

Revealing Linguistic Power: Discourse Practice toward “Youth” in Japanese and Thai Newspapers

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The discourse of mass media is considered as a site of power, a site of social struggle where language is apparently transparent. Media institutions, whether intentionally or not, tend to naturalize things and try to place themselves in the position of objective agents who know “the facts” and have a legitimate right to report them to the public. In recent studies of sociopolitical discourse analysis where language, ideologies, and power relations have been examined, “youth” has been viewed as a powerless and disregarded social group. This article takes a critical approach to discourse by extensively employing Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis and van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach as a theoretical framework to explore the relationships between language use (text), discourse practice and the sociocultural practice of news reports on youth in Japanese and Thai newspapers. It is geared to provide an explanation of how reports on youth are produced, how they are interpreted, and how they reflect and manipulate attitudes toward youth in Japanese and Thai society as a system of social dominance. It can be remarked that the Japanese media conceptualize youth as “naïve” and accordingly they tend to utilize a variety of discursive strategies in order to protect youth from the state of social impurity by shifting the main focus from youth crime to other issues such as parenting, school education, decisions handed down by courts, and social reform. In sharp contrast, news reports on youth in Thai newspapers have caused an amount of the negative view of youth by having a strong connection with social legacy of feudalism, where age relationships have long been constructed in such a way as to allow adults to deny the voice of and exercise control over youth.

Keywords: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA), DISCOURSE, LANGUAGE, MEDIA, NEWSPAPERS, YOUTH

Language, one of the very first social practices of human beings, is an invisible vehicle whereby thoughts as well as feelings are conveyed and exchanged. According to Critical

Discourse Analysis (CDA), a multidisciplinary approach developed by such notable scholars as Teun A. van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Roger Fowler, and Gunther Kress, language is a socially and historically situated mode of action in a dialectical relationship with other facets of a society. It is also the medium through which power and ideology are socially shaped and reproduced. It is constitutive both in conventional ways which help to maintain and reproduce social relationships, social identities, and existing systems of knowledge and belief, and in creative ways which help to transform them.

All linguistic forms, including language use, text, talk, and every kind of verbal and written communication, form a discourse. “Discourse” has been variously defined by social theorists (e.g., Foucault 1972, Bourdieu 1977), linguists (e.g., Saussure 1959, Schiffrin 2001), and other scholars. As a point of departure, this article takes “discourse” as a form of social practice (Fairclough 2001) and as a part of a communicative event (van Dijk 1997) which *mediates* ideologies in a variety of social institutions. Discourse thus understood exerts a large measure of influence on both culture and the circulation of power in any society.

If we accept this view of discourse, then it is undeniable that news reporting, like every other form of discourse, is mediation. News is a socially constructive practice by which events, of whatever kind, are mediated from the viewpoint of the perceiver to someone who is assumed not to have been a direct perceiver of that event. This kind of communication sometimes results in “misrepresentation.” Misrepresentation arises from a mismatch between reality and the view people have of this reality—a view that has been refracted through a prism whose faces are made up of elements of ideology, self-interest, limits on understanding, previous experience, and the like. For example, when an event happens, the intention of the causer may be interpreted as an “accidental bump,” or a “deliberate push.” Alternatively, the event itself may be classified differently, for example as either a nudge or a push. Reports of the event exist only in and through language. Consequently, the perception of the listener or the reader—the consumer of news—depends entirely on language.

The discourse of mass media is, therefore, considered as a site of power, a site of social struggle and a site where language is apparently transparent. Media institutions, whether intentionally or not, are likely to *naturalize* things and try to place themselves in the position of objective agents who know “the facts” and have a legitimate right to report them to the public. Nevertheless, no matter how hard they attempt to show that they reflect states of affairs disinterestedly and that they report all sides of issues without prejudice, it is plain that ideological and other considerations are in play. This is apparent in subtle choices of linguistic forms and structure, and even more apparent in news organizations’ selection of topics and decisions about content (notably, about what quotations are included) and other aspects of news production.

The Hidden Power Enactment

Power and dominance are usually *organized* and *institutionalized* (van Dijk 1993). They are, on the one hand, formulated and legitimated by social institutions such as legislatures, judicial and administrative bodies, and schools, and by the prevailing views within social groups such as police, doctors, teachers, and politicians. On the other hand, power and dominance are sustained and reproduced by the discursive practices of the media, yet this usually escapes notice because media discourse always appears as common and “natural” as it

could possibly be.

Media discourse has certain special properties that distinguish it from other forms of communicative events. First of all, it is an event of “one-sidedness” (Fairclough 2001) in which a sharp divide between producers and interpreters can be discerned. Further, since the discourse that is published or broadcast is both permanent (once it is in print or recorded on tape or a disk or some other memory medium) and reproducible, it can be and indeed is likely to be consumed in various places and at various times; it has the potential to be reused for multiple purposes as a “cultural commodity” (Fairclough 1995). This temporal and spatial setting of media properties makes possible the crucial function of media discourse as a medium of communication between the public domain and the private domain. For instance, it brings items that can be regarded as having their source in the public domain, such as political or criminal events, to the attention of people in the home private domain—people who become consumers of the news through broadcasts on television, radio, and increasingly other new media such as the Internet, or through reporting in the newspapers.

Media discourse also exemplifies a significant difference in terms of social interaction. For starters, it is a type of communication which essentially involves many categories of participants, most notably reporters (as mediators), audiences (as receivers), and, most importantly, “third parties” from various segments of the public domain. Furthermore, media communicative events are, in a sense, monologues. Unlike face-to-face discourse in which participants interact, media discourse is premised on the absence of simultaneous feedback from co-participants. As a result, media producers have to construct their own “ideal” audiences, and this is consequently why each of the actual audiences in media discourse is, in principle, required to negotiate its particular relationship with that “ideal subject.”

Media discourse, with the properties discussed above, has then become a site of power struggle, where people can be manipulated by powers that are hidden to them without being conscious of those powers. The well-known statement of Pierre Bourdieu is apt, in relation to this: “It is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know” (Bourdieu 1977).

A crucial point for critical analysis is to *denaturalize* the hidden ideological power in media discourse by unravelling what kind of linguistic strategies are associated in conforming and reproducing ideologies, how discursive practice is constituted by sociocultural structures and how it in turn actively constitutes them. This analysis is ultimately geared to raise people’s critical awareness of discursive media practice and provide grounds for effective resistance against the power abuse and social inequality perpetuated upon them.

“Youth” in Media Discourse

Media discourse, adapting to the distribution of new technology, has developed features that distinguish it from other forms of communicative events. It has a major impact on the boundaries between public and private life and institutions, redrawing them in fundamental ways (Scannell 1992, Thompson 1990). In addition, unlike face-to-face discourse, communicative events in media discourse involve participants who are separated in place and time; or in other words, the time and place of production of media discourse usually differs from the time and place of consumption. Despite the obvious disparities between production and consumption of the media, the power relations inherent in media discourse have often

been overlooked and ignored.

A few recent studies of sociopolitical discourse analysis (e.g., van Dijk 1993) have closely examined language, ideologies, and power relations, and in these studies “youth” has been viewed as one of the powerless and disregarded social groupings, alongside women, people of colour, and gay people (Fairclough 2001). While a “youth” has limited discursive rights as an interlocutor of conversational speech toward an “adult” in face-to-face discourse, that same youth has certain obligations and constraints on the contents, relations, and subjects of his or her discourse through transient interaction of spoken language and non-verbal communication (e.g., Vadeboncoeur and Luke 2004). Youth has also very often been treated dismissively as a “third party” in media discourse. The time and space parameters of that discourse are totally different from those that obtain in the relations between youth and adults, and power relations in media channels are seldom explicitly revealed. In some societies, youth are presumed to be a powerless group, as they are usually denied a voice or, in those instances when they are given a voice, they are not given the same speaking space as adults.

In the fields of linguistics and cultural studies, a number of analyses have examined the connection between language use and unequal power relations. Among those studies, the first of which were initiated by the Frankfurt and Birmingham schools, there has been considerable critical research on relations of struggle between dominating and dominated groupings focused on gender, class, and race relations (e.g., Mullany 2004, Wadak 1985, Billig 2001), and there has been some descriptive research on youth and their media consumption (e.g., Mastronardi 2003). To date, however, there has been surprisingly little work done on critical relations of power and social inequality in terms of *age relations* in media discourse. Even less work has been done that takes a cross-cultural comparative approach, and hardly any research focuses on discourse in non-European languages, in which age relationships are routinely reflected in usage, and older speakers and writers often discriminate against youth. The intention of this article is to contribute toward filling this gap in the research by presenting a case study of discourse practice toward “youth,” examining the discursive manifestation of newspapers in Japanese and Thai and offering some comparison to European languages.

Here I employ Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis and van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach as a theoretical framework to explore the relationships between language use (text), discourse practice, and the sociocultural practice of news reports on youth. I attempt to provide an explanation of how reports on youth are produced in Japanese and Thai newspapers, how they are interpreted, and how they reflect and manipulate attitudes toward youth in Japanese and Thai society as a system of social dominance.

Japan and Thailand: Fast-growing Markets of Newspapers in Asia

As well as being the world’s second largest economy, Japan also boasts the largest number of newspapers per 1,000 people among the major industrialized countries. According to the 2005 version of the online publication World Association of Newspapers (WAN), Japanese newspapers print 70.4 million copies a day. The newspapers enjoy a stable readership based on home delivery subscriptions, and statistics show that more than 80% of the Japanese read newspapers every day. National dailies try to satisfy readers’ desires for current news coverage by publishing both morning and evening editions, despite the worldwide tendency of declining print readership due to an expanding use of the Internet as a medium for getting

the news.

For its part, Thailand, with a population of almost 63 million, is considered the largest newspaper market in Southeast Asia.¹ Circulation was estimated in 2005 to be at least 13 million copies daily.² Newspapers have long served the Thai people, from their beginnings as vehicles for distribution of information based on official announcements of the royal court in the mid-1840s³ to coverage of local and international politics, economics, business, crime, social events, celebrations, people, and sports in modern times.

Attitude surveys in both countries indicate that newspapers in Japan and Thailand are similarly regarded as nationally reliable sources of information, and that they have an immense impact on people's general attitudes and perceptions. According to the Japan-U.S. Joint Opinion Poll 2006 conducted by *Yomiuri shinbun* and Gallup, Inc., newspapers are trusted by the Japanese people more than any other organization (with 67.6% of respondents expressing trust), followed by courts (61.3%) and the Self-Defense Forces (59.4%). In Thailand, a 2007 poll found that 41.5% of people express trust in newspapers, and when asked why, respondents most frequently cited their perception that “newspapers reveal the facts to the public.”⁴

In the next section, I describe the data collection and analytical methods that are used in this study. Then I will analyse and compare selected news reports on youth in Japanese and Thai newspapers. In the conclusion, I will discuss the relationship between discourse structure and its sociocultural practice in Japanese and Thai society, a relationship that is ordinarily hidden but that can be discerned from close analysis of news reports treating youth.

Research Methodology

As mentioned earlier, this article uses a critical approach to discourse by extensively employing Fairclough's CDA and van Dijk's SCA as a theoretical framework. This framework is different to other paradigms in discourse analysis and textual linguistics in that it not only focuses on spoken or written texts as objects of inquiry, but also requires a theorization and description of the social structures that give rise to the production of texts and of the social structures that individuals or groups as social historical subjects create as they discern meanings in their interaction with texts.

The main sources of data for this article are *Shinbun daijesuto* 新聞ダイジェスト, a Japanese monthly journal consisting of news articles from six major daily Japanese newspapers, and *Matichon e-Library*, a digital news library providing news clippings from over thirty Thai newspapers.⁵ For this research, I selected materials from articles on youth in general, on youth crime, and on juvenile court cases during the period 1 January 2006 to 30 June 2006. In addition, I have chosen some news articles from *Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞 and *Asahi shinbun* 朝日新聞, the dailies with the highest and second-highest circulation numbers in Japan,⁶ dated between 1 January 2006 and 30 June 2006; I did this to supplement the items that appeared in *Shinbun daijesuto*, which are fewer in number than the items found in the *Matichon e-Library* on the same subjects.

The original sources are written in Japanese and Thai, and here I have attached English equivalents wherever necessary. All of the English translations are by the author, and it should be noted that the lack of fluency in these translations is deliberate, as I have attempted to retain the characteristic style of the news reports, e.g., the avoidance of verbs in Japanese headlines and the omission of subjects.

Discourse Practice in Newspapers toward Youth

In this section, through an analysis of certain linguistic strategies that have been used to construct and organize “the facts” for readers, I examine how news reports on youth in Japanese and Thai newspapers are produced and interpreted, and I comment on their ideological significance. Those linguistic strategies are themes, lexical options, use of quotations, choice of active/passive transformation, and nominalization.

1) Theme:

A theme or topic of a news report can be easily signaled by a news headline. Virtually always in a bigger, bolder font than the body of the article, the headline is the most conspicuous part of the piece. In addition to summarizing the most important information of the report, a news headline also has cognitive and ideological functions (van Dijk 1988a, 1988b, 1991 quoted by Kuo and Nakamura 2005). Van Dijk (1991) suggested that a headline may bias the understanding process and influence the interpretation of the news made by the readers, because it encapsulates what the journalist—or in some cases the editor—considers the most important aspect of an event. The headline necessarily implies an opinion or a specific perspective on the event. Therefore, not merely a summary of the text of the news item, it often gives an ideological implication of what the news producers or the journalists consider important, or want readers to consider important. For example,

- (1) *Ōsaka chisai* / “*shōnen’in ga nozomashii*” / *Neyagawa no kyōshokuin sasshō jiken*
大阪地裁 「少年院が望ましい」 寝屋川の教職員殺傷事件

Translation: Osaka District Court / “Detention center is preferable”
/ Case of kill and wound teaching staff at Neyagawa)

—*Asahi shinbun*, morning edition 24 February 2006

- (2) *Ruap3 joe* / *Ken sop kllii kadii kaa maam*

Translation: Arrested three teenagers / (and) pressed (them) for inquiry to
solve the foreign lady murder case)

—*Naew Na*, 3 January 2006

The first item (1) is a Japanese news report on the court trial for a case of juvenile delinquency which happened a year before, and the second (2) is a report from Thai newspaper on a well-known case of the murder of a foreigner. In (1), the news producers intentionally picked up a message from one of the witnesses in court who was a professor in clinical psychology of delinquency to give a vivid hint to the readers that “in this case, detention center is preferable to putting the convicted youth in juvenile prisons or some other punishment.” In (2), on the other hand, the news producers take the word *ken* (to press, to squeeze a secret out of someone) to topicalize the news article by stressing the “fact” that “it is confirmed that at least one of these three teenagers is proved to be a murderer and we (the police) will soon be successful in forcing them to confess.”

News producers deliberately identify a theme in order to (*re*)construct a frame to guide readers in interpreting what is to follow and to *naturalize* what they want their readers to perceive or recognize. This (*re*)construction and naturalization has an ideological dimension.

2) Lexical options:

The systematic use of words, or choice among lexical options, also provides readers with

cues for interpreting events. For example, in (2), the selection of the words *ruap* (to arrest, to seize), *joe* (slang word used to refer to teenagers delinquents), and *ken* (to constrain, to press on) implicitly *labelled* the actions of the police as “heroes” and the teenagers as “murderers,” as if the teenagers were already proven guilty, while it was evident that the matter was still in the process of inquiry. A similar strategy is illustrated in another example (3) in which words with strong connotations—*laa* (hunt), *ai huun* (a pervert), *rum soom* (to gang-rape), *tom saap* (a wicked dyke), *luang* (seduce)—were chosen.

- (3) *Tamruad reng laa 9 ai huun / Rum soom naksuksa sao*
... Nang sao Aey look sao thuuk nang sao jiew tom saap luang pai hai klumgwairuun 9
kon rum soom yap thi klaang paa ooi nai kead jangwad Nakorn Pathom
 Translation: Police rush on a hunt for the nine perverts (lit., men full of disgusting sexual lust) / gang-rape a university female student)
... [The victim's mother said that] Miss A, her daughter, was seduced by Miss
Jiew, a wicked dyke and was taken to be severely raped by a gang of nine teen-
agers in the middle of sugar cane jungle, within the area of Nakorn Pathom
province.

—Kao Sod, 27 January 2006

The lexical selections here invoke stereotypes and encourage readers to picture the young suspects as a group of violent criminal offenders, and they also imply that the media has a legitimate right to dramatize the event by using expressions such as hunt, pervert, and wicked dyke. The report evidences no consideration of the rights of the suspects as well as of the feelings of victims and their families, and no concern about prejudgment of the case. It is characterized by what has been called “overlexicalization,” an excessive use of descriptive expression.

By contrast, Japanese newspapers tend to be more circumspect about choices of words. Their avoidance of certain groups of words that might suggest a damaging image of victims, or even of suspected young offenders, is remarkable. Example (4) illustrates this.

- (4) *Joshikōsei ni ranbō no shōnenra o taiho / Keishichō*
... Shirabe ni yoru to, 3-nin wa sakunen 9-gatsu 29-nichi yoru, doboku sagyō-
in no shōnen no shiriai datta tonai no kōkō 1-nen no joshiseito (15) o doraibu
ni sasoi, shanai de sake o nomaseta ue de, shanai ya Tachikawa shinai no kōen de
ranbō shita utagai. 3-nin wa yōgi o mitomete iru.

女子高生に乱暴の少年らを逮捕／警視庁

…調べによると、3人は昨年9月29日夜、土木作業員の少年の知り合いだった都内の高校1年の女子生徒（15）をドライブに誘い、車内で酒を飲ませたうえで、車内や立川市内の公園で乱暴した疑い。3人は容疑を認めている。

Translation: Arrested boys who committed violence on high school girl / Metropolitan Police Department

According to the investigation, three of them invited a first-grade high school girl (15) from Tokyo, an acquaintance of a boy who was a public works construction worker for a drive on 29 September last year. After having made her drunk, they are suspected of committing violence on her in the car and in a public park in

Tachikawa. The three confessed to the charges.

—*Yomiuri shinbun*, evening edition 17 January 2006

This example (4) obviously shows a more cautious choice of words than (3), despite the fact that both cases involve girl victims who were led to an unfamiliar place before being sexually assaulted. The word *ranbō* (violence, wildness) is an oblique word, widely known for its usage to refer to sex crime in Japanese news reports; *ranbō* is routinely chosen even though the word *gōkan* (rape) exists, presumably because *gōkan* is considered too forthright. However, it can be noted here that *Yomiuri shinbun*, which has a reputation for a relatively high level of sensationalist stories on crime and accidents, does use the direct word *dantai gōkan* (group rape) in another paragraph, while no such word appears in the *Asahi* account of this incident.

3) The use of quotation:

Quotations appear much more often in Japanese news headlines than in Thai. The Thai press frequently uses locutions such as “according to the relevant source” or “according to the report” when citing information that has been obtained from primary sources.

The use of quotation or direct speech report from primary sources in Japanese news can be noted in a variety of patterns, e.g., from eyewitness reports, from expert knowledge (as in example (1) above), from official accounts such as police, lawyers or judges, from the bereaved family (as in example (5), below), or from young offenders themselves (as in example (6), below).

(5) *Yamaguchi no Kōsensei satsugai* / “Ikite tsukamari, hanashite hoshikatta”
/ *Ryōshin, yariba nai ikari*

... Nakatani-san no ikotsu wa, jitaku no zashiki ni okarete iru. Junichi-san wa
“Nani mo shite agerarenakute gomen” to katarikaketa to iu.

山口の高専生殺害 「生きて捕まり、話して欲しかった」
両親、やり場ない怒り

…中谷さんの遺骨は、自宅の座敷に置かれている。純一さんは「何
もしてあげられなくてごめん」と語りかけたという。

Translation: Murder case of technical college student in Yamaguchi /
“I wish he had lived and been caught. I wish he had told us (the reason
why he killed our daughter)” / (said) the parents with a suppressed fury.
... Ms. Nakatani’s remains are placed in the sitting room of her home. It has
been reported that Nakatani Jun’ichi [the victim’s father] spoke to her, saying,
“I’m sorry I can’t do anything for you.”

—*Yomiuri shinbun*, morning edition 8 June 2006

(6) “Taihenna koto shita” / *Rīdā kaku kō 3, chijin ni* / *Himeji-nojuku seikatsusha shōshi*
「大変なことした」 リーダー格高3、知人に 姫路・野宿生活者
焼死

Translation: “(I) did a terrible thing” / Leader of third-year high school told an
acquaintance / Himeji outside-sleeper [i.e., homeless person] burned to death

—*Asahi shinbun*, evening edition 15 March 2006

Although it is remarkable that there are very few quotations in Thai headlines, we can

find direct quotes in the body of the news articles themselves, particularly when the source is a statement from an official entity such as the royal court, the police, or a judge. Quotation is common also in articles written with the obvious purpose of portraying a dark and negative aspect of youth, as in the following example (7).

(7) *“Pom komkuun prao suu lamok”*

. . . Chai yoom rub wa suu lamok pen tua kratun hai kao “kao plaad” yang mai mee sathi / *“Pom funthong leuy wa suu lamok nee lae thee pen sing yua yu hai mee aarom thang pead. . . .”*

Translation: “I raped because those pornography.”

. . . Chai admitted that pornography is the factor that caused him to take “a wrong step” without awareness. *“I can absolutely say that pornography is the thing that aroused my sexual desire.”*

—*Matichon*, 1 February 2006

Either the omission of quotation or the qualitatively unbalanced use of direct speech (with different weights given to statements from victims, youth suspected of crimes, and official authorities) reflects the fact that Thai media tend to ignore information—whether it is accurate or not—from specific groups of people, particularly youth who become victims or crime suspects. Furthermore, Thai reporters have been conditioned to give preferential treatment to opinions and statements of bureaucratic informants, rather than such primary sources as victims, their families, or associated suspected youth, who are treated as powerless and therefore subject to being disregarded with impunity.

4) Transitivity:

Traditional linguistics has categorized verbs that take a direct object, such as “write,” “kick,” and “kill,” as transitive verbs. Verbs that cannot take a direct object, such as “run,” “walk,” and “sit,” are classified as intransitive verbs. In critical linguistics, however, there are more distinctions than the simple syntactic differentiation of transitive and intransitive; for instance, there are “active/passive transformation (voice)” and “nominalization” of meaning behind transitivity. Transitivity is the foundation of representation. It has the facility to analyze the same events in different ways (Fowler 1991). The choice indicates the point of view of the producers of the discourse, and it informs the points of view of the receivers.

Here I will illustrate and discuss the significance of two types of transitivity: the choice of active/passive transformation and nominalization. The choice of active/passive transformation relates to the involvement of specific participants (whether to focus or defocus on the responsible agents) and a specific type of “action” (as in the difference between “to kill someone” and “someone was found dead,” here understood to be a difference of “action”). Nominalization—the syntactical transformation of predicates (verbs and adjectives) to nouns—relates to substantial ideological opportunities such as the deletion of important participants (details of “who did what to whom”), indication of time, and indication of modality. Let us compare two stories on the same crime reported by Japanese and Thai newspapers in examples (8) and (9).

(8) *Satsujin yōgi de 4 shōnen taiho e / Nojukusha shōshi / “Kaenbin nageta” / Hyōgo, Himeji*
. . . Shirabe dewa, sakunen 10-gatsu 22-nichi gozen 4-ji 15-fun goro, Himeji-shi Nishi

*yume saki dai no kokudō 2 gō yume saki bashi nishi zume shita de danbōru nado ga yak-
eru kaji ga atta. Nojuku seikatsu o shite ita dansei (tōji 60) ga shōshitai de hakken sareta.*
殺人容疑で4少年逮捕へ 野宿者焼死「火炎瓶投げた」
兵庫・姫路

…調べでは、昨年10月22日午前4時15分ごろ、姫路市西夢前
台の国道2号夢前橋西詰め下で、段ボールなどが焼ける火事があ
った。野宿生活をしていた男性（当時60）が焼死体で発見され
た。

Translation: Arrest of four boys on suspicion of murder / Outside-sleeper
burning to death / “(I) threw a petrol bomb” / Himeji, Hyōgo

... According to the investigation, there was a fire in which cardboard and other
things burned below the west side of Yumesaki bridge, on Route 2, West Yume-
sakidai, Himeji, around 4:15 a.m., 22 October last year. The burned corpse of the
man (sixty at that time) who had been living as an outside-sleeper was discovered.

—*Asahi shinbun*, evening edition 14 March 2006

- (9) *Jap wairuun yipun 5 kon / pao thang pen chaay joon jad proa ha wa pen kaya sangkom*
... *Tamruad yipun dai jap kum wairuun 5 kon thaen tong songsai wa payaayaam jud*
fai pao chaay joon jad thang pen dooy ha wa kao pen kaya lae mai dai chuaylua sangkom.
Translation: Arrested five Japanese teenagers / burned homeless man to
death blaming him for being social garbage

... Japanese police arrested five teenagers on suspicion that they attempted
to burn homeless man to death, blaming that the man is garbage and did not
contribute anything to the society.

—*Nation*, 16 March 2006

The *Asahi* deliberately employs passive transformation in the text of the article: “The
burned corpse of the man who had been living as an outside-sleeper has been discovered.”
This passive transformation allows the victim to occupy the syntactic subject position without
the necessity to identify any associated agent. This linguistic strategy also reorients the story
so that it is focused on a dead homeless man rather than his alleged young killers; hence, re-
sponsibility for the action is left unspecified. Furthermore, the effective use of nominalization
found in the headline such as “outside-sleeper burning to death” helps to conceal information
that would explain who did what to whom. Agency is unexpressed.

In the Thai newspaper the *Nation*, the writer illustrates active transformation, for
example in the clause “they attempted to burn the homeless man to death.” The focus is,
hence, fully placed on the agent of the action, clearly implying responsibility for the crime. In
addition, there is no use of nominalization in the report; information about who did what to
whom is explicitly conveyed in the sentence “[Japanese teenagers] burned homeless man to
death blaming him for being social garbage.”

Also notable is the euphemistic diction in the *Asahi* report (8). The word *nojukusha* (lit.,
a person who sleeps outside) has been carefully selected to refer to the homeless victim in the
case. In the story in the *Nation*, the direct Thai equivalent of “homeless” is used. The lexical
variation here evidences different attitudes of news makers toward the victim, and is revealing
of the ideological underpinning of news discourse.

Conclusion: Discourse and Sociocultural Practice toward Youth

The key to understanding the relationship between discourse structures and social structures is social cognition. “Social cognition” is a link from media texts to context. It shows the relationships between texts, production processes and comprehension processes, and between these and the wider social practices they are embedded within (Fairclough 1995). Media discourse—or news reporting, as a representative facet of this sociocultural practice—is cumulatively shaped by social structures, and at the same time it plays an important role in the diffusion of social cognition and such sociocultural changes.

According to critical discourse analysis, the linguistic strategies found in Japanese news reporting on youth can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Themes usually take the side of youth. That is, news stories are marked by an obvious attempt not to blame youth for their misbehaviors, but rather to treat juvenile cases as the result of an overall social structure for which every adult should be responsible.
- 2) Lexical options tend to be limited, with preference shown for indirect terms and a soft-spoken tone, in order to avoid strong senses of harsh or pejorative words that might be damaging to the interests of, or cause mental anguish to, victims or their families on the one hand and the youth who are accused or have been convicted on the other. Further, relatively few details of the nature of the crime are given to readers.
- 3) Quotations are printed with comparatively high frequency, and more or less equal space is allocated to authorities’ direct speech and the words of other involved parties such as victims, families, and suspected young offenders.
- 4) Passive transformation and nominalization are used frequently in Japanese news reports on youth crime. This tends to have the effect of shifting the focus from the accused or convicted youth to their victims.

On the other hand, the linguistic strategies found in Thai news reporting can be summarized thus:

- 1) Themes usually take the side of adults. That is, stories typically are cast in such a way as to blame individual youths for their misbehaviors and irresponsible actions toward the society.
- 2) Lexical options tend in the direction of the sensational and dramatic, with frequent use of slang and harsh words referring to youth. Additionally, detailed and in some instances arguably excessive descriptions of the nature of crimes are provided, and it is not uncommon for pejorative labels to be applied to particular groups and individuals.
- 3) Space allocated for quotations is not balanced. There is a noteworthy exclusion of youth from the speaking position, and the space given to reports of direct speech by authorities, victims, and families of victims is considerably greater than that given to suspected young offenders.
- 4) The active voice is found in most cases, and the use of nominalization is relatively rare. “Who did what to whom” is made explicit. Consequently, the focus is placed

squarely on the agent of the actions, implying clear responsibility.

These linguistic features reflect significantly different discursive practices in Japanese and Thai media discourse toward youth. The analysis in this study has revealed that the Japanese media conceptualize youth as “naive.” The media give special care and attention to reports on youth, making manifest that youth in Japan is regarded as a subject that must be treated with care and empathy. As a result, in what seems to be an effort to protect youth from the state of social impurity, Japanese news reports tend to utilize a variety of discursive strategies. The analysis in this article suggests that Japanese news makers employ the different linguistic strategies in order to shift the main focus from youth crime to other issues such as parenting, school education, decisions handed down by courts, and social reform. Those issues are relevant and important, but it should not be overlooked that they are different from youth crime.

In sharp contrast, the most noticeable feature of the data from Thai newspapers that I have introduced here is the negative view of youth. It is believed to have a strong connection with the social legacy of feudalism, which was established in Thailand in the sixteenth century. Fundamentally, Thai feudalism has been characterized by a rigid hierarchy of social relationships, particularly between “patrons” (superior) and “clients” (inferior). Age relationships, particularly the major division between adults and youth, have long been constructed in such a way as to allow adults to deny the voice of and exercise control over youth, in return for providing financial and other support to the young. In this case, Thai newspapers play the role of patrons or guardians who have a legitimate right to blame and preach to the youth for any action they consider “misbehaviors.” The Thai press has attempted to construct stereotyped portrayals of “bad youth” as “criminals” by providing a “misrepresentation” to readers through discursive practices that are quite different from those seen in Japanese newspapers. This manipulative power has sustained and reproduced a paternalistic ideological stance toward youth, and so long as it remains unmodified, it will reflect and reproduce inequality and social dominance in Thai society.

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NOTES

- 1 See the 2005 version of the online publication World Association of Newspapers (WAN).
- 2 Circulation figures are based on the newspapers' claimed average daily circulation figures.
- 3 The first Thai-language newspaper was The Bangkok Recorder, published bi-weekly in Bangkok during 1844–1845 and 1865–1867.
- 4 ABAC Poll 2007, conducted by ABAC Poll Research Center and Thai Journalists Association.
- 5 The Japanese papers excerpted in *Shinbun daijesuto* are *Asahi shinbun* 朝日新聞, *Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞, *Mainichi shinbun* 毎日新聞, *Sankei shinbun* 産経新聞, *Nihon keizai shinbun* 日本経済新聞, and *Tōkyō shinbun* 東京新聞. The Thai papers in *Matichon e-Library* include *Thairath*, *Matichon*, *Daily News*, *Kom Chad Luek*, *Khao-Sod*, *Siam Rath*, and *Thai Post*.
- 6 Figures on newspaper circulation appear on the media industry page of the website *Japan Reference* (accessed 1 July 2008).

要旨

未知なる言語の力
—日本とタイの新聞における「青年」をめぐるディスコース—

チャワーリン・サウェッタナン

マスメディアによるディスコースは、権力発見の場・社会闘争の場・さらに言語の存在感が極めて薄められる場だと言われている。各メディアは、意図するしないに拘わらず、物事を整合化する傾向にあり、「事実」を知り、その「事実」を公に報道する正当な権利をもつ客観的な代理人であろうとする。言葉・イデオロギーおよび社会的権力をテーマとした最近の社会政治的ディスコース研究では、「青年」というグループを、社会的に無力で無視されたグループとみなしてきた。本稿は、フェアクラフ(Fairclough)のクリティカル・ディスコース・アナリシス(批判的談話分析)とヴァン・ダイク(van Dijk)の社会認識的アプローチの方法論に拠りながら、「青年」を取り上げた日本とタイの新聞記事における言語使用(テキスト)、ディスコースの手法、および報道の社会文化的実践との関わりを考察し、批判的に論じようとするものである。つまり、どのように青年が報じられ、それがどのように解釈され、また、社会的支配のシステムとして日本およびタイにおける社会の青年に対する態度を反映し、また操作しているのかを解明する。結果として、日本のメディアは青年を「ナイーブ」と捉え、ニュースの主要な焦点を、青年犯罪という視点から子育て問題や学校教育、法律制度、さらに社会改革という視点にまで移すといった様々なディスコースの手法を通じ、対象とされた青年たちを社会の不純から守ろうとする傾向が見られる。対照的に、青年を話題とするタイの新聞報道は、封建制度の社会的遺制と強く結

びつくことによって否定的な青年観を提示し、またその年齢による上下関係の中で若者の声を支配したり否定したりしようとする大人たちの側に立っている。