

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH FOCUS

I chose the topic of representation in the media as it is an area that appeals to me and links into my wider interests and would allow me to study articles on a topic that interests me. I was inspired to focus on the representation of Islam after reading 'Manufacturing Consent' by Noam Chomsky as the section on the influence of Islamophobic language linked well to work I had covered as part of the A Level syllabus. Whilst it is not directly related, Owen Jones' 'Chavs' also contained interesting ideas about tabloid demonization of immigrants through language. Through my wider reading, I also found a research paper by The University Of Birmingham on the presentation of Muslims in the media. I will also include other key work by theorists such as Dwight Bolinger and David Crystal as well as Sapir and Whorf and the idea of linguistic determinism to compliment my analysis. These theorists link to the idea of the influence language can have on an individual and therefore would help my work on representation.

Awareness of A02
- wider reading of the field

I expect to find that right wing papers are more likely to present a negative image of Islam through the use of epithets, semantic fields and negative constructions. I also expect to see that tabloid newspapers use less subtle methods of representation such as a greater amount of emotive lexis and hyperbolic premodification. Finally I would suggest that broadsheet media is more likely to use techniques such as writing in a higher register to gain power.

Clear A01 ability

Clear hypotheses linked to A01

METHODOLOGY

I have selected 4 articles from a variety of left and right wing biases, all concerning Islam, from both tabloid and broadsheet publications. Moreover all articles were published within the same week (September 3rd 2017) to ensure that as many factors as possible are controlled. The articles I have chosen are 'The Most Feared Buzzwords Associated With Islam...' from *The Independent*, 'Of course British Muslims are being held back' by *The Guardian*, 'Warning on UK Muslim ghettos' by the *Daily Mail* and 'Why Do Islamists Hate Women?' by *The Sun*. I will be looking at the use of semantic fields, register and pre-modification in each article, comparing the presentation of Muslims by each journalist. To include quantitative data, I will produce graphs detailing the differing semantic fields and the positive and negative connotations of pre-modifiers. This collection of data will help me come to a conclusion based upon the data.

Strong A03 awareness

ANALYSIS - useful to split this up into appropriate subheadings

Firstly the *Sun* uses a semantic field of conflict to link Islam to terror. The journalist uses lexis with violent connotations such as 'targets', 'massacre' and 'perpetrator' to link Islam to terrorism. One can link this to the Sapir and Whorf hypothesis which states that language influences the ideology of readers, suggesting that the journalist selects words from this semantic field to demonise Muslims. The theory was developed in the early 20th century so it may be less accurate due to the rise of the internet and the evolution of media presence as a result of this. A Guardian article challenges this theory of linguistic relativity by suggesting that 'we aren't born with words for everything that we understand'¹ and therefore the theory is flawed. The political bias of the *Sun* is strongly patriotic and has a right leaning readership so the use of semantics would support this bias. The audience of the tabloid paper is also predominantly of a lower socio-economic class and therefore cares less about the authenticity of the content and more about the entertainment value. Overall, the lexis used is loaded to create a bias against Muslims and influence the reader's opinion, suggesting that Islam is a danger to our society.

Data clearly applied to A02

need to unpick this further

challenge of A02

clear, strong links to A03

¹ Livingstone J (2014) Relatively Speaking: Do Our Words Influence How We Think?, *The Guardian*

This is similar to the use of semantic fields in *The Daily Mail* article where the journalist uses deliberately loaded lexis linked to brutality to create connotations of hostility. Words such as 'extremist', 'suicide bombers', 'life-and-death' and 'dangerous' are used by the author to associate Islam with violence. This use of extreme language links to the work of Owen Jones who writes that 'media organisations relish hunting down extreme examples that might be used to tap into widespread prejudices and insecurities'². One can challenge this interpretation for its strong left wing bias as the book's main focus is attacking the right wing press. The journalist creates a contrast with the repetition of the word 'values' to associate Islam with the demise of 'British values', terms both mentioned in the article. Mark Thompson talks about the emotional reaction that this lexis creates in and states that 'Islam and the beliefs of other minorities are treated with a contempt that alienates them... you shouldn't be surprised if words or images which are taken to be notably provocative trigger an extreme response because the average reader is only aware of what newspapers tell them'³. Thompson suggests that the print media uses emotionally biased lexis to attack and demonise Islam because most people ^{are} only aware of what the media informs them. Overall *The Daily Mail* uses semantic fields of terror and brutality which reinforces right wing bias in an attempt to influence the ideology of the reader against Islam.

Excellent support of AO2 + appropriate challenge

Strong considered analysis

This is contrasted by *The Independent* using a semantic field of misrepresentation to show how Muslims are a poorly represented in the media. Words such as 'misconceptions' and 'stereotypes' show how preconceptions about Islam have negatively influenced public perspectives. In particular, the verb 'brainwashed' shows how people have been turned against Muslims by the language of the media. This again links into the power of the media and shows how much power they hold, being able to shape public attitudes. Again, this form of influential power is mentioned in Owen Jones' book 'The Establishment' where he states that 'the political views of media owners set the tone for their newspapers, transforming them into effective political lobbying machines'⁴. This quote suggests that newspapers have powerful influence over the political ideology of our country and that this can damage the public and government's attitude towards certain groups of people. This also fits with Noam Chomsky's description of the media where he describes their 'function to amuse and entertain whilst simultaneously inoculating individuals with the values and beliefs... this role requires systematic propaganda'⁵. Whilst this interpretation is slightly hyperbolic, the concept of newspapers using shock tactics to manipulate people and misrepresent minorities. On the whole, the journalist uses a semantic field of representation to show how Muslims are not properly understood by most in our society.

links to AO2

Good, appropriate challenge of AO2

Moreover, this negativity is shown through *The Sun*'s use of noun phrases to present Islam in a negative manner and attack those who defend them. Firstly the phrase 'the usual post-massacre playlist' is used to mock liberal buskers playing uplifting music after an attack as the neologism 'playlist' juxtaposes the extremely violent connotations of the word 'massacre'. This suggests that violence is now so common that it is as trivial, assembling a playlist. It also mocks the ineffectiveness of the general public's response as it shows how people are using something as mundane as a playlist in response to terrorism. This is also linked to the adjective 'usual' which again shows the frequency of these attacks. The journalist has created this noun-phrase to suggest an alarming frequency and normalisation of terror whilst also attacking optimists. Moreover, the journalist uses the phrase 'Al-

Sound AO1 linked to wider AO3

Receptive analysis of AO1 linked to strong AO3 considered

² Jones O (2015) *The Establishment*, Penguin

³ Thompson M (2016) *Enough Said*, Penguin

⁴ Jones O (2015) *The Establishment*, Penguin

⁵ Chomsky N (1988) *Manufacturing Consent*, Pantheon



Qaeda linked cell' to make the perpetrators look organised whilst simultaneously linking them to rebels in the Middle East. Whilst the group was not formally affiliated with Al-Qaeda, *The Sun* has linked the two groups so that its right wing readership associates Islam as a religion with violent radicals in a separate continent. One can link this to an essay by George Orwell where, in his essay *Politics And The English Language*, states that 'If thought corrupts language then language can also corrupt thought'⁶. This statement is similar to that of the Sapir Whorf hypothesis and shows how language can have an influence on public opinion, so if the journalist uses a negatively loaded word it is being used to 'corrupt' the reader and influence their beliefs. *The Sun* uses a variety of noun phrases to provide greater depth to the subjects of the article, whether it's linking them to a rebel militia or showing how terror has become a part of our society. This paints a negative and radical image of Islam and attacks those who do not act to stop it.

perceptive + insightful
AO2

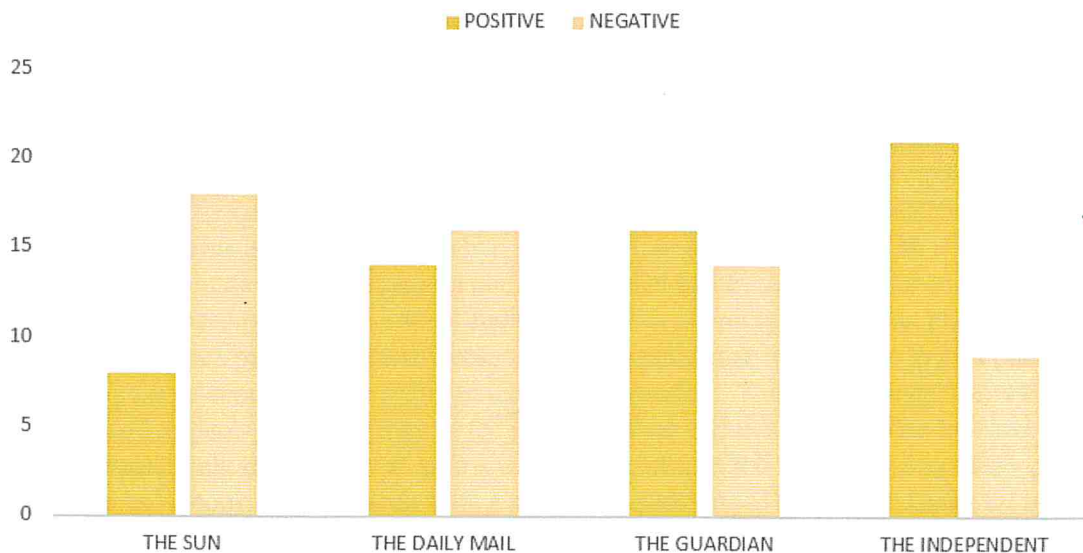
useful context to have before pronoun

This is a strong counterpoint to the article in *The Independent* which uses premodified lexis to present Muslims as victims of irrational prejudice. This is shown by post-modification in the phrase 'Saudi Arabia's oppressive regime', displaying her opinion that the Muslim country is a poor representation of the religion and has a negative effect on people's view as a whole. The writer describes Saudi Arabia as a 'regime', a word that has connotations of an authoritarian government. She uses this to show how Saudi Arabia is a politically constrained country and that it does not offer a complete picture of Islam as a result of this. This is further exemplified with the modification 'oppressive' that suggests that the government is restricting the freedom of citizens and is therefore an unsuitable country to base opinions on. Dwight Bolinger references this loaded nature of language when he states 'Language is not a neutral weapon. It is a thousand way biased' before going on to say that it can be 'utilised to great effect to influence political or social beliefs'⁷. This suggests that language is a tool which can be wielded by an author to shape the ideology of the reader. The writer presents Islam as a faith bound to unjust connotations and the victim of uninformed prejudice.

As to be understanding of data in relation to AO3

perceptive AO2 continued

I have produced a visual depiction of the premodification in each article and included several graphs detailing the use of pre-modifiers by each newspaper and whether they have positive or negative connotations generally. Words with no obvious connotations were discarded and I selected roughly the first 30 examples (The Sun only had 26).



useful illustration of data

⁶ Orwell G (1946) *Politics And The English Language*, Why I Write, Penguin

⁷ Bolinger D (1980) *Language The Loaded Weapon*, Longman

book written by the columnist. This can be linked to a quote by journalist Katherine Graham who said 'news is something someone wants suppressed, everything else is just advertising' as it shows that the columnist is capitalising upon Islamophobia in his article to sell copies of his book. Unusually the article contains low frequency words like 'loathe' and 'bafflement' which are not as commonly used by tabloid writers. This is because the journalist is, like *The Guardian*, trying to gain overt prestige to gain credibility and seem intelligent. *The Sun* adopts a deliberately mixed register to appeal to a mass readership and convey its anti-Islam message to a wider platform.

Perceptive awareness of AO1

This is

Unlike *The Daily Mail* article which uses a tabloid style structure and a hybrid mode as well as low frequency lexis. The journalist uses an abundance of low frequency words to try and seem more informed; this can be seen through examples such as 'bigamy', 'separatist' and 'ordained' that have Latinate origins. One can suggest that this is to add validity to the argument but also because the readership of the *Daily Mail* is better educated, older and consider themselves more intellectual than that of *The Sun*. Despite this fact, the two extracts do share a common structure and mode. *The Mail* uses short sentences that almost reflect spoken language, like *The Sun*, and shorter, more accessible paragraphs that make it easier to read. This accessibility means that it is easier to attract a self-selecting audience and convey the message of the text. *The Daily Mail* uses low frequency lexis and a reader friendly structure to give credibility to their argument and attract a wider audience.

Useful parallels in discourse mode (AO1)

CONCLUSION

My findings were close to what I predicted in my hypothesis however certain aspects were unexpected. My graphs showed that the right wing texts used more lexis with negative connotations than the left wing ones in order to present a hostile image of Muslims, an idea I predicted in my hypothesis. I found that broadsheet publications tended to adopt a higher register however I was surprised to see how much *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail* had in common besides their political leaning, one using more low frequency lexis than expected and the other using a structure that was atypical of the genre. I also found that tabloids used a greater amount of hyperbolic lexis but fewer pre-modifiers than I had expected. These findings support the idea of an overall negative image of Islam.

Clear conclusions linked to hypotheses

EVALUATION

If I ^{were} to redo my investigation I would choose a broader range of texts, possibly a greater number, to make my findings more representative of the media as a whole. I also feel like I could have approached my topic from a spoken language perspective and analysed transcripts from news programs with various biases such as CNN and Fox as it may have produced more interesting points of comparison. The language levels I had selected were not particularly challenging and I feel like my investigation would have benefitted from selecting less obvious areas to analyse to produce more insightful findings.

Useful additional AO3 considered → broadcast media

- AO1 - Analysis of language methods is insightful, incisive and systematic with no errors. An assured understanding with appropriate terminology and an academic register.
- AO2 - Perceptively applied theories and sources integrated with ease and accurately and appropriately challenged. Reliability is consistently considered.
- AO3 - Largely perceptive understanding of context but not always consistent. When context is fully considered, alternative interpretations are convincingly raised.