Our Boys'. They are clearly represented as incompetent.

At no point in this text are we told overtly how we should interpret this conflict, yet this is clearly indicated through lexical choices which create an opposition between the professional British soldiers on the one hand and the inhumane, savage, irrational Taliban on the other. We are certainly never told why the soldiers are fighting. Why exactly is the British army killing these people and who exactly are they? What is the overall aim? In the case of this story we can say, therefore, that there is a suppression of information at the level of motives, of broader values and sequences of activity. There is also a suppression of the brutality of war, of the mutilating effects of the weapons used by these soldiers on the bodies of their enemies. Instead, there is an overlexicalisation of terms for precision combat.

Lexical choices and genre of communication

Often texts can use lexical choices to indicate levels of authority and co-membership with the audience (Fairclough, 1995a). Authors will often seek to influence us through claims to having power over us. This may be through legal or hierarchical means or through claiming specialist knowledge. In the first case, a text might simply tell us we cannot act in a particular way because of the law. In the second, a scientist might tell us that we should understand the world in a particular way due to their knowledge of facts. They will use specific, official-sounding terms that help to convey authority. We often see this in advertising for cosmetics, where technical-sounding terms are used to connote 'science' and 'specialist knowledge' where in fact there might be none. Drugs marketing companies are aware that products often have to carry brand names that connote science, for example that carry lots of 'x's and 'y's. So a cough medicine might be named 'txylxyn'. It seems that consumers are much less likely to buy the same product if it is called something more literal like 'smooth cough'. Other texts might try to influence us through claiming to speak through a language common to the readership or listener, by using more colloquial and everyday language, hence giving the impression of being like us (Leitner, 1980).

In the following text extract we find two sets of lexical choices used to convey different kinds of authority at the same time. This text is supposedly about drug problems and young people, but it is vague about facts and is little more than a sensational piece. It reveals nothing about the actual numbers of young people taking drugs. Drug-use researchers often comment on how the press continually serves to distract the public from the reality of drug problems through its moral outrage stance (Manning, 2007b). Instead of rational debates that would inform the public about the potential long-term damage of prolonged ecstasy use, 'news construction reinforces moral evaluation' (Manning, 2007b: 163). In this sense, the drug debate is more of a self-perpetuating witch hunt; a 'call for the "evil" individual seeking to lead innocents astray' (Manning, 2007b: 162). Much research on drugs use now

emphasises that millions of people take recreational drugs in a 'normalised' way, which is not characterised by addiction, but rather periodic use (Parker et al., 1998, 2002). Only a small percentage of drug users fall into the hard use/hard drugs category – groups associated with poverty and marginalisation and prior connections with crime and the 'irregular' economy (Seddon, 2008). Yet media reporting tends to focus on drugs as something sordid and deviant, and merges all drug use into the same discourse, where innocent victims are in grave danger from a shadowy world.

The really innocent victims of our drugs explosion (*The Sun*, 10 October 2002[1])

Emma Jones

WHEN I was a kid, one of my mum's worst fears was me accidentally swallowing bleach. It was the health scare of the moment. There were public information adverts on telly and campaigns for child-proof tops.

For modern mums there is a more hidden and sinister danger – ecstasy tablets and illegal drugs.

This week Sadie Frost and Jude Law's two-year-old daughter, Iris, swallowed part of a discarded E tablet she found on the floor at a children's birthday party.

She was robbed of her innocence (after most likely suffering hallucinogenic effects) and nearly her life.

Iris survived – but others haven't.

In July this year ten-year-old Jade Slack became the youngest person to die from ecstasy after taking five tablets she found.

Dangers

A week later, three-year-old Brandon White, from London, was rushed to hospital after swallowing ecstasy he mistook for a sweet.

In June, a 20-month-old Swansea girl suffered the same fate.

In another incident a 19-month-old nearly died after mistaking the killer drug for mints.

And it's not just ecstasy.

In 1999 a three-year-old girl from Newcastle swallowed cocaine powder she thought was sherbet after finding it in her garden.

The charity DrugScope warn one of the biggest dangers is the heroin substitute methadone because of its green colour and sweet taste.

Dozens have accidentally drunk methadone thinking it was pop and some have died.

---

[1]Thanks to Will Hall for this text.

These tragedies may seem like a series of unrelated, freak accidents.

Sadly, they are not.

The phenomenon is a sign of the times, giving us a shocking insight into how drugs have swamped our country and spilled over the hands of our children.

Drugs have become so cheap and freely available that they can be found nearly EVERYWHERE. Iris Law found the E tablet at Soho House, one of Britain's poshest private members' clubs.

No longer are ecstasy tablets confined to the sleazy dance clubs and cocaine to showbiz parties.

Drugs are so cheap and plentiful that people routinely buy them in bulk and have them lying around the house in cupboards, handbags and coat pockets – places where curious kids will root them out.

What we do not find in this text is an account of the facts of ecstasy use and users. In the following table we have placed the formal and informal lexical items in different columns. In the right-hand column we find terms that connote what Fairclough (1995a) call a 'discourse of information', a sense of imparting facts.

In the left-hand column we find a much more informal lexis. This too serves to provide authority, in that the newspaper speaks 'our language'. Commentators on language use and communication have long observed the technique of using conversational style to bring a sense of informality to the conversational mix (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991; Bell and van Leeuwen, 1994). Conversational style is both private and suggests dialogue between equals. For this reason it is a useful strategy for politicians, advertisers and, here, journalists. Technical language can be used to connote 'facts and information'. But this can be delivered in a way that suggests equality. So in this text we find the opening sentence sets this theme with:

When I was a kid, one of my mum's worst fears was me accidentally swallowing bleach.

In terms of the connotations of this lexis, we also find nostalgic references to an idealised family life through 'my mum', 'kid', and the mundane everyday

Table 1 Genre indications in drug explosion text

| Informal lexical choices	Formal lexical choices
Kid(s)	Public information adverts
Mum(s)	Ecstasy tablets
Telly	Hallucinogenic effects
Modern mums	Heroin substitute methadone
E tablet	Independent Drugs Monitoring Unit
Green colour/sweet taste	Cocaine, heroin, amphetamines
Poshest private clubs	Decriminalisation
Sleazy dance clubs	Criminal enterprises
Mates	Reformists
Sweets in a playground	Traditionalists
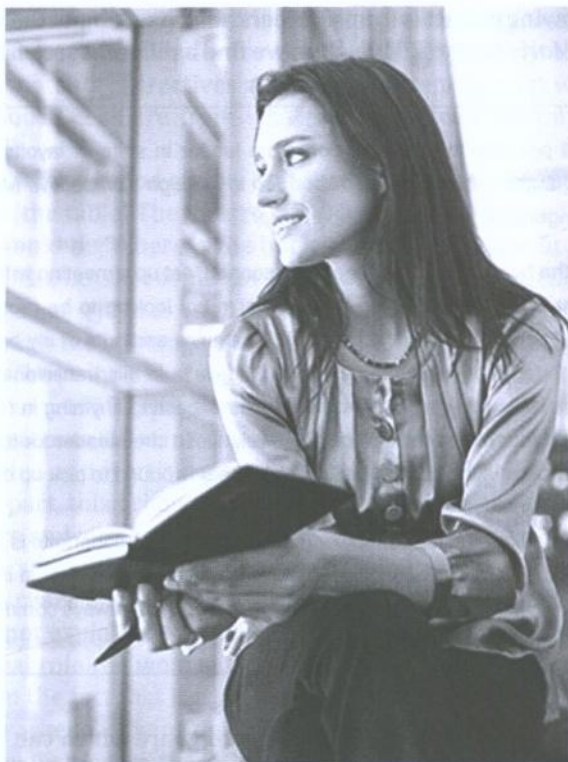
Figure 3 Career woman from *Marie Claire* (Jupiter images)

(www.marieclaire.com/career-money/advice/tips/promotion-recession-work)

fear of the dangers of bleach. This is used to contrast with the connotations then used for the information discourse: 'there is a more hidden and sinister danger – ecstasy tablets and illegal drugs'.

Fairclough (1995a) explains that mixing these two lexicons in this way helps to infuse official discourse with a populist voice. The newspaper does nothing to explain problems with drugs in society, whether or not they are related to unemployment and other social problems. Rather, we might say it serves to distract the reader from these. Again, we find suppression of facts and participants and foregrounding of moral outrage.

The writer uses this juxtaposition throughout, as in the sentences:

Dozens of children have accidentally drunk methadone thinking it was pop and some have died. These tragedies may seem like a series of unrelated, freak accidents. Sadly, they are not.

The formal descriptive term, 'methadone' is here contrasted to the informal 'pop'. Fairclough (1989: 184) describes this process as 'simulated equalization' – whereby the text producer appears on an 'equal footing with the reader through choices of expressions readers may make themselves'.

The following extract is from a careers advice section of the women's lifestyle magazine *Marie Claire* (2010). Here we find a different set of genre indicators:

Yes, it is still possible to scale the corporate ladder in spite of layoffs. Here, Bob Calandra, co-author of *How to Keep Your Job in a Tough Competitive Market*, offers advice for gingerly negotiating a title bump:

- **Act like the boss.** If your manager gets canned, set up a meeting with her supervisor right away. Calandra's no-fail script: "I'm not looking to be promoted, but I also recognize no one wants chaos. I know the ins and outs of my boss's job, so feel free to tap me for any of her work while we're in this transitional phase." To come off a hero, you can't appear as if you're expecting anything in return.
- **Pollyanna gets the corner office.** Be a relentless cheerleader for the company, even if it means irking co-workers. Your manager is bound to pick up on your positive outlook and use you as a model.
- **Mind your alliances.** If watercooler gossip reveals your cubemate is on management's hit list, publicly align yourself with the office hotshot, even if it makes you feel like Tracy Flick. Appearances matter — and you can always commiserate with your axed colleague over cocktails later (your treat).

In this text too we find the conversational genre which can be seen from the extensive use of personal pronouns: 'your', 'you' and 'I'. This is one device which creates a sense of dialogue between equals. We also find this in terms of lexical choices as in 'If your manager gets canned', and 'negotiate a title bump' and 'tap me for any of her work'. Machin and van Leeuwen (2005) point out the way that lifestyle magazines often use a lexis of 'street' vocabulary by using a sprinkling of the latest slang expressions used by the young and trendy. This is an important aspect of lifestyle as both the goods the magazines sell and the identities and values that are aligned with them must always appear to be up to date. Much of this is accomplished through marketing and focus groups.

In this text we also find the inclusion of fictional genres. 'Tracy Flick' and 'Pollyanna' are from a movie and a children's story. Both are assertive and ambitious, although they feel the weight of this from others. But importantly both are slightly comical and the tales are lightweight. The text is able to draw on these references for their connotations of playfulness. And particularly 'Tracy Flick' is played by Hollywood actress Reese Witherspoon.

Alongside the conversational and street styles we also find the style of the expert. The key characteristics of this are the use of a more formal vocabulary often with more technical terms, such as 'competitive market', 'corporate ladder', 'this transitional phase', 'positive outlook' and 'publicly align yourself'.

In our 'lifestyle society', authority depends not so much on tradition and established professionals but on role models and the 'expert'. Here we see

the expert using lots of directives: 'set up a meeting with her supervisor', 'Be a relentless cheerleader for the company', 'publicly align yourself with the office hotshot'. Directives are where sentences start with a verb to give a command. These are from what we would call the imperative mood in language.

The indicative mood simply states something. An example would be 'The book is on the table'. The interrogative mood, which is used for seeking information, would be 'Where is the book?' So the advice about publicaly aligning with the office hotshot could have been conveyed through the indicative mood also: 'It is a good idea to align yourself with the office hotshot'. Or it could be done through the interrogative: 'Why not try aligning yourself with the office hotshot?' The point is that the magazine positions itself as a voice of expertise through the use of imperatives. In fact, as Machin and van Leeuwen (2005) point out, across different kinds of content in these magazines, whether features, advice or advertising, we find an overlexicalisation of imperative verb forms. In part, this brings a sense of energy and forthrightness and above all confidence and authority.

What is also notable about the *Marie Claire* text is what is suppressed. 'Be a relentless cheerleader for the company' is an abstraction. What it specifically means is not explained; nor is it clear from the text. Likewise we are not told what actual role the woman has in this text, nor the nature of her company, apart from the fact that it is an 'office'. This means that the text addresses all kinds of workers as being able to play this strategic game.

Notably, women in these lifestyle magazines do not work in factories, shops or kitchens, nor are they on casual contracts. Nor does the text explain any of the characteristics of the woman herself. Getting on at work has nothing to do with personal characteristics, educational qualifications or connections. What these kinds of texts clearly do not deal with are real social and personal issues. Their role is simply to signify a discourse where women can be in control of themselves and be fashionable through the way they dress and speak.

Critically analysing texts that reflect our own ideology

What can be most difficult in carrying out Critical Discourse Analysis is the critical analysis of texts that we agree with, which are in accord with our own ideological viewpoint. The following text from the British newspaper *The Guardian* is critical of government funding cuts in the university sector. The authors' views align with that of the text. In such a case the lexical choices can tend to appear as neutral to the analyst. But a closer look at these choices nevertheless helps us to reveal the way the author selects from a range of possible language choices to represent the situation.

Thousands to lose jobs as universities prepare to cope with cuts
(*The Guardian*, 7 February 2010)

Universities across the country are preparing to axe thousands of teach-ing jobs, close campuses and ditch courses to cope with government funding cuts, the Guardian has learned.

Other plans include using post-graduates rather than professors for teaching and the delay of major building projects. The proposals have already provoked ballots for industrial action at a number of universi-ties in the past week raising fears of strike action which could severely disrupt lectures and examinations.

The Guardian spoke to vice-chancellors and other senior staff at 25 uni-versities, some of whom condemned the funding squeeze as "painful" and "insidious". They warned that UK universities were being pushed towards becoming US-style, quasi-privatized institutions.

The cuts are being put in place to cope with the announcement last week by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce) that £449m – equivalent to more than a 5% reduction nationally – would be stripped out of university budgets.

The University and College Union (UCU) believes that more than 15,000 posts – the majority academic – could disappear in the next few years. Precise funding figures for each university will be released on 18 March.

The chairman of the Russell Group of elite institutions, Professor Michael Arthur, vice-chancellor of Leeds University, warned that budg-ets would be further slashed by 6% in each of the next three years. Last month he described the cuts as "devastating".

To begin with, the author of this text has chosen words that connote ruthless-ness to describe the instigation of the cuts, using 'axe' and 'ditch'. This could have been written in a more neutral language such as: 'Universities will have to *reduce* teaching posts' or as 'Universities will need to operate more effi-ciently and balance staff–student ratios'.

The lexical choices used to describe the financial changes describe universities being 'stripped' and budgets being 'slashed'. Such terms do not sound like they are the result of measured activity, but suggest violence and lack of reasonable measure. Again, more moderate terms such as '*reduced*' could have been used.

We are told there are plans for the 'delay of major building projects'. Yet what constitutes 'major' projects is not explained and nor is the extent of the delay. These might appear as minor details but as van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) explain, where actual facts and processes are replaced by abstractions and generalisations, this is a sign that there is ideological work being done.

The proposals themselves are described as 'provoking' and 'raising fears' and 'severely disrupt'. Again this could have been written: 'The proposals have been followed by ballots which may *result in* strike action'. The word 'provoke',

of course, suggests conflict. Clearly, opposition to the action is favoured by the author. The text states that the proposals are 'raising fears of strike action'. However, who has these fears is not stated. Fairlough (2003: 136) argues that where participants are excluded from a text we need to ask why.

We can also see here that the author of the text has chosen to include quotes from what looks like more than 25 sources in the form of two single words 'painful' and 'insidious'. How are we to take such quotes? Such disembodied words tell us little of the context in which they were used. The author also states 'some of whom condemned the funding squeeze'. Yet the term 'funding squeeze' does not appear in quotation marks so it is again a lexical choice made by the author.

Finally, we find the word 'warned' appears twice in the text to account for the opinions of the interviewees. The author could have used more neutral terms, such as *'said'* or *'commented'*. We look in more detail at these 'verbs of saying' in the next chapter. But here it is clear that such lexical choices indicate the ideological work done in the text and the clear stance of the author.

Visual semiotic choices

The texts we come across often communicate not only through word choices but also through non-linguistic features and elements. Even this very text you are now reading, which contains no image as such, communicates partly through choice of font type, colour of font, line spacing and alignment of text. Would it be read differently were it written in a comic font using a broad palette of colours, or were it printed on parchment paper? Here we want to think specifically about the images that accompany some of the texts we have been analysing so far.

In the last chapter we looked at the image from *Cosmopolitan* magazine of the woman leading against a desk. We thought more broadly about the way it communicated. Here we show how we can analyse this and images like it much more systematically by asking a sequence of specific questions. We then return to a number of the texts analysed in this chapter looking at the way the images contribute to meaning making.

Iconography

We begin with the widely known semiotic theory of Roland Barthes (1973, 1977) and his account of how images can denote and connote. But here the emphasis normally given to the two levels of analysis is switched.

On one level, images can be said to document. In other words, they show *particular* events, *particular* people, places and things. Or in semiotic terminology, they *denote*. So asking what an image denotes is asking: Who and/or what is depicted here? So a picture of a house denotes a house. In the case of the photograph from *Cosmopolitan* we could say that it denotes a woman, a desk and a computer.

Other images will still depict particular people, places, things and events, but 'denotation' is not their primary or only purpose. They depict concrete

people, places, things and events to get general or abstract *ideas* across. They use them to *connote* ideas and concepts. So asking what an image connotes is asking: What ideas and values are communicated through what is represented, and through the way in which it is represented? Or, from the point of view of the image maker: How do I get general or abstract ideas across? How do I get across what events, places and things *mean*? What concrete signifier can I use to get a particular abstract idea across? We can see how this is relevant in the case of the *Cosmopolitan* photograph. The image has been chosen as it connotes certain kinds of identities and practices. While it denotes a women and a desk, these are not an ordinary, everyday women and desk. Rather, the image communicates a particular set of values about glamour, excitement and women's identities. So for any image we can ask what discourse is communicated that includes kinds of persons, attitudes, values and actions.

Of course we could argue that there is no neutral denotation, and that all images connote something for us. For example, an image of a large house can connote wealth and excess. But considering what is denoted, arguably, is what is often undervalued in semiotic analysis. Students often look at an advertisement for a car, for example, and immediately speak of what is connoted in terms of 'energy', 'style' and 'modernity'. But here they are jumping a step. They are saying *what* is connoted but not exactly *how* it is connoted. When we listen to a political speech we might be aware that the speaker has managed to give a particular spin on a set of events, but it may take the kind of language analysis done throughout this book, which emphasises careful attention to the detail of the way that language is used, to show exactly how they have done this. This is why we need to be attentive to denotation.

So in the case of the *Cosmopolitan* image we need to describe the desk carefully, that it is very clean and shiny with polished surfaces. We need to describe what clothes the woman is wearing, what is placed on her desk and what kind of wider setting we find. In this case, there is very little in the image in terms of objects. What we would need to ask here is: What is the meaning of all this space in a setting that would in normal life be characterised by lots of items related to work activities, such as files, papers, pens and pencils, personal photographs, drinking mugs, etc.? We will think more about this shortly.

There are a few other points of relation between denotation and connotation that we also need to make. Again, the importance of these will become clearer shortly. First, the more abstract the image, the more overt and foregrounded its connotative communicative purpose. In the *Cosmopolitan* image we can see that the high key lighting has the effect of making the scene appear slightly fuzzy or softened. This means that there is reduced likelihood that this image was intended to show us something about a particular place at a particular time, but rather that it has a symbolic value. We will be dealing more with how we assess levels of abstraction in images in Chapter 8.

Secondly, whether the communicative purpose of an image is primarily denotative or connotative depends to some extent on the context in which the image is used. An image of a mother and child in a war-torn street could be used to denote the experiences of these particular people in a news report.

In another news report, the same image could be used to symbolise suffering through war in general, where motherhood and childhood signify innocence.

Thirdly, what an image connotes may, in some contexts, be a matter of free association. But where image makers need to get a specific idea across, they will rely on established *connotators*, carriers of connotations, which they feel confident their target audiences will understand (whether consciously or not). In *Cosmopolitan*, where it is advertising revenue that is at stake, a range of established connotators will be used to signify women as having a life that is fun and glamorous and certainly not bound by the tedium of domestic life. But these connotators must allow a fit with consumer activities. So we would not find connotators of discourses where women found agency outside consumer society.

While the concept of connotation is one we use in our analysis, we also use the term 'meaning potential'. In language we have a range of communicative resources that we can use in contexts to communicate. For example, we might choose one word over another. We therefore have a range of choices that we can use to create particular meanings. However, these meanings can change depending on the context in which they are used. For example, if we put the words 'You must' at the start of sentence in place of 'Can you', it changes the meaning of the sentence from imperative to interrogative – in other words, a demand rather than a question. The words that follow therefore are part of a different meaning. So words have meaning potential that can be realised in different contexts and which is sensitive to that context. Visual semiotic resources also have the potential to mean that is realised in specific contexts. The term 'meaning potential' has the advantage over 'connote' as it suggests not something fixed, but a possibility, and it encourages us to consider specifically how any visual element or feature is connected to and used with other visual elements, which may serve to modify its meaning. Why this is important will become increasingly clear.

Barthes listed a number of important connotators of meaning: poses, objects and settings. We will look at objects and settings here, leaving the meaning of poses for the next chapter. We will be discussing in much more detail how to analyse the representation of people themselves in Chapter 4.

Attributes

Here we are concerned with the ideas and values communicated by objects and how they are represented. What discourses do they communicate? When carrying out analysis of objects, the meaning of every object should be considered. In the *Cosmopolitan* image, for example, there are a number of objects, such as the computer, the clean empty desk, the handbag under the table. We can also turn our attention to the woman's clothing, such as the high-heeled shoes, the scarf around her neck, her hair and other clothing.

Images like the one just described are typical of *Cosmopolitan*, with an emphasis on clingy fabrics, loose lavish hair, high heels and heavy lipstick. At the heart of *Cosmopolitan*'s brand, of its representation of women in non-domestic

settings, is glamour and seductiveness through traditional female attributes. The scarf flying loose around the woman's neck would in many ways be impractical, unless looking glamorous was high on the agenda. The placing of the handbag in a prominent place in the image draws our attention to accessories and high fashion. As a rule, the women in *Cosmopolitan* images are model-beautiful. Their sexy clothes draw on traditional notions of female sexuality and male desire: short skirts, revealing tops, high heels, shiny red, sensuous lipstick. Women's sexuality is the source of their power over men and appears to be linked to their success in the workplace. Much of this is never explicitly mentioned in the magazine texts, but it is signalled clearly enough in the images, through the things the women are doing and the interactions they engage in.

The computer is also important in that it is a PC computer. Often women are shown with laptop computers which suggest mobility and independence. This computer suggests work where the woman is tied to the desk. But most remarkable in the image is the lack of everyday objects that can be found in work environments. We discuss this under the next heading.

In the *Marie Claire* photograph, accompanying the text regarding work previously discussed in the chapter, we find a woman holding a notebook or agenda and a pen, whose clothing is less glamorous and informal and perhaps 'creative', complete with hippy beads. This suggests a kind of work which requires an agenda or somewhere to write down ideas, therefore suggesting a kind of job that does not have a daily, repeating routine. The clothes too suggest no formal regimentation, as might be characteristic of a faceless bureaucratic job, but someone who can choose their own clothing, importantly, someone who has the power to do so. While the text communicates a cynical self-interest by using trendy language and confident directives along with technical business terms, the image appears much softer, creative and pleasant.

Settings

We can also look at the way that settings are used to communicate general ideas, to connote discourses and their values, identities and actions. In the *Cosmopolitan* photograph, as in the *Marie Claire* photograph, the settings only hint at office work, where only a few attributes stand for work in an abstracted way. In the *Cosmopolitan* image the woman is not really using the computer. There is no evidence of any activity at all in fact. The emptiness of the setting suggests the luxury of space, as is often found in corporate entrance halls. We could imagine the opposite effect, were it made to look like she was in a very small cluttered space. In the *Marie Claire* image too there is clearly a luxury of space with very large windows and a high ceiling.

Important in both of these photographs is the use of high key lighting, which suggests optimism. In both of these photographs the setting serves to symbolise work rather than documenting it. What is signified is glamour, modernism, optimism, creativity and excitement. In the *Cosmopolitan* text, the topic was doing exercise in the workplace. In *Marie Claire*, it was the cynical getting

ahead while your colleagues are losing their jobs. In both cases, photographs of real women in real work settings would have made the texts appear very odd and may have revealed their silliness. But these symbolic images load the texts with the above values and therefore allow them to signify discourses of women's agency. These abstracted settings are one way that these women's lifestyle magazines create a fantasy world through the use of symbolic images, which allow a particular kind of agency that is suffused with women's ability to seduce and the glamour of fashion, and to signify power. For the producers of *Cosmopolitan*, a 'brand' is a set of representations and values that are not indissolubly tied to a specific product.

What *Cosmopolitan* sells to its readers are not magazines, but connotators of independence, power and fun. In sum, these representations of women are not realistic, an aspect which some critics of women's magazines have pointed out. Women's lives are presented as playful fantasies. Thus, the heritage of 1960s' feminism, with the idea of the woman as independent from the domestic situation, as fully able to enjoy her own sexuality, has become to some extent intertwined with consumerism (Irigaray, 1985).

Below we see the homepage from where the text analysed earlier in the chapter for the vision the Heart of England Health Trust was taken. We compare this with the homepage from the North Glamorgan Trust to draw out the particular choices used. What is important here is to think about what is being foregrounded and what backgrounded, as this terrain is mapped out for us visually.

Earlier we described the way that in terms of language choices the Trust represented itself and its aims through abstractions: 'Cherishing', 'Excellence' 'Finding a Way', 'Innovation for Advancement', 'Working Together'. We considered the way that this was part of the empty corporate business language that has come to dominate public institutions and backgrounds actual concrete matters about facilities, staffing and treatment. Looking below and comparing the two Trust homepages in terms of the visual semiotic choices, we can see that the Glamorgan page contains real settings with its photographs of actual hospitals, whereas North Glamorgan itself appears to be represented in the banner bar through a cartoon of countryside which links with a graphic of a heart-rate monitor.

Somewhat like the *Cosmopolitan* image described above, this serves to idealise North Glamorgan. In contrast, the Heart of England homepage displays settings only in terms of abstracted spaces like those found in *Cosmopolitan*. The iconography that connotes medicine is the stethoscope around the neck of the man at the front of the image in the banner. Also important in the image is the headset worn by the woman to the right of the image. This is to signify 'communication', presumably part of the mission value of 'Cherishing' and 'Working Together'.

What is important in this image is the gaze of the participants. Three of them engage with the viewer, smiling warmly and striking relaxed poses. The woman with the headset looks off into the distance thoughtfully, presumably engaged in friendly chatter with a person requiring treatment.
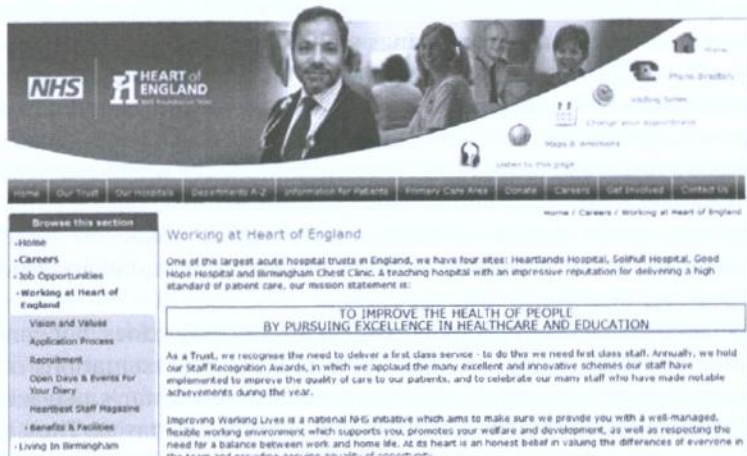
Figure 4 Heart of England Health Trust homepage

Just as the language serves to conceal the changes through a vibrant lexis, so visually we find semiotic choices not to document practices but to symbolise 'communication' and 'caring'. More will be said about these two homepages across the following chapters.

Salience

Salience is where certain features in compositions are made to stand out, to draw our attention to foreground certain meanings. Such features will have the central symbolic value in the composition. There are a number of ways that salience can be achieved in images. We list these below. But we must be aware that different principles of salience may be more or less important in each composition and that they will work together in different ways often to create hierarchies of salience.

- *Potent cultural symbols*: Certain elements carry much cultural symbolism. It is a good idea to scan the composition for such elements. In the Health Trust image above it is important that we see the stethoscope to signify medical practice, but also the clear importance of the woman communicating and the fact that everyone is smiling. If we had a broken leg, would we care if everyone was smiling or would we want them to simply treat us? And quite simply, the Heart of England page includes only people and not settings, as does the Glamorgan page.
- *Size*: This can be used to indicate ranking of importance, ranging from the largest to the smallest. On the Heart of England page we can see that the doctor is slightly larger than the other employees, although only slightly
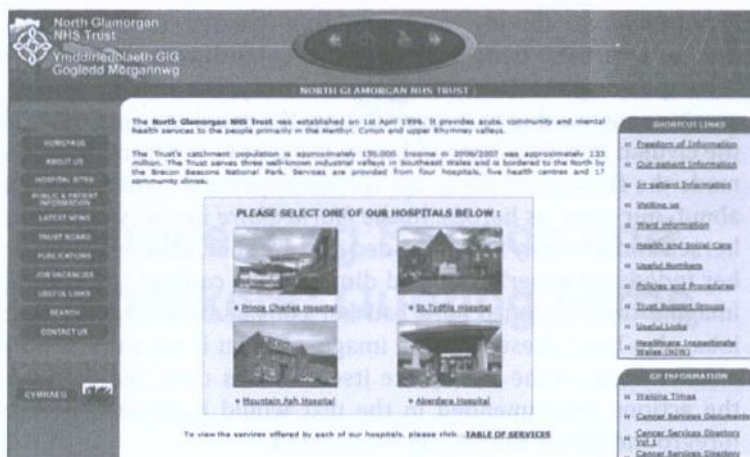
Figure 5   North Glamorgan Health Trust homepage

so. He is therefore the most important but in other ways only part of the 'team', of the 'we' who speak through the language as 'having values' and as 'cherishing you'. In contrast on the North Glamorgan page, it is the hospitals themselves that are given salience in terms of size. We might view this as being more indicative of a discourse from a former era where there is some remaining attempt to document actual services rather than signify 'values'.

- *Colour*: This can simply be the use of striking colours, rich saturated colours or contrasts. Less salient elements may have more muted or less saturated colours. We can see the use of richer colours for salience on the North Essex Health Trust webpage on page 99 in Chapter 4. The warmth of the faces of the two people stands out against the colder blue and white. Without these, this page would look very barren. Here salience is given to the pleasure brought to the service users. Again the emphasis is on her being pleased not with treatment, but with the broader way was she dealt with in terms of communication.

- *Tone*: This can simply be the use of brightness to attract the eye. Advertisers often use brighter tones on products themselves to make them shine. On the North Essex webpage we can see that the faces of the two people are glowing with highlights. This helps them to literally shine off the page.

- *Focus*: In compositions different levels of focus can be used to give salience to an element. It can be heightened to exaggerate details, or focus can be reduced. In the Helmand province story earlier in this chapter, we find the soldier in the foreground is in focus, whereas the civilian fades into the setting. He serves only to foreground the experience of the soldier. At this point in this conflict there was considerable effort to gain public support for the presence of the troops, not by explaining the reasons for the war, but by stressing how brave and dedicated they were.

- *Foregrounding*: Simply, foregrounding creates importance. Elements that are further back may become subordinate. In the photograph accompanying the Helmand province story, the British soldier is given greater salience due to foregrounding. We could imagine the difference if the civilian in the background were brought to the front. This would have made the story more about the civilian experience when, as it stands, it is about 'our boys' as heroes. In the *Marie Claire* image, we find the woman herself considerably foregrounded in close shot. This serves to foreground her individual experiences and diminish the context and setting. We can imagine the difference here had her colleagues, who were to lose their jobs, also been present in the image, or even if we were simply to have a fuller view of the workplace itself. In this case, the consequences of the actions recommended in the text would have been brought to the foreground rather than being suppressed.
- *Overlapping*: This is like foregrounding since it has the effect of placing elements in front of others. This gives the impression that the element is in front of others. On the Heart of England webpage, we find the doctor overlaps the other social actors. But at the next level we find the nurse and the telephone operator at the same level. Care and customer service through 'communication' here appear to be ranked at the same level.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have begun to look at the way we can more systematically analyse some of the basic semiotic choices found in texts both linguistically and visually in ways that allow us to draw out the broader discourses being communicated and hence to reveal the ideology communicated. Basic choices in words and iconography can be used to create a field of meaning. This can serve to both foreground and background, or even suppress, some meanings or to connote and symbolise others. This mapping proves an ideological interpretation of events and social practices, which imply identities and actions even if not overtly stated.

What we have shown is that much of this meaning lies at the implicit level. It is only through attention to linguistic and visual detail that we can reveal just what these implicit meanings are. We saw that we can look for the kinds of oppositions that texts set up and the importance of looking for words that are overused. We also found that there can be important differences between what is communicated through words and through visual elements. What follows in the remaining chapters are ways to breakdown the analysis of word and visual semiotic choices into more specific categories.