Positioning readers in newspaper discourse: A contrastive case study

Izaskun Elorza[*]
University of Salamanca (Spain)

Abstract

A corpus-based analysis was carried out with the aim of revealing dissimilarities in newspaper discourse in Spanish and English which can both reflect and be due to differences in the use of cultural patterns. For this purpose, two small corpora consisting of the news articles covering an event of global importance were compiled. This event was the world food summit organized by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and the corpora cover all the texts which were published on the opening day of the summit (3 June 2008). One corpus consists of all the articles appearing in the electronic version of *El País* newspaper and the other contains all the articles from the electronic version of the *Guardian*.

In order to compare the two corpora, a qualitative-quantitative analysis adapted from O'Halloran (2007, 2009) was carried out using corpus linguistics methodology and discourse analysis. The analysis reveals that *newsworthiness* (Bell, 1991) is higher in *El País* than in the *Guardian* and that each newspaper aligns itself crucially with different participants. These results show how each newspaper has constructed its own agenda of the summit so that each readership is offered a different account and, therefore, is positioned in a different way in each case.

Introduction

As face-to-face intercultural communication often reminds us, problems of understanding people from a different culture to our own are not always due to our lack of knowledge about them, but rather to the fact that we *already have a model* of the "different" culture (Agar, 1994, p. 224). These misunderstandings are usually related to mismatches between what we expect from "the others", for example about how they will react to a situation in particular or how they will value some kind of behaviour, and what they really say and/or do.

An important dimension of those models is that they are constructed socially and this is why mass media are considered a powerful device for cultural meaning construction (Gamson, 1995). Our expectations about other people's behaviour, and the values and beliefs of other cultures, are to some extent mediated by how they are (or are not) represented and constructed by the media. Both the models we have of other cultures, as well as the mental model we have of our own culture, are (at least in part)

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[*] Email address for correspondence: *iea@usal.es*

based on meanings constructed by the media, and differences or mismatches among the models used by participants often reveal themselves during intercultural communication.

The case study I am presenting here aims at shedding some light on how different newspapers use different cultural patterns in their representation and construction of real world events as news. The study has been developed within the field of cross-cultural pragmatics and focuses on how a Spanish newspaper (*El País*) and a British newspaper (the *Guardian*) gave coverage to the world food summit organized by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome (2008) on its opening day. A contrastive analysis has been carried out of all the texts published in the electronic versions of both newspapers on 3 June 2008, as the highest *recency* of the coverage (Bell, 1991) was expected to occur on that day.

Frames and the analysis of cultural patterns

Cross-cultural pragmatics is concerned with "the study of differences in expectations based on cultural schemata" (Yule, 1996, p. 87) which refer to the "pre-existing knowledge structures based on experience in a particular culture" (Yule, 1996, p. 128). When these cultural schemata show a fixed static pattern (e.g. they are shared by a social community or are consistently used by a mass-media group), they are referred to as *frames* (Yule, 1996, p. 130).

Frames represent "only one of a number of possibilities, an arbitrary rather than a *natural* way of seeing, thinking, and acting" (Agar, 1994, p. 232) so, in this way, they constitute a dynamic means of representing how different interpretations of the world are made. However, as there is no consensus over what frames are or how people and cultures make use of them (Fisher, 1997, p. 2), it is necessary to start by explaining their role for the aims of the analysis presented in this article.

The concept of "frame" corresponds to a number of different terms in the literature, including "script, scenario, scene, cultural model, cognitive model, idealized cognitive model, domain, schema, (experiential) gestalt, and several others" (Kövecses, 2006, p. 64). All those terms, coming from different branches of cognitive science, are used to designate a coherent organization of human experience (Kövecses, 2006, p. 64) which is thought to help us interpret the world efficiently in a certain way. Human thought processes are considered to be largely metaphorical (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 6). This implies that information processing relies on a certain model of the world which is a representation built from human experience. The concept of frame has been developed to account for the fact that human beings have "the ability to arrive automatically at interpretations of the unwritten and the unsaid [which] must be based on pre-existing knowledge structures" (Yule, 1996, p. 85), because, as Emmott argues, "the human mind works by monitoring and making

assumptions rather than by continually checking the context" (Emmott, 1994, p. 161).

Considering scholarly research on models of interpretation of that kind, Fisher (1997) distinguishes two types of frames, namely discursive structural frames and cultural frames.

Discursive structural frames are thought to have a main function of organising the topics of discussion (Fisher, 1997, p. 2). For example, in reading, the assumption is made that frames compensate for the lack of contextual detail at a certain point in a text by bringing forward the required contextual information from the earlier text (Emmott, 1994, p. 165). On the other hand, cultural frames are not only used to organise information, but are rather considered "loose, socially-generated structures in discourse […] around which groups develop ideological and policy arguments" (Fisher, 1997, p. 2).

The analysis of frames may help us to gain insight into how people understand and negotiate the world (Fisher, 1997, p. 11). In this sense, if frames allow us make intercultural differences explicit (Agar, 1994, p. 231), it is reasonable to expect that the cross-cultural contrastive analysis of a frame may reveal differences between cultures which are likely to affect intercultural communication.

However, cultural frames are not self-evident. Rather than a representation of the world itself, a cultural frame is better understood as a construct which constitutes an "interpreting pack" of some sort of social behaviour, typically including assumptions about what is positively or negatively valued socially. This type of construct consists of co-occurring elements of various kinds, ranging from ideas, which "gain stability when they fit into a frame" (O'Halloran, 2009, p. 24), or social events such as spontaneous meetings of thousands of *Real Madrid* football supporters at the *Cibeles* fountain in Madrid just after a cup victory, to linguistic expressions or lexicogrammatical patterns which show a conventional or frequent use for the construction of certain meanings, such as the linguistic realizations of strategies typically used for the construction of national identities, as analyzed by Wodak, De Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart (1999).

All the co-occurring elements in a frame are considered to contribute to a greater or lesser extent to the construction of meaning and understanding in communication. Unfortunately, the set of elements subsumed in a frame are not generally stated (Yule, 1996, p. 86), so it is not possible to hypothesize about the number or types of them which participate in a frame in particular. Consequently, the analysis of a frame cannot be carried out except by means of observation of its linguistic and social manifestations. In this sense, if the analysis of frames cannot be separated from the analysis of their manifestations in communication, it is reasonable to assume that cultural frames, which are related to high-level socially-generated structures, may only be studied productively but in relation to the analysis of the use of language in discourse. In the case presented in this article, the specific domain considered within mass-

media communication is newspaper discourse as it is realized in special-topic news (Bell, 1991).

As already mentioned, a distinctive lexicogrammar may be typically used within a frame. This makes the research of the elements associated with the frame more productive, because lexicalized expressions can be identified by means of corpus methodology. For example, the *Guardian* newspaper mentioned the word *rugby* 19,666 times between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2003, whereas the word *bullfight* (including also other variants such as *bullfighting* or *bullfighter*) was mentioned only 273 times. Interestingly enough, the word *bullfight* or its variants appeared sometimes in association with other expressions such as *macho* or *matador*, which seem to be part of a cultural frame in British culture about Castilian, Mexican and other Latin American cultures with which the concepts of braveness and cruelty are also associated.

The possibility of studying the tendency of words to co-occur with other words and certain evaluative meanings, such as the association of *bullfight* with braveness (positive value), but also with cruelty (negative value), is probably the major contribution of corpus linguistics to the study of cultural frames, and is currently also applied in relation to the description of media discourse in different languages, including Spanish (e.g. García Riaza, 2009), although most studies deal with English media (e.g. O'Halloran's 2007, 2009) analysis on reader positioning. The positioning of readers is understood as an engagement strategy (as it is sometimes called) by which readers are positioned by the writer into a certain (often value-laden) interpretation. This strategy involves "an alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations" (Hyland, 2005, p. 176).

In order to show how regular target readers of the British tabloid newspaper *The Sun* would have been positioned to potentially reproduce a complex of negative meanings in relation to Eastern European migration, O'Halloran (2007, 2009) studied a set of 76 texts (26,350 words) from the tabloid over the six weeks prior to European Union expansion on 1 May 2004. Following Stubbs (1996, 2002), he conducted his synchronic analysis using corpus-based methods, which had the advantage of providing "objective quantitative support for the extent to which cultural keywords are being used, and the lexical company they keep" (O'Halloran, 2009, p. 22). By this means, he was able to identify regular associations of grammar and lexis, and semantic patterns correlating with them, obtaining "a measure of what meanings are culturally reproduced" (O'Halloran, 2009, p. 22).

The cross-cultural analysis of newspaper coverage

As noted, the analytical procedure applied by O'Halloran (2007, 2009) was able to show how readers were positioned by *The Sun* newspaper over a period of time to reproduce a complex of negative meanings in relation to Eastern European migration. However, when the aim is to compare how different newspapers construct their respective agendas on the coverage of the same event, this procedure has to be adapted or a different approach must be followed, since the simultaneity of the texts analyzed does not allow for the observation of regular patterns through time.

In this particular case, an analytical method combining corpus linguistics procedures and discourse analysis was designed so that some relevant assumptions about the coverage of events which are transformed into news by media discourse could be accounted for. Firstly, it was my contention that newspaper readers are positioned as to which events are important or more valuable according to the degree of *newsworthiness* (Bell, 1991) they receive from the media, so that the more newsworthy an event is considered to be, the greater coverage it will receive. Secondly, I also assumed that readers are positioned into a certain interpretation of the news by means of strategies which include the newspaper's alignment with some positions and participants (and not with others), as well as the activation of cultural patterns during reading which involve meanings conventionally linked to some positive or negative social value. Bearing this in mind, and in order to study contrastively the coverage of the summit by the two newspapers selected, several features have been analyzed. A summarized description of the object studied is presented in Table 1 below.

Although the event chosen could be considered potentially controversial in terms of the expected reactions, roles and political positions on the global food crisis of the different countries participating in the summit, there were no a priori reasons to suspect that the coverage by *El País* and the *Guardian* should be radically different. These newspapers are typically considered comparable in terms of readership and ideological positions and, consequently, contrastive analyses of newspaper discourse in English and in Spanish often make use of them. On the other hand, there did not seem to be any aprioristic reasons to expect differences in the potential involvement of Spain and Great Britain in the UN's call for action. For these reasons, the world food summit seemed to be an appropriate event for the purpose of the research, but once this particular event was chosen, it was also necessary to establish some criteria for the compilation of the contrastive corpora.

Object of study:	Contrastive corpora
Event:	World food summit (potentially controversial)
Location:	Rome (Italy)
Time:	Opening day (3 June 2008)
Texts in the corpora:	All the news articles published on the summit as main topic [comment and opinion articles are not considered]
Source:	Printable electronic versions from *El País* (http://www.elpais.com) and the *Guardian* (http://www.guardian.co.uk)
Aim:	Study of cross-cultural reader positioning → analysis of differences in cultural patterns including newsworthiness and alignment

Table 1. Description of the object of study

When describing the value of events, Bell (1991) argues that the best news is something which has only just happened. This is why he considers time a basic dimension of news stories, the day being "the basic news cycle for the press" (Bell, 1991, p. 156). Taking recency as a compilation criterion, the opening of the summit was considered to be the most relevant day and, therefore, only the texts published on that day were compiled. The type of text was another criterion considered. In order to minimize the presence of evaluative meanings corresponding to the personal views of journalists, and also in order to compile texts with a homogeneous communicative purpose, opinion genres such as editorials were left out and only the news articles were compiled for the contrastive corpora whose details can be seen in Table 2 below.

According to Bell (1991), recency is not the only factor which affects news value. In order to establish the degree of newsworthiness of the event in my cross-cultural analysis, it was necessary to take into account other factors. These included what Bell (1991) refers to as the *proximity* of the event, its *consonance*, *novelty* and *relevance*, as well as the eliteness of the news actors and also of the story's sources. Some of these were taken as control variables, namely the recency, novelty and relevance of the event, whereas the others were used to identify the potential contrasts in the coverage.

	El País	*Guardian*
Size	6 articles 3,924 words	3 articles 2,344 words
Location: Text → section → subsection	SCEP 1 → *Internacional* → *La crisis alimentaria* SCEP 2 [*idem*] SCEP 3 [*idem*] SCEP 4 [*idem*] SCEP 5 [*idem*] SCEP 6 → *Internacional*	SCTG 1 → World news → Zimbabwe SCTG 2 → Environment → Food SCTG 3 → Environment → Biofuels

Table 2. The contrastive corpora (size, location and texts)

Although the proximity or distance of the summit could be considered similar for Spain/*El País* and Great Britain/the *Guardian*, in a broad sense this factor can encompass social proximity, affinity and alignment, apart from its geographical dimension. Bell considers only geographical closeness in relation to news value enhancement, but he also relates the concept of *meaningfulness* to this factor, which accounts for "the cultural familiarity and similarity of one country with another" (Bell, 1991, p. 157). It is in this sense of *cultural familiarity* that some degree of contrast could be expected, especially when focusing on the positions of third parties, as is also the case with the consonance factor.

In Bell's (1991) conception, consonance is narrowly related to the concept of cultural pattern:

> The *consonance* of a story is its compatibility with preconceptions about the social group or nation from which the news actors come. Thus editors have stereotypes about the manner in which Latin American governments or the British royal family behave. […] Environmental issues, demonstrations, or superpower summits are all perceived to have a typical pattern which they follow. These events will tend to be seen in terms of the script even when they deviate from expectation. (p. 157)

Even if it were the case that the two newspapers reported on the summit according to a common script shared by both cultures, it could also be argued that two different scripts should be used if they had to comply with different expectations. The rationale here would be that each group of readers could have different expectations, because they were culturally different. If this proved to be the case, it would also be reasonable to expect that the news coverage should follow different

scripts in each newspaper, so that the texts could be consonant with their respective readers' expectations, and that different strategies were used by each newspaper in order to fulfil the consonance required in each case.

The participants were also analyzed. The term *participant* is used here to refer not only to the individuals who participated in the event, but also to their linguistic representation in the corpora, as defined within the transitivity system by systemic functional grammar (Halliday, 1985) according to their role in the processes or actions, as *actors*, *sayers*, and so on. In news reportage, different voices can be distinguished (Martin & White, 2005), which typically correspond to the author of the text, the people whom the story is about and other people to which some information is attributed and whose role is typically to add credibility to the text because, as Bell argues, "[n]ews is what an authoritative source tells a journalist" (Bell, 1991, p. 191).

Following Bell's distinction between news actors and the story's sources, two groups of participants can be distinguished in the corpora. Typically, the actions performed by participants consisted in saying, declaring, defending, arguing and other similar verbs, so the participants in the corpus texts most of the time had the grammatical role of *sayers*. Therefore, the type of action performed was not enough to distinguish which participants could be considered news actors and which ones the sources of the story. For this reason, textual participants who were also participating in the summit were identified with the label *active sayer*, whereas participants in the corpora who were not attending the summit (e.g. Gordon Brown) or whose attendance was not explicitly stated (e.g. Mark Malloch Brown) were labelled *source sayers*. In order to establish which active sayers received more attention from each newspaper, three aspects were considered.

Firstly, a word list was produced by means of WordSmith Tools 4.0 (Scott, 2004) in order to compare how frequently each participant was mentioned in each corpus. Since the very mentioning of their names did not guarantee that the participants had a prominent role in discourse as actors of the actions reported, it was also necessary to distinguish between the different ways of reporting what they had said. Three degrees were distinguished here, namely quotation, citation and mention. Quotation and citation were considered to represent a similar degree of importance, since in both cases the participant held a central role in the sentence and the choice for either one or the other might have been conditioned by the textual role assigned (e.g. the headline of the text, as in Example 1), whereas mentioning was considered to involve a less important presence than the other two. Those active sayers that were most frequently quoted and/or cited were taken as *key participants*.

Quotation involved those cases where the participant's words were reproduced in quotes, as in

(1) *Ban Ki-moon: "Las políticas alimentarias no deben empobrecer al vecino"* (SCEP2)

Citation was used for those cases where the words of the participant were reported as in

> (2) *Zapatero anuncia que España destinará 500 millones de euros
>   a la seguridad alimentaria* (SCEP1)

Finally, *mention* was used for appearances where the participant was not fulfilling the role of active sayer, either because the action performed was not a verb of *saying*, as in

> (3) *Luiz Inázio Lula da Silva ha sido de los primeros dirigentes en
>   llegar a Roma* (SCEP5)

or because the participant was not the actor of the process, as in

> (4) *el presidente iraní, Mahmud Ahmadineyad, y el de Zimbabue,
>   Robert Mugabe, no han sido invitados a la cena* (SCEP5)

Secondly, the importance of participants was also analyzed in relation to their degree of saliency in the corpus, or *keyness*, which is "a quality words may have in a given text or set of texts, suggesting that they are important, that they reflect what the text is really about, avoiding trivia and insignificant detail" (Scott & Tribble, 2006, pp. 55-56). This was achieved by producing a list of the keywords of each corpus. In corpus linguistics, the term *keyword* (Scott, 1997) is used for words which are unusually frequent in a corpus when compared to a reference corpus, so if the participants in the summit were also outstandingly present in the corpora, as expected, this procedure would show which ones were more outstanding than others.

In order to produce the keyword lists, two reference corpora were used, consisting of texts from *El País* and the *Guardian* (about 0.25 million words each), thus indicating how often a given word could be expected to occur in newspaper discourse as represented in *El País* and the *Guardian*. In this sense, it was expected that participants who were referred to frequently in those newspapers, such as the president of Spain in *El País* or the British prime minister in the *Guardian*, would not be referred to more frequently in the texts analysed than they would be on average, and, even if they did, they might not have a high degree of keyness unless their presence in the texts analysed were much more outstanding than in the reference corpora. The dispersion value of participants was also relevant, as it was an indicator of whether the word was consistently present throughout the corpus (value close to 1), or rather concentrated in a single text or portion of text (value close to 0).

Finally, the key participants, i.e., the active sayers who were more frequently quoted and/or cited in the corpora, were also analyzed with respect to the associated words they tended to co-occur with (their *collocates*), so an analysis was carried out of the behaviour of participants

who presented greater contrast when comparing the corpora. The purpose here was to identify the meanings in the texts related to key participants, which could be considered key meanings in the corpora, in order to observe dissimilarities in the patterns and/or strategies used by the newspapers for their meaning construction. Key meanings could be found in relation to a keyword or a key participant, but also in a textual prominent position, such as the headline of the text or the *nucleus* in hard news (White, 1997).

The following section presents an account of the results of this analysis.

The coverage of the Rome summit by *El País* and the *Guardian*

The first factor that was analyzed is how newsworthy the summit was on its opening day for *El País* and the *Guardian*. The quantity of text devoted to this event was dissimilar when the newspapers were compared, as Table 2 above shows, since *El País* gave greater coverage to it, if we consider the quantity of articles on the summit (6 vs 3) and the total number of words devoted to it (3,924 vs 2,344).

The distribution of the articles within the different sections and subsections of the newspapers also indicated that the editorial policy for covering the event was different. Within the International section, *El País* created a special subsection called "*La crisis alimentaria*", devoted especially to the coverage of the summit, while the Guardian scattered the three texts across different sections and subsections. The coverage in *El País* showed visibility and versatility, as most of the texts were organized structurally with a clear unity within a single subsection and also with the dynamism of a *colony*, i.e. "a discourse whose component parts do not derive their meaning from the sequence in which they are placed" (Hoey, 2001, p. 75). The *Guardian*, by contrast, published the three texts in different sections and subsections, so that their intertextual association was not highlighted or made evident for *Guardian* readers.

As was expected in an account of the food summit, the keyword list of *El País* (cf. Appendix A) showed a focus on topics related to the food crisis and food production, with words such as *agricultura*, *alimentos*, *crisis*, *biocombustibles*, *especulación*, *cosechas*. Only two participants were present as keywords, Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary-General, and Robert Mugabe, the president of Zimbabwe at the time. However, the keyword list of the *Guardian* (cf. Appendix B) indicated a greater focus on people, since more participants appeared as keywords in this corpus, namely Ed Schafer (US Secretary of Agriculture), Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (President of Iran) and Jacques Diouf (FAO Director General), apart from Ban Ki-moon and Mugabe as well. This contrast could indicate that different approaches were employed by the two newspapers or, in Bell's terms, that different scripts were being used for the summit report.

The scarce presence of active sayers in the keyword lists was not very productive in this case. For this reason, more information was collected about their frequency in the corpora, as well as the type of report used in each case (quotation, citation or just mention), which can be found in Appendix C (*El País*) and Appendix D (the *Guardian*).

A comparison of the five key participants (i.e., active sayers who were either quoted, or cited or both) in each corpus revealed that, in order of frequency the focus in *El País* was on the UN Secretary-General, the president of Brazil (defending the sugarcane option for biofuels), the president of Spain, the FAO Director General, and the president of Iran. On its part, the *Guardian* focused on the president of Zimbabwe in the first place, on the FAO Director General, on the UN Secretary-General, on the US Secretary of Agriculture (defending the corn option for biofuels), and on the president of Iran. In general terms, the participants heading the lists were the expected ones. Nevertheless, it was noteworthy that only one of the two positions in the biofuel debate was represented in each newspaper, the sugarcane defended by Brazil in *El País* and the corn option defended by the United States of America in the *Guardian*.

The presence of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was reported by *El País* as an active sayer with an active role in the summit (*Zapatero anuncia*, *ha asegurado*, *ha pedido*, *ha dicho*). In contrast, the British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, was presented in the *Guardian* in a different way on two occasions.

Brown was cited in the *Guardian* in relation to Robert Mugabe's attendance to the summit, but in this case he did not have the role of an active sayer, because the emphasis here was placed on his actions (*the boycott*, *the final decision* or *his presence*) or his mental processes (*contemplating coming*), but not on him as actor, as the following fragment shows:

> Mugabe was granted a waiver on the ban last year to attend a summit in Lisbon, prompting *a boycott by Gordon Brown*.
> *The prime minister had been contemplating coming* to the Rome summit himself. British officials said *the final decision not to attend* was not a result of Mugabe's appearance, but because it was felt that *Brown's presence* would be more critical at other summits in the coming months. (SCTG1) (my emphasis)

In addition to this, when the British prime minister appeared as an active sayer, this was done through a polyphonic attribution to an external source, namely the Spanish newspaper *El País*:

> *Gordon Brown*, who is not attending the summit, *said* today in the Spanish newspaper El País that the world "cannot afford to fail" to deal with the crisis.
> In a joint article with the Spanish prime minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, *he said* immediate action was essential.

"The fact that food prices have reached record levels can only worsen these already devastating figures," *the article said.* "For the poorest quarter of the global population, three-quarters of their income is now taken up by the costs of food."

"According to the World Bank, the success in reducing world poverty during the last seven years could be jeopardised. Immediate action is essential."

The article said it was important to ensure the international community agreed on a coordinated approach to the crisis before the UN Millennium Development Goals summit on September 25. (SCTG2) (my emphasis)

As this excerpt shows, the role of active sayer evolves rapidly from Gordon Brown to the abstract entity *the article*. Through the information published in the *Guardian*, it was possible to construct Gordon Brown's position on the summit, which may help to explain why his treatment in the *Guardian* texts was different from the active role of Zapatero reported in *El País*.

Brown had declined to attend the summit and had sent the UK Secretary of State for International Development instead (with a very discreet role, being only mentioned twice in the *Guardian*, as can be seen in Appendix D). It seemed that his aim was to maintain a previously adopted boycotting attitude towards Mugabe's attendance, but without declaring an official boycott to the summit (which, according to some critical voices, was not convenient for Gordon Brown's popularity at the time). At this point, in the script used to report the summit, clear points of divergence started to emerge between the newspapers, which also reveal the curious fact that the joint article quoted by the *Guardian* was never published by *El País* (neither on paper nor electronically).

The analysis of key participants gave more weight to the hypothesis of two different scripts, and more so when the textual behaviour of Robert Mugabe was studied in detail. His outstanding presence in the *Guardian*, which was quoted and cited more than twice as frequently than the rest of the active sayers (cf. Appendix D), heavily contrasted with his presence in *El País*. Although his presence was also very frequent in this newspaper (it was the second most frequent), the fact that he was only mentioned and not quoted or cited, and that the dispersion value of this active sayer was very low (0,117), suggests that Mugabe did not receive more attention in *El País* than other participants, as was the case in the *Guardian*.

Another point of divergence in the coverage appeared when the sources of attribution were compared. As Appendix E shows, both newspapers relied on a variety of information sources whose main function was to give credence to the information presented. However, the source sayers were different in each corpus, which supports the idea that authoritative sources of information are culturally bound and that their credibility must be conventionally accepted in order to be able to fulfil readers' expectations.

However, readers can be positioned into a certain opinion by means of different strategies, the most elaborated one being the use of a pattern (Strategy 3 below). In the corpora analyzed, a pattern was found which positioned readers to evaluate Robert Mugabe negatively. In this pattern, which was present in the *Guardian* (where Mugabe was a key participant) but absent in *El País*, four elements could be identified for constructing the meaning of Mugabe in the texts.

Strategy 1: *Key evaluation*. Evaluative meaning is found in key meanings. This strategy was used to position readers by constructing key meanings evaluatively.

(5) Australia's foreign minister, Stephen Smith, said *Mugabe's attendance was obscene*. (SCTG1) (my emphasis)

Strategy 2: *Meaning extension*. The negative evaluative meaning of an entity was linked to the meaning of a keyword. This strategy was used to position readers by associating the meaning of an entity with the evaluative meaning (either positive or negative) of another entity. In Example (6), the conventionally negative meaning of Pol Pot was associated with Mugabe.

(6) [Allowing *Mugabe* to attend the summit] is like inviting *Pol Pot* to a human rights conference. (my emphasis)

Strategy 3: *Meaning accumulation*. Around a keyword, there was a cumulative effect of polarized meanings which had been conventionalized. This strategy was used to position readers by cumulative effect of conventionally polarized meanings, so that it consists of different elements. In the case of Mugabe in the *Guardian* corpus, four elements were identified for this pattern, which are highlighted in Examples (7) and (8) below.

(7) *The* current *summit has been overshadowed by* [1] the Zimbabwe president, Robert Mugabe, who *made a surprise appearance* yesterday [2]. It was his first official trip since his country's contested presidential elections in March. […]
The foreign office minister for Africa, Asia and the UN, Mark Malloch Brown, said Mugabe's attendance was "*like inviting Pol Pot to* [3] a human rights conference". […]
Similarly, *the appearance of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, prompted distraction* [4] after the Iranian leader attacked Israel. (SCTG2)

(8) Robert Mugabe *made a surprise appearance* yesterday *at a world food summit* [2] in Rome, drawing fierce criticism from the British government, which accused him of causing Zimbabwe's food crisis. (SCTG1)

Although it goes beyond the limits of this article, and would require a longitudinal study of newspaper discourse, the question of whether the co-occurrence of the elements associated with Mugabe is a recurrent pattern or not is of paramount importance. Tentatively, some of those elements used in a similar way were found, as in Example (9), which is a headline taken from the electronic newspaper *Haaretz*.

(9) Ahmadinejad and Meshal *make surprise appearance at Gaza summit* [2] in Qatar (*Haaretz*, 16 January 2009) (my emphasis)

It still remains to be seen whether the scope and influence of the evaluative meanings identified here appear in other cultural settings, as well as their use in Spanish culture.

Concluding remarks

The coverage of the world food summit in *El País* and the *Guardian* followed different agendas. Newsworthiness was higher in *El País* and Spanish readers were positioned into the major importance of the summit by a more intentional and extensional coverage. This also applies to the active role of the Spanish president. By contrast, the *Guardian* emphasized instead the significance of the summit and to who attended or did not attend the conference.

Alignment with the summit participants and their respective positions also revealed differences between the Spanish and the British newspaper, as well as the sources of attribution used in each case to give credence to the information.

A conventional script of the summit involved dealing with formal discussions related to problems of food production and solutions to hunger. Those topics were fully addressed in *El País*, but the *Guardian* directed the attention of its readers to Mugabe's attendance at the summit. This was done by means of strategies of evaluation and meaning construction which included the use of a pattern consisting of four elements of negative value.

Readers were positioned into a certain interpretation of the news by means of strategies which included alignment with some participants (and not with others), as well as the activation of culture-bound patterns. The factors analyzed (i.e., newsworthiness, proximity, consonance and participants) show how readers were positioned differently in each newspaper, suggesting that two different scripts were followed in each report.

As there are no reasons to suspect that consonance of the coverage was not achieved by *El País* or the *Guardian* (we assume that they are *not* giving their readers something they *do not* expect to receive), the different patterns activated in each case to fulfil consonance seem to show that consonance responds to different cultural expectations on the part of both newsworkers and newsreaders in each case. It is in this sense that we

consider that the negative pattern identified is culturally determined; not because it does not exist in Spanish culture (which remains to be proven), but because its activation did not seem to be considered necessary in order to fulfil the expectations of Spanish readers.

The specific purpose of this study was to make explicit at least some of the patterns used by each newspaper for constructing its own agenda in relation to the coverage of the world food summit organized by the UN's FAO. In this respect, the analysis has been a way of studying and showing how the event was interpreted cross-culturally. The results suggest that the analysis of this case constitutes a clear example of how mass-media may exert a crucial influence on readers' perceptions and interpretations of the world when considering reader positioning from a cross-cultural perspective.

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Appendix A: Keywords in *El País*

WordSmith Tools 4.0 -- 13/12/2008

N Key word	Dispersion	Keyness	Hits
1 AGRICULTURA	0.865	63.55	12
2 ALIMENTOS	0.835	196.52	24
3 CRISIS	0.833	141.71	29
4 PAÍSES	0.789	105.83	34
5 ALIMENTARIA	0.787	204.89	24
6 MILLONES	0.777	40.87	24
7 PRECIOS	0.776	66.03	14
8 HA	0.754	61.83	58
9 AGRÍCOLAS	0.723	39.23	7
10 BIOCOMBUSTIBLES	0.720	76.80	9
11 POBRES	0.714	35.98	8
12 PRODUCCIÓN	0.706	81.89	15
13 PETRÓLEO	0.687	59.30	10
14 CUMBRE	0.681	78.80	16
15 BAN	0.650	68.26	8
16 KI-MOON	0.650	68.26	8
17 NACIONES	0.650	31.90	8
18 CORTO	0.644	30.31	6
19 UNIDAS	0.640	30.59	7
20 PLAZO	0.622	31.96	9
21 ROMA	0.622	39.42	9
22 FAO	0.604	112.16	14
23 ONU	0.596	59.74	12
24 POLÍTICAS	0.586	38.85	11
25 ALZA	0.553	31.26	6
26 EXPORTACIÓN	0.553	37.85	6
27 MUNDIAL	0.536	36.12	13
28 ESPECULACIÓN	0.514	36.98	7
29 ETANOL	0.478	51.19	6
30 CEREALES	0.429	34.13	4
31 PRIMAS	0.429	29.15	4
32 REDUZCAN	0.429	34.13	4
33 ALIMENTACIÓN	0.420	60.86	9
34 CAÑA	0.359	37.28	5
35 COSECHAS	0.359	42.66	5
36 DISTRIBUCIÓN	0.282	37.28	5
37 MUGABE	0.117	51.19	6

Appendix B: Keywords in the *Guardian*

WordSmith Tools 4.0 -- 13/12/2008

N Key word	Dispersion	Keyness	Hits
1 AGRICULTURE	0.847	39.09	7
2 SAID	0.847	59.28	35
3 PRICES	0.827	67.80	13
4 GLOBAL	0.810	57.79	12
5 FOOD	0.799	234.66	39
6 BAN	0.748	61.13	11
7 CRISIS	0.724	78.39	13
8 SUMMIT	0.706	143.01	19
9 ROME	0.644	45.46	6
10 NATIONS	0.640	44.58	7
11 ZIMBABWE	0.640	45.76	7
12 UN	0.622	45.87	9
13 UN'S	0.596	30.31	4
14 ETHANOL	0.553	56.87	6
15 HUNGER	0.550	30.21	5
16 BIOFUELS	0.533	113.77	12
17 LAND	0.514	40.68	7
18 MUGABE	0.496	113.77	12
19 SUBSIDIES	0.448	67.15	9
20 KI-MOON	0.446	47.39	5
21 MUGABE'S	0.446	47.39	5
22 ZIMBABWE'S	0.446	47.39	5
23 SCHAFER	0.429	37.91	4
24 BIOFUEL	0.413	56.87	6
25 ZIMBABWEAN	0.359	47.39	5
26 CORN	0.300	37.91	4
27 AHMADINEJAD	0.250	28.43	3
28 FAO	0.192	37.91	4
29 DIOUF	0.117	51.15	6

Appendix C: Active sayers in *El País*

ORGANISATION	LEADER	FREQUENCY	TYPE OF REPORT
UN (Secretary-General)	Ban Ki-moon	8	CITATION QUOTATION
Zimbabwe	Robert Mugabe	6	MENTION
Brazil	Luis Inázio Lula da Silva	5	CITATION QUOTATION
Spain	José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero	4	CITATION QUOTATION
FAO (Director-General)	Jacques Diouf	3	CITATION QUOTATION
Iran	Mahmud Ahmadineyad	2	CITATION QUOTATION
Argentina	Cristina Fernández	2	CITATION QUOTATION
Egypt	Hosni Mubarak	2	QUOTATION
France	Nicolas Sarkozy	1	QUOTATION
Japan	Yasuo Fukuda	1	QUOTATION
Italy (Prime Minister)	Silvio Berlusconi	1	MENTION
Catholic Church	Pope Benedict XVI	1	MENTION

Appendix D: Active sayers in the *Guardian*

ORGANISATION	LEADER	FREQUENCY	TYPE OF REPORT
Zimbabwe	Robert Mugabe	17	CITATION QUOTATION
FAO (Director-General)	Jacques Diouf	6	CITATION QUOTATION
UN (Secretary-General)	Ban Ki-moon	5	CITATION QUOTATION
United States of America	Ed Schafer (US Secretary of Agriculture)	4	CITATION QUOTATION
Iran	Mahmoud Ahmadinejad	3	QUOTATION
United Kingdom	Douglas Alexander (UK Secretary of State for International Development)	2	MENTION
Catholic Church	Pope Benedict XVI	1	CITATION
Brazil	Luis Inázio Lula da Silva	1	MENTION
Spain	José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero	1	MENTION
Italy (Prime Minister)	Silvio Berlusconi	1	MENTION

Appendix E: Source sayers in the *Guardian* and *El País*

COUNTRY / INSTITUTION / ORGANISATION	SOURCE SAYER	FREQUENCY IN THE *GUARDIAN*	TYPE OF ATTRIBUTION	FREQUENCY IN *EL PAÍS*	TYPE OF ATTRIBUTION
Australia (Minister for Foreign Affairs)	Stephen Smith	1	CITATION	0	
European Food Safety Authority (Chairman)	Patrick Wall	2	CITATION (SOURCE: *The Times*)	0	
FAO (Spanish representative)	Alberto López	0		1	QUOTATION
United Kingdom (UK Foreign Office Minister for Africa, Asia and the UN)	Mark Malloch Brown	2	QUOTATION	2	CITATION (SOURCE: *Guardian*)
REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND NGOs					
ActionAid (Head of Policy Coordination; 'head of trade and corporate')	Claire Melamed	1	QUOTATION	0	
Ayuda en Acción (Italian Secretary General)	Marco de Ponte	0		1	MENTION
Council of Foreign Relations	Ford Runge and Benjamin Senauer	0		1	QUOTATION
Crocevia (member)	Antonio Onorati	0		1	QUOTATION
Human Rights Watch (Africa division)	Carolyn Norris	1	QUOTATION	0	
Médicos Sin Fronteras	Javier Sancho	0		1	QUOTATION
Oxfam (biofuels expert)	Rob Bailey	2	CITATION QUOTATION	0	
Oxfam (spokesman)	Alexander Woollcombe	1	CITATION QUOTATION	0	
World Food Program (spokesman)	Greg Barrow	2	QUOTATION	0	
OTHER TEXT PARTICIPANTS					
Cambodia	Pol Pot	3	MENTION	1	MENTION (SOURCE: *Guardian*)
United Kingdom (Prime Minister)	Gordon Brown	2	QUOTATION CITATION (QUOTED SOURCE: *El País*)	1	MENTION
Zimbabwe	Morgan Tsvangirai	3	MENTION	0	

Izaskun Elorza is Assistant Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Salamanca (Spain), where she obtained an MA in English Studies and later received her PhD in Linguistics. Her major fields of interest are corpus linguistics, discourse analysis and systemic functional descriptions of language, as well as their application to the teaching and learning of intercultural competence, and reading and writing skills, together with the use of ICT in education. She is currently conducting contrastive research in newspaper discourse in English and Spanish. Her most recent work has been published in *Language & Intercultural Communication*.