

Kobie van Krieken

# Linguistic Viewpoint in Crime News Narratives

## Form, Function and Impact

In the coverage of criminal events, newspapers often publish narratives which combine characteristics of journalistic discourse with elements of literary fiction. The function of these stories is not so much to inform readers about what happened, but to create an immersive reading experience. How does the language of crime news narratives contribute to this function? And what is the impact of such stories on the audience? This dissertation adopts a multi-method approach to answer these questions.

Building on Mental Space Theory and Conceptual Blending Theory, this thesis develops a cognitive linguistic model of narrative news discourse. The model is used to analyze the linguistic manifestation of viewpoint in news narratives in qualitative and quantitative ways.

Findings of the various studies show how news narratives make strategic use of grammar, referential expressions, tense, and implicit viewpoints to describe criminal events from the perceptual and psychological viewpoints of eyewitnesses. Speech and thought reports are found to function either as a means to dramatize the narratives or as a strategy to legitimize the narrative reconstruction of reality. A diachronic corpus analysis reveals that the dominant function of discourse reports has shifted over time from dramatization to legitimization. Finally, an experimental study indicates that crime news narratives enable readers to take the position of a mediated witness and virtually experience the crime from up close.

This book is of interest to scholars in the fields of cognitive linguistics, journalism studies, narratology, stylistics, and communication studies.

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