

In Activity 3.2 on bias on page 70, there was a list of headlines about Christine O'Donnell from different newspapers and news organisations about one story published on one day. In groups, look at how different newspapers report the same events. Choose a news story and find five different headlines on it. Compare and contrast the headlines. Is there bias in any of the headlines? How is language used to achieve certain effects?

'Freedom of expression – in particular, freedom of the press – guarantees popular participation in the decisions and actions of government, and popular participation is the essence of our democracy.'

Corazon Aquino (1933–2009)



Emotive language is language that both reflects the emotional tone of the writer and instigates an emotional response from the reader. It is also known as loaded language.

Censorship is the intentional removal of information that the censor, be it a government or media agent, deems harmful, sensitive or controversial.

Euphemisms are words or phrases that are substituted for more direct words or phrases in an attempt to make things easier to accept or less embarrassing.

euphemistic words and phrases used in reports about modern wars. Next to them is a more direct way of saying what they mean. The examples reveal how language can be used as a tool by governments and journalists to manufacture consent and, in this case, justify wars.

Euphemism

collateral damage
to neutralise
friendly fire
enhanced interrogation
air campaign

Meaning

death of civilians
to kill
accidental killing of soldiers on the same side
torture
bombing

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

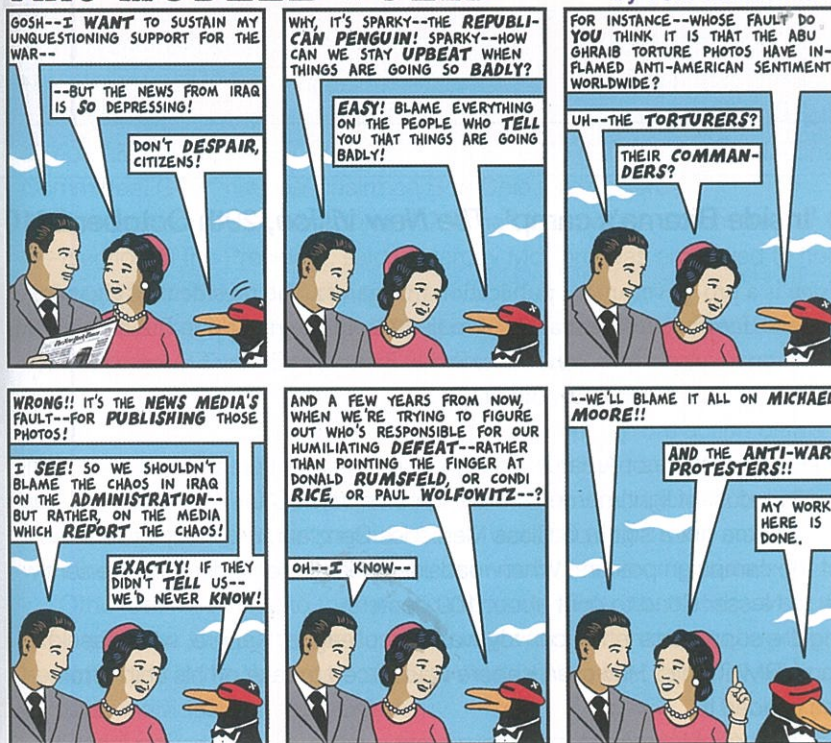


Figure 3.5 While Sparky the republican penguin seems comical, do you think he presents a case for censorship that many people subscribe to?

Vague language

Some words in the English language have very clear meanings, such as *chair* or *bachelor*. Others words, especially quantifiers, such as *a lot*, *frequently* or *far away*, are vaguer and may mean something different to one reader or another. Part of becoming more media literate is learning to spot vague language. Writers may use such devices to avoid honest reporting while readers can make false presumptions if they do not spot vague language.

In Text 3.3 you will be looking at the front page of a tabloid newspaper, *The Sun*. In one of the articles, we see vague language about a 'stunning model', who was the 'passion flower' of Jean Collin's husband. This husband planned to 'ditch' his soap-star wife, after stealing 'half her fortune' and running away with his lover. As critical readers we have to ask ourselves several questions about this vague language: How one can quantify this lover's good looks? What is a 'passion flower'? Was he 'ditching' his wife or was she divorcing him? How much exactly is 'half her fortune'? There is room for several interpretations to this text, which is why we should be wary of vague language.

Part 2 – Language and mass communication

'Political language ... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.'

George Orwell (1903–50)

HL

Higher level

Complete a comparative textual analysis of Texts 3.1 and 3.2 as if they are texts in the Paper 1 exam. Use the tools that you have developed in Chapters 1 and 2, looking at audience, purpose, theme, content, tone, mood, stylistic devices and structure.

Activity 3.3

Texts 3.1 and 3.2 are two newspaper articles which both report on political campaigns.

- 1 Read the two articles and find examples of emotive language, euphemisms and vague language in each article. Add to the examples that have been provided in the table below.
- 2 Copy and complete a table like the one below with the examples you have found.
- 3 Compare and contrast the linguistic devices used in the two texts. Look out for further examples in other texts you read.

	Emotive language	Euphemisms	Vague language
Text 3.1	The man was forced to take off his shirt.	People's president	... about 100 posters
Text 3.2	We deplore action of this kind in or out of politics.	The bugging incident	... the mystery deepens.

Text 3.1 'Inside Bitama's camp', *The New Vision*, 29th October 2010

The New Vision is a pro-government publication in Uganda. The president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, faced a presidential election in 2011. In the run-up to the election this article reported on an opposition candidate, Paddy Bitama, and how he arrived at the official nomination as an election candidate.

Comedian Paddy Bitama of Amarula Family got off the list of presidential candidates in a dust of light moments. Having set off from Chez Johnson, Nakulabye, Bitama got a suit, a C Class Mercedes Benz and a convoy of vehicles but forgot the campaign posters. When roadside cheerers reminded him, he sent DJ Messe to Nasser Road to print about 100 posters.

Among the supporters in the convoy was his colleague, Kapere, who was wearing an NRM¹ T-shirt. However, Kapere was forced to take off his shirt after colleagues noticed it.

On reaching Kisekka market, the convoy met a man who was having lunch by the roadside. Bitama grabbed an Irish potato from his plate saying as a people's president, he had to eat with them. The man just shook his head.

At Spear Motors, when the Police asked why his car had no sticker,² he claimed to have lost it adding that he was too busy to pick another one from the Electoral Commission.

Bitama also had sh2m³ in cash but no one bothered to count it because he was supposed to have banked sh8m before going for nomination.

Meanwhile he had assured bodaboda⁴ riders that he had a deal with a filling station in Lugogo to refund their fuel. However, when they reached Lugogo and the bodabodas demanded for their fuel, he told them they would get it after he has been sworn in as president.

¹ **NRM** the National Resistance Movement of President Yoweri Museveni

² **sticker** a licence granted by the police that must be displayed on a candidate's vehicle to show it is part of an election convoy

³ **sh2m** 2 million Ugandan shillings

⁴ **bodaboda** bicycle taxi

discussion

- 1 Do you detect any bias in this article? Which words or phrases indicate possible bias?
- 2 What light does the text shed on Ugandan culture and politics?

Text 3.2 'GOP security aide among 5 arrested in bugging affair', Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, *The Washington Post*, 19th June 1972

In 1972 five men were caught breaking into the Watergate Hotel in Washington DC, where the Democratic Party were organising their presidential campaign. Investigative journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein discovered a link between the five burglars and the Republican President, Richard Nixon. Text 3.2 is the article that broke the story of Nixon's involvement in the bugging scandal which eventually led to his resignation.

One of the five men arrested early Saturday in the attempt to bug the Democratic National Committee headquarters is the salaried security coordinator for President Nixon's reelection committee.

The suspect, former CIA employee James W. McCord Jr., 53, also holds a separate contract to provide security services to the Republican National Committee, GOP¹ national chairman Bob Dole said yesterday.

Former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, head of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, said yesterday McCord was employed to help install that committee's own security system.

In a statement issued in Los Angeles, Mitchell said McCord and the other four men arrested at Democratic headquarters Saturday 'were not operating either in our behalf or with our consent' in the alleged bugging attempt.

Dole issued a similar statement, adding that 'we deplore action of this kind in or out of politics.' An aide to Dole said he was unsure at this time exactly what security services McCord was hired to perform by the National Committee.

Police sources said last night that they were seeking a sixth man in connection with the attempted bugging. The sources would give no other details.

Other sources close to the investigation said yesterday that there still was no explanation as to why the five suspects might have attempted to bug Democratic headquarters in the Watergate at 2600 Virginia Ave., NW, or if they were working for other individuals or organizations.

'We're baffled at this point ... the mystery deepens,' a high Democratic Party source said.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien said the 'bugging incident ... raised the ugliest questions about the integrity of the political process that I have encountered in a quarter century.

'No mere statement of innocence by Mr. Nixon's campaign manager will dispel these questions.'

The Democratic presidential candidates were not available for comment yesterday.

O'Brien, in his statement, called on Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst to order an immediate, 'searching professional investigation' of the entire matter by the FBI.

A spokesman for Kleindienst said yesterday, 'The FBI is already investigating. ... Their investigative report will be turned over to the criminal division for appropriate action.'

The White House did not comment.

¹ **GOP** the Grand Old Party, or GOP, is a nickname for the Republican Party



Figure 3.6 Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward at *The Washington Post* in 1972.

discussion

- 1 After learning that this text eventually led to President Nixon's resignation, did you expect a more sensational story? How does the use of language in this report serve its purpose well?
- 2 Notice that Text 3.2 quotes a lot of people. Does the use of quotes make the reporting more or less biased? Compare the use of quotes in Text 3.2 with their use in Text 3.1.