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# Lexical metaphor as affiliative bond in newspaper editorials: a systemic functional linguistics perspective

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## Abstract

From the perspective of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), lexical metaphors are recognized as a resource for enacting interpersonal meaning in discourse. Within the APPRAISAL framework, they constitute a means for ‘provoking’ an attitudinal interpretation. While the interpersonal function of lexical metaphors is well recognized in SFL, there have been relatively few studies that focus specifically on their deployment in the construction of recurring rhetorical strategies in discourse. This is explored in this study in the context of media editorials. It is found that there are patterns in the choices of lexical metaphor, in the values they provoke and the experiential entities these values couple with. The reinforcement of these evaluative couplings in the flow of text functions to promote values similar to the provoked ones. The analyses also show that lexical metaphors propose bonds of affiliation to a putative readership and therefore foster the readers of the newspaper.

**Keywords:** Lexical metaphor, Systemic functional linguistics, Editorials, Affiliation, Bond

## Introduction

Newspaper editorials attempt to persuade their readers into ways of thinking and behaving that are consistent with the values of the newspapers. A variety of lexicogrammatical resources and rhetorical strategies have been deployed to support this objective. These include, for instance, the full range of appraisal resources and the prosodic patterns they enter into. Liu, Feifei: *Strategies for affiliation in media editorials: Persuading and aligning readers*, Unpublished PhD thesis notes, for example, a recurring pattern in the play of irrealis and realis attitude in building a consistent editorial stance. This paper aims to explore the rhetorical functions of lexical metaphors in newspaper editorial texts. In studies of lexical metaphor, much attention has been given to the categories of their source domains, including, for example, the work of Charteris-Black (2011). Less attention has been given to their function in invoking attitude and the potential rhetorical effects of their deployment. These areas are the focus in this paper. The analyses are based on a data set of 11 editorials selected from *The Australian*. Key concepts from SFL are the tools for uncovering the rhetorical functions of lexical metaphors in this study.

Where media, in particular editorial discourse, is the object of study, many scholars identify their interpretive interests in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This has

generated a fruitful source of explorations of media discourse, social power relations and ideological positioning. Studies from CDA perspective in general are eclectic in theory and methods, in some cases relying on a pragmatic process of interpretation, and in others paying closer attention to the specific nature of linguistic choices, with interpretations referencing linguistic theory, such as SFL (Wang, Wei: *Newspaper commentaries on terrorism in China and Australia: A contrastive genre study*. Unpublished PhD thesis). A valuable and comprehensive model of an SFL approach to study the textual patterning of evaluative resources in media discourse is found in Martin (2004a) which presents a detailed analysis of one editorial from a Hong Kong lifestyle magazine. His analyses reveal a complex of relationships across interpersonal, ideational and textual meanings that enable the editorial writer to negotiate solidarity with a predominantly expatriate readership, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. The study reported here follows Martin's approach.

### **Lexical metaphor**

An interest in lexical metaphor, as a feature of discourse, ranges across a number of fields. And this generates multiple theories about lexical metaphor and its use. There is an agreed appreciation of the concept of lexical metaphor as dealing with “the phenomenon whereby we talk about something in terms of something else” (Semino 2008: 1). Three primary functions of lexical metaphors have been identified: “linguistic (naming), conceptual (framing), and communicative (perspective changing)” (Bougher 2012: 149). These functions have been the focuses in different fields. Its communicative functions in developing persuasive arguments and creating intimacy have been discussed across these fields, in particular cognitive linguistics and SFL.

In cognitive linguistics, their conceptual function has been comprehensively discussed in terms of how they mediate our understanding of the world around us. The work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) not only defined what is a metaphor but more importantly proposed that our conceptual structures of the world are metaphorical. The conventional use of cognitive metaphors has been discussed in this work. Scholars from this area predominantly focus on their function in conceptualizing the world (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987) and in creating new ideologies (Lakoff 1993). For example, Goossens et al. (1995) discussed the underlying concepts of linguistic actions, and Bounegru and Forceville (2011) examined the realization of lexical metaphors as visual and verbal modalities in editorial cartoons. Some scholars also explore the social functions of lexical metaphor. For instance, Mcneel (2011) considered the usage of maternal imagery in building community and constructing identity. The scholars from cognitive theory talk about the functions of lexical metaphors in shaping attitudes and affecting behaviours from the conceptual level. These functions are realized when lexical metaphors become “part of the conceptual system of an individual, community or culture” (Mcneel 2011: 18). Their exploration of the rhetorical functions appeals to the concepts rather than to the values invoked by the expressions of lexical metaphors.

In SFL much attention has been paid to grammatical metaphor (Chang 2004; Martin 1995), but there has been comparatively less attention to lexical metaphor (Simon-Vandenberg 2003). For Halliday (1994), lexical metaphor constitutes a relationship between signifier and signified in which there is one signifier, different signified. Simon-Vandenberg (2003: 224) suggested that lexical metaphor involves “a remapping of meaning onto form” and interpreted this as a realignment of two

strata within the linguistic system. Researchers in SFL primarily pay attention to the three metafunctions realized by lexical metaphor. For example, both Goatly (1997) and Simon-Vandenberg (2003) have taken a functional perspective in their study of metaphorical expressions collected from dictionary. While Goatly (1997) limited his study to an attempt to remedy the marginalized position of lexical metaphor in SFL, Simon-Vandenberg (2003) principally considered the make-up and interpersonal functions of lexical metaphor in a corpus of 3000 metaphorical expressions of verbal Process collected from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. Martin and White (2005) have made a significant contribution to understanding the interpersonal function of lexical metaphors from the perspective of APPRAISAL framework. They treated lexical metaphor as one means to covertly express attitudinal values. These studies in the field of SFL focus on the functions of lexical metaphor in the discourse, in particular their powers in expressing values and changing attitude.

From an SFL perspective, the employment of lexical metaphors indicates that the writers intend to covertly convey some values to the readers by referring to some knowledge common to the readers. Attitudinal value is inherent in the expressions of lexical metaphors. The provoked values have been understood as one device to texture evaluations across a text (Martin 2004b) and influence the way we view the world (Sahlane 2013). Their accumulation over a text proposes bonds for writers and readers to rally around. In this sense, lexical metaphor functions as a resource for community formation. The present study is inspired by these previous studies in SFL.

To identify the expressions of lexical metaphor, this paper adopts the principle of 'one signifier, different signified', that is, 'one wording, different meanings'. The steps are presented as follows with reference to the identification procedure in Pragglejaz group (Semino 2008: 11–12) and the analysis of field in discourse (Martin 1992):

- i. Read the editorial text to get a general understanding of its meaning and fields realized in TAXONOMY, CONFIGURATION and ACTIVITY SEQUENCE.
- ii. Identify the lexical units which have a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the present editorial context with the help of online *Collins English Dictionary* (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english>);
- iii. Recheck the different meanings of the identified lexical units with the native speakers of English.

Based on this procedure lexical metaphors are identified in a data set of 11 editorials collected by a constructed week method. The provoked attitudinal values and their persuasive functions are then analysed in detail, and considered in terms of their cumulative functions in the flow of discourse in each text and as a collective set of editorials.

### **Theoretical background**

The analyses in this paper draw on the key concepts from SFL, a social semiotic theory about language. The SFL tradition presents meaning as three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual (Halliday 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). Each metafunction is theorized as systems of choices across three strata of language – phonology/graphology, lexicogrammar and discourse semantics, and across two strata of context –

register and genre (Martin 1992; Martin and Rose 2007). The focus on the rhetorical function of lexical metaphors orients our attention to both the interpersonal discourse semantic system of APPRAISAL, dominantly focusing on its subsystem of ATTITUDE, and the ideational system of IDEATION. The couplings of choices from these two systems are foundational to the process of affiliation.

### APPRAISAL framework

APPRAISAL framework is a discourse semantic system realizing the personal dimension of the interpersonal meaning (Martin 2014). It is now well-documented in substantial bodies of work since Martin and White's (2005) foundational introduction. This framework serves as an analytical model to deal with "the way language construes attitude and enables writers/speakers to position themselves evaluatively with respect to the viewpoints of potential respondents and other speakers/writers" (White and Thomson 2008: 10). It provides resources for positioning readers and negotiating communities (Martin 2004a, 2010).

At its most general level, APPRAISAL framework has three dimensions: ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION (Martin 2000; White 2001, 2012). ATTITUDE deals with feelings. ENGAGEMENT is concerned with the different sources of attitude and the interrelations among different attitudinal positions. GRADUATION relates to the strength of attitude (Martin and White 2005). Attitudinal feelings are expressed with the aim to be shared and with the expectation that the hearers/readers may sympathize or empathize with the speakers/writers (Martin 2002). It is through shared feelings that readers are being persuaded and affiliated. Since attitudinal values play an important role in negotiating affiliation, we need to discuss it in detail with reference to the discussion in Martin and White (2005), including its categories, its expressions and its vibe (Martin 2017, personal communications).

ATTITUDE is categorized into three semantic regions according to the target of evaluation: AFFECT, JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION. AFFECT deals with positive or negative feelings, including the subcategories of dis/inclination, un/happiness, in/security and dis/satisfaction. JUDGEMENT is concerned with the evaluation of behaviours, including the subcategories of normality, capacity, tenacity, veracity and propriety. APPRECIATION deals with the evaluation of semiotic and natural phenomena, including the subcategories of composition, reaction and value. All these subcategories could be inscribed by attitudinal lexis (such as *likes to*, *talent*) or invoked by the selection of experiential meanings (Martin and Rose 2007; Martin and White 2005). Attitudinal lexis inscribe attitude on the basis that they can explicitly encode either positive or negative value which can be adjusted in its amplification. The inscribed attitudinal value is "largely fixed and stable across a wide range of contexts" (White and Thomson 2008: 11). The selection of experiential meanings functions to construe the objective world from a subjective stance (Hood 2004, 2009; Hood and Martin 2007) by invoking attitude through lexical metaphor (provoke), graduation resources (flag) and the underlying cultural background (afford). Different linguistic resources come into play in the invocation of attitude and function to invoke with different degrees of compulsion.

This paper focuses on the persuasive functions of the provoked attitudinal values. The evaluative positions explicitly expressed in the editorial are identified and discussed, and then the positions provoked by lexical metaphors are examined in relation

to these explicit ones. That is, how the provoked positions strengthen or weaken the inscribed positions?

### Affiliation

Affiliation is a concept recently developed in the SFL (Bednarek and Martin 2010; Martin 2008a). It is concerned with “persona aligning themselves into sub-cultures, configuring master identities and constituting a culture” (Martin 2010: 24). It is presented as a theory about how “social persons affiliate together into communities” (Knight 2010: 38). Affiliation provides the theoretical basis for exploring the affiliative function of lexical metaphor in this paper. The affiliation process in written monologic discourse involves several steps: coupling (bond), local community and general community (the detailed discussion of the affiliation process see Liu, Feifei: *Strategies for affiliation in media editorials: Persuading and aligning readers*. Unpublished PhD thesis). This process accounts for the identification of participants as co-members of one community.

Coupling is a concept from the instantiation cline. It refers to “the ways in which meanings combine, as pairs, triplets, quadruplets or any number of coordinated choices from system networks” (Martin 2008b: 39). Feelings are always interpersonal attitudes to ideational experience (Martin 2004a). It is the combination of interpersonal attitude and its experiential target that impacts upon the affiliation of writers and readers. Evaluative couplings can be found throughout each editorial text within the data set. In this paper, attitude is discussed in terms of couplings, that is, the combination of attitudinal value with its ideational target.

A number of evaluative couplings cluster together when they are concerned with consistent (positive or negative) evaluations of the same or similar entity (Zappavigna et al. 2008). They form one syndrome of evaluative couplings (Liu, Feifei: *Strategies for affiliation in media editorials: Persuading and aligning readers*. Unpublished PhD thesis). In written monologic discourse, each evaluative coupling is assumed to be shared by the writers and a certain group of readers. It construes a local community of values including writers and readers as its members (Liu, Feifei: *Strategies for affiliation in media editorials: Persuading and aligning readers*. Unpublished PhD thesis; Stenglin, Maree K: *Packaging curiosities: Towards a grammar of three-dimensional space*. Unpublished PhD thesis). One syndrome of evaluative couplings construes a general community of values (Liu, Feifei: *Strategies for affiliation in media editorials: Persuading and aligning readers*. Unpublished PhD thesis). In the following analyses, couplings are discussed as syndromes and one syndrome of evaluative couplings as one authorial position constructed in the text.

### Data analyses

This paper reports on a study of the linguistic construal of persuasion and affiliation in online editorials in one national newspaper, as part of a large comparative study of the rhetorical strategies employed by different national newspapers. The particular discourse discussed here is one from the small data set of 11 editorials collected from *The Australian* – the national broadsheet newspaper in Australia. And the strategies employed in this editorial exemplify a recurrent pattern occurring across all the texts within the data set. The editorial entitled *Faceless man’s bid for Batman* was published on the Opinion column on June 4, 2013. It was

written at a time when the two major political parties of Australia – the Labor Party and the Liberal Party – were approaching a federal election for the 44th Parliament of Australia (to take place on 7 September 2013). With the purpose to gain further support, both political parties aim to present positive images of themselves, and at the same time deprecate their opponents.

*The Australian* takes a centre-right political position, thus its editorials strongly affiliate with the Liberal Party and reflect the stances of this party. This study focuses on how the editorial writers rhetorically manage to support the Liberal Party through depreciating the Labor Party. I will show how the lexical metaphors are used to affiliate the readers with the anti-Labor positions. Both the inscribed and the provoked attitudinal values are identified in the analyses. The play between inscribed and provoked values is crucial in the affiliation process.

Following the identification procedures mentioned in this paper, I identify the following instances of lexical metaphors in the chosen editorial. These instances are assumed to be accepted by the putative readers as true. In the following instances, *Batman* refers to the name of an electoral seat. The instances of lexical metaphors are presented in bold and underlined.

- [1] Faceless man's **bid** for Batman
- [2] He has worked as a state and federal **party-machine** man, trade-union employee and ministerial adviser.
- [3] While most Labor MPs have only one or two of these backgrounds essential for representing Labor in parliament, Senator Feeney has the **trifecta**.
- [4] The decision by Martin Ferguson not to recontest his Victorian seat of Batman is a **blow** to Labor.
- [5] That spirit of co-operation in the national interest is no longer part of Labor's **DNA**.
- [6] Instead, the party has been taken over by an **exclusive club** of **operatives** with a **cloistered** world view that a **party machine**, a union or ministerial office provides.
- [7] It still **languishes** in the polls as defeat looms.
- [8] The seat of Batman should be **quarantined** for a stellar candidate who would make a good minister, or perhaps prime minister, one day.

To see what kinds of attitude are provoked, the basic contemporary meanings of these expressions of lexical metaphors and their meanings in the editorial text are explored and presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 illustrates that the literal fields and the metaphorical ones could be the same, such as the field 'people' construed by *exclusive club*, *operatives* and *cloistered*. They, however, refer to different kinds of people and highlight different aspects of people, as shown in the following discussions. The literal and the metaphorical fields could be different, such as those of 'betting' and 'institution' construed by *trifecta*, *DNA*, *languish* and *quarantine*.

The process of provoking attitudinal response in readers depends on the relationship between the literal and the metaphorical meanings involved, and on the evaluative prosody in the co-text and context. Thus, each instance needs to be read from two perspectives – literally in terms of the basic contemporary meaning, and metaphorically in terms of its meaning expressed in the present editorial text. For example, *trifecta* in



**Table 1** The literal and metaphorical meanings associated with lexical metaphor

Expressions of lexical metaphor	Literal meanings		Metaphorical meanings	
	Experiential meaning	Field	Experiential meaning	Field
Bid	offer (a certain price) for something, especially at an auction, stock exchange, or card games; make an effort or attempt to achieve	Betting	Feeney voting for the seat of Batman	Election
Party-machine/ party machine	A machine is a tool containing one or more parts that uses energy to perform an intended action. Machines are usually powered by mechanical, chemical, thermal, or electrical means, and are often motorized.	Industry	the Labor party	Institution
Trifecta	In American and Australian horse racing terminology, a trifecta is a pari-mutuel bet in which the bettor must predict which horses will finish first, second, and third in exact order.	Betting	Feeney's real-life experience for representing Labor in parliament	Experience
Blow	a hard hit in boxing which is a combat sport in which two people engage in a contest of strength, speed, reflexes, endurance, and will, by throwing punches with gloved hands against each other	Betting	Ferguson's decision influences the Labor Party	People
DNA	DNA is a molecule that encodes the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of all known living organisms and many viruses.	People	spirit of co-operation in the national interest in Labor	Institution
Exclusive club	belonging to or catering for a privileged minority, esp. a fashionable clique	People	Labor members	People
Operatives	a worker, esp. one with a special skill	People	Labor members	People
Cloistered	secluded or shut up from the world; living in a monastery or nunnery	People	Labor members	People
Languish	to lose or diminish in strength or energy	People	Labor government	Institution
Quarantined	Quarantine is used to separate and restrict the movement of well persons who may have been exposed to a communicable disease to see if they become ill.	People	the seat of Batman	Institution

While most Labor MPs have only one or two of these backgrounds essential for representing Labor in parliament, Senator Feeney has the trifecta, expresses different evaluative meanings in different context. Literally, it is a term used in America and Australia horse racing. Under such betting context, *trifecta* is a bet “in which the bettor must predict which horses will finish first, second, and third in exact order” (Fries 2002). So *trifecta* invokes positive judgement: normality of the bettor. But in the present editorial text, it refers to candidates’ real-life working experience. Under this political election context, *trifecta* implies that Feeney is lucky to have these three backgrounds: *state and federal party-machine man, trade-union employee and ministerial adviser*. Consequently, *trifecta* provokes negative judgement of Feeney as he tries to win the political election with luck rather than with capability.

This kind of process helps to identify the provoked attitudinal values in the selected editorial text, as presented in Table 2. The analyses show that most of these expressions of lexical metaphors provoke negative judgement of the entities from the field ‘Labor’. Only one of them provokes positive appreciation of the seat of Batman.

The attitude analyses demonstrate that in the text discussed here JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION are the major types of inscribed attitude, and explicit AFFECT only account

**Table 2** Attitude provoked by lexical metaphor

Metaphorical expressions	Appraised	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation
Bid	Feeney		t.-propriety	
Party-machine	Labor party		t.-capacity	
Trifecta	Feeney		t.-capacity	
Blow	Labor party		t.-capacity	
DNA	Labor party		t.-capacity	
Exclusive	Labor members		t.-propriety	
Operatives	Labor members		t.-propriety	
Cloistered	Labor members		t.-propriety	
Languish	Labor government		t.-capacity	
Quarantined	Batman			t. + reaction

for a small part. These attitudinal values are primarily encoded towards entities from the field ‘Labor’, including its members, the party itself, and its policies. These instances construe five syndromes of inscribed evaluative couplings. Two of them are strengthened by the provoked evaluative couplings and the others are subverted by the provoked ones, as shown in the following sections.

An examination of the provoked attitudinal values in the sample text reveals that the lexical metaphors are categorized according to their relationship with the inscribed evaluative couplings. They affiliate the putative readers with the positive evaluation of the seat of Batman through reinforcing the inscribed positive evaluations. As far as ‘Labor’ is concerned, the lexical metaphors provoke negative evaluations. They disaffiliate the putative readers from ‘Labor’ by strengthening the inscribed negative evaluations of the Labor government and also subverting the inscribed positive evaluations of Labor members and Labor policies. This disaffiliation process involves criticism of ‘Labor’, as discussed in the Discussion Section.

**Lexical metaphor affiliates readers with the positive evaluation of Batman**

This editorial text expresses explicitly positive evaluation of *the seat of Batman*, as shown in example [9]. In this example, *parliamentary seat* refers to the *seat of Batman*, which couples with positive appreciation:value in the attitudinal lexis *safest*. Attitudinal inscriptions are presented in bold in this paper and the appraised entities are underlined.

[9]If Labor awards Senator Feeney with its **safest** [+appreciation:value] parliamentary seat, it will mark the triumph of the faceless man.

This evaluative coupling of [positive value + seat of Batman] construes a community of values including readers who take positive stances towards this seat as its members. This community is consolidated in example [10] through the provoked positive evaluation.

[10]The seat of Batman should be **quarantined** [t. + appreciation:reaction] for a stellar candidate who would make a good minister, or perhaps prime minister, one day.



*Quarantine* here is an instance of lexical metaphor. It literally means an action to separate and restrict the movement of healthy people who may have been exposed to a communicable disease. In this example, it is used to describe the current situation of *the seat of Batman*. When the seat of Batman is protected, it indicates that the seat is in a good situation. The treatment of this seat as healthy persons provokes positive appreciation:reaction of *the seat of Batman*. The community of shared positive values is strengthened through this provoked position. The inscribed and provoked attitudinal values work together to provide a healthy and vigour image of the seat of Batman to the putative readers.

### **Lexical metaphor distances readers from 'Labor'**

The expressions of lexical metaphors provoke negative evaluations of entities from the field 'Labor'. In the selected editorial text, these provoked positions either strengthen the inscribed negative evaluations of the Labor government, or form contrast with the inscribed positive evaluations of Labor members, Labor policies and ideal candidates. The contrast strategically subverts these positive positions, as the provoked attitudinal values are more rhetorically effective and therefore more difficult to resist.

### **Reinforcing inscribed negative evaluation of the Labor government**

This editorial text inscribes negative evaluations of the Labor government, as shown in example [11]. *Labor government* is negatively evaluated through the expressions of *plunge further into crisis* and *defeat*.

- [11] His standout contribution in public life was being one of the plotters who removed a first-term prime minister in favour of his deputy, only to see the government **plunge further into crisis** [-judgement:capacity] as it lost its parliamentary majority. It still **languishes** [t.-judgement:capacity] in the polls as **defeat** [-judgement:capacity] looms.

The two instances of evaluative couplings of [negative capacity + Labor government] identify readers taking negative stances towards the Labor government as its members. They construe the community of Labor government haters. This community is further strengthened by the provoked negative evaluation of the government in the lexical metaphor *languishes*, as well shown in example [11]. Through treating the Labor government as a person losing strength and energy, *languish* invokes negative judgement:capacity of this government. The inscribed and invoked evaluative couplings work together in effectively affiliating a large number of readers into this community of Labor government haters.

### **Subverting inscribed positive evaluation of Feeney**

This editorial text inscribes positive evaluations of Feeney, as shown in examples [12] and [13]. Feeney's behaviour of getting the seat of Batman is positively evaluated as capable through the attitudinal lexis *triumph*. Feeney's performances in public life are positively evaluated as appreciation:reaction in the lexis *standout* and *key*.

- [12] If Labor awards Senator Feeney with its safest parliamentary seat, it will mark the **triumph** [+judgement:capacity] of the faceless man. His **standout** [+appreciation:reaction] contribution in public life was being one of the...
- [13] This is not surprising, given he (Feeney) is one of her (Gillard) **key** [+appreciation:reaction] numbers men.

These three evaluative couplings are all concerned with positive evaluation of Feeney. They construe the community of Feeney supporters in the text.

However, this position of positive evaluation of Feeney is not the real stance of the newspaper, for this text also proposes a negative evaluation of Feeney to the readers as shown in example [14]. The Labor Party is characterized as a *machine* and Feeney as a *party-machine man*.

- [14] He (Feeney) has worked as a state and federal **party-machine** man [t.-judgement:capacity], trade-union employee and ministerial adviser.

*Machine* is the equipment which is used to perform a particular kind of intended work without any flexibility. When described as a party-machine man, Feeney takes these inflexible features which should not have happened to a candidate of the seat of Batman. This forms contrast with the inscribed position of Feeney as capable. The common knowledge about *machine* covertly affiliates the readers with the negative position rather than the positive one. It is the community of Feeney haters that is the intended stance of the newspaper. The management here implies that even Feeney was awarded this seat, he is not capable enough to do the job well.

#### Subverting inscribed positive evaluation of Labor policy

This editorial text encodes explicitly positive evaluation of Labor policies as shown in example [15]. Labor's policy in economic reform in the 1980s and early 90s is positively evaluated by *landmark* and the modern Labor project is positively evaluated by *national interest*.

- [15] Mr. Ferguson was part of the modern Labor project which aligned the unions and the party behind the **landmark** [+appreciation:reaction] economic reform agenda of the 1980s and early 90s. That spirit of co-operation in the **national interest** [+appreciation:reaction] is no longer part of Labor's DNA.

Both of the two evaluative couplings are concerned with positive evaluation of Labor's policies. They propose the community of Labor policy supporters to the putative readers.

The positively evaluated policy applies to the past rather than the current Labor government. This is illustrated through the use of the negation marker *no longer*. Negation here explicitly distances the readers from the positive evaluation of Labor's economic reform agenda of the 1980s and early 90s in terms of national co-operation. It indicates that the Labor Party does not still consider the national co-operation in its governance

now. The disaffiliation from Labor policy supporters is implicitly supported by the provoked attitudinal values in examples [16], [17] and [18].

[16] Faceless man's bid [t.-judgement:propriety] for Batman

[17] While most Labor MPs have only one or two of these backgrounds essential for representing Labor in parliament, Senator Feeney has the trifecta [t.-judgement:propriety].

[18] The decision by Martin Ferguson not to recontest his Victorian seat of Batman is a blow [t.-appreciation:reaction] to Labor.

Here we consider the expressions: *bid*, *trifecta* and *blow*. The first expression, *bid*, from a literal perspective, refers to a competitive offer at an auction or in gambling in card games. *Trifecta* is a term used in Australia horse racing, where it is a bet predicting the order of the first three horses in the race. To win such a bet would be considered very lucky. *Blow* refers to a hard punch, as in a boxing ring. Metaphorically in the editorial text, they refer to the Labor Party's election prospects for the electoral seat of Batman. Sequentially, the lexical metaphors associate election prospects with trying to win, the possibility of luck, but likely to lose. This characterization of election provokes negative evaluation, in particular negative judgement of the Labor Party in terms of capacity to win. The use of lexical metaphors here covertly distances the putative readers from the capacity of the Labor Party.

#### Subverting inscribed positive evaluation of ideal candidate for Batman

This editorial text inscribes positive evaluation of the ideal candidate for Batman, as shown in examples [19] and [20]. The ideal candidates for Batman are positively evaluated as capable through *talent*, *stellar* and *good*. These evaluative couplings propose a community of capable candidate to the putative readers.

[19] The Labor Party must recruit from a wider **talent** [+judgement:capacity] pool.

[20] The seat of Batman should be quarantined for a **stellar** [+judgement:capacity] candidate who would make a **good** [+judgement:capacity] minister, or perhaps prime minister, one day.

However, the Labor Party members are constructed as incapable through the lexical metaphors in example [21].

[21] Instead, the party has been taken over by an **exclusive club** [t.-judgement:capacity] of **operatives** [t.-judgement:capacity] with a **cloistered** [t.-judgement:capacity] world view that a party machine, a union or ministerial office provides.

Literally, these expressions (*exclusive club*, *operative*, and *cloistered*) refer to people who are secluded or shut up from the outside world. In the present editorial text, they are applied to describe the characteristics of the Labor Party members. When the members are enclosed, they cannot work efficiently and correctly for the public. They form contrast

with the *wider* and *talent* features of the ideal candidates. The use of lexical metaphor here implies that the Labor Party members are not the ideal candidates for Batman.

### Discussion

The analyses in this study discuss the persuasive functions of lexical metaphors from two aspects. The first function is their usage to affiliate the putative readers with the positive evaluation of the experiential entities. In the case of the editorial text discussed here, it is manifested as the positive evaluation of the seat of Batman. Through provoking positive evaluation of Batman (*quarantine*), it reinforces the inscribed positive positions towards this seat. Lexical metaphor works together with the attitudinal lexis in constructing the community of Batman supporters. They effectively align the mass readers as members of this community.

The other function is to affiliate the putative readers with the negative evaluations of experiential entities. In the case of the editorial text analysed here, it is presented as negative evaluations of Labor policies, Labor members and Labor government. These provoked negative evaluative couplings distance the putative readers from 'Labor'. For example, by treating the Labor government as people losing energy (*languish*), it strengthens the inscribed negative evaluation of this government and therefore distances the readers from Labor government. The provoked negative values also subvert the inscribed positive evaluations of these entities. For instance, the lexical metaphors present Feeney as a party-machine man, Labor's policy for election as betting, and Labor members as isolated. But the seat of Batman is construed as a person with the personalities of strong and healthy. They implicitly describe the Labor members, including Feeney, as opposite to the ideal candidates. This subversion process creates a sarcastic tone towards the Labor Party. This party is criticized and reproached in terms of selecting the candidate for Batman in this editorial text. The symbolization process enables the writers to mercilessly satirize the Labor Party and as well distance the readers from this party.

The opinions expressed in the editorials are closely related to the stances of the newspaper (van Dijk 1998). The attitudinal lexis and the lexical metaphor construct this newspaper as a *guardian* of Australia. It takes the national co-operation and interest into consideration and encodes this spirit as positive (*landmark, talent, stellar, good, quarantine*). The putative readers are persuaded to rally around this position. On the other hand, it indicates that the Labor Party takes a *narrow* position and expresses this position as negative (*exclusive, operative, cloistered*). This narrow nature of the Labor Party forms contrast with the national interest of Australia. The contrast rhetorically distances all the Australians from 'Labor'.

### Conclusion

This paper takes an alternative perspective on the rhetorical functions of lexical metaphor in media editorial discourse. The rhetorical functions lie in its usage to provoke attitudinal values. Lexical metaphor involves two fields. The literal field is more concrete and common to the mass readers. These common cultural backgrounds are assumed to be shared and accepted by both the writers and the readers. The metaphorical field, on the other hand, is more abstract and uncommon to these readers. It is the play of these two fields that provokes attitudinal values. The provoked

positions are the real stances of the newspaper. Lexical metaphor reflects the ways that editorial writers rhetorically position themselves and their putative readers.

The provoked values establish the grounds for the writers to affiliate the putative readers with these implicit positions. The use of lexical metaphor in the unfolding text indicates that the writers intend to covertly convey some values to the readers by referring to some knowledge common to the readers. The presentation of lexical metaphor is an important signal of the affiliation process between the writers and the readers. Lexical metaphor is used for rhetorical effects and therefore serves as a *bond* of affiliation. Lexical metaphors play a significant role in constructing and maintaining the affiliative relationship between writers and readers. The expressions of lexical metaphors in this editorial are predominantly used to emphasize the negative features of the Labor Party and its members. Their function to provoke negative values of them is a powerful device to disaffiliate the readers from this party. They invite the putative readers to either confirm their negative opinions or change their positive opinions of the Labor Party.

Through lexical metaphors the writers present a negative image of 'Labor' and invite the readers to affiliate with this view. The invitation process enables us to see the influences of lexical metaphors on constructing communities of shared values. In newspaper editorial discourse, lexical metaphors are employed not only to unite readers but more importantly to justify controversial issues and promote the positions of the newspapers.

#### Abbreviations

CDA: Critical discourse analysis; SFL: Systemic functional linguistics

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#### Author's contribution

The manuscript was prepared by FL. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

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#### Competing interests

I declare that I have no competing interests.

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