Lecture 2
Linguistic theories applicable to political communication: An overview

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Framing theory

- *The elements of a situation that best convey the gist of an event or problem.*

- *A concept that summarizes the basic characteristics of a topic.*

  - *"To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."*

    (Entman, 1993, p. 52)

Framing theory cont.

- About the *content* of the news, rather than the *topic*

- Can be a phrase, image, analogy, or metaphor used to communicate the essence of an issue or event.

- Frames simplify the story-writing process for journalists and help audiences make sense of what they encounter in the news.

Examples of framing

- Vegetables without pesticides vs "vegetables"

- (not the other way around..)

Examples of framing

- "Arbetsgivare" vs. "Arbetsköpare"
  - Employer,
  - someone who gives or offers work(opportunity)
  - someone who is buying someone's labour

Two aspects of the framing process

- Frame-building (-> news)
  - the development of frames and their inclusion in news stories.   (how the frames come into existence)

- Frame-setting (news -> public)
  - describes audience consumption of news with frames and audience members' consequent adoption of frames as ways to understand issues and problems.

Culture and social norms

- A society's culture provides the basic terms and ways of interpreting the world

- An issues' frames are defined, in part, by the underlying culture.

- In addition, frames are constrained by the norms of a society.
  - When a journalist (or anyone) decides between competing frames for presenting an issue
  - ….they must consider what is normal and acceptable for the audience.
  - So, they might have an agenda, but the frames must be likely to resonate with the recipients

organizational pressures and constraints

- Routines that influence how the news is produced.
  - *"rules—mostly unwritten—that give the media worker guidance." (Shoemaker and Reese (2014, p. 164))*
- May influence when and how frames are applied to issues; they can even prescribe the use of specific frames for different situations.
  - *public debate over political issues often features opposing groups such as political parties.*
- Often emphasis on the conflict between such groups – "conflict is central to the issue"

Frame advocates.

- Interest groups, corporations, government actors, others?
- The most effective advocates produce frames consistent with a society's (or at least the target group) culture and norms.
- Contesting advocates -> frames compete for public attention and acceptance.
- Frames for presenting a chronic problem can change over time (economy)
- The journalist themself (or anyone sending a message...)
  - Media is sometimes portrayed as politically biased

Frame-setting

- The effect of frames on receivers' beliefs and feelings about issues, problems, and policies.

- The basic idea:
  - people have perceptions about causes and consequences of public issues and problems, and who is responsible.

- describes how public perceptions of what is applicable to explaining a problem are influenced by how the media frame that problem (Price & Tewksbury, 1997).

Applicability

- the mental associations people make between concepts.

- If people perceive that a problem is associated with a concept they believe that the latter is *applicable* to the former.
    - "poverty" Rel. "high_unemployment"

- can be established by
    - explicitly stating the connection
    - implying it

Theory of communicative action

- Habermas (1984/87; 1989)

- Set of ideal speech conditions to arrive at shared view of reasonable goals

  - E.g. freedom of speech, lack of coercion, restraint from organized autorities
  - Provides framework for assessing public opinion process,
  - ..but assumes "rationality undistorted by interested parties"

Digital media and youth engagement

- Bennett et al. (2013)

- Established political and media institutions lose authority in postmodern, postbureaucratic societies

- "rise of a participatory digital media culture" replacing old-style civic engagement.

Theories of Voice

- Who can send a message and be heard?
- Prompted by "the arrival of new media"
- More voices can be expressed and heard
- Voices are diverse and this may lead to a more fragmented political conversation

    (dogwhistle effects?)

- Incivility
  - Potentially detrimental to democracy (e.g. Rossini, 2022; Anderson et al., 2014, etc.)

Presupposition

- A proposition that has to be accepted for an utterance to make sense

- Has been shown to be connected to more shallow processing, thus can be used to "smuggle" information into the discourse model/common ground. (Vallauri)

Presupposition – the basics

"…a proposition that P presupposes that Q iff Q must be true in order that P have a truth-value at all. "

(Stalnaker, 1974 p.48)

Triggered by e.g.
    definite noun phrases (my brother, his house, the car…)
    change-of-state verbs (start, begin..)
    factive attitude verbs (know, realise, understand…)

Presupposition – the basics

- *The queen of England is bald*

Presupposition – the basics

- *The queen of England is bald*
    - *≫ There is a queen of England*

Presupposition – the basics

- *The queen of England is bald*
  ≫ *There is a queen of England*

- *The queen of England is not bald*   *(constancy under negation)*
  ≫ *There is a queen of England*

Accommodation

- If an utterance presupposes a proposition *P* and a listener, *L*, is not previously aware of the truth value of *P*, (but has no reason to assume that *P* is false), *L* will integrate P into their discourse model. (see Lewis, 1969; Stalnaker, 1974)

  - I am planning to visit my cousin tomorrow
    >> I have a cousin

  Presuppositions are more persuasive than assertions, if accommodated by addressees

  (Thoma, Becker & Kissler, 2022)

An example

"Alla partier behöver inse att parallellsamhällen med kriminalitet, extremism och hederskultur kommer att fortsätta bereda ut sig om inte utvecklingen vänds"

(Nyamko Sabuni and Johan Pehrson, The Liberal Party, 2022)

(Gustafsson, 2024)

An example

- " all parties must realise that parallel societies with criminality, extremism and honor culture will continue to spread unless the development is turned around"

    (Nyamko Sabuni and Johan Pehrson, The Liberal Party)

Presupposition examples

"Alla partier behöver <u>inse</u> att parallellsamhällen med kriminalitet,

all parties must <u>realise</u> that parallel societies with criminality,

extremism och hederskultur kommer att <u>fortsätta</u> bereda ut sig

extremism and honor culture   will   <u>continue</u> to spread

om inte <u>utvecklingen</u> vänds"

Unless <u>the development</u> is turned around

(Nyamko Sabuni and Johan Pehrson, The Liberal Party)

Presupposition examples

all parties must <u>realise</u> that parallel societies with criminality
    - you can't realise something that is not a fact

extremism and honor culture will <u>continue</u> to spread
    - in order for x to continue x must be currently happening

unless <u>the development</u> is turned around
    - the/this development is an actual fact

Conversational implicature

Paul Grice 1913 – 1988

Sometimes we draw conclusions from utterances over and above the semantic content of the utterance – is there a system to this?

"Sam has nine apples"
 -> Sam has at least nine apples (logical reading)
+> Sam has exactly nine apples (implicature)

Principle of cooporation

- How can an utterance provide more information than what is explicitly said?

- Grice: The dialogue participants are expected to follow the Cooperative Principle

> *"Make you conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of talk exchange in which you are involved"*

Grice's maxims (paraphrased)

- Quantity: Say enough, but not too much

- Quality: Just say what you have reason to believe is true

- Relation (relevance): Say only what is relevant

- Manner: Be clear and unambigous

Grice's maxims (paraphrased)

- Quantity: Say enough, but not too much
  - Witholding information, what you say is true, but not enough

- Quality: Just say what you have reason to believe is true
  - There is an expectation of adequate evidence

- Relation (relevance): Say only what is relevant
  - Principle behind agenda setting – if it is talked about it must be relevant
  - Relevance judgements rely heavily on background assumptions and what is activated in the context. - > Thursday – topoi !

- Manner: Be clear and unambigous
  - When a political statement is not clear, it is hard to evaluate

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