Defining Syria:

An Analysis of Terminological Selection of the Syrian Crisis (2010-2014) by Sky News and BBC News and its Implications for Audiences

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Contents

Introduction

This thesis is seeking to further the understanding of how news broadcasters in Britain choose and use terminology and how this affects audiences. BBC News and Sky News have been selected as the case studies on which to represent the UK news broadcasting industry. These two broadcasters view themselves as different and so do the public and the literature and this research is aiming to show how different or similar these two broadcasters are. With much of the literature based around the US news industry, I am hoping to be able to add a British dynamic to the understanding of how news broadcasters create the news and in so doing see to what extent the literature can be applied to a British market.

The words chosen as the key terms are "government," "regime," "opposition," "rebel," and "terrorist." These words are not only politically sensitive but are useful in being able to show how far news agencies work within the frames and metanarratives of the socio-political system they are broadcasting from and to. Further explanations into how and why these words were selected can be seen in Chapter 2.

In addition to the case studies of BBC News and Sky News, the Syrian Crisis was selected as the event on which to focus this research. The Syrian Crisis was selected as its complicated nature and the potential for "sides" to be chosen made it a very useful and contemporary example around which to build this research.

Building upon the literature review and theoretical Chapter (1) there are three further chapters based around original research, News Article Analysis, a Survey and Interviews. Each part of the original research aimed to add an additional dimension to the utility of this research. By analysing over 200 news articles across the Syrian Crisis I have been able to demonstrate the similarities and differences in how both Sky News and BBC News reported on the Crisis both in how often they used each of the key terms and also how these were then used within the articles themselves. The survey shows how people react to the key words both within and without context of Syria so as to better understand how audiences understand and react to these words and so be better able to gauge the importance of terminological selection in the news. The interviews then allowed me to shine a light on how Sky News and BBC News view their own systems of terminological selection and the way in which each reported on the Syrian Crisis. Each part of the original research will allow me to accept or challenge key theoretical concepts and understanding to build a clearer and more contemporary picture of how news media work in the UK.

Each part of this thesis is aiming to answer four key research questions:

1. How are these words used and what does this show?
2. To what extent are BBC News and Sky News similar or different?
3. Is terminological selection important for audiences?
4. How far can we accept key literature and theoretical concepts, in particular the rise of infotainment and the relationship between encoders and decoders, when applied to the UK?

The conclusion and understanding drawn from this research will add new facets to the understanding of how these two broadcasters reported on the Syrian Crisis and to extrapolate from that a better understanding as to where the UK news industry is today and where it is heading

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Chapter 1

News Media Literature and Theory

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1:1 The Foundations: Saussurian Semiotics and its Application to "Terrorist"

This thesis seeks to explore the usage of a five selected political terms: Regime, Government, Opposition, Rebels and Terrorists. The reasoning behind this thesis' focus on the way in which such terms are used within the news, within the case study of Syria, stems from the understanding that words are intrinsically important and mould the way in which the readers, watchers and listeners perceive what they are recipients of and also how they then interpret that received information. The comprehension of what words *mean* is housed within the realms of linguistics and it is here where the foundations for this thesis are to be found in the comprehension of semiotics.

Semiotics is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) as, "The study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation."[1] which has particular applications to this thesis' research beyond the simple use of these terms but also what these terms later imply for audiences. Saussure is hailed as being the architect of semiotics, but this research will look at a small part of what he created with a particular focus on *linguistic signs*, *associative relations* and *syntagmatic solidarities.* A linguistic sign "unites… a concept and a sound image… the psychological imprint of the sound."[2] Saussure writes about how all words are understood by the human brain through two ways, *le signe et le signifié,* the sign and the signified.[3]
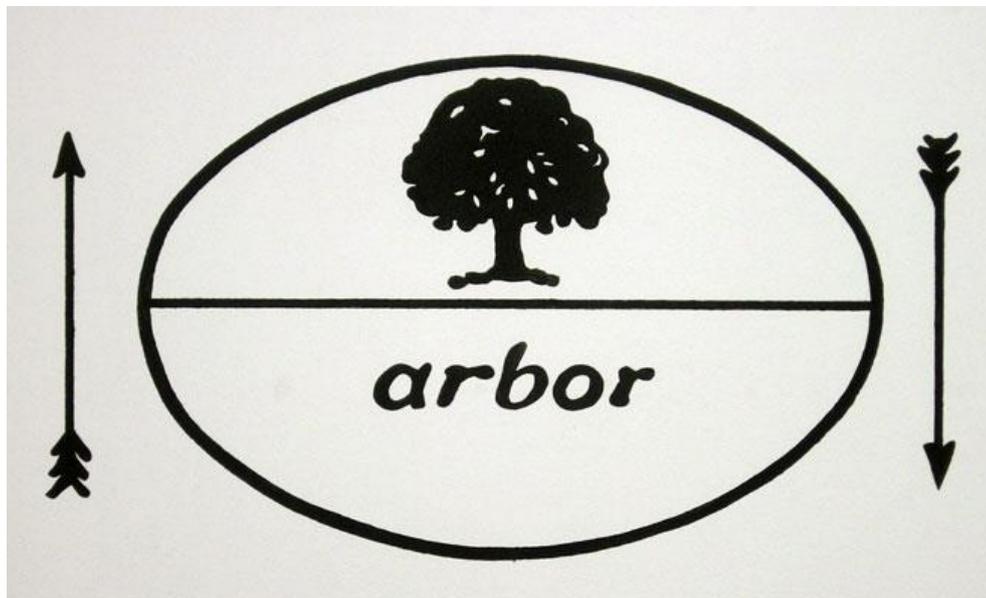
Figure 1: le signe et le signifié

Figure 1 represents one of the many examples Saussure utilizes to highlight the sign / signified relationship. Here it can be seen that the word *arbor* (tree) brings to mind the image of a tree

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[1] Oxford Dictionaries Online. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/semiotics. 09/04/15
Figure 1. http://www.jansvenungsson.com/pics7/potsdam/saussure1.jpg. 09/04/15
[2] Saussure, Ferdinand de. "Course in General Linguistics." Translation by Baskin, Wade. Columbia University Press: New York. 2011. Pg 66
[3] Saussure. Pg 67

and that this connection works both ways, sign to signified and signified to sign. Saussure's model has a third part to it, *le significant*[4] (the signifier.) This takes the concept of the signified and applies it beyond simple stock images to perhaps more abstract concepts such as "happy", "despair" and so on. This additional theoretical concept of the signified / signifier relationship is of particular applicability to this thesis as when, later, the survey results are analysed, a clear positive / negative response can be seen to varying words which reinforces the utility of these Saussurian concepts.

Matusitz applied this to "terrorist" by putting forward that terrorist (the signifier) will mean, to many, the "enemy" [5] (the signified.) This is a relationship that has been further compounded following the 9/11 attacks and the collapse of the Cold War-polarised world. With the sudden ending of the Cold War status quo, it has been proposed, the Western world lacked an "other" against which to define itself and so spent the following decade in the prelude to 9/11 without an easily identifiable "enemy." In this time, Huntington's seminal work "Clash of Civilizations"[6] propagated the idea that without the Communist / Capitalist divide the world would revert back to a far older and deeper set of divisions along the ideas of "civilizations" and religion and that the Muslim world would become that sought-after "other." Many have said that it was 9/11 that saw the era of the demonization of the Muslim world and a clear defining of "us vs. them" based on religion and culture, but Barker in 1997 had already written that the West was viewing "Islam as chief bogeyman"[7] showing the idea existed long before the Twin Towers were hit. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks this schema was further compounded and more deeply ingrained by the images of those two planes flying into the Towers being broadcast all over the world and Bush's veritable Crusade against "evil".[8]

A concept within the literature that highlights this is the "media Muslim." The media Muslim is a media construct and has seen Muslims homogenized and collectivized[9] into a single mass, which Karim calls *"Islamicness".* [10] Not only have Muslims been amalgamated into a homogenized group by the media and in public consciousness, they also tend to be represented in the same way. The media appears to have "go to" images when talking about Muslims as can be seen below:

Figure 2

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[4] Saussure. Pg 67
[5] Matusitz, Jonathan. "Terrorism and Communication: A Critical Introduction." Sage: Los Angeles. 2013. Pg 67
[6] Huntington, Samuel. "Clash of Civilizations? The Next patter of Conflict." *Foreign Affairs*. Vol 72, Summer. 1993. Pg 22-49
[7] Barker, Chris. "Global Television: An Introduction." Blackwell Publishers: Oxford. 1997. Pg 100
[8] CNN – 29/1/02: Bush State of the Union Address http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/ Accessed 14/04/15

[9] Machin, David & Niblock, Sarah. *News Production: Theory & Practice.* Routledge: London. 2006. Pg 81
[10] Eds. Zelizer, Barbie & Allan, Stuart. *Journalism after September 11.* Routledge: London. 2002. Pg 108
Figure 2 http://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/01438/PD29945558_behesht_1438733c.jpg Accessed 03/05/15
Figure 3 http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/multimedia/archive/00451/84050622_Muslim_451215c.jpg Accessed 03/05/15
Figure 4 http://cdn2.spiegel.de/images/image-121051-panoV9free-pist.jpg Accessed 03/05/15

Taking this concept of the "media Muslim" and the relationships between words and images we will return to Saussure and the concept of associative relations and syntagmatic solidarities which are particularly relevant to understand for the latter parts of this thesis. Associative relations are defined by Saussure as "discourses formed in the brain (which) are part of the inner storehouse that makes up the language of the speaker".[11] This can be more easily understood as, words that are associated within the brain with other words or images, and further complements the concept of syntagmatic solidarities, which are words that appear in conjunction with other words. Syntagmatic solidarities are of particular utility later in this thesis when the articles from Sky News and BBC News are analysed in order to see which words appear with others words in the reporting of the Syrian Crisis.

Another area that builds on the concept of the media Muslim and the Saussurian linguistic concepts is the blurring of the terms Muslim and Islamic and the application of the term "terrorist" within the news media. Karim makes an interesting point on the distinction, or rather lack of distinction, in the media between "_Muslim_ terrorists and Muslim terrorists."[12] The distinction is in the fact the news will often say Islamist fighters, Muslim terrorist, Islamic groups and so forth; what Karim is highlighting is that often audiences will fail to distinguish between a terrorist who happens to be Muslim and a Muslim terrorist.

1:2 Schema, Semantic Macrostructures & Relevance Structuring

Within media theory the term _schema_ seems to be more widely used than the political science terms _frame_ or _discourse_ although they are essentially interchangeable. Gamson defined a frame as "A central organizing idea making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue".[13] Durant provides a slightly differing and interesting definition, which ties very closely to the Saussurian debates in the previous sub-chapter. He defines schema as "The mental organization of stereotypical knowledge…. A tendency to draw on previous knowledge (to understand)"[14] which, early on, sets to challenge the view that it is possible for news media to work beyond the social norms and framing of the society they emanate from.

The most commonly understood schema is that of "us vs. them." As previously mentioned, the Cold War saw the West define itself against the Communist "other" and that, with the end of the Cold War, there was a "coup de grâce"[15] bringing about, as Laïdi says, "a world without meaning".[16] This saw the need for the West to enter into a new schema and the Muslim world emerged as that necessary "other". The news media, as Toolan said in 1998, is diachronical,[17] following the realpolitik of the day, and by mapping the terms used by the key news media "players" it is possible to understand the global media, and even political, framework of the world at that time, acting almost like "a political time capsule".[18] A good example of this would be the changing stereotype, in the UK at least, of what a terrorist may look like. In the post 9/11 world it is hard for someone who has grown up surrounded by a

[11] Saussure. Pg 123
[12] Ed. Zelizer, Barbie.& Allan, Stuart. "Journalism After September 11." Rouledge, London. 2002. Pg 109
[13] Wolfsfeld, Gadi. "Media & Political Conflict: News from the Middle East." Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1997. Pg 31.
[14] Durant, Alan & Lumbroum, Mariam. "Language & Media: A Resource Book for Students." Routledge. London. 2009. Pg 79
[15] Hammond, Phillip. " Media, War & Postmodernity." Routledge, London. 2007. Pg 7
[16] Hammond. Pg 14
[17] Conboy, Martin. "The Language of the News." Routledge, London. 2007. Pg180
[18] Wolfsfeld. Pg 32

world divided between the West and the Muslim world to think that terrorists are anything other than what the "media Muslim" images would have us believe. Saying that, in the UK a terrorist would normally have meant a white Irishman, due to the high presence and threat of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), a thought that many nowadays would not be able to reconcile with their own preconceptions of what a terrorist means today.

One of the largest debates within the media theory literature is the authorship of these schemas and how far a supposedly independent news system can break free of a country's, or even ideology's, framework. This has particular weight when looking at terminology used by news media and to what extent terms are being used accurately through the understanding of the situation at hand and how far meta-narratives and cultural norms influence those decisions. This thesis will analyse the way Sky News and BBC News do this in following chapters but will now look at the larger debates and critiques within the literature.

To begin this analysis of schema and language selection within the news media we must, of course, begin with Chomsky. Chomsky's series of interviews and writings covering the news' and politicians' language usage from the Vietnam conflict onwards takes a highly critical stance of the way in which Governments and news outlets present the world in which we live. He says, "The media tend to present and interpret social reality within the framework that is largely set by the domestic power".[19] This is a critique that has followed into the 21st century with Thussu, who looks largely at US coverage of the Muslim world and the rise of infotainment and says, "There is substantial evidence that media coverage of foreign events closely follows the interpretative frames offered by the political elites".[20] This can be difficult to prove, with many news agencies stating that they use their own language and not that of the Government of the day, while, on the other hand, it is common that the two often coincide when it comes to terminological selection, be that tacitly or implicitly, with Ginneken placing the number as high as 75%.[21] This statistic does stem from a body of work that is rather dated but is still useful as a guideline as much of the more modern literature continues to critique news media along similar narratives. In 2002, Zelizier and Allan highlighted why this area is important to the way in which news is written as, "attempts are made to place atypical occurrences within the cognitive scripts and models of behaviour shaped by previous events".[22] The applicability of this idea to both the thesis as a whole, and this subchapter's focus, is that they are suggesting that news articles are bound by the schema and metanarratives of the world in which they live, being forced to mould language and the story itself to conform to preconceptions of terminology and understanding. This would perhaps fly in the face of journalists who consider themselves to be investigative and ground breaking and would be challenged, as will be seen in later chapters, by the BBC and Sky News. They believe their reportage to be based around "the facts" and the world as it is, rather than these concepts of a world "constructed"[23] by the news and the political elites for the domestic populace. Saying this, an understanding has to be taken as to the realities of 24/7 rolling news and the demands placed upon journalists. Journalists may need to "find a narrative fit

[19] Chomsky, Noam. "Language & Politics." Black Rose Books Ltd., Montreal. 1988. Pg 437
[20] Thussu, Kushan Daya & Freedman, Des. "War & The Media." Sage Publications, London. 2002. G 36
[21] Ginneken, Jaap Van. "Understanding Global New: A Critical Introduction." Sage Publications. London. 1998. Pg 86
[22] Zelizier. Pg 102
[23] Barker. Pg 97.

between incoming information and existing media frames"[24] not from a conspiratorial agenda-setting angle, but rather from the necessity of instantaneous reporting and news coverage in an attempt at, what Tuchman called, "routinizing the unexpected"[25] - something that has become more and more wide spread with the professionalization of news and the standardization of news practises.

In their 2004 book, Hallin and Mancini talk of *political parallelism,* "the degree and nature of the links between media and political parties [and] the extent the media system reflects major political divisions".[26] This is something that can be seen very clearly within the British press, certainly around election time, where newspapers will very explicitly back certain political parties, but which is slightly harder to see within televised news here in the UK although is much more evident in the US. One reason for the different degree of real and perceived parallelism within the US and UK news is to the level of legislation and regulation governing news agencies. In 2003, the British Government passed the Communications Act which governs news coverage, in all its forms, in the UK and was created to steer the UK media away from following the US example of a very overtly politicised news media. There are three key clauses within the act that are worth noting:

1.4.1 – News in whatever from, must be reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality.

1.4.10 – Due impartiality must be preserved on matters of politics and industrial controversy.

1.4.12 – Broadcasters should not give undue prominence to the views of persons of bodies on matters relating to current public policy.[27]

This is an attempt by legislators to ensure that news media is freed from the meddling of the formalized political elites allowing news to, in theory, break away from political schema. The BBC, in addition to the Communications Act 2003, is bound by its own Charter, which deeply stresses the need for independence from external influences, something which will be analysed through interviews conducted in Chapter 5. Despite this, it is worth noting, that legislation cannot ensure that news broadcasters are freed from the far larger macrostructures and frames that society as a whole works within.

Dijk's writings back in the 1980s talk of schema as *semantic macrostructures*, the big picture, in which the news must operate. He very clearly believed that it was an impossibility for the news to break free from the wider metanarratives operating in the world. In his book, Dijk broke the structure of a news articles into three main areas, each with its own level of embedded schema and framing.

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[24] Wolsfeld. 34

[25] Woldsfeld. 34

[26] Hallin, Daniel & Mancini, Paolo. "Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media & Politics." Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 2004. Pg 21.

[27] 2003 Communications Act - http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/contents Accessed 05/05/15

Headline = Highest macro-proposition i.e "us vs. them"

Lead/ Sub heading = Top of the Macrostructure

Content = Schematic categories and lower macro-propositions[28]
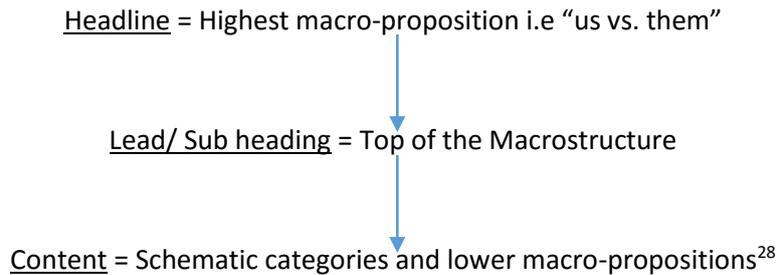
Although he was talking about print news media, this is a system that can easily be seen transferred to the world of television news and their web-based news platforms. This is what has been coined as *relevance structuring* whereby the order in which a news story is written and presented is based on an almost subconscious ordering of varying levels of schema by editors and journalists alike. During interviews conducted in 2014 with the BBC's Style Editor Ian Jolly, he also spoke of not only how news pieces are organised within themselves, based around the concepts of relevance structuring, but so too is the very order of the stories in the news. Contrary to popular belief, the ordering of news stories on, for example, the 10 O'clock News is not done by what could be deemed as "important" by political scientists or political elites, but rather by what the editors believe will be the most important for their viewers.[29] Schlesinger also talks about how the news ranks its stories by saying that "The news only deals in what the audience is interested in knowing".[30] This then raises a plethora of questions around how news agencies know what their audiences are interested in and who gives editors the authority to make those decisions, some of which will be analyses in the subsequent subchapters on *Newsworthiness* and *Encoders and Decoders.*

1:3 Newsworthiness and Embedding

Building on and developing the understanding and discussions in the previous subchapters we will now look at two key areas of news media theory: the concept of newsworthiness and the idea of embedding. Galtung and Ruge say the 12 requirements for a story to be elevated from a simple story to becoming news and therefore becoming newsworthy are:

- *Negativity* – stories with a negative quality "sell" better.
- *Recency* – news is all about immediacy and being up-to-date.
- *Proximity* – stories nearer to home tend to be more important.
- *Superlatives* – the more superlatives the bigger a story can be.
- *Personalization* – the human element to a story brings "us" in.
- *Attribution* – understanding the "why?"
- *Consonance* – familiar stories.
- *Unambiguity* – stories that can be easily understood by audiences.
- *Unexpectedness* – Surprise events capture audiences' attention.
- *Relevance* – the more audiences relate to a story the "bigger" it is.
- *Eliteness* – celebrity in all its forms captures public interest.
- *Factility* – how true audiences perceive it to be. [31]

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[28] Dijk, Teun Van. "News Analysis: Case Studies of International & National News in Press." LEA Publishers: London. 1988. Pg15
[29] Ian Jolly Interview. 10/1/2014
[30] Schlesinger, Philip. "Putting Reality Together: BBC News." Constable: London. 1978. Pg 116
[31] Bell, Alan. "The Language of the News Media." Blackwells: Oxford. 1991. Pg 156-158

The concept of newsworthiness centres on the understanding that not all stories become news and the reasons behind that. This was captured by the editor of the New York Sun, John Bogart, who said, "'Dog bites man' is not news, 'Man bites dog' now that's news!".[32] It might seem to most to be somewhat self-apparent that the news does not report on any and all events and yet, simultaneously, few will raise questions as to how and why some items become news and others fail to "make the cut." Fowler puts forward a key idea as to why newsworthiness as a concept is one that is worth investigating, he says "nothing is intrinsically newsworthy".[33] This statement truly places news creation as a whole into perspective as no event anywhere in the world is, in and of itself, newsworthy. The story only becomes newsworthy when it is deemed to be so by journalists, news agencies, governments, the public and so on. This means that news agencies are extremely powerful in not only deciding what is shown and how but, in so doing, also deciding what the world believes to be newsworthy. Ginneken gives a real-world example from the US coverage of Gulf War I highlighting how Iraqi missile deployments and development made headline news while US missile deployments and development both in the Gulf and elsewhere was unlikely to make Fox News bulletins as it is not thought to be suitably newsworthy for a US audience.[34] Whether or not something does become part of the news and how it meets the newsworthy criteria is called the *threshold.*[35]

To further apply this to the specific focus of this thesis, Hoskins and O'Loughlin provide a very telling example as to when "evil" acts become newsworthy but also tie it back to the tone in which these acts are portrayed with further application and relation to the "media Muslim": "To commit an evil act is newsworthy, but for an evil actor to commit an evil act is not political: it appears as natural, instinctive and therefore not a matter for enquiry".[36] There are a few points that should be unpacked from this: its applications to "terrorist" and "regime", its relation to the "media Muslim" and its implication for audiences. If you were to apply this to "terrorist" and "regime" by simply substituting the world "evil" for either of those terms, it would immediately raise questions. Fisk makes a helpful observation and one that should be carried through to later sections. He says "Terrorists are those who use violence against the side using the word".[37] The implications for this in relation to newsworthiness are clear: terrorist actions and, indeed, regime actions, are only newsworthy and only have such terminology utilized when being done by "others." This is useful when looking at the news articles and interviews as to how far news agencies' terminology shows potential bias in the way in which a story is being covered. Furthermore, the "media Muslim" is propagated further by the way in which "terrorist," in particular, appears to be quite liberally applied to acts by Islamists which means that audiences no longer question the motivations behind such actions but simply deem that as natural and not worthy of further investigation. For audiences this could mean an oversimplification of the world into a binary "us and them" or even "right and wrong" scenario, proliferated by what news agencies deem newsworthy and the terminology used when presenting that story as news.

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[32] http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/24897.html Accessed 16/05/15
[33] Fowler, Roger. "Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press." Routledge: London. 2009. Pg 11
[34] Ginneken. Pg 88
[35] Conboy. Pg 155
[36] Hoskins, Andrew & O'Loughlin, Ben. "War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War." Polity Press: Cambridge. 2010.
[37] Zelizier. Pg 102

There is the possibility of a proverbial Catch-22 surrounding what is deemed newsworthy as primarily it is down to if the audience will be interested in the "news" or not and that is why news agencies choose the stories, while, at the same time, audiences do not have access to any and all sources used by news agencies and so can only know about what they are being shown and therefore watch it. I would question as to how far news agencies are able to decide what audiences would believe newsworthy if audiences themselves are not able to be involved in the selection processes of editors and news staff. Bell does level some criticism at this by saying "the news media systematically reinforce…what 'everyone knows to be true'";[38] a criticism, once again, which news agencies and journalists refute by highlighting their belief and dedication to investigative journalism. Despite this potential gap in media theory's understanding of newsworthiness, Galtung and Ruge's 12 key areas seems to hold true when looking at what turns an event into a *newsworthy* event, with very little of the literature seeking to challenge this concept in the 30 years since it was written. However, Harrison makes an important caveat to this by saying "different conceptions of newsworthiness and what is in the public interest differ according to each broadcaster",[39] which explains why, although broadly similar, Sky News and BBC News, for example, do not have identical news programmes, with different stories being given different emphasis as well as, sometimes, wholly differing stories featuring in their news cycles.

It is worth noting, before moving on to embedding, the fact that news stories are *stories*. In addition to being newsworthy, what becomes the news must also become a story. Hall provides two useful phrases that unpack this choice of noun well. Firstly, "an event must become a story before it can become a communicated event".[40] This has flavours of infotainment as mentioned in the previous subchapters whereby audiences need almost to be entertained by the news as well as simply informed by it. Furthermore, this shows that Fowler's belief that "nothing is intrinsically newsworthy" rings true, as an event which has little ability to be developed into a story that fits a wider metanarrative or series of events would prove difficult for news agencies to drop into the news cycle. Hall is later quoted by Bell along with his co-writers Connell and Curtis on how "TV cannot transmit raw historical events to its audiences"[41] as they require contextualisation and narrative in order for an audience to fully understand what is happening on the screen. Despite this, Aljazeera and Euronews, to name but two examples do have parts of their news broadcast done as a "no comment" section where raw news events are televised with no voice over or reporter. The potential risks of understanding or misunderstanding the news will be unpacked through the encoder / decoder debate that will be analysed in the subsequent subchapter.

Further to the concept of newsworthiness is that of *embedding*. Embedding is a relatively straightforward concept that will be briefly explained now but implicitly and explicitly applied throughout this thesis as it is a key concept in understanding why terms are chosen. Embedding is the theory that every story will carry something from each part of the reporting process; Bell suggests that "The average news item has probably been through 4+ separate newsrooms[42]" before reaching the TV screens of audiences. Bell attributes this to editors and

[38] Bell, Allan & Garrett, Peter. "Approaches to Media Discourse." Blackwell Publishing: Oxford. 2007. Pg. 108
[39] Kuhn, Ramond. "Politics and the Media in Britain." Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke. 2007. Pg 149.
[40] Bell (2007). Pg 113
[41] Bell (2007). Pg 118
[42] Bell (1991). Pg 47

the role they play in creating news and the way in which information is added and subtracted in order to meet editorial criteria through the processes of information deletion, lexical substitution and syntactic editing.[43]

To clarify, here is an example:

Bomb detonates in square. 100+ dead
↓
Suicide bomb explodes in central square. 100s dead and injured
↓
Huge suicide bomb explodes in crowded square with 100s of innocents dead or injured.
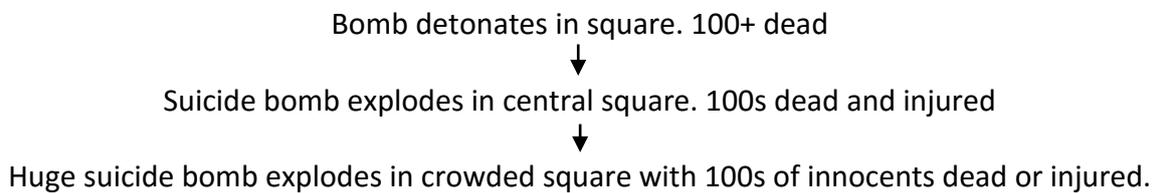
From the diagram it can be inferred that the core of the story has not changed; a bomb has exploded and people died as a result; though it is evident that the first line is informative and by the third line the story has become headline-worthy. Even though the information has not significantly changed, the language selection has developed it into something we would "like" to hear about. This is a good example of encoding, where a story is layered with meaning and edited until the finalized story is released. Behind the language choices are also what Kress and Hodge called "underlying ideologies embedded in linguistic expression".[44] This is particularly applicable to what this thesis is focusing on around terminological selection as, do the language choices being made act as evidence of the embedding of ideological beliefs of editors and other news creators and, if so, what are the implication of that for audiences? This is all the more significant when 91% of people in a survey by Hargreans and Thomas said that TV news was their "most useful" source of news.[45]

From the concepts of newsworthiness and embedding it is clear that what is shown to the public within news undergoes degrees of filtration and that throughout and after that process there also lie questions surrounding how and why language is chosen and the implications that that may have for audiences. From here we will look at how far encoders and decoders understand one another.

1:4 Encoders and Decoders

Put simply, *encoders* are the people that create the news, such as producers, editors and reporters and *decoders* are those who receive the news such as viewers, readers and listeners. There is much within the literature explaining and questioning the dynamic within the relationship between these two halves of the news media world, with particular focus on how far the two sides understand one another clearly. In the penultimate chapter of this thesis this debate will be analysed in depth around a survey taken of people's understanding of the terms focused on within this research. For now this area will remain in a more generalised and theoretical sense in order to understand the wider contexts and discourses surrounding this area of media theory.

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[43] Bell (1991). Pg 70-73
[44] Bell (1991). Pg 214
[45] Montgomery, Martin. "The Discourse of Broadcast News." Rutledge: London. 2007. Pg 13

To begin this subchapter on encoders / decoders it is useful to start by placing them within the entirety of the cycles of news from source to feedback, Berlo's Model of Communication / Hypodermic Model provides an over-simplified but easily understood flow chart of communication.

Source = the original action

Encoding = writing and editing

Message = the article or report

Medium = the mode of transmission e.g. TV, newspaper, radio or online

Noise = anything that may interfere between the medium and the receiver

Receiver = the end-user e.g reader, viewer, listener

Decoding = Interpretation of the received communication

Reaction = How that information is processed and understood

Feedback = How the decoders have reacted is then analysed by the encoders[46]

From this diagram you can easily see the flow of a news story from the initial source through to the end-user and it then feeding back into the encoding system. What Berlo's model makes clear is that from the "source" to the "reaction" there are multiple stages from both the encoding and decoding side of the news and it highlights the various steps that a story must go through before it is understood. This is particularly useful as it reemphasises the journey a story must take and whereby each stage of that process will mean that the language used has to be able to be interpreted across all the stages accurately and / or the propensity for the actual terminology used or the interpretation of that terminology to change through each stage.

Delving further into the stages highlighted by Berlo, this thesis will first explore the process of encoding and its implications on language. Fairclough makes clear something which at first may not seem obvious, and that is that "many people work on a story, [meaning that each story] is embedded and layered with each [person]".[47] One aim of this thesis is to challenge ideas within the literature over the ideas of the near-conspiratorial nature of news creation and to attempt to balance the theoretical understandings and philosophical concepts of the news with the reality of news creation. This is following in the same vein as Stuart Allan, who says "An effort is made by academics and researchers to problematize and 'make strange' the everyday activities of journalists",[48] and this thesis will seek to establish how far Allan's criticisms can be justified.

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[46] Matusitz. Pg 34
[47] Faiclough, Norman. "Media Discourse." Hodder Arnold: London. 1995. Pg 48
[48] Allan, Stuart. "News Culture." 2nd Ed. Open University Press: Maidenhead. 2004. Pg 56

Bell, who was previously a journalist in New Zealand before writing many books on the language and processes of news media, talks of how all news stories must make their way through various editing "gates"[49] between the reporter on the ground until final broadcast or publication. Through each "gate" each person's style of language, definition preferences and even overt or covert implementation of schemas and frames, are all placed in to the story. Much of the news media theory seems to criticise this as conspiratorial elitist agenda setting but according to many other books written from *within* the industry, as well the interviews conducted as part of this research, this is simply a necessary process of the news writing system. That is not to say that criticisms of how news is edited are not worth noting however.

Journalists require editors to do their job in order to provide standardization and consistency of language across stories, as well as editors' ability to see the "bigger picture", which makes editors, as Becker calls them, "Heralds of Credibility"[50] in terms of both the story itself and the wider news cycle. Editors have three key roles according to Bell: information deletion, lexical substitution and syntactic editing rules.[51] Syntactic editing raises few questions as that is simply proof reading, however criticism has been levelled as to the power of editors and the extent to which they exercise their authority in the first two areas. Information deletion can be seen from both sides of the "agenda setting" debate, with one side seeing the need for information deletion as a necessary tool in order to keep reports and stories within strict time/space restriction and those who view it as a "news apartheid"[52] whereby the "news is based on a *selective* articulation of *certain* voices about *supposed* events".[53] Both sides are valid when it comes to this area of encoding and editing as there have been clear cases in the past where the news could be seen to be censoring what makes the news in a way that can easily add weight to the concept of an elitists' "club." A most recent example would be the slow pick-up of the riots and demonstrations in London following the 2015 General Election result by mainstream news broadcasters. However, despite clear evidence that it can sometimes be done with questionable motives, on the whole the constraints and necessities of a 24/7 rolling news cycle means that information deletion is an essential part of a news story's life.

Perhaps the area that raises most questions directly with regards to the topic of this thesis on terminological selection is that of lexical substitution. Sapir and Whorf stated that, "Changing your word for something, changes that something",[54] a phrase on which the premise of this thesis lies heavily in order to see how far such a statement can be utilized in the terminological selection processes of Sky News and BBC News and how far this plays out for audiences too. This area of the editor's role poses large questions over how far editors and broadcasters are able to select terminology which will later go on to influence millions of people's decisions and views of the world. Once again this can be seen from both sides, from a side that views this as news agenda setting and the proliferation of Western hegemonic discourse as

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[49] Bell (1991). Pg 66
[50] Allan. Pg 63
[51] Bell (1991). Pg 70-73
[52] Conboy. Pg 150
[53] Ginneken. Pg 85 (emphasis added)
[54] Durant. Pg 27

discussed in the previous subchapters, and the other which sees it as a necessary part of the news cycle. From the view of necessity there are two key reasons for lexical substitution; meeting an "in-house" style and the possibility of "verbal hygiene." Every news broadcaster has its own set of in-house guidelines on language covering accepted definitions and terms and when they can be applied, the style and level of language used and a plethora of other areas which maintain a broadcaster's ability to differentiate itself from another and to retain and engage its chosen audience. "Verbal hygiene" as defined by Cameron is "using language that is respectful to all".[55] This is particularly important when broadcasters have a wide and varied audience base, or, for example with BBC News, whose website is the same across the whole world, in order to maintain consistent and well-informed language. The argument against this is the sterilization of language in order to maintain a status quo and the increasing difficulty for news to shape, rather than follow, popular beliefs and thoughts, but this is a very real and necessary part of modern news broadcasting.

Since the 1990s there has been a large increase in the professionalization of the news and this is an underlying dimension to the debates above and those that will follow, both in terms of how the news is created but also the move to news as a commercial enterprise rather than simply a source of information. Wilensky defined professionalization as "systematic knowledge or doctrine acquired only through language prescribed training".[56] Evidence for the rise of professionalization in the news across the industry is the creation of more professional journalism schools within news broadcasters themselves, as well as ever growing and more detailed in-house "style guides" which outline how and when terminology can be used and the style in which news should be presented. Three key dimensions of professionalism as outlined by Hallin and Mancini are: a rise in autonomy for journalists, an increase in professional norms and business-style hierarchies, and a strong public service orientation.[57] In reading through Hallin and Mancini's concepts of professionalism it is evidently based on more of a BBC model of news broadcasting, focusing far more on public service broadcasters (PSB) / national broadcasters rather than the "newer" commercial style broadcasters such as Sky News, Al Jazeera and 5 News and most certainly does not take into account the meteoric rise in online news outlets such as Buzzfeed. Once again, theory seems to eye this professionalization of the industry with suspicion and caution while, in reality it is something that is here to stay and although not perfect, allows multi-national, multi-platform rolling news agencies to maintain standards across all platforms as best they can and not allow journalists total freedom in the prescription of their own language which may lead to inconstancy and miscommunication. Furthermore, Thussu, who tends to criticise the way in which modern news production is heading towards a more "infotainment" style of presentation, does side in favour of professionalism saying "Professionalism implies a willingness to report 'both' sides of the story and less willingness to meet the demands of Government",[58] which is a belief that is reinforced later in this thesis through interviews with both Sky News and BBC News.

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[55] Conboy. Pg 200
[56] Hallin. Pg 33
[57] Halin. Pg 34-36
[58] Thussu. Pg 89

Encoding is not simply about the processes stories go through in the editing room, but goes beyond that into how news is presented to the decoders which this will now be briefly looked at. The way in which news has been presented has changed greatly from newspapers to the radio, to the television and the internet. Not only do these different media present different presentational challenges but, taking television news as an example, the way in which news is now presented to the audience has dramatically changed. If one were to look at the news from the 1950s, a middle-aged man would be seated behind a desk reading the news in a clipped accent. Now you only have to look at a recent event such as the General Election 2015 to see how much news has changed, with far more informal language, large usage of graphics, regional accents and an established need for the news to be "fully live," reporting from all areas simultaneously. In short, the news has become a programme to "watch" rather than just to learn from. This harks back to the tensions between information and entertainment with the rise of the perceived "infotainment" and can be seen as an attempt to stem the dramatic and consistent fall in television and radio viewers and listeners, and to continue the rise of web-based news accumulation. Audience numbers have fallen both in the UK and the USA and this is primarily down to a decrease in youth engagement[59] in the more traditional forms of news acquisition. Therefore, there has been a large shift across the industry to make the news more engaging in order to recapture this large market through new presentation methods as well as new platforms such as online and mobile. Returning to the way in which news is presented to "us" it is worth noting the way in which news presenters and, to an extent, written news both online and print, present themselves. Combining Fairclough and Bell, "presenters often present themselves as inhabiting the same common sense world as their audience"[60] in order for audiences to "accept as natural, obvious or commonsensical, certain preferred definitions of reality".[61] For obvious reasons this raises issues as to the power of the news in shaping the beliefs of its audiences while also enabling the news to become more appealing to a more modern audience.

There are now only a few factors that must be understood further when looking at the encoder / decoder relationship and this thesis will now more explicitly investigate the role of the decoder. The entirety of this debate centres simply on understanding. To what extent do decoders understand what encoders are wanting them to understand and how far is this communication pure or miscommunicated? Bell puts simply that "encoders cannot guarantee ideological closure and acceptance by the decoder".[62] It would appear that much of the literature focuses on the encoder side of news production as it is far more easily researched and analysed by looking at what news broadcasters and editors do and, as this thesis has shown, there is a range of tools used, including in-house guides, new presentation styles and platforms, the selecting of stories deemed already interesting and known to the audience and other ways in which to professionalise the news and make audiences engage in the news and better understand it.

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[59] Machin, David & Niblock, Sarah."News Production: Theory and Practise." Routledge: London. 2006. Pg 21
[60] Fairclough. Pg 81
[61] Bell (2007). Pg. 105
[62] Bell (2007). Pg118

Despite this, there can never be a 100% guarantee that what the encoders broadcast the decoders have fully understood *in the way in which the decoders intended.* Ginneken makes a useful observation, saying "The news items are selectively decontextualized. They may be recontextualized by the [decoder] – but only with the help of *les idées reçues*".[63] This is particularly worth noting and carrying forward into the rest of the thesis when the specific focal terms and original research are analysed, as Ginneken proposes that decoders can only interpret the world through frames and concepts they already have and so decoding a message can only be done through those pre-understood structures, harking back to the sign /signified debate in the first subsection of this thesis, on Saussure.

One of the easiest ways for encoders and decoders to "misunderstand" one another is through the comprehension of terminology, an area that will be specifically analysed in relation to Syria in subsequent chapters. Here terminology can be interpreted in two ways by the decoder: through its denotative and connotative meanings, or rather its dictionary versus interpretative meaning. This is particularly important and applicable to the words focused on by this thesis as in particular the differences in usage and opinion of "government", "regime", "opposition", "rebel" and "terrorist" and has already been touched upon when looking at the "media Muslim" and the links between perceptions and stereotypes versus the dictionary definitions of certain terms. The debate then flows on to how far the news is dumbing down in order to meet the expectations and abilities of "average Joe",[64] by telling audiences only what they are interested in knowing so as to reduce the likelihood of miscommunication, and how the "average Joe" may not be the same for all broadcasters. This will be much further analysed and explored through the interviews with BBC News and Sky News.

From these theoretical debates this thesis will now look into the research question and design, the applicability of some of this theory to a real world example of BBC News' and Sky News' coverage of the Syrian crisis and analysing five terms and definitions in order to see how terminology is selected, why it is selected and finally what these words and changes mean for audiences.

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[63] Ginneken. Pg 155
[64] Schlesinger. Pg 125

Chapter 2

Research Design and Methodology

2:1 Overview

The research question of this thesis stems from an interest in language and how political terminology is used by the news, why it is used and the effect that it then has on the audience and the population at large. This chapter will seek to explain the reasoning behind this thesis and to explain the subsequent chapters, walking through each chapter and explaining the methodology of the original research conducted in order to answer the question and idea "Defining Syria: An Analysis of Terminological Selection of the Syrian Crisis (2010-2014) by Sky News and BBC News and its Implications for Audiences."

2:2 Focal Terms

The focus on language in this thesis stems from the concept that "Changing your word for something, changes that something", [65] as Sapir and Whorf stated. As explained in the previous chapter, there is much in the realms of semiotics, linguistics and news theory that suggest the power of not only language, but the power of that language in conjunction with the influence of the news. However, what this thesis aims to marry are the world of academia and the "real" world and to see how far the words selected for particular focus in this thesis, which are deemed politically charged by political scientists and media theorists alike, are also viewed in the same way by the audiences who are in receipt of them. The words selected for analysis are: *terrorist*, *regime*, *government*, *opposition* and *rebel*. These were the words selected to be focused on, primarily due to their politically charged and opposing nature with the use of each term denoting a certain view of the world and view of the conflict. Barnett explains this well through the use of the word "evil" saying, "I am never evil, only you are",[66] which, to apply this to one of the terms focused on in this research, means "we" would never call an ally's government a "regime" or a group supported by "us" as "rebels", meaning these terms' usage within the news should be analysed as they can shed light on the meta-frameworks at work in the news and if the news is able to extract itself from the country's linguistic status-quo. Through news analysis I conducted within the thesis' research for this thesis all these chosen terms appear in the top 20 most frequently used words in both BBC News and Sky News articles analysis.

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[65] Durant. Pg 27
[66] Hoskins, Pg 176

Term	Definition	Contrasting Term
Government	"The group of people with the authority to govern a country or state; a particular ministry in office.[67]"	Regime
Regime	"A government, especially an authoritarian one.[68]"	Government
Opposition	"A group of opponents, especially in sport, business, or politics.[69]"	Rebel
Rebel	"A person who rises in opposition or armed resistance against an established government or leader.[70]"	Opposition
Terrorist	"A person who uses terrorism in the pursuit of political aims.[71]"	N/A

Table 1 Key Terms and Definitions

Furthermore, these words in the context of Syria have clear political implications within their usage, showing if the news is "siding" with or against the domestic government's political line and how such selection could show the theoretical ideas of news bias, news apartheid, infotainment and agenda setting by highlighting the news' ability to interpret real life events for audiences. This research is seeking to explore how far news broadcasters were aware of this, used particular words because of this and if the audience understood the words in the way that either political scientists or the news broadcasters themselves wanted them to. This not only seeks to provide evidence as to the extent that the encoder / decoder relationship is one of clear or unclear communication during Sky News and BBC News coverage of the Syrian Crisis, but has further utility and applicability as this is research based around a contemporary UK rather than US example, providing new research in an area primarily focused on the American news industry. This will all enable me to see how far my hypothesis before beginning this research, that the UK's mixture of regulation and the existence of both public broadcasters (BBC News) and commercial broadcasters (Sky News) make a primarily US-centric literature base less applicable to the UK market. *To what extent do encoders and decoders understand one another?* is a key question that will underpin this research as it dominates the literature and is a crucial outcome of this research in order to see how the linguistic choices of news broadcasters are interpreted by audiences.

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[67] Oxford Dictionaries. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/government Accessed: 10/07/15
[68] Oxford Dictionaries. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/regime Accessed: 10/07/15
[69] Oxford Dictionaries. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/opposition Accessed: 10/07/15
[70] Oxford Dictionaries. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/rebel?q=rebels Accessed: 10/07/15
[71] Oxford Dictionaries. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/terrorist Accessed 10/07/15

2:3 Case Study – Syrian Crisis 2010-2014

The reasoning behind my selection of the Syrian Crisis, 2010-2014, as a case study was due to the contemporary nature of the conflict, its extensive global news coverage and the dynamic within Syria and the potential for outsiders to be able to choose a "side" and how the language used by news broadcasters and politicians could be a useful indicator as to how those "sides" were selected. Although the Syrian Crisis continues, this thesis focuses on February 2010 to February 2014. Selecting a defined temporal limit was necessary for a project such as this as being able to identify an end date enables the project's parameters to be clearly defined and to enable research to be conducted in such a way that the results would be fixed and not ever changing. Furthermore, this temporal boundary was selected as a consequence of the results of online news analysis. Stories mentioning the Syrian Crisis began in early 2010 and continued almost daily until early 2014. Hereafter the focus of the news shifted from one of the domestic Syrian Crisis / civil war between the Assad administration and its various opposition and rebels groups, to a focus on the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS.) This focal shift would require a new host of terms to focus on and the nature of the conflict left less clearly defined parameters to work around, both temporally and linguistically and so appeared as a natural boundary for this research.

2:4 Case Study – BBC News

This thesis is built upon the research conducted during my undergraduate dissertation "Understanding the Language of the News: Media Discourse Analysis and Interviews with the BBC on Terminological Selection in the News." Within this research I showed that the BBC did follow many of the trends seen in US news and media theory such as infotainment and so on. However, while theory seems to suggest that news broadcasters are unaware of what they are doing with regards to changing styles and language selection it was made clear that, in the case of the BBC, they were very much aware of the criticisms levelled at the industry, and, furthermore, that they have also attempted to ensure language was used consistently throughout the BBC, with strict guidelines governing when terms could be used but that theory had to accept the limitations placed on news broadcasters in the real world also. The reasoning for the selection of the BBC as a case study for both this and the undergraduate dissertation, is justified through a number of key reasons. First and foremost, BBC News is not only one of the UK's most watched news broadcasters but it also one of the world's largest and most respected news broadcasters with over 265 million[72] people a week watching or reading BBC News. This total figure combines the BBC News, BBC World and BBC World Service figures. Not only this, but it is also a news broadcaster which is growing and provides news across multiple media platforms, from traditional television and radio to more modern internet and mobile platforms.

In addition to this, the BBC is a UK public service broadcaster (PSB). This, in addition to its being one of the world's most watched and read news outlets, was important when selecting BBC News for this thesis as much of the literature focuses on a US example of news. This

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[72] BBC News - http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2014/global-news-audience-265m Accessed 3/6/15

research seeks to add to the literature by providing a researched UK example, while also seeking to challenge and test the applicability of news theories which have mainly grown from US research to the UK market. Furthermore, as the main news broadcasters in the US are not PSBs, this also leaves a large area for challenging and adding to current understanding. As the BBC is paid for by the license fee, it is bound by, not only its own Charter, but also strict laws, outlined in the Communications Act 2003, which govern not only public but also commercial news broadcasters in the UK. This provides a useful juxtaposition in which to place the BBC, in comparison to a free market and commercialised US-centric literature and research base which lack the governmental and public service restrictions and expectations of the BBC. In addition to this, the BBC provides a crucial comparison as to the applicability of theories, in particular infotainment, on a broadcaster which does not require advertising revenue and a need to satisfy shareholders through providing increased audience share and so on. On the other hand the BBC does have to justify its license fee and does still seek to maintain and grow its audience share and so this may mean there is less differentiating the two than first meets the eye and that they themselves believe, which will be a key outcome of this research. What this thesis will explore is how different the BBC really is when compared to commercial news broadcasters and whether the theory is as applicable to a UK PSB as it appears to be with US private companies.

2:5 Case Study – Sky News

Sky News was selected for a number of reasons. Sky News represents a significant part of the UK news sector viewed by 8%[73] of the total UK audience every week. Sky News, although based in the UK, is owned by Fox, the global media giant of the Australian Rupert Murdoch. Fox is the owner of Fox News which is one of the most analysed broadcasters within the literature, in conjunction with CNN. Also, Sky News represents the free-market and commercialised news which much of the theory focuses on in the US, applies that to the more restricted and governed UK news market and provides, at least on the surface, an "opposite" to compare against BBC News. Furthermore, Sky News is mentioned within some of the literature, in particular by Thussu and Freedman who say that "Sky News is the harbinger of US style 'tabloid' news", [74] and with this come the criticisms of infotainment, sensationalization and a host of other accusations of the news moving away from information and heading towards entertainment as introduced in Chapter 1. By running news analysis, conducting interviews and reflecting on audience responses this research will seek to understand. *To what extent the understanding of Sky News as a "harbinger" of tabloid news can be accepted?* and if so by how much, while also enabling a comparison to the BBC News, a comparison that will be able to provide useful evidence as to how far the two are different or whether they are, in reality, more similar than they would believe or the theory would suggest.

Through the various areas of original research this thesis will be able to analyse the extent to which these criticisms are applicable by answering the question, *How far do BBC News and Sky News differ on their use of language and to what degree are the two similar*? By comparing

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[73] BARB - http://www.barb.co.uk/whats-new/weekly-viewing-summary Accessed 6/6/15

[74] Thussu. Pg 122

these two key players in the UK news market this thesis will be able to place itself well within the literature, challenging and adding to it through these chosen examples and the research methods along with news article analysis, interviews and survey results.

2: 6 Research Design

To build upon the work of the undergraduate dissertation, this thesis seeks to add to the literature by providing clear data to act as evidence for its summations and conclusions. One of the three types of original data analysis that will be used is news article analysis. This type of analysis was selected in order to answer the question of *How are these words used?* As explained above, this research focuses on five key terms: "government", "regime", "opposition", "rebel" and "terrorist", all chosen due to their politically charged nature. To discover how these words were being used by both Sky News and BBC News, data needed to be collected and processed using a methodology that would reveal how similarly or differently the two news broadcasters were using these terms.

2:6 (a) News Article Analysis

To analyse these terms' usage within the news articles, Nvivo was selected as it allows easy data collection from online resources and provides a variety of graphic and numerical data analysis tools that are particularly useful when looking at text-based sources. For both Sky News and BBC News, approximately one hundred news articles were selected. These were selected through a process of finding a minimum of one of the research's focal terms within the news article's main body or headline and that there would be no more than one news article per day, spanning as much of the four year temporal boundary as was applicable. It was important for the news articles to reflect the entirety of the period in order to provide a base for analysis. In total there are 95 BBC News articles and 120 Sky News articles analysed in this research. This methodological approach was taken to provide raw data on which theoretical analysis can be applied and analysed and embedded amongst other original research. By focusing on the words themselves, how often they are used and which words they appear with, it provides an objective database on which to draw conclusions. This process was selected as opposed to alternative methodological systems, such as ranking stories on "negativity" or "Western bias" or a whole host of other scales that could have been applied to the data. I deemed this to be far more useful to this research's focus as the whole core of this research is to see how far language choices in news show potential bias and the effect that has on audiences. By introducing a data-driven, data-based scale, it eliminated the potential of layering the raw data with my own bias and opinion.

From the raw news data inputted into Nvivo, the data was then categorised by news broadcaster and then by each of the key terms: "government", "regime", "rebel", "opposition" and "terrorist", with an additional sub-section under "opposition" for the Syrian National Council (SNP). The reason for this sub-section was to challenge the BBC's belief in the privileging of the usage of official names of groups over divisive terms such as "terrorist" and so forth and by having the SNP as a sub-section it is easy to see how much more frequently the term was used rather than that of "the opposition" or "Opposition". By categorising all the news articles by news broadcaster and by key term it enabled a variety of data searches

to be done in order to show a range of evidence on which to challenge not only the literature, but also the interviews with the news broadcasters themselves.

There were three main types of analysis run in Nvivo to highlight how the words were used by Sky News and BBC News: *word counts*, *word frequency* and *word trees*, each of which aims to provide evidence for or against certain theoretical claims and responses from the interviews conducted. Word counts provide a simple and clear tool for seeing how often each of the terms was used by each of the broadcasters in an objective way. According to both theory and their own interview responses, Sky News and BBC News should differ in the use of the word "terrorist" and there should be, in general, a differentiation between an, allegedly, more "tabloid" news broadcaster such as Sky News and a more "broadsheet" news broadcaster such as BBC News. Word frequency allows understanding of which words were used most by the two news broadcasters. Analysis was run on the top twenty words used by both Sky News and BBC News individually. This, again, allows a comparison of which words are being used more by each of the broadcasters, while also allowing the analysis to broaden its research focus to see how the five key terms sit within the general language of these two news broadcasters, both in terms of whether the five terms selected are the most prominent within the articles and so are worth focusing on initially and also to see which other terms are being used and what that could mean in terms of "infotainment" and other key theoretical criticisms of news production. The final type of text analysis used in Nvivo for the articles was word trees. Word trees allow one of the key terms to be placed within the articles in order to see which words appear in conjunction with that term, linking back to the Saussurian notion of syntagmatic solidarities. These allow for a more nuanced analysis of the actual usage of the words within the context of the articles, building on what the word count and word frequency results reveal and permits a clearer challenge to theoretical critiques of news language and also the perceived differences and similarities of the two news broadcasters both from within and without. The results from all of these will be fully analysed in Chapter 3.

2:6 (b) Survey

The second method of original analysis used for this research was a survey. The survey aims to answer the simple question *Is this important?* Once again the theory seems to provide many ideas and deductions about the power of the news to influence audiences, the extent to which audiences understand the news and the effect language has on a person's understanding of the world around them, which cover the theoretical areas such as the encoder / decoder debate, infotainment and linguistic signs. Saying this, there appears to be scant evidence that researchers and theorists have actually posed these questions to audiences. If audiences do or do not find a difference in these words in general, and in the case of Syria in particular, then it is clear that words lack the importance given to them by both this research thesis and the theory at large. On the other hand, if it does prove to yield evidence that audiences have clearly differentiating responses to words then this is necessary evidence for the importance of the encoder /decoder debates and the necessity for language and terminological selection processes of news agencies to be considered seriously.

The survey consisted of thirteen questions covering audience demographics, levels of trust between BBC News and Sky News and then an analysis of how positively or negatively

respondents viewed each of the key terms as stand-alone terms and then in the context of Syria. There were 222 respondents who were reached through a snowball sampling method, this method was chosen due to the limits of this research's resources but yielded a good response rate and provided much useable data. There was a 60/40% split between females and males, 43/57% split between those of university age (18-24) and those who were older and a 64/36% between those educated to university level or above against those who did not. From the analysis conducted in Chapter 4, the responses and data have proved very useful in challenging and / or adding weight to claims made by the theory and also by the news broadcasters themselves.

2:6 (c) Interviews

The final methodological approach utilized by this research project was interviews. Interviews provide the next layer of analytical evidence building on from *How are these term used?* to *Are BBC News and Sky News different?,* both in a fundamental news production sense but also in their specific approaches to language and terminological selection during the Syrian Crisis. The desire and necessity to interview key people within the BBC (News) team and the Sky News team stemmed from a perceived lack of direct research done by much of the news theory and production literature. Much of the literature and research appears to have taken a commentating approach to news broadcasters, using data and analysis to draw conclusions on how news broadcasters work and "think" while, it would seem, failing to allow news broadcasters to comment on this themselves. Despite the perceived limitations of asking them directly, in particular the propensity for the broadcasters to shine a good light on their own actions and decisions, I still believe it is necessary and useful to find out how BBC News and Sky News perceive themselves. Although criticism could be levelled at asking Sky News and BBC News to explain their own working due to potentiality of bias etc, this does not make the findings not useful. This allows me to show how news agencies see themselves and to see how far their rules, comments and understandings of their own and each other's workings match or refute those of my own understandings and those of the literature base. This then allows for a fantastic insight into the minds of news broadcasters and for those responses to be compared against news theory and other areas of original research within this thesis. There is a particular focus on how different or similar Sky News and BBC News are and to what extent theories such as infotainment *are* conscious or unconscious phenomena within the industry.

Most of the theory stems from a place of near-commentated analysis consisting of externalised research on the ways in which the news *appears* to create news and so forth. For this research it was essential that the research conducted went beyond the theoretical framework of news analysis and provided original research and insight into how these news broadcasters perceive their own news creation and terminological selection methods and their responses to the theoretical claims of news production in the 21st century. In essence, to see to what extent, to re-quote Allan, "An effort is made by academics and researchers to problematize and 'make strange' the everyday activities of journalists."[75]

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[75] Allan (2004.) Pg 56

Three interviews were conducted in total, two at the BBC and one at Sky News. Both the BBC interviews were conducted face-to-face while the Sky News interview was conducted via email. At the BBC, the interviewees were Jonathan Paterson, BBC World Affairs Deployment Editor, and David Jordan, Director of Editorial Policies and Standards. At Sky News the interviewee was Peter Lowe, Managing Editor of Sky News. These were key managers with the news or higher managerial teams and were able to provide great insight into the workings or their respective news agencies while also providing responses to theoretical concepts and data analysis results as well as their own opinions on the subject as a whole and the specific questions asked.

The interviews were five umbrella questions with some sub-sections, the questions drawn from initial data analysis of the survey and news articles, combined with theoretical critiques and some personal preconceptions which required refuting or accepting. These questions, which can be seen in full in Chapter 5, sought to identify key terminological selection processes from both news agencies in a general news creation sense, in terms of the specific guidelines around the terms focused on within this research and also with specific emphasis on how Sky News and BBC News approached their coverage of the Syrian Crisis and how these words were used within that coverage. The aims of the interviews were to provide insights into how Sky News and BBC News select words and explain their coverage of Syria while still tackling the critiques stemming from literature and also providing other avenues of explanations as to the numerical data and analysis arising from the news article analysis and the survey responses.

Each part of the original research conducted for this thesis serves a purpose and provides useful and necessary data and analysis which be used to challenge the theoretical framework that currently exists while also providing evidence to reinforces or refute parts of the research conducted. This allows this thesis to confidently assert its understanding of how Sky News and BBC News selected terminology in the Syrian Crisis and more generally, providing a useful body of work to add to current understanding of news creation within this country and furthering the debate on the encoder / decoder relationship in the process.

News Article Analysis

3:1 Introduction

Within this chapter I will seek to investigate the extent to which theoretical understanding of news media's terminological selection can be applied to the real-world case studies of BBC News, Sky News and their coverage of the Syrian Crisis between 2010 and 2014. Within this chapter, two key research questions will be answered in order to challenge theoretical understanding and my own preconceptions based on the body of literature that exists. The first question is *How do Sky News and BBC News use these terms?* This question seeks to present a data-backed analysis of how each of the five key terms used within this research are used by each broadcaster. Within this overarching question I will also attempt to extrapolate the implications of their terminological selection and usage with regard to investigating the level of neutrality Sky News and BBC News are operating to. The second question is *How far are BBC News and Sky News similar or different?* This question stems from the literature and in particular the perceived rise in infotainment in today's news media. Sky News has been deemed by many to be a more tabloid-like broadcaster, following a much more US style of news broadcasting, while the BBC News is seem as more broadsheet and holding on to the ideal of news as information rather than as entertainment. I am hoping to be able to see how far these generalisations are reflected in the language used by each broadcaster and, in so doing, further understand the effect that infotainment may or may not be having within the UK news media industry. The data collected from the news article analysis, in conjunction with the subsequent interviews and survey, will bolster the research base within this thesis and allow me to better challenge and / or accept key areas and debates within the literature outlined in Chapter 1.

Some within the literature have queried the utility of terminological, linguistic and phraseological analysis of news media as news represents the "language conventions of the moment"[76] and so is supposed to be contemporary and not looked back on and analysed.[77] However, I would argue that regardless of these critiques, news language is a product of the linguistic norms of the time and so is still useful as a reflection of contemporary societal, elite and political discourse norms and that by understanding the terms' usage then, it can still affect how people see and react now. Although news stories may come and go within a news cycle, the linguistic imprints will be left on audiences long after the story has stopped being "news."

As this research uses and analyses online news articles rather than TV news media, it is worth noting some key areas of theoretical understanding about the ways in which online and mobile news platforms differ from TV. While TV news is a single programme that many will watch multiple times a week, online and mobile news is presented and interacted with differently. Aitchinson and Lewis outline some key and useful differences that are worth

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[76] Conboy. Pg 192
[77] Golding. Elliott. "Making the News." Longman: London. 1979. Pg 210.

noting when dealing with online news. Firstly, TV is a passive form of news in the sense that audiences cannot engage with or change what is being shown to them; online they can. News articles are linked together through key words, themes etc. Both Sky News and BBC News had / have "Syria" pages where all Syria related content would appear including video and written content. These links develop into what is called a "news cluster"[78] allowing a user to access and explore multiple stories thematically. Due to the way in which users interact with online and mobile platforms, often skimming through articles and skipping between stories within and beyond the news cluster of their original focal article, this means that online news articles tend to be quite short, broken down with clear subheadings, pictures and video content[79] in order to create the "perfect data chunk"[80] for a user to quickly absorb the necessary information. In my opinion this makes understanding terminological selection in the news even more important as, if people are skimming through articles and hopping between articles within a "cluster," then understanding how the news broadcasters have selected these terms is very important. Furthermore, it is particularly interesting to see how consistently these terms are being used to ensure that decoders are understanding what the encoders are wishing them to in the way they intend it to be understood.

3:2 Methodology

This research gathered data from Sky News and BBC News' websites. The reason for selecting the online versions of these news broadcasters rather than television or radio platforms were threefold reasons. Firstly, there has been a steady decline in the number of TV news viewers and a huge and continuing increase for online and mobile platforms, particularly amongst young people[81]. Secondly, it was far easier to collect data and run analysis on web-based content than from TV news broadcasts allowing for simpler data collection but on a rich set of data on which to run analysis. Finally, both broadcasters' web pages are the same anywhere in the world while domestic and international versions of, in particular the BBC News, are different. This means that by looking at the online versions of these news broadcasters we can better see how they select language for their whole audiences rather than just their domestic ones.

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[78] Eds. Aitchinson. Jean & Lewis. Diana M. "New Media Language." Routledge: London. 2003. Pg 97
[79] Aitchinson. Pg 99
[80] Aitchninson. Pg 97
[81] Thussu. Pg121

Before beginning the capturing of online news article data I had to first assign a temporal frame to work within. By running a few basic searches with Sky News and BBC News websites it became evident that the Syrian Crisis came to the fore within British broadcasting around February 2010 and continued almost daily until February 2014 where the news coverage was than overtaken by the rise of ISIS and the ensuing battles, fights and actions carried out across Syria and its neighbours. In order to ensure this research's utility as a contemporary analysis of a recent news event, while also allowing for there to be a defined boundary in which to focus my research, the transition from the conflict within Syria between the Assad government / regime and its various opposition/ rebel / terrorist groups to that of ISIS seemed a natural and useful place to set the boundaries for this thesis. For the BBC News 95 articles were selected and for Sky News, 120. Articles were selected on the criteria of having at least one key word in the article and but excluding multiple articles of the same date. Below is a graph illustrating the distribution of articles across the time period January 2010 to March 2014. From the graph it can be seen how the majority of articles are between March 2011 and February 2014.

Figure 3 BBC News and Sky News Article Distribution

I selected Nvivo as the best tool in order to facilitate this research due to its ability to work around primarily qualitative information while still holding many tools in which to turn qualitative into quantitative data. Moreover the Ncapture tool specifically allowed me to save and import whole web articles and then run various searches and categorise each article according to the key terms: "government", "regime", "opposition", "rebel" and "terrorist", with the additional nodes of BBC and Sky, enabling me to run searches based on terms and/ or broadcaster. This flexibility allowed me to manipulate the data in clear and useful ways in order to bring to light key areas highlighted by current theoretical understandings such as Word Frequencies, Word Counts and Word Trees, each of which will form the next three subsections of this Chapter.

Word Frequencies allowed me to see the top 20 words within the BBC and Sky's coverage and then present them in both tabular and word cloud form. This was particularly useful as it

showed me which words were being most frequently used by each broadcaster, allowing comparisons to be drawn while also highlighting that the selected terms for this research are as important as originally hypothesised. Word Counts show a count of each word by each broadcaster. Once again this allows for easy comparison between each broadcaster and to be able to understand to what extent BBC News and Sky News do differ or not in their terminological usage and then to extrapolate the meanings from that based upon theoretical frameworks. Moreover, the approach of answering such a research question by running word frequencies has allowed me to remain objective in my categorizing of each article and each broadcaster, as opposed to ranking stories by other more subjective means such as a scale of some description, e.g. levels of negativity. This is particularly important for this research as much of the research, that exists already appears to be subjectively driven and by allowing the numbers to speak for themselves it will allow this research to remain more objective in its initial findings. Word Trees show how each of the key terms is used *within* the articles by creating a map of words leading into (entry) and out of (exit) the key term. This allows me to see how the words are being used and if there are similarities or differences in the way in which these terms are being used rather than just the number of times they appear in the coverage. Word trees are particularly useful in exploring syntagmatic solidarities as explained in Chapter 1.

3:3 (a) Word Frequencies

Word Frequencies allow me to show all the words most used within the articles in the Nvivo database and then presents then in tabular and word cloud format. For both the BBC News and Sky News articles I wanted to discover the top 20 words of three letters or more for both sets of articles in order to see if the focal words for this research - Government, Regime, Opposition, Rebel and Terrorist - were of suitable significance to be the core of the research. The database search runs a search on *all* words and so some which enter into the most commonly used terms include names and titles which are not deemed relevant insofar as this research is concerned. By running this analysis I hoped to see if the terms selected for investigation were indeed the correct terms, while also allowing an initial glance at how similar or different the BBC and Sky News' top 20 terms were, begin to extrapolate and analyse what these similarities and differences could be, why they may exist or not and what the implications of this are.

Below are the tabular and world cloud results from both Sky New and BBC News' top 20 most frequently used words. The key terms focused on in this research are highlighted in yellow.

BBC Top 20 Word Cloud

also   assad   bbc   council   damascus   forces   foreign

government   killed   last   national   news

opposition   people   president   rebel   rebels

syria syrian   weapons
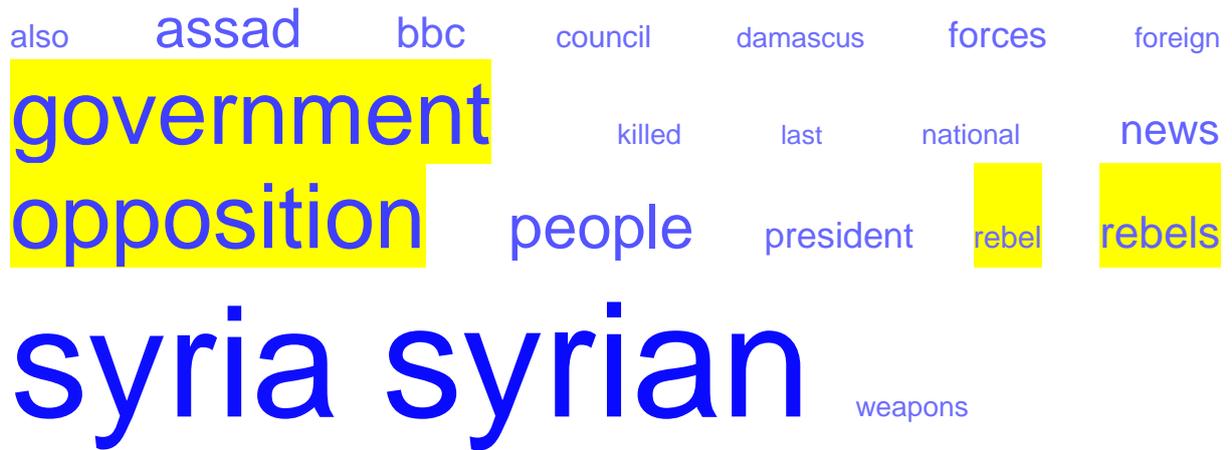
Figure 4: BBC News Word Cloud

BBC Top 20 Table

Word
syrian
syria
government
opposition
people
assad
rebels
news
bbc
president
forces
also
rebel
council
foreign
damascus
killed
national
weapons
last

Figure 5: BBC News Top 20 Table

Sky Top 20 Word Cloud

army **assad** bashar chemical country damascus **forces** foreign
government killed **opposition** People president
rebel **rebels** **regime** **syria**
syrian video **weapons**
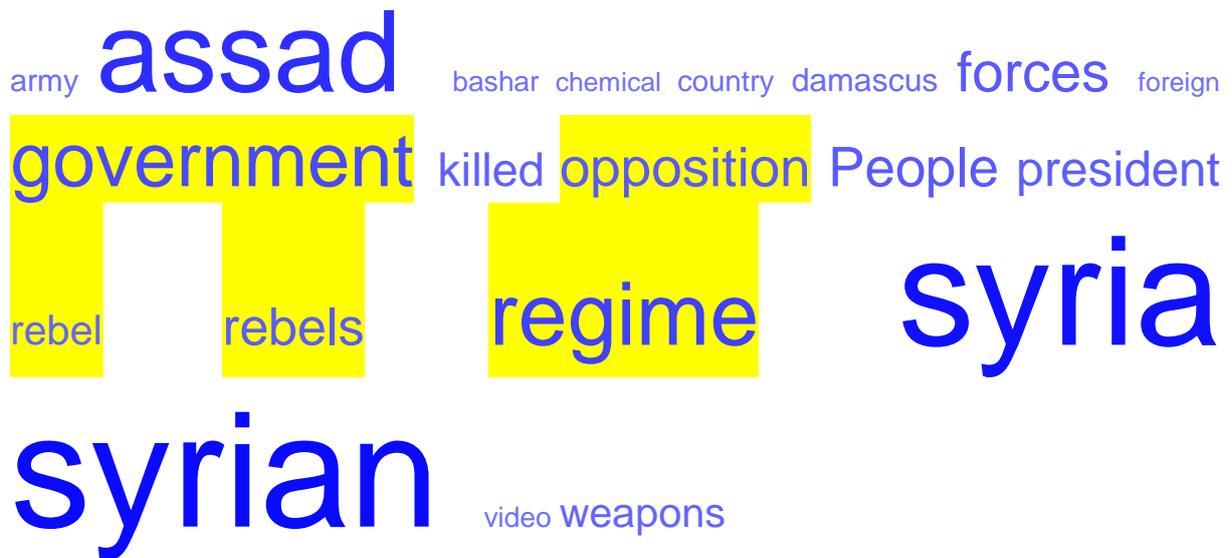
Figure 6: Sky News Word Cloud

Sky Top 20 Table

Word
syrian
syria
assad
regime
government
people
forces
opposition
rebels
president
killed
weapons
rebel
damascus
army
country
video
bashar
foreign
chemical

Figure 7: Sky News Top 20 Table

3:3 (b) Word Frequency Description and Analysis

Firstly Sky News had four out of five of the selected terms appear in the top 20, and for the BBC News three out of five appear, neither sets show terrorist within their top 20. From this it can be seen that the terms selected for investigation are significant not only due to their political implications as explained in Chapter 2 but also in their prevalence within the

database of articles for each broadcaster. At first glance Sky News' and BBC News' most frequently occurring words seem very similar but there are two significant differences. First is the appearance of the word *regime* which only appears in Sky News' top 20, and the second are the number of times some of the key words have been used, in particular *government* and *opposition.* The first difference will be investigated in this section, the second difference will be analysed with the Word Counts section of this Chapter.

On the whole Sky News' and BBC News' frequent terminological usages are relatively similar with the same three key terms appearing in their top 20 most frequently used terms; *Government*, *Opposition* and *Rebel(s)*. "Government" appears in each of the BBC and Sky's top five (third and fifth respectively) which is not surprising as much of the coverage of the Syrian Crisis focuses on either the political wrangling of the Assad administration and the Syrian National Council (SNC) and / or on the fighting between Assad's forces and those of various "rebel", "terrorist" and "opposition" groups. "Opposition" is the BBC's fourth most frequently used term while for Sky it is the eighth. *Rebel(s)* appears to be used fairly similarly between the two broadcasters. All of this reinforces that these words were correctly chosen to be focused on within this research as they are frequently used by both broadcasters. Within the top 20, BBC News and Sky News used 13 out of 20 of the same terms, i.e. 65% of the terms matched one another. Although the evidence will continue to grow throughout this thesis, already there could be potential challenges made to the theoretical understanding that Sky News and BBC News are largely different in the language that they use as the majority of most commonly used terms are the same. Saying this, evidently this type of database search is somewhat crude and so there are bound to be words that will appear frequently in both such as "Syria(n)" and "Assad", but, nonetheless, the fact that both have used three out of five of the key, politically charged, terms fairly consistently means that their lexical decisions can not to be too wildly different.

Neither Sky News nor BBC News used "terrorist" enough to enter into the top 20 words. Initially this appears somewhat surprising, especially given the nature of the Syrian conflict and the perceived involvement of widely accepted (in the West) terrorist organisations such as Hezbollah, Al Qaida and eventually ISIS. Furthermore, Assad often referred to the armed rebel and opposition groups as terrorists in many of his speeches, this is a point that can be more deeply analysed now. An underlying question that flows beneath the selection of the five terms is *What does the use of these terms show?,* meaning, by choosing "government" rather than "regime" or "rebel" rather than "opposition," what are Sky News and BBC News saying about their global views and understandings. Both Sky News and BBC News aim for neutrality in their reporting, something reinforced by their own broadcasting and journalistic guidelines but also by the Communications Act 2003. An interesting sub-question would be to ask would be, *Is this possible?* Simply by choosing one word over another the broadcasters are showing that they have picked a "side". By calling the Assad administration a "government" they are pushing against the rhetoric of the UK and US governments which insist on calling it a "regime." Linking this back to the use, or absence, of the word terrorist it shows that both Sky News and BBC News have chosen to adhere to their own guidelines on the strict usage of the term and to not follow Assad's linguistic selections on what is happening in his own country. Furthermore, within the articles themselves, often when the term is used it is shown

with quotation marks around it, especially in reference to quoting an Assad or Administration announcement in order to highlight that neither broadcaster condones the use of the term in those circumstances, i.e. in reference to any and all anti-Assad groups and actors. This all ties back to the editing gates, professionalization and embedding that were discussed in Chapter 1 and shows that editorial decisions are being made in line with in-house guidelines for the word "terrorist" and that terrorist is not being used in pursuit of audience attention-grabbing or to make headlines, as some of the more critical theorists around the prevalence of infotainment would suggest.

However, while appearing to be rather similar in their top 20 words there is one very crucial difference and that is the use by Sky News of the word "regime" which does not appear within the BBC's top 20. This is of particular significance to this research as not only is it one of the five focal terms, but it is also one of the most politically sensitive words when it comes to showing a broadcaster picking a "side" and the implications of that. The BBC does use the term "regime" within its articles (and a comparison will be drawn later when the word counts are analysed), but just not enough to rank in the top 20. Initially, the fact that Sky News and not BBC News uses the term is potentially informative in its own right. Sky News has been labelled in some of the literature as the vanguard to tabloid and commercialised news production and the use of a word such as "regime" could be evidence of this. Not only does Sky News use the word more than BBC News does, it is the fourth most used word across the articles, placed higher even than "government". For me this is informative in that Sky News has deemed that the Syrian administration is a "regime" rather than a "government," or that, at least in the case of Syria, there is the possibility that the two are deemed interchangeable by both Sky News' editorial team but also, by extension, its audiences. The interchangeable nature of the terms "regime" and "government" will be explored in the subsequent sub-sections and chapters as this is an intriguing part of the data results. Whether as a conscious editing choice or not, this follows far more closely the UK government, but in particular US language, surrounding Assad and by choosing "regime" they are delegitimizing Assad's claim to power and reinvigorating the legitimacy of the rebel and the groups opposing him. Here can clearly be seen the power of terminological selection within the news. The survey in Chapter 4 will show how audiences react to these various terms and then to these terms in the context of Syria, but, from the language selections and then the extrapolated political understanding implications for audiences, it is possible to hypothesise that Sky News viewers and readers have a stronger negative association towards Assad's administration as a regime, rather than the BBC News viewers' responses to an Assad administration as a government.

From here the question is then raised, *Are the encoders and decoders understanding one another and who is influencing whom?* Has Sky News opted for a more prevalent and looser use of the word "regime" due to their own editorial decisions and so are influencing how their audiences perceive the conflict, or are they more relaxed with the use of the term as their audience is different to that of the BBC News target audience and so are able to be less stringent in their terminological selection? These questions will be answered in Chapter 5 during the interviews with BBC News and Sky News.

To conclude this section on word frequencies, it can be seen that 65% of the top 20 terms used by Sky News and BBC News are the same, with the addition that neither uses *Terrorist* enough for it to reach either of their top 20. However, only three out of five of the terms appear in both and do not appear in the same order with the especially significant difference of "regime" only appearing within Sky News' top five and not within BBC News' top 20. From these similarities and differences the foundations of answers to many of the questions posed can be laid, Sky News and BBC News are very similar but do differ on certain terms and throughout this thesis these differences and similarities will be better understood and analysed with reference to theory.

3:4 Word Counts

Word counts allow me to see how often a word has been used by either Sky News or BBC News. Nvivo allows a matrix analysis to be run, which creates tabular data and converts the qualitative information in the news articles to quantitative data which can be more easily interpreted and understood. By using this method, not only do I gain a clear set of easily comparable data but I also gain a clear view of how often the selected terms have been used and from that can begin my analysis and understanding based on an objective set of data. I could have approached this section of the work in a different way, by ranking articles according to "Western Bias" for example. However, if I were to have done that then I would have been introducing my own bias and embedding that into the research. This would have been counterproductive and hypocritical as I am looking at how and why these news agencies use these words, whether their usage implies any bias and whether theoretical critiques such as embedding and news apartheids can be applied to them in the case of the Syrian Crisis, and so adding a layer of my own bias would have affected the results.

From the theory it would be expected that Sky News and BBC News would vary in their language selections and that, on the whole, the BBC would be expected to have more neutral language and Sky News to pursue a less middle-of-the-road approach to language. From the data below I will be able to see how far the two differ, or are in fact similar, and by doing so begin to formulate ideas as to why they do differ or not and what this then means when placed within the understandings on the media theory literature base.

3:4 (a) Government and Regime

	A : Government	B : Regime
1 : Sky	350	339
2 : BBC	331	325

Figure 8: Government & Regime Word Counts

Figure 8 shows the query matrix for all news articles coded under Sky News and BBC News and each of the key terms *government* and *regime.* Sky News used the word "government" 350 times and the word *regime* 339 times, while BBC News used the term *government* 331 times and the term *regime* 325 times. What is perhaps most striking is that all the figures are relatively similar, in the fact that both Sky News and BBC News' figures are very similar but so too are the number of times each broadcaster has used each of the terms. This is striking, as the theory states that these two broadcasters should be using different language due to their

differing target audiences and also the type of news that they are wanting to broadcast, in the sense of perhaps more tabloid versus broadsheet approaches to news broadcasting. However, it is clear, at least in the frequency that when the two broadcasters are using these words there is little to divide them. The clear similarities pose interesting questions on infotainment. Is the theory that exists not applicable to the UK news market, as the BBC is held up as a broadsheet broadcaster while Sky News can be seen as more tabloid and yet the two differ hardly at all on these two terms' usage? Or, if infotainment as a phenomenon does exist and yet both news broadcasters have similar approaches to terminological selection then does this mean that both broadcasters are either actively or passively adopting more infotainment-like language and styles?

To answer these two initial questions I believe that infotainment is an inevitable part of a 24 hour rolling news cycle in the modern world. The theory on infotainment tends to talk much about the sensationalization of the news in order to make it more engaging and to maintain audiences' attention and viewing figures. However, I would argue that, although this may be the case in the US where much of the current literature originates, I do not think that sensationalization of language for the aim of audience engagement is something that UK broadcasters are pursuing. This is not to say that the effects of infotainment are not present within British news broadcasting. It can clearly be seen in the presentation styles of both on and off-line news from the introduction of more and more graphics, innovative presentation styles and the way in which broadcasters engage in new social media such as Twitter. Therefore, I think that, although linguistically infotainment has not greatly affected the way in which more traditional broadcasters such as the BBC and newer news broadcasters such as Sky News approach their linguistic choices, it has affected the way in which they present themselves to the world and engage their audiences.

Furthermore, the linguistic choices around Syria in particular are interesting. Both *government* and *regime* were used almost equally. From a political standpoint the two words mean very different things. *Government* lends itself more towards legitimacy and *regime* towards a less legitimate and more authoritarian administration. It would appear that, although these words differ in their denotations, their connotations [82] had become interchangeable when talking of the Assad administration. In Chapter 5, the BBC News and Sky News interviewees will respond as to how far they view these words as interchangeable, which will further reinforce or refute the survey results in Chapter 4. This thesis began on the basis that words are in and of themselves important and that "changing your word for something changes that something",[83] but that perhaps this is not something that can be applied universally and / or is liable to change. Sky News and BBC News have very clear policies on when and how to use these words, but it seems that in the case of Syria there was no top down decision as to which one they should use when talking of Assad and so the two are used interchangeably. This could prove interesting as although the words mean very different things, if their usage in the news shows them as being synonymous does that also

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[82] Ginneken. Pg 146
[83] Durant. Pg 27

mean that they have become synonymous for audiences? The survey results will more clearly show how the decoders have interpreted this language selection by the encoders.

The final point of interest is what the us of these words shows "us" about how the news broadcasters view the world. In short, they appear to subscribe to the Western metanarrative around the Syrian Crisis, with many countries appearing to switch between calling the Assad administration a "government" and a "regime." In so doing, it is can be extrapolated that neither the BBC News or Sky News team journalists or editorial team deem the Assad administration to be a fully legitimate "government" otherwise it would not have been used as equivalently to the term "regime." Here we can return to Chapter 1 and the concepts of embedding and editorial roles, as by using both terms the news broadcasters have delegitimized the Assad administration, wrongly or rightly, and in turn audiences will be influenced by what they see and hear on the news, as will be shown more clearly in the survey results in Chapter 4.

3:4 (b) Opposition and Rebel

	A : Opposition	B : SNC	C : Rebel
1 : BBC	312	115	260
2 : Sky	289	45	292

Figure 9: Opposition & Rebel Word Counts

The second set of words is *opposition* and *rebel. "*Syrian National Council (SNC)" has also been added as a sub-section of the coding in order to investigate how far BBC News does aim to utilize group names over applied terms, for example Al Shabab rather than "terrorists" etc. This came to light in previous interviews as well as the interviews in Chapter 5. The reason for looking into the two main words, *rebel* and *opposition* is, as with *government* and *regime,* by calling one group "rebels" and another group the "opposition," it legitimizes or delegitimizes a group's claim to power in Syria. In the case of Syria, there is the extra dimension of which group is deemed legitimate by whom. The West generally accepted the sole legitimate opposition to the Assad administration as the SNC, a group of exiled politicians and businessmen from Syria who were mainly based in Istanbul, Turkey. It was the SNC that began gaining diplomatic recognition in many countries over the delegations from the Assad administration. However, for many within Syria, the SNC were seen as rich businessmen who had left Syria and were then puppets of the West and their own ambitions. In essence, the SNC held greater legitimacy in the eyes of the Western and many Arab political elites but lacked support from within Syria. For many within Syria the various groups under the banner of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) were, at the time, deemed more legitimate. Therefore, the significance of linguistic choice by news broadcasters shows which "side" they saw as legitimate and enables hypotheses to be created on whether they are working within the metanarratives and schema of their home countries and/or governments or those from within Syria. In the case of Syria, both the BBC News and Sky News teams appeared to deem the SNC as the "opposition" and the FSA and other armed groups as "rebels." From this it can be said that BBC News and Sky News are working from within a Western hegemonic discourse based upon their domestic metanarratives and not of those from within Syria itself. That is not to say that this is evidence of a news apartheid or anything conspiratorial as is often

suggested within the literature of elites supporting other elites and so forth. In the case of Syria both broadcasters followed the linguistic status quo and identified the SNC as the "opposition" and other groups as "rebels."

Although they both appear to be relatively similar in their terminological usage, there are differences. The BBC News used *opposition* approximately 10% more than Sky News, while Sky News used the term *rebel* approximately 10% more than BBC News did. These are minor differences and are not significant enough to draw too large a conclusion from with regard to Sky News being more tabloid than BBC News. However, when looking at the usage of the term *SNC* it is clear that BBC News favoured this far more than Sky News, using it 115 times as opposed to 45 times. This falls in line with what was expected, based on previous knowledge that the BBC prefers to use names wherever possible, which can clearly be seen in the data. In addition to this, from reading the articles, more generally the BBC focused on the political struggle between the SNC and Assad while Sky News' coverage leant a little more towards the domestic fight on the ground which may explain the discrepancy.

The choices made by the news teams will have had implications for the audiences, which will be shown in the survey results in Chapter 4 and will add weight to how far encoders and decoders understand one another when the interviews in Chapter 5 are also taken into consideration. Within the theory it is stated that "The media's choice of label in their coverage … stands to influence, tremendously, the audience's perceptions of the act". [84] The subsequent chapter will show how audiences react to the terms on a positive / negative scale, it would be expected that Syrian opposition / government will be more positively received than Syrian rebels / regime, if this is true then by selecting "opposition" or "government" over "rebel" or "regime" will mean that the acts carried out by these groups will also be more positively or negatively viewed. This adds an extra layer to the importance of when and how these terms are used as they will have an influence on audiences and so provide further evidence for the complexities of the encoder / decoder relationship.

3:4 (c) Terrorist

	A : Terrorist
1 : BBC	122
2 : Sky	84

Figure 10: Terrorist Word Count

As explained earlier in the Chapter, the use of the word *terrorist* in the case of Syria was particularly interesting as Assad called all those fighting against him "terrorists", while in the West broadcasters and governments alike failed to follow Assad's lead and deemed many of the opposing groups to be either "oppositions" or "rebels" as seen in the section above. What is surprising from both a theoretical and practical point of view is that BBC News used the term *terrorist* 50% more than Sky News did. Theoretically speaking, this should be reversed, with Sky News using more exciting and headline-grabbing language than BBC News and yet the data suggests otherwise. Moreover, BBC News has been quite adamant that it tries to use

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[84] Ed. Alali. Odasuo & Eke. Kenyoye Kevin. "Media Coverage of Terrorism." Sage Publications: London. 1991. Pg 3

the word *terrorist* as sparingly as possible so as to avoid controversy and to utilize a group's chosen name. However, it is clear from the table that the BBC used the word at least once in every article selected, which is unexpected. It is possible to draw conclusions that the BBC is perhaps succumbing far more than even it will accept to a more sensationalized approach to news language, but I do not think that that is the case. From previous interviews and the interviews analysed in Chapter 5, it is clear that the BBC has extremely strict guidelines on the use of the term *terrorist* and so I find it hard to leap to the conclusion that this is evidence of the negative areas of infotainment encroaching into BBC journalistic styles. Saying this, it is still surprising and was put to the interviewees at the BBC for comment, which can be seen in the next chapter.

Another explanation as to why *terrorist* on the whole seems to not have been used anywhere near as frequently as the other focal terms could be down to, in part, the sample of news articles, but primarily down to the nature of the conflict, and had the temporal limit of this thesis, which ends before ISIS really begins to dominate the news cycle, been extended to include more of the rise of ISIS, I would have expected there to be much more focus on them and their "terrorist" acts.

	A : Islamist	B : Jihadist	C : Terrorist
1 : BBC	93	34	122
2 : Sky	57	36	84

Figure 11: Islamist, Jihadist & Terrorist Word Counts

Figure 11 has been included as, although the five focal words were chosen before starting the research, I had to ensure that other terms that appeared while conducting the research were also included in case they became more significant than the chosen terminology. As can be seen, *Islamist* was not too uncommon and so can be seen as being a relatively significant word appearing in nearly every BBC News article and in approximately 50% of Sky News articles. This word is useful to briefly focus on due to the ramifications of such a term in relation to theoretical ideas such as the "media Muslim." Islamists, unlike terrorists, are only ever Muslim and the word is popular in the US media and becoming ever more so here in the UK. In addition, while *terrorist* has a long-standing existence in British news media, even if the application has shifted from Ireland to the Middle East, *Islamist* appears to lack the same rigidity in guidelines and appears to be a more accepted term for supporters of a more militant Islam. However, it is once again surprising that the BBC uses the term far more than Sky does, which again poses the same interesting questions as to the reversal of anticipated outcome with *terrorist,* with Sky News using these terms more sparingly than BBC News. The explanation as to the usage of these terms is explained in Chapter 5 during the interviews.

3:4 (d) Word Count Summary

	A : Government	B : Opposition	C : Rebel	D : Regime	E : Terrorist
1 : BBC	331	312	260	325	122
2 : Sky	350	289	292	339	84

Figure 12: All terms

Figure 12 provides a clear summary of all five key terms and how many times they were used by Sky News and BBC News. As each section has outlined, there is very little to divide the two broadcasters based around this set of data and, apart from the unexpected results around the term *terrorist*, there is not much to differentiate the two broadcasters. Despite appealing to different audiences and, theoretically, being different "types" of broadcaster, they appear to differ only slightly in the number of times each broadcaster has used each of the terms. From these numbers it can tentatively be surmised that both are working within the frames of the West due to the significant usage of the terms *regime* and *rebel* and the favouring of *government* and *opposition* when talking of Assad and the SNC. However, with the terms *regime* and *government* also being used in near identical amounts it can also be surmised that, in the case of Syria, the terms became interchangeable, an idea that will be further explored and reinforced in the subsequent chapters. This can be seen as a rather blunt method of analysis but it is useful in laying the groundwork of being able to answer the two key questions of this chapter. *How do Sky News and BBC News use these terms?* and *How far are BBC News and Sky News similar or different?* So far it can be said that both news broadcasters use these terms in similar amounts and that, therefore, there is much more that draws them together than differentiates them.

3:5 Word Trees

Word trees are the final research tool used on the news articles to analyse them. While word counts and word frequencies allow us to see how often a word is used across the articles, word trees allow us to see how these words are being *used* by Sky News and BBC News *within* the articles. Word trees work by selecting a key word to be searched on. In this case, each of the five key terms was used for each of the broadcasters, then Nvivo runs a database search through all the news articles coded under each broadcaster and creates a word tree. A word tree has the key searched term placed at the centre and then each of the "branches" running into and out of the word shows all the words that preceded (*entry*) or follow (*exit*) the key term, along with other words that then precede or follow those which creates a word "tree." Word trees add an extra dimension to the understanding of *how* these words are used and not just if they have been used at all. This allows a deeper understanding of the ways in which Sky News and BBC News have used these terms and allows an extra layer of understanding and analysis to be drawn from them. Word trees present in a visual way the syntagmatic solidarities Saussure talks about, and these syntagmatic solidarities show "words that appear with other words".[85]

Word trees are particularly useful in allowing me to see to what extent BBC News and Sky News have used these terms and if they are being preceded or followed by similar or different

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[85] Saussure. Pg 127

words. In so doing this will allow me to see if there are elements of sensationalised language within the reports themselves, which would reinforce the ideas of a move to a more infotainment-prevalent UK news style, with Sky News perceived as they potential "harbinger[86]" of that. If this is the case, I would expect to see higher levels of adjective usage as signs of the news articles trying to be more engaging and entertaining for the reader. In addition to showing potential evidence, or lack of evidence, of infotainment, word trees can also show which words appear most with other words, and whether these associative relations, "discourses formed in the brain",[87] exist within the writing of the reports which can highlight potential embedding of key schemas and metanarratives.

Below are the word trees for each key term and each news broadcaster. These trees represent selected examples of the most prevalent words leading in and out of the key term and not *all* the words created by Nvivo's word trees.

[I have limited the number of words to be around three or four of the most common primary entry and exit words in order to provide clearly understandable graphics.

<u>3:5 (a) Government</u>
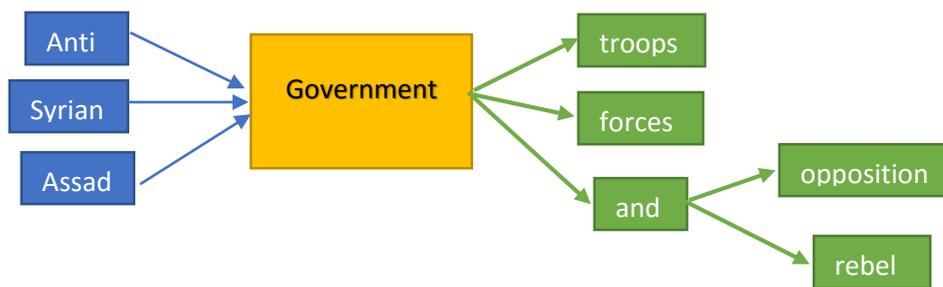
*Figure 13 BBC News - Government Word Tree Extract*
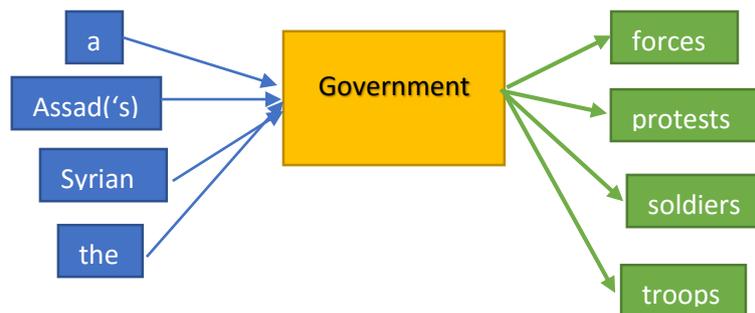
Figure 14 Sky News - Government Word Tree Extract

As can be seen, the entry words are very similar for both BBC News and Sky News and show the obvious main words to be associated with covering the Syrian Crisis: *Syria(n)* and *Assad('s).* With Sky News' additions of simple prepositions and BBC News' addition of the term "anti." Of the exit words, *forces* and *troops* appear for both broadcasters, while the BBC News had

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[86] Thussu. Pg 122
[87] Saussure. Pg 123

the addition of *and* leading into an additional set of branches based around *opposition* and *rebel*. Sky News continues a more fighting-based theme of *troops* and *forces* with *soldiers* and *protests*.

There is not much to deduce from the entry words, they are as would be expected in news coverage of this conflict. However, there are possible deductions that could be made around the differences in the exit words for each broadcaster. As was inferred by the word counts, there seems to be a slightly clearer leaning in the BBC News' coverage towards the political battle between the Assad administration and the various oppositions and rebel groups, while Sky News seems to have reported the literal battle between the various sides to a larger degree than BBC News has done. This can be seen by the additional smaller word tree in the BBC News' *Government* word tree extract of *and* followed by *opposition* and rebel, when looking at the full word tree these branch further, in particular with *opposition* to include terms such as *delegation*, *talks* and *delegates* along with the more militarised terms as seen in the initial exit words. This can be tied back in to the word counts and the BBC's far higher usage of the term *SNC*, slightly lower usage of the term *rebel* and slightly higher usage of the term *opposition*. Sky News does also have this subsequent tree but it is not as large or apparent as the BBC News one.

This is not necessarily evidence for a larger extent of infotainment within Sky News, although some may argue that a preference for the coverage of the physical rather than diplomatic war could be evidence of that. I think that this would be too strong a conclusion to draw immediately from this word tree and supporting word count data. What I think it does show is a slight differentiation in coverage based on audience. This will be further explored in Chapter 5, analysing the interviews, but from here it can be concluded that the BBC covered the diplomatic struggles within Syria more than Sky News did. The extent to which this slight difference is based upon a differentiation of styles and target audience based on executive and/or audience expectations will be explored more in subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, despite the fact that most of the word counts and this initial word tree appear similar on the surface, there are telling differences beginning to emerge in the data which will make this research richer and more nuanced in its understanding of the UK news market's usage of these terms during the Syrian Crisis.
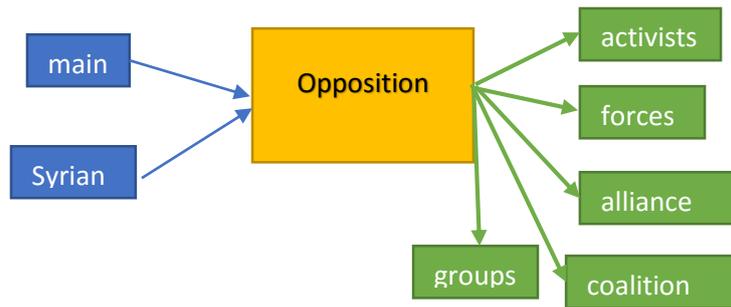
*Figure 15 BBC News Opposition Word Tree Extract*
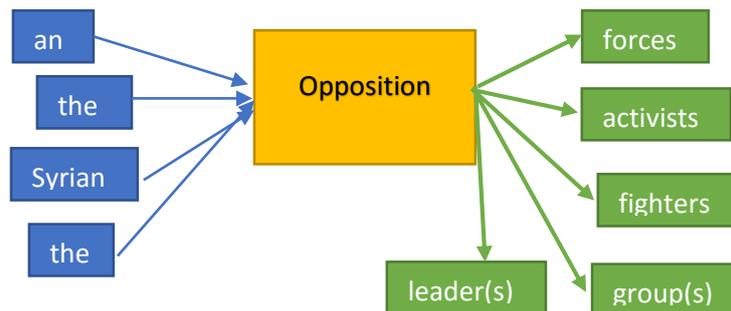
Figure 16 Sky News Opposition Word Tree Extract

As with the Government word tree, the entry words for *Opposition* do not sway from the expected outcomes. It is, once again, in the exit phrases in which some differences can be seen between the two broadcasters. Both see the introduction of the term *activists* which has so far not appeared in the research. The word "activists" for me is interesting as it appears to be used only when talking of the opposition and hardly, if ever, when talking about the administration. Furthermore, there is a clear separation between who the broadcasters see as activists and those they perceive as rebels, fighters etc. It would appear that the difference is based around the use of arms in the conflict, with many activists being online campaigners such as bloggers, Twitter users etc. and protestors. What is interesting about this is that within Syria there was clearly a fairly large group of pro-Assad supporters, outside the military, who themselves would be thought of as activists in much the same way as the opposition activists and yet it would appear that they were not covered to the same degree as anti-Assad activists. This poses interesting questions around the neutrality of terminology and what is reported on. By giving preference to anti- rather than pro-Assad activists it shows a clear preference for Western hegemonic metanarratives and frames.

In these *Opposition* word trees the exit words more clearly show the extent to which BBC News covered the diplomatic conflict far more than Sky News did, with words such as *alliance*, *coalition* and *group*. Sky News also had *group* and with the addition of *leader(s)* and *fighters* also. I think this adds further weight to the cumulative data that Sky News' coverage tended to lean more towards the actual fighting and the BBC tended to lean slightly more towards the diplomatic battle; in essence, that the BBC seem to be slightly more focused on the *Opposition* while Sky News seem to be focusing more on the *opposition*.

In comparing both *Government* and *Opposition* word trees, there is an evidently higher proportion of more military-based words surrounding the term *government* than *opposition*. This again could be seen as evidence of an approach to reporting the events from a more "Western" position with the Assad administration being seen to be using force in a more aggressive and reported way than that of the opposition. An explanation for this which is not necessarily based around Western power elites, is that the Assad administration coverage was more homogenized, since it was one group, as opposed to the opposition, which with it encompassed the SNC and the multitude of armed and unarmed groups that fell under the term, in turn creating a wider base of terminology used in the coverage of them.

3: 5 (c) Regime

*Figure 17 BBC News Regime Word Tree Extract*
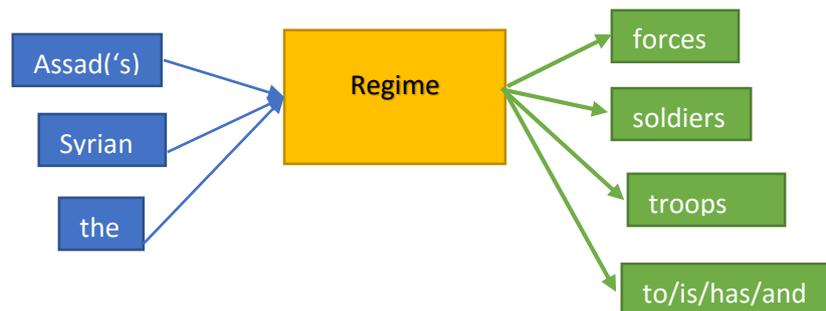
Figure 18 Sky News Regime Word Tree Extract

The most frequent entry words for both the BBC News and Sky News articles are the same and follows what has been seen for both "government" and "opposition" with the main words being "Syria(n)" and "Assad." Again, there also appears to be little differentiation between the BBC News and Sky News' word selection with both focusing on the more military aspect of the conflict. This time, neither has particularly mentioned the non-military part of the Assad administration clearly showing that, when the term "regime" is being used that it seems to be used in a primarily negative and conflict-based way. This is in line with the dictionary definition and general understanding as to what a regime would be and act, as "regime" tends to leans more towards heavy police or military deployment against its opposition. However, as with the previous two terms, the BBC has used a term not used as much by Sky and that is "change." Once again this could be seen as a more political coverage focusing on the initial Western desires to see Assad removed from power and the ensuing debates that emerged particularly between Russia and the West around possible regime change.

What the word trees have allowed us now to do is to reinforce what was first highlighted by the word counts is that regime and government are being used very similarly by both, further

adding weight to the conclusion that these terms, in reference to Syria, became interchangeable in their usage. Saying this, as the difference between opposition and government shows, there is the same slight preference for the political angle by the BBC in its usage of regime in comparison to Sky.

3:5 (d) Rebel
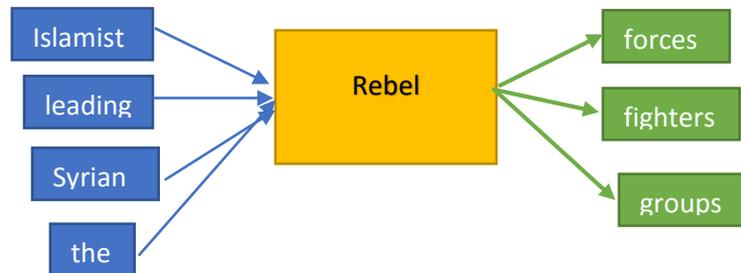
*Figure 19 BBC News Rebel Word Tree Extract*
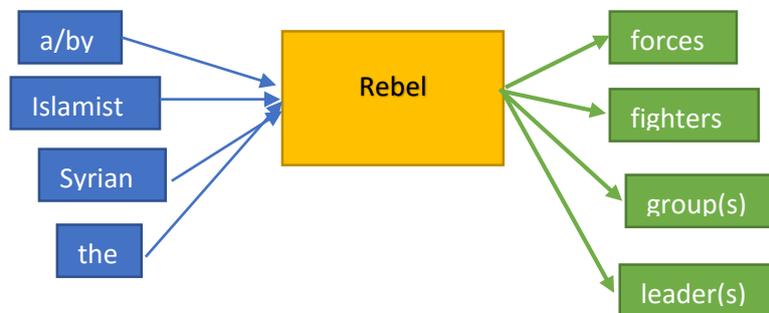
Figure 20 Sky News Rebel Word Tree Extract

Rebel and *opposition*, like *government* and *regime*, do have striking similarities in both their word count statistics and also in the exit words in their word trees, despite having quite different dictionary definitions. It would appear that, once again, Syria seemed to prove difficult for news broadcasters to draw a clear line between the two terms. The Opposition was that of the SNC, but the opposition as an umbrella term encompassed all those groups opposed to the Assad administration. As a result of this overlap in usage, *rebels* and *opposition* share many similar exit words such as *forces*, *fighters* and *groups*. While *opposition* did have some elements of a diplomatic angle, it would seem that *rebel* lacks this and seems to be primarily used to cover the military wing of the opposition such as the FSA and other militant groups. While this is not too surprising, what can be drawn from this is that both broadcasters viewed the "rebels" as militant rebels rather than as a political force as it does appear to lack the same level of diplomatic language seen around the term *opposition*. This could be seen as evidence of possible Western bias since, for many within Syria, the FSA was far more legitimate than the SNC and so were fighting, yes, but for a political aim, and their leaders were both military and political figures. By using the term *rebel* far more with more militarised language is could arguably delegitimize claims by "rebel" leaders who are portrayed as not pursuing a diplomatic agenda in comparison to the "opposition" in the form of the SNC.

In the entry words, BBC News and Sky News seem to concur and remain fairly consistent in their similarities, in general, on the usage of these terms. However, the entry word *Islamist* is

of interest. While in the word counts *Islamist* was used much more widely within the BBC News articles than the Sky News articles, they both seem to use it frequently enough to be seen as being in the top four entry words for the term *rebel* in the word tree. This is where word trees add a more nuanced look at how these broadcasters use certain terminology as from the initial word count data there was evidence to suggest that BBC News is using the term far more than Sky News does. However, at least *around* the term *rebel*, both news broadcasters use it fairly consistently.

3:5 (e) Terrorist
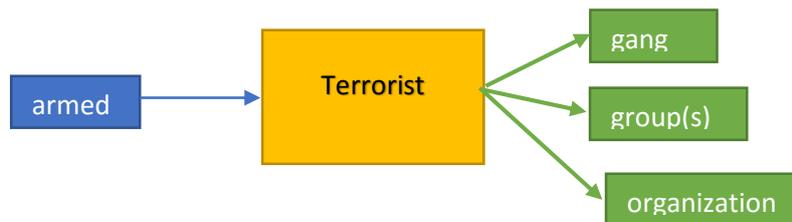
*Figure 21 BBC News Terrorist Word Tree Extract*
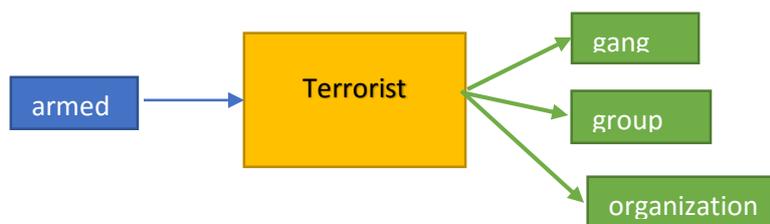
Figure 22 Sky News Terrorist Word Tree Extract

Although the word counts have shown that, in comparison to the other terms, *terrorist* is far less significant than initially predicted within the news articles of both Sky News and BBC News, it is nevertheless interesting to see how the term has been used when they have decided to use it, especially as there are such strict guidelines around when a group can be labelled a terrorist organization or not. As can be seen from the word trees above, both Sky News and BBC News do not differ at all in their main entry and exit words around the term *terrorist*. Both have *armed* as the main entry word and then *gang(s)*, *group(s)*, and *organization* as the main exit words. What this does show is clear evidence that, although the word counts suggested, in particular for the BBC, that the guidelines were being more loosely applied due to the prevalence of the term appearing, at an average of more than once per article, the word tree refutes this. The word tree, as explained, allows us to see how the terms are being used and not just whether they have been used or not. This means that, although the initial perception that the guidelines were being less tightly followed than might be thought, the word trees show that both Sky News and BBC News have been extremely consistent in their usage of the term. This is evidence that in fact the rules are being closely followed.

What is perhaps interesting to note is that is what does *not* appear around the word *terrorist*, and that is any mention of Islam. While the BBC used the term *Islamists* 92 times and the term terrorist 122 times the two do not appear to have appeared together. This is interesting as

Islamists does factor into both Sky News and BBC News word trees on *Rebel*, clearly showing a desire to show the extremist Muslim leanings of some rebel groups but not those of terrorist groups. A possible explanation of this could be the theoretical concept of the "media Muslim," whereby Muslims are presented in a very particular way in Western news media. Applying the "media Muslim" to the presence, or absence, of "Islamist" as an adjective could mean that, while "rebels" requires an additional layer of explanation as to their political and/or religious affiliations, "terrorists," from the Middle East must be Muslim and so therefore do not require the description as Islamist. This is perhaps quite a dark interpretation of the data but is nonetheless justified through the data seen so far and the application of certain media theories.

3:6 Conclusion

From these various types of news article analysis we can now begin to answer the two questions posed at the beginning of this Chapter: *How do Sky News and BBC News use these terms?* and *how far are BBC News and Sky News similar or different?* From the various news analyses run, the simple answer to the two questions would be that, they use the same terms similar amounts and so differ very little. While theory would suggest that the two broadcasters, due to the their target audiences and editorial styles, would be differing often with their usage of words both in terms of numbers and in the way in why they are being used, it would appear that, generally, this is not the case. The word counts showed that there was little difference between the two broadcasters, apart from the surprisingly higher usage of the terms *terrorist* and *Islamist* by the BBC. There are three possible interpretations for this. Firstly, that infotainment has not reached the UK to such a degree, via Sky News, as first thought. Secondly, that infotainment is occurring in the UK but that this has taken on the form of newer presentation styles and media platforms rather than sensationalization of language. Or the third option is that infotainment is happening but that it is happening fairly equally across the broadcasters and not to Sky News in particular. From my understanding and analysis I think that there is a combination of the last two interpretations. I think that language in the news in the UK does not seem to have taken a large swing towards tabloidization and has remained fairly consistent across both broadcasters, but that both broadcasters have pursued other avenues by which to engage audiences. However, I do also believe that, in doing this, both have pursued this fairly similarly without one engaging more fully, at least linguistically, in a US style of news than the other.

Saying this, although they do appear to be fairly similar, there were some key areas of interest brought to light by the word counts and word trees. Firstly, that the BBC News coverage appears to have been slightly more focused on the political struggles within Syria and Sky News more on the physical fighting of the various groups. This could be down to their audiences, with the BBC appealing to a slightly older, more middle class, target audience and Sky News appealing more to a younger audience base from a wider socioeconomic background. Although linguistically they seem to have been fairly similar, their emphases on which part of the conflict they covered could add weight to the understanding of the BBC as a more broadsheet news provider and Sky News as a more tabloid news broadcaster, although I think this would be stretching the evidence somewhat. There is also clear evidence

on which to base the opinion that both are working from a more Western frame and metanarrative, working from Western understandings of the conflict within Syria with greater legitimacy given to the SNC and the Opposition in terms of the diplomatic fight, while fighters on the ground in Syria were labelled as "rebels" or with a focus more on their military actions rather than their political objectives. In addition, it would appear that some terms, while differing quite clearly in their dictionary definitions, have been used fairly interchangeably when speaking of Syria, in particular the terms *regime* and *government* highlighting a lack of belief in the Assad administration's claim to legitimacy and following Western political interpretations of the power struggles within Syria.

In conclusion, both broadcasters have used the key terms fairly similarly in terms of quantity and have, on the whole used the terms similarly within their articles, albeit with slight differences around certain terms and focuses which do challenge some of the "obvious" distinctions made about the two broadcasters from the literature base.

The next Chapter will look at how the public responds to the key words and from this to further investigate the nature of the encoder / decoder relationship when talking of the coverage of the Syrian Crisis by Sky News and BBC News.

Chapter 4

Survey

4:1 Introduction

This chapter will seek to explore and analyse data gathered through a survey of 222 people and their reactions to the key focal terms of this thesis: *government*, *regime*, *opposition*, *rebel* and *terrorist*. In so doing, I hope to be able to demonstrate and then build a hypothesis on how the British public feels towards these words in general and how they feel towards these words in the context of the Syrian Crisis. A survey allows me to see how people react to these words and see to what extent media theory generalisations fit to a British news audience. From the survey I hope to add additional weight to the findings from the news analysis and the interviews in order to understand the effects terminological selection processes in the news has on audiences' perceptions.

There are two main questions that will be answered by the survey data. Firstly, *How do audiences perceive these words?* and secondly, *What are the implications for news broadcasters?* These two questions will help me challenge and / or accept notions and ideas from the current literature and from the previous data seen in Chapter 3.

From my own understanding and those within the literature, people should perceive each of the key terms differently to one another and then, in turn, differently in the context of Syria as people form associative relations[88]. People will form ideas and opinions around certain words regardless of context. Placed within context, another layer of understanding and associations is added, which is why, one would presume, the reactions to words in the context of Syria should be different to those without context at all. Furthermore, if such a difference does prove to be present, then this will reinforce the underlying precept of this research that the terms used by news broadcasters do affect the way in which people see and interpret the world especially as, for many, news media is their only window to the world and so "it is through media that perceptions are created, sustained and challenged.[89]"

In addition to seeing the extent to which associative relations do play a part in modern news broadcasting and comprehension, the survey will allow some light to be shed on the extent to which encoders (the news broadcasters) and decoders (the audience) are understanding one another and to further explore the dynamics of this relationship. The thesis will look at the two sides of this relationship partly in reverse, with the survey results, representing the decoders, being analysed before the interviews with the BBC News and Sky News interviewees who are the encoders. However, from the news analysis in Chapter 3 there are already some interesting areas to explore as to word usage by the two broadcasters, the most interesting of which will be the extent to which, in the case of Syria, the terms *government* and *regime* became interchangeable, both in the views of the encoders and the decoders. Furthermore, it will allow me to reinforce some of the ideas that have been shown regarding how positively or negatively each of the words in the case of Syria is seen and, in so doing,

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[88] Saussure. Pg 123
[89] Hoskins. Pg 5

reiterate the importance of how these terms are selected and to highlight the potential power of news broadcasters to influence people's understanding of the world around them as they have been "invited in [to] trust the TV [news] as a safe means of scanning the world outside.[90]"

4:2 Methodology

I used Qualtrics as my survey tool as it allowed me to run a professional-looking survey in which I am able to freely access all the data and allows the export of data in a variety of forms. The survey was distributed via the university email, personal email and through Facebook. The survey was answered fully by 222 participants who were reached through a snowball sampling method. This method, whereby a survey is sent to an individual, completed and then sent on to others, enabled me to break free of a survey based solely on my university friends and colleagues in an attempt to access a more representative sample. Below are some of the initial questions which will show who answered the questionnaire.

4:2 (a) Q1. What is your gender?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Male		88	39%
2	Female		134	60%
3	Other		2	1%
	Total		224	100%

Table 2: Survey Q1: What is your Gender? Results

Here is can be seen that 60% of the sample were females, while only 39% were males, but since gender is not a variable which this research is focusing on, the lack of an even split should not greatly affect the conclusions drawn.

4:2 (b) Q2. What is your age?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	18-24		96	43%
2	25-34		38	17%
3	35-44		32	14%
4	45-54		37	17%
5	55-64		14	6%
6	65+		5	2%
	Total		222	100%

Table 3: Survey Q2: What is your age?

As I lacked the access to a survey distributer, the snowball sampling method had to be used. As a result it is not surprising that the largest demographic was the 18-24 (43%) as these will likely represent many students of the University of Kent and their friends. However as 57% were not of (traditional) university age, this method has worked well. Moreover, as although TV news viewing audiences are falling, their core is the 30+ year-olds, while online news is read far more by the under-35s. This means that as there is a good split between under and

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[90] Ang, Ien. "Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Influences for a Postmodern World." Routledge: London. 1996. Pg 24

over 35s it will cover a spectrum of people who will likely be watching and/or reading the news.

4:2 (c) Q4. How often do you watch/read the news?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Never		10	5%
2	Less than Once a Month		26	12%
3	Once a Month		2	1%
4	2-3 Times a Month		24	11%
5	Once a Week		22	10%
6	2-3 Times a Week		57	26%
7	Daily		78	36%
	Total		219	100%

Table 4: Survey Q4: How often do you watch/read the news?

This table shows how often the surveyed 222 people watch or read news. From this it can be seen that 36% of respondents, or over 1/3, watch or read the news daily, while 72% watch or read the news at least once a week. This is particularly helpful as it shows the vast majority of respondents are fairly frequent or frequent consumers of the news, in turn meaning that the results stemming from this group of people will be more informative than if they had been infrequent consumers of news media. It would be expected that, if a person watches or reads the news more frequently that their views of the world around them will be more influenced by what the news is telling them.

From these basic entry level data I can show that from 222 people surveyed there is a good balance of ages, genders and news viewership / readership which will provide a solid foundation on which to draw some conclusions as to how a UK audience responds and decodes the news. In the following section each of the terms will be shown and analysed both without context and within the context of Syria so as to further inform my understanding of the relationship between encoders and decoders within the UK in the context of Syria.

4:2 (d) Survey Results Analysis

In this section each of the key terms both in and out of the context of Syria, plus additional questions on the level of trust ascribed to each broadcaster will be shown, described and analysed. From these conclusions can begin to be drawn to answer the two questions posed in this Chapter's introduction, *How do audiences perceive these words?,* and secondly, *To what extent do encoders and decoders understand one another?* While being able to answer these questions I will also be able to further build on the analysis of Chapter 3 and begin to compile more detailed layers of evidence in order to respond to the key research questions of this research: *How are these words used?* and *To what extent to which encoders and decoders understand one another?* and *Is this important?* This Chapter's results and conclusions will then feed into the interviews in the next Chapter and provide a base from which to ask questions of each of the interviewees within Sky News and BBC News, which will complete the three levels of original research and the foundation level of the existing media theory and literature.

4:3 Trust

To begin, I thought it would be interesting to see how far the respondents agreed with the following statements: *I trust the BBC News* and *I trust Sky News.* From these questions it would be possible to see the level to which people trust each broadcaster and, if the results should differ, begin to delve into why such a difference exists and if it is founded within the literature and the news analysis so far conducted in this work. Each will be described individually and then both with be analysed and compared.

4:3 (a) Q.5 How far do you agree with the following statement: "I trust the BBC News"

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		5	2%
2	Disagree		23	11%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		60	28%
4	Agree		108	50%
5	Strongly Agree		20	9%
	Total		216	100%

Table 5: Survey results: "I trust the BBC News"

From the table it can be seen that 59% of the respondents chose *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* with 50% of all respondents choosing *Agree*. This is in comparison to just 13% who chose *Disagree* or *Strongly Disagree* to the statement. This leaves 28% who *Neither Agree nor Disagree* with the statement. From this is can be shown that the majority of people (87%) do trust, or at least do not distrust, the BBC News coverage. This shows what the BBC itself believes that it is one of the country's and the world's most trusted and watched news channels. Therefore, the language selected by the BBC News teams will hold a very strong influence over its viewers and readers as so many people appear to trust its news coverage. This has implications when looking at the news analysis results and their responses in interviews as to how and why they have chosen certain terms with regard to the Syrian Crisis.

4:3 (b) Q6. How far do you agree with the following statement: "I trust Sky News"

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Strongly Disagree		18	8%
2	Disagree		40	19%
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree		93	44%
4	Agree		59	28%
5	Strongly Agree		3	1%
	Total		213	100%

Table 6: Survey results: "I trust Sky news"

While the BBC had 59% *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* Sky News has only 29%. With 27% who *Disagree* or *Strongly Disagree* with the statement, 14% more than did for the BBC News. 44% responded with *Neither Agree nor Disagree*. It is somewhat surprising that nearly 2/3rds of respondents did not "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with the statement, especially in the light of Sky News' BAFTAs for Best News Coverage in 2002, 2003 and 2008[91] and also an International

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[91] BAFTA. http://www.bafta.org/television/awards . Accessed 28/07/15

Emmy in 2010[92]. However, what this could reflect is the perception of the way in which Sky News reports and perhaps hints that Thussu was right to suggest that Sky News is a "harbinger"[93] of US style tabloid journalism in that Sky News may be one of the most watched news channels in the UK, but that people "trust" the BBC's coverage more.

What can be seen from these two is that, although both news broadcasters are watched very widely in the UK, it would appear people seem to trust the coverage by BBC News more. This is likely to stem from the view of the BBC as the older and longer established broadcaster with the view that Sky News is the "new kid on the block." What this does mean with regards to the impact of terminological selection choices by these two broadcasters is that it may not be equal. If people really do trust BBC News 30% more than Sky News as the survey suggests, then that would mean that the word choices by BBC News would have stronger implications with regard to how their encoders (audience) view what they are watching and reading. Saying this, that is not to say that just because audiences may not trust Sky News to the same level, 73% did choose options that were not "Disagree" or "Seriously disagree" which means that many still trust it to some level or at least do not distrust its coverage.

Looking back on what the news analysis showed us, if trust in a news broadcaster could also be then pushed forward to mean loyalty to a news broadcaster then this could also explain some of the slight differences between the broadcasters, despite having, on the whole, fairly similar results with regard to term usage by quantity and term usage within an article. One of the clearest, albeit slight, differences is the way in which the BBC News articles appeared to focus more on the political struggle while Sky News tended to focus slightly more on the physical fight between the Assad administration and the various opposition and rebel groups. What could be taken from this is, if the public view the two differently, in the same way they view tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, then this difference makes sense. To apply this to newspapers, you are more likely, if you have a genuine interest in politics, to follow politics in The Telegraph or The Times, whereas if you're more interested in finding out about political scandal you would likely turn to The Sun or The Mirror. That is in no way to say that focusing on the physical rather than political battles is deemed less journalistically valuable, but that perhaps those more engaged in the ins and outs of Syria's political struggle would more likely turn to the BBC (The Times) and so Sky News (The Mirror) could be differentiating its news coverage so as not to compete for the same audience demographic's focus.

What this could mean for the concept of infotainment is a slightly more nuanced interpretation of the theory. Rather than taking infotainment as outright tabloidization of news, it can be seen as a slightly more market-orientated approach to news production. Both broadcasters exhibited similar language usage across their news articles and yet people respond to them differently when it comes to trust and there are slight differences to be inferred with regard to what each broadcaster is focusing on. Both may be using similar language, and so are either both equally adopting or not adopting the linguistic elements of infotainment. Both may also have increased the more "showy" approach to news presentation styles, including graphics and launching on multiple media platforms in order to

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[92] International Emmy. http://www.iemmys.tv/news.aspx. Accessed 28/07/15
[93] Thussu. Pg 122

stay relevant. Despite this, it could be argued that what they are doing differently is accepting their different "roles" within the news broadcasting landscape and tailoring their focus to better suit their audiences. This is what could be seen from the results above but will be put to the interviewees to see what they have to comment on this.

From now we will now look at the results pertaining to the core words featured in this research and how they are reacted to on a scale from *Very Good* to *Very Bad*, both out of context and within the context of Syria. By placing the words in and out of the context of Syria I hope to show if people's initial reactions to the words differ from their reactions to the same words when contextualised with Syria. By doing this I hope to be able to highlight that terminological selection *is* important and does affect people's perception while also investigating certain areas of interest that have been raised by the news article analysis, in particular the interchangeability of the terms *Regime* and *Government*.

4:4 Government

4:4 (a) Q7: How positively (good) or negatively (bad) do you find the term "Government"?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Bad		13	6%
2	Bad		10	5%
3	Poor		45	21%
4	Neither Good nor Bad		74	35%
5	Fair		48	22%
6	Good		20	9%
7	Very Good		4	2%
	Total		214	100%

Table 7: Survey Results: Q.7 Government

32% of respondents viewed the term as *Poor*, *Bad*, or *Very Bad* with 35% selecting *Neither Good Nor Bad* and 33% *Fair*, *Good*, or *Very Good*. Perhaps surprisingly the respondents were split fairly evenly into thirds between *Good*, *Bad* and *Neither*. This perhaps reflects fairly poorly on British apathy towards the current political elite and system of governance, which is interesting but not the focus of this thesis as people will likely equate *Government* to their own government rather than an objective analysis of the term. What this shows however is that 67% of people do not view "government" as negative.

4:4 (b) Q.9 How positively (good) or negatively (bad) do you find the term "Syrian Government?"

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Bad		34	16%
2	Bad		55	26%
3	Poor		60	28%
4	Neither Good nor Bad		53	25%
5	Fair		7	3%
6	Good		2	1%
7	Very Good		1	0%
	Total		212	100%

Table 8: Survey Results: Q9. Syrian Government

From this it can immediately be seen that there has been a large shift towards a more negative response to the term with only 4% of respondents selecting *Fair*, *Good* or *Very Good*. 25% compared to the previous 35% stayed in the middle selecting *Neither Good Nor Bad*. 70%, over double those who responded the same towards *Government*, selected *Poor*, *Bad* or *Very Bad*. What this very clearly shows is that people react far more negatively towards the Syrian Government than to they do to the term out of context. This opinion is likely to have been largely influenced by the news media in all its forms especially as at the time there were daily updates on the conflict within Syria. What this highlights is the power the news has to influence and change people's perceptions as, it is reasonable to presume, many people will not have researched the Syrian administration's actions independently and so are basing their understanding through the framework presented to them by the news.

4:5 Regime

4:5 (a) Q.8 How positively (good) or negatively (bad) do you find the term "Regime?"

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Bad		32	15%
2	Bad		74	35%
3	Poor		53	25%
4	Neither Good nor Bad		38	18%
5	Fair		13	6%
6	Good		3	1%
7	Very Good		0	0%
	Total		213	100%
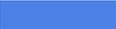
Table 9: Survey Results: Q.8 Regime

Unlike *Government*, *Regime* has a far more negative initial response. Only 7% selected *Fair*, *Good*, or *Very Good*, with only 18% selecting *Neither Good Nor Bad*. This leaves 75% choosing *Poor*, *Bad* or *Very Bad*, with 35% of all respondents choosing *Bad*. This, when looking at the dictionary definition, is to be expected as *Regime* has elements of illegitimacy, totalitarianism and lack of democratic rights and so it would surprising if it ranked positively amongst the respondents.

4:5 (b) Q.10 How positively (good) or negatively (bad) do you find the term "Syrian Regime?"

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Bad		67	32%
2	Bad		55	26%
3	Poor		54	26%
4	Neither Good nor Bad		27	13%
5	Fair		4	2%
6	Good		2	1%
7	Very Good		2	1%
	Total		211	100%

Table 10: Survey Results: Q10. Syrian Regime

Here there can be seen once again a shift between *Regime* out of context and then *Regime* in the context of Syria, although the shift is nowhere near as dramatic as with *Government* to *Syrian Government*, but has occurred nonetheless. Only 4% selected *Fair*, *Good*, or *Very Good*, with only 13% selecting *Neither Good Nor Bad*. 84% chose *Poor*, *Bad*, or *Very Bad*, an increase of 9% from the original *Regime* responses with a more than 100% increase in responses of *Very Bad*."

4:6 Summary Analysis of "Government", "Syrian Government", "Regime" and "Syrian Regime" Survey Results

Here we can begin to explore to what extent the terms *Regime* and *Government* became interchangeable or not in the coverage of Syria. Below is a table to show how the respondents responded in a clearer way. Positive will include *Fair*, *Good*, and *Very Good*, while negative will include, *Poor*, *Bad*, and *Very Bad*.

	Government	Syrian Government	Regime	Syrian Regime
Positive	33%	4%	7%	4%
Neutral	35%	25%	18%	13%
Negative	32%	70%	75%	85%

Table 11: Summary Table: Government & Regime

In this table it is much easier to see how the responses to each of the terms changed. The most notable shift is from *Government* to *Syrian Government* where positive responses dropped from 33% to just 4%, while negative responses more than doubled from 32% to 70%. There was some shift, but not an overly dramatic one, when *Regime* and then *Syrian* Regime were compared. The most notable shift was an increase of 10% to 85% in negative responses. What is far clearer to see in this table is the similarity in responses between *Syrian Government* and *Syrian Regime*. Both had positive responses of only 4%, neutral responses of 25% and 13% respectively and very high negative responses, at 70% for *Syrian Government* and 85% for *Syrian Regime*. When this is compared to the difference between *Government* and *Regime* without the Syrian context, the results are even more revealing, particularly in the negativity rating where *Regime* was viewed negatively in excess of 130% more than *Government* was. This means that, as dictionary definitions, the public *do* view the words differently, as would be expected, but that in the context of Syria those clear differences have

become somewhat blurred as *Syrian Government* and *Syrian Regime* responses were fairly similar to one another.

This reinforces what was seen in the news article analysis, where the words appeared to be being used in similar quantities across the articles and being used in a similar way within the articles by both Sky News and BBC News. Here it can be seen that as the encoders, the news broadcasters viewed the words as interchangeable in the case of Syria. So too have the decoders, their viewers and readers. This is very clear evidence that the encoder/decoder relationship is a powerful one. In much of the literature this appears to be described as a fairly one-way transfer of information from encoder to decoder, but as can be seen in Chapter 1 in Berlo's Model of Communication, the relationship is cyclical. It might enter the realms of "chicken or egg?" but the ways in which both sides influence each other is a key part of this research. To what extent were Sky News and BBC News using the words interchangeably already, with the result that their audiences also adopted the same view point? Or could there also be an argument that sees that audiences' willingness to accept the interchangeability of these terms allowed the broadcasters to continue to do so? This is something that the interviews will shed more light on but I believe that, although the relationship is a dynamic one, there is far more power coming down from the encoders to decoders than the other way around. I think that, as the news articles show, both news agencies took the terms to be interchangeable when talking of the Assad administration and that audiences accepted this. The BBC did slightly differentiate the two with a more diplomatic leaning to the term *government* and a more military leaning when using the term *regime* but it would seem that both broadcasters and their audiences accepted that, although out of context both words mean very different things, within the context of Syria they became synonymous.

4:7 Rebels

Below can be seen the responses from the 209 people who answered the question on rebels.

Q12. How good (positive) or bad (negative) do you find the term "Rebels?"

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Bad		13	6%
2	Bad		49	23%
3	Poor		33	16%
4	Neither Good nor Bad		83	40%
5	Fair		24	11%
6	Good		7	3%
7	Very Good		0	0%
	Total		209	100%

Table 12: Survey Results: Q12. Rebels

14% of respondents chose *Fair*, *Good*, or *Very Good*, with the largest percentage of people, 40%, selecting the *Neither Good Nor Bad* option. This leaves the remaining 45% who chose *Poor*, *Bad*, or *Very* Bad. This shows that 85% of the responses were *not* outright positive, which shows a very clear leaning to a more negative response to the use of the term *rebel*. This could be seen as somewhat surprising as, when looking at the dictionary definition, "A person who rises in opposition or armed resistance against an established government or

leader",[94] there is little to suggest that this resistance is "bad". However, when selecting the terms for this research, as could be seen from the table in Chapter 1, *rebel* was chosen as the opposing term for the term *opposition*. Perhaps in this context it could be viewed more negatively. Furthermore, the militant aspects of the term *rebel* as opposed to the arguably more diplomatic leanings for the term *opposition* could also explain the non-positive response to the words. This difference of military and diplomatic emphasis within the definitions of *rebel* and *opposition* appears to be how both the BBC News and Sky News have opted to choose which words are used for each group with the more militarized groups including the FSA being labelled as "rebels" and the more diplomatic groups such as the SNC being deemed as the "opposition" this appears to coincide with the way the general public too would have divided these groups as well.

4: 8 Opposition

Q.13 How good (positive) or bad (negative) do you find the term "Opposition"?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Bad		1	0%
2	Bad		8	4%
3	Poor		17	8%
4	Neither Good nor Bad		90	43%
5	Fair		59	29%
6	Good		29	14%
7	Very Good		3	1%
	Total		207	100%

Table 13: Survey Results: Q13. Opposition

The table of responses for *Opposition* is almost the exact opposite to that of *Rebels*. Only 12% viewed the term as *Very Bad*, *Bad*, or *Poor*, with *Neither Good Nor Bad* remaining around 40% at 43%. 44% of respondents view *Opposition* as *Fair*, *Good*, or *Very Good*. These figures are the near reverse of the responses for *Rebels* with the non-positive responses for *Rebel*s at 85% and the non-negative responses for *Opposition* at 87%.

When comparing *Opposition* to *Rebel* it is clear that in the UK, the term *rebel* has far stronger negative connotations than the term *opposition*. This clear division means that the choice of terminology by each of the broadcasters will cause a clearly differing response from their audiences. As was suggested in Chapter 3, there are clear political implications in how each of the broadcasters reported on who was the "opposition" and who were the "rebels" against the Assad administration. The SNC, who were backed by both Western and Arab states, as the "legitimate" opposition to the Assad administration were labelled by both the BBC and Sky News teams as the "opposition", and as their word trees also reinforced, the term was used much more when speaking of the diplomatic events between the Assad administration and the SNC and other groups. "Rebels" were deemed as the FSA and other militarized groups and, as the word trees showed, the term was applied much more when focusing on the armed

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[94] Oxford Dictionaries. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/rebel Accessed 31/07/2015

fight and the battles on the ground between the Assad administration and the Free Syrian Army and other armed groups.

As was raised in previous chapters, the decision by both news agencies to follow this division of "opposition" for the SNC and "rebels" for the FSA can be seen in two lights. Firstly, based around their dictionary definitions, where one has more diplomatic and the other more military leanings. The second interpretation could be that this is evidence of the news broadcasters following Western political discourse and not those of domestic Syrians. Within Syria, many viewed the "rebels" as having a far more legitimate claim to being the "opposition" of the Assad administration rather than the SNC which was often seen as rich foreign businessmen and politicians. In the next Chapter the broadcasters will touch upon why these terms were selected. Combined with the results shown from the survey it is clear that, by deeming the SNC as the "opposition" each broadcaster has consciously or sub-consciously embedded legitimacy of the SNC in their articles and, in so doing, influenced the way in which their decoders understand the conflict in Syria as, with *Opposition* scoring much more positively than *Rebels* the broadcasters will have transferred this legitimizing notion of the SNC to their audiences.

The same is true of "rebels". By focusing on the military rather than diplomatic aspects of the FSA, which can be seen in the clear use of more military-based language in the word trees for both broadcasters, combined with the far more negative responses by audiences to the use of the term *Rebels,* each broadcaster has delegitimized the FSA to some degree in the eyes of their decoders. The extent to which this is part of active elite agenda-setting can be seen in the responses from the interviews in the next Chapter, although I doubt the extent to which this is agenda-setting and more a simple following of Western metanarratives and domestic expectations of both editors and audiences alike. Furthermore, given the way in which the English language is constructed I think it would have proved difficult for broadcasters to challenge too far the syntagmatic solidarities of their audiences in relation to these terms. This is reinforced by Fairclough's notion that "Balance is not simply having all sides represented, but also how those actors are framed [defined]".[95]

4:9 Terrorist

In the previous Chapter the word "terrorist" was revealed to be less significant than originally thought, but nevertheless proved to show some divisions between how much each broadcaster chose to use the term, and other related terms, in their coverage, even if both used the term within their articles in near-identical ways. Below is a table that shows how people responded to the term when asked in a survey.

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[95] Fairclough. Pg 82

Q11. How good (positive) or bad (negative) do you find the term Terrorist?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Very Bad		116	56%
2	Bad		48	23%
3	Poor		19	9%
4	Neither Good nor Bad		17	8%
5	Fair		4	2%
6	Good		1	0%
7	Very Good		3	1%
	Total		208	100%

Table 14: Survey Results: Q11. Terrorist

This table is the least divided of any of the tables we have seen so far. Only 3% of people chose *Fair*, *Good*, or *Very Good* and 8% chose *Neither Good Nor Bad*. This leaves a very significant majority of 88% who chose *Poor*, *Bad*, or *Very Bad* with 56% alone choosing *Very Bad*. This is not surprising as most people would agree that terrorists and terrorism are not positive concepts and acts. The extremely strong and negative connotations of the term for audiences clearly explains why both the BBC News and Sky News teams have such strong guidelines on the usage of the term. In addition to this, by deeming groups to be "terrorists" it "constitutes a declaration of illegality of the political violence referred to[96]" which explains why, when quoting or referring to Assad's use of the term *terrorist* it was nearly always placed in inverted commas in order to denote that both broadcasters viewed his usage of the term to be misplaced.

4:10 Conclusion

After having looked at the responses to the survey we are now in a position to summarise what has been gained from this section of research and to begin to answer the two questions outlined in this Chapter's introduction: *How do audiences perceive these words?* and secondly, *What are the implications for news broadcasters?*

To answer the first question, *How do audiences perceive these words?,* the results have proved both interesting and informative. It is clear audiences do perceive and respond differently to each of the focal terms: *government*, *regime*, *opposition*, *rebel* and *terrorist*. This in itself is useful and shows that each word is viewed differently by the audience and therefore there are significant repercussions for the news broadcasters (encoders) when choosing terminology as it *will* affect the way in which the news is decoded and understood.

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[96] Carruthers. Susan. "The Media at War." Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke. 2000. Pg 165

Below is an expanded table of Table 11 where each term's information has been summarized. *Positive* are the combined *Fair*, *Good*, and *Very Good* responses. Neutral are the *Neither Good Nor Bad* responses. Negative are the *Poor*, *Bad*, and *Very Bad* responses. Highest percentages for each term are marked in orange, lowest in blue.

	Government	Syrian Government	Regime	Syrian Regime	Opposition	Rebel	Terrorist
Positive	33%	4%	7%	4%	44%	14%	3%
Neutral	35%	25%	18%	13%	43%	40%	8%
Negative	32%	70%	75%	85%	12%	45%	88%

Table 15: Summary of all terms' positive and negative scores

Table 15 clearly shows how each term was responded to during the survey and highlights some key areas in which to bring forward. Firstly *Government* and *Opposition* were the only two words where *Positive* or *Neutral* were the highest scoring. This means the these terms, without context, are viewed far more favourably than their partner words of "*Regime*" and "*Rebels*" which both had their highest percentages in the *Negative* section. This clearly indicates that choosing one term over another will affect the way an audience sees and understands what is happening in the world around them as in these cases an audience's response could be reversed from more positive to a more negative reaction.

However, when the terms *Government* and *Regime* were placed within the context of Syria, the responses greatly changed. While *Regime* and *Syrian Regime* both scored highly negatively showing that, *Regime* is already considered a "bad" word by audiences and *Syrian Regime* even more so. The same could not be said for *Government* and *Syrian Government*. Here a majority positive or neutral response to *Government* is hugely reversed to become a very negative response, on a par with *Regime* and *Syrian Regime* to become a negative word association.

Opposition and *rebels* also had opposing responses with *Opposition* scoring more positively than *Rebels* which scored far more negatively. Like the difference between *government* and *regime* it is clear that, by simply choosing a different word, news broadcasters have the potential to reverse an audience's response to a group. What all this is evidence of is that the underlying assumption that "changing your word for something, changes that something[97]" in the eyes of the audience / decoders is valid.

What this means for both Sky News and BBC News is very clear; words do matter. The terms they choose to describe the key players in any political event will have clear ramifications for the way in which their audiences interpret these words. This may sound obvious but, part of the aim of this thesis was to see if people do actually feel differently towards these words which have political and dictionary differences, but to what extent these differences are actually significant to the everyday news viewer was implied but not shown. The survey data has shown that these words are decoded differently by audiences which means that there is more significance and weight as to how and why news broadcasters are selecting terms. This

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[97] Durant. Pg 27

means that we are now in position to begin to answer the second question: *What are the implications for news broadcasters?*

The way in which both Sky News and BBC New chose the term *opposition*, in general, to mean the Syrian National Council and to label the Free Syrian Army and its various groups as *rebels* becomes more significant when taking into account the survey response data. As seen in the table *opposition* is deemed more positive and *rebel*s more negatively. By following Western political metanarratives of the time, these applications of the terms were not out of the ordinary and followed a Western desire to legitimize the SNC on the world stage while remaining cautious of the multitude of armed groups that formed the FSA. By following the linguistic norms both news broadcasters accepted this and reinforced the legitimizing and delegitimizing of each group's claim to be Assad's replacements in the eyes of the public.

While the selection of certain words to do with the opposition does / did have an effect on the way audiences will have / do view the opposing groups within the Syrian Crisis, when it comes to the terms *government* and *regime*, these threw up slightly different results. While *Government* and *Regime* polled as polar opposites, with *Regime* scoring very negatively and *Government* far more positively, this difference only occurred without any context. When placed within the context of Syria, *Regime* scores slightly more negatively, but the original positive response to *Government* is reversed to a very negative response close to how *Regime* originally scored. What this means in terms of news broadcasters selecting terminology is that terms are not fixed and do change over time and in different contexts which means that Bell's point that "The encoder cannot guarantee ideological closure and acceptance by the decoder"[98] holds true. In essence, decoders interpret words differently all the time and so encoders have to be extra vigilant when selecting terminology in order to stay abreast of what these differing interpretations and understandings could be. How news broadcasters do this will be touched upon through the interview analysis.

What the shift in perception from decontextualized and contextualised *Regime* and *Government* show is that, in the case of Syria, the two words did become synonymous as the word counts and word frequencies suggested. This means that both encoders and decoders agreed that, although they understand the terms to mean different things, within the context of Syria these differences all but vanished. The aligning of these terms' audiences' reactions shows the power of the news to influence people. Hardly anyone from the UK will have an in-depth first-hand account of the Crisis and so, for many, their only window onto the Crisis will be through the news. The fact that both news agencies adopted a fairly interchangeable approach to calling the Assad administration a "regime" or a "government" can clearly be shown to have affected the audience's perceptions of these terms. In so doing, whether intentionally or not, the broadcasters have taken away the legitimacy of the Assad administration. There are no words other than "government" that could reinforce a leader's claim to international support and by reducing the term to the extent where there is little difference between the "Syrian government" and the "Syrian regime" in the eyes of the public means that Assad will continue to lack the ability to be defined in a positive way.

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[98] Bell (2007) Pg. 118

In short, this Chapter has shown that terms do have different interpretations and reactions to audiences and that these reactions can be changed by the news and that news broadcasters' linguistic choices do impact an audience's understanding of the world. To understand the encoder half of the encoder / decoder relationship between Sky News, BBC News and their audiences in the case of Syria the following Chapter will add the understandings and responses from key parts of both broadcasters' editorial and managerial teams.

Interviews

5:1 Introduction

The final section of original research conducted for this thesis was interviews with key figures from within the Sky News and BBC News editorial and managerial teams. These figures were: David Jordan, Director of Editorial Policies and Standards (BBC) and Jonathan Paterson, World Affairs Deployment Editor (BBC News) who were both interviewed in person on 20th January 2015, and Peter Lowe, Managing Editor (Sky News), who was interviewed via email. Each of these interviewees was selected due to their prominence within their news broadcaster's hierarchy and their job roles and responsibilities. By conducting interviews I aimed to gain an insight into the ways in which these news broadcasters viewed themselves in terms of their news production values and systems, their role in national and global news gathering and broadcasting and their responses to both my own findings and the critiques of news media theory on news production. In so doing, this will provide a unique set of interview data to analyse, adding an additional dimension to this research which is often lacking from news media theory in general, and that is the opinions and views of the news creators themselves. By doing this it will enable me to provide a useful insight into how these organisations work in real life and to see how far theory can be applied or refuted, as well as allowing me to directly challenge the interviewees on my own findings on their reportage of the Syrian Crisis.

I believe that by conducting these interviews it will provide a more "real world" facet to this thesis by enabling the news producers themselves to voice their views on what I have researched and what others have said. Evidently, there are questions over how unbiased and objective these responses will be as, as would be expected, senior employees of these huge broadcasters are unlikely to be hyper-critical of their own practises. Saying this, regardless of whether their responses can be deemed biased or unbiased they are nevertheless useful. This section is to show that how news creators view *themselves* and their position and influence in the British and global markets, regardless of whether these responses are objective or subjective, is to be taken into consideration in the analysing but does not detract from the utility of these responses in showing how broadcasters think and respond about themselves.

Within this section I hope to be able to answer three key questions which build upon the other evidence from the previous chapters. Firstly, *Are BBC News and Sky News different?* This question will enable me to more conclusively answer if the two broadcasters are different, as the literature suggests, and if this is a conscious decision and/or, if they view themselves as more different than the research in this thesis would suggest. Secondly, *How do BBC News and Sky News perceive themselves?* This question adds to the previous question. Not only is it asking whether they do see themselves as different or similar in terms of audience, reporting styles, language and even ethos, but how they understand their own reporting and linguistic procedures both in and outside the context of Syria. This question really adds to the weight of this research as this is where much of the literature is lacking. And finally, *What does this mean for news media theory?* On taking these responses, what are the implications that these have for challenging or accepting key parts of news media theory ranging from the

existence and ever-growing presence of infotainment, to the prevalence and importance of embedding, to issues of linguistic selection and implications such as the Media Muslim and the relationship between the encoders and decoders along with many others.

Each of the interviewees was asked the same five umbrella questions which are listed below:

Q1) According to the survey, the words "Syrian Regime" had an 85% negative response rate compared to "Syrian Government", which had 70%. Across the articles the words appear almost as often as each other.

    A)   What do you believe is the difference between these two words?
    B)   What is the decision process in choosing each of these words in the context of Syria?
    C)   Do you think that, in the case of Syria, these words become interchangeable?

Q2) According to the survey, "Rebels" received 45% negative response, while "opposition" polled at just 12% negative.

    A)   How and why did you decide to select the term "opposition" for the Syrian National Council (SNC) and the term "rebels" for the Free Syrian Army (FSA)?
    B)   Do you think this decision justifies the critique that news media must work within certain frames/schemas?
    C)   The BBC News uses the term SNC far more than Sky News who seem to favour the term opposition/Opposition. Can you comment on this?

Q3) Many of the reports quote or use the Syrian Observatory on Human Rights (SOHR) as a source.

    A)   How far do you use the language of the SOHR in your own reporting?
    B)   Did the difficulty of direct access to Syria see the news teams become unavoidably reliant on external groups for information and did/does this raise any questions on impartiality with regard to language?

Q4) It has been argued that news agencies use more inflammatory language in their headlines in order to grab audience attention.

    A)   How far do you think this is true?
    B)   Are there any pressures in the modern news age for reporters to write/ present more "exciting" reports and does this affect linguistic choices?

Q5) Syria was a melting pot of groups, as the terms *rebel* or *opposition* or *terrorist* each polled so differently in the survey's negativity ratings (45%, 12% and 88% respectively).

    A)   What were the processes of defining groups as either "rebel," "opposition" or "terrorist?"

Most of these questions stemmed from the initial survey or news data analysis, some of these question and sub-questions have been proved to be less useful to this research as it has developed (Q3). This Chapter will now go through each question and analyse the responses of each other interviewees and analyse areas of agreement, disagreement and what this means for this research.

Q1) According to the survey, the words "Syrian Regime" had an 85% negative response rate compared to "Syrian Government" which had a 70%. Across the articles the words appear almost as often as each other.

A) What do you believe is the difference between these two words?
B) What is the decision process in choosing each of these words in the context of Syria?
C) Do you think that, in the case of Syria, these words become interchangeable?

All three interviewees believed there was a difference between the words based around varying interpretations of the dictionary definition. "*Government implies legitimacy while regime implies illegitimacy*", said Jordan, but went on to qualify this by saying that "*legitimacy does not equal democracy*". And Paterson, also at the BBC, said, "*A regime has not been elected and does not rule by law.*" Lowe, from Sky News, adds that "*there is a subtle element suggesting that it [regime] is an authoritarian one [government]*". All three appear to be suggesting that *government* leans towards a more peaceful and democratically elected administration while *regime* lends itself towards more illegitimate and militaristic administrations. This follows what would be expected based on the dictionary definitions of the two words and does show that all parties are following a Western liberal democratic understanding of the term "government" based around an elected representative although Jordan did suggest that democracy was not necessarily an integral part of deeming an administration as legitimate, which is an interesting deviation from what might be expected.

When placed in the context of Syria, and challenging them on the interchangeable nature of the words in the case of Syria, the three did not agree. David Jordan, who is one of the directors of the whole of the BBC, quite simply said "*They are not interchangeable in meaning*" but then went on to say that "*there can be a move over time*", implying that "governments" could become "regimes" and vice versa. This is in stark contrast to Jonathan Paterson, World Affairs Deployment Editor for BBC News, who said "*They are interchangeable…. Large percentages of the population were against the government, therefore it is not legitimate*", and so they are justified in the flexibility in the application of the words. Peter Lowe at Sky News agreed with the interchangeability of the words in the case of Syria, saying that "*A report could easily have an introduction that says "regime" and a more detailed script that says "government"… Neither term is wrong.*" The views of Paterson and Lowe are backed by the news article analysis which showed both news broadcasters using each term a similar number of times and in similar ways across the sample of news stories which can now be explained by editors also taking the approach that these words could be used interchangeably. This can be seen as evidence for embedding,[99] which is so often talked about in the literature whereby each editor and journalist that touches a story embeds their lexical and schematic understanding onto the articles they write.

Two other areas of interest, particularly when looking at the real world applicability of news media theory, did emerge from the interviews with Paterson (BBC News) and Lowe (Sky News).

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[99] Bell. Pg 52

Paterson went on to say, after being questioned as to how each of these words was chosen and the significance in their usage, *"BBC News' language does not mean that the BBC is being pejorative."* This is an interesting comment as it means that, from the BBC News' point of view, their language selections are based on journalistic styles and their understanding as to which word should be used when, but *not* from the position that they, as the BBC, are pushing an agenda by selecting such terminology. This poses an unexpected answer to Conboy's question "Could we ever narrativize without moralizing?",[100] as well as challenging Golding's view that "News is a reflection of the forces that produced it".[101] I do not doubt that the BBC does not believe that by selecting the words that it in itself is being "pejorative", but I do think that by saying this, Paterson seems to underestimate the power of the news' terminological selection choices on its audiences. While the BBC may not deem itself to be pejorative, that does not mean that its audiences do not view it as such or take what is being said as fact and allowing it to influence their view of the world. As the survey shows, audiences responded very negatively to both *Syrian government* and *Syrian regime* which highlights that, although the BBC may not wish to be shown to be choosing a side, it inevitably implicitly does so.

The second area of interest was raised by Paterson at Sky News who said *"I don't think we need to make a 'decision' about which word to use."* This, for me, was interesting as I think it highlights a key differentiation between theory and reality. While media theorists and political scientists view these words as extremely important and the use of them must be taken very seriously, in reality there simply is not time for editors and journalists to sit down and debate the pros and cons of using one term over another. This is particularly true when looking at the case study of Syria where, from the news article analysis showing what the journalists use, the interviews which show what the editors and managers believe and then how people feel which is shown in the survey, when it comes to Syria all are in agreement that these two words were interchangeable and that both were applicable to the Assad administration without much contesting from any of the key parties in the encoder / decoder debate.

5:3 Question 2

Q2) According to the survey, "Rebels" received 45% negative response, while "Opposition" polled at just 12% negative.

   A) How and why did you decide to select the term "opposition" for the Syrian National Council (SNC) and the term "rebel" for the Free Syrian Army (FSA)?
   B) Do you think this decision justifies the critique that news media must work within certain frames/schemas?
   C) The BBC News uses the term SNC far more than Sky News who seem to favour the term opposition/Opposition. Can you comment on this?

The three interviews across the BBC and Sky News agreed on the way in which they determined why to call the SNC the "opposition" and the FSA and some other armed groups "rebels". In essence they follow a dictionary-based and commonsense approach to the division. Jordan said *"Opposition is a democratic/ peaceful opposition, while armed resistance*

[100] Conboy. Pg 144
[101] Golding. Pg 206

groups are seen as rebels." This is echoed by Sky's Peter Lowe who said "*Opposition is part of the normal language of politics… Rebel is more readily applied to fighting forces.*" Paterson added that "*Western Governments had had the most contact with the SNC, and so were seen as a government in exile*", therefore the use of the term *opposition* made sense as it was following the political narratives of the time. Furthermore, Paterson adds a helpful example of the divide between the terms used for the SNC and the FSA by comparing them to the relationship between Sinn Fein and the IRA, which again reemphasises the division of the groups based primarily around the use or non-use of force in order to determine which term will be applied to each. What is interesting to note is that, at this point in the answers, no one has mentioned the words being used to add weight to a group's claim to legitimate power.

The answers to Q2.B were surprising. Jordan said "*The BBC would plead guilty to working from a liberal democratic perspective, [we] are not value-free.*" This sentiment was reinforced by Paterson, also at the BBC, who said "*The BBC is a Western news agency in a Western country*" but added "*We do aim to provide critical news making… and to have a civilian voice from within Syria.*" I think that these statements are very important to unpack. Within much of the literature there is a near conspiratorial tone of news media agenda-setting and elite-driven linguistic selection in order to fulfil a Western liberal democratic objective. This is often in collaboration with an idealistic view of news as a perfect mirror onto the world whereby "complete impartiality is like perfection, an ideal for which many will strive but none will wholly attain".[102] Here I think is where much of the literature begins to enter the realm of inapplicability. News agencies know that they are not wholly unbiased and, as the BBC interviews have shown, are more than happy to admit that they *are* working from within certain socio-political frames but that they are not ashamed of that. Moreover, because of this awareness they *do* engage in critical journalism much of the time in order to highlight as many sides as possible although, as stated by Fairclough, "balance isn't simply having all sides represented, but also how the actors are framed."[103]

Paterson does talk of the meteoric rise in the quantity of reporting based on and including user generated content (UGC). UGC can be anything from blogs, tweets and social media posts, to direct comments on articles and so on. The fact that the BBC and other news broadcasters are increasing their UGC content with Paterson even saying that "*UGC is more influential than many other sources*", which was particularly prevalent in the Syrian Crisis and continues to be so in the various ISIS-based conflicts, shows a desire to reach the perspectives, opinions and realities of the people on whom they are reporting. Moreover, UGC is helping news agencies to further challenge the literary belief that they are working from an elite perspective by providing, as Paterson said, " a broad spectrum base of people" on which to base their news findings and, in so doing, increase the reliability, accuracy and balance of a story. I think this reiterates Allan's point in saying that, "An effort is made by academics and researchers to problematize and 'make strange' the everyday activities of journalists."[104] News agencies are aware of the criticisms levelled at them and are not conspiratorially reporting on world events

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[102] Boyd. Andrew. "Broadcast Journalism: Techniques of Radio and TV News." 3rd Ed. Focal Press: Oxford. 1994. Pg 171
[103] Fairclough. Pg 82
[104] Allan. Pg 56

but are openly reporting from with certain meta-narratives while also trying to balance such inescapable constraints.

Another comment by Paterson was that language choices and news reporting did take audiences "into account" in the fact they he said the BBC's audience tends to be "Western, middle-class and well educated" and so there were considerations to be taken when writing for such an audience, an audience that is different to that of Sky News for example, which tends to have a slightly different demographic than the BBC News. Schlesinger asks "Are journalists writing for the editor, audience or the story?",[105] a question where the answer would simply be. Yes, all three. Again, within the literature it is not so much what is written but more the tone of what is being said. Schlesinger writes as if writing for anything other than the purity of information equals "bad" journalism or a subversion of the values of news, but I think that this is too much of an opinion taken from outside the realms of the real world. Journalists still have to write and present for an audience, otherwise no one would watch or read what was being talked about, editorial guidelines must be followed and editors' green lights given in addition to the reporting of breaking news as accurately as possible from all over the world. The "Journalism of Attachment"[106], as Thussu calls it, suggests that audience engagement has become the number one driver of news broadcasters. This, I think, is true to an extent but, when looking through the interviews and the way in these people talk about the way they report, I think that they do try to ensure that audience numbers are maintained, and that audiences are engaged, but that this is not a compromise between that and journalistic integrity or quality as Thussu seems to suggest in his books.

Returning to the original question, Q2.B, Sky News' Peter Lowe added that "*The situation in Syria is now so complicated and fragmented that we have largely stopped using the term 'rebels' for anyone.*" This follows what David Jordan said in that "*You're not going to get an agreement between everyone*" on how to define certain groups, and so both Sky News and BBC News pursued their own usage of the terms, according to how they saw fit. This point rolls into part C whereby the BBC appears to use the term *SNC*, rather than *the Opposition*, far more than Sky News does, as was shown in the news article analysis. Here the two news agencies disagreed slightly over the use of names, over the use of terms or terms plus adjectives. Both Jordan and Paterson from the BBC said similar things. Jordan said "*It's better to use the name for something… Where we can be precise we will aim to do so.*" This would explain very clearly as to why the BBC used the term to such a large extent in comparison to Sky News, especially when Lowe from Sky News showed an opposing interpretation to the use of names versus terms by saying that "*You can't assume that everyone knows what the SNC is. Explaining we're talking about the opposition to the Assad government is more important.*" Paterson provided a slightly more blunt interpretation as to why there is a preference for names over terms in the BBC by simply saying it "*gets you off the hook.*" This I thought was interesting as, while in the previous sub-section both the BBC interviewees talked about how they were fully aware of and happy to admit to working from a liberal democratic and Western view point, here Paterson acknowledges that, by using names rather

[105] Schlesinger. Pg 107
[106] *Thussu. Pg 225*

than terms for groups it avoids the dilemma of appearing to favour one side over another, as this thesis has sought to investigate.

5: 4 Question 3

On reflection, looking at how this research has developed, the questions and answers for Question 3 are no longer deemed relevant to the progression of this thesis and so have been omitted, as the relevance of the SOHR within the body of news articles and news gathering by both news agencies, while at first seemed like a significant point of interest, later transpired to be of little significance to the research as a whole.

5:5 Question 4

Q4) It has been argued that news agencies use more inflammatory language in their headlines in order to grab audience attention.

A) How far do you think this is true?
B) Are there any pressures in the modern news age for reporters to write/present more "exciting" reports and does this affect linguistic choices?

This question was asked to see the extent to which the news agencies believed they were engaging in the concept of infotainment or not and if so, to what degree and if not, why not. What is interesting here is how the two agencies viewed themselves and each other. Lowe (Sky) stated very clearly in response to A that "*We don't, [As the need] …for hyperbole by journalists is entirely unnecessary.*" This perhaps goes slightly against what I felt myself when reading the articles but nevertheless it is interesting that Sky News refuted outright that they do this. When the same question was put to the BBC interviewees their reactions were different. Paterson called out Sky News by saying that "*Sky has more dramatic headlines than we do*", but qualified this by saying that Sky News did this to "*play to their audience which is of a lower socio-economic status than the BBC's.*" This tension between the ways in which the two news agencies view themselves continued with Jordan who said "*There are headlines that might grab your attention in broadsheet terms and headlines that might grab you in tabloid terms.*" It would appear that the BBC follows what Thussu suggested in his research that "Sky News is the harbinger or US style tabloid news",[107] something which it would seem that Peter Lowe would take some offence at. What is interesting is that the BBC clearly still views itself as a more "broadsheet" news broadcaster and Sky News as a more "tabloid" one, although Sky News does not seem to see itself in the same light. What is interesting is that both view themselves as different to one another yet, when looking at the usage of terms and the way in which these terms are being used within their news articles as shown in Chapter 2, there is little to tell them apart. Both seem to feel that linguistic choices are made on their own merit, their applicability and utility to the story and their audiences and not used in order to grab someone's attention. On the other hand, it would appear that the BBC believes that Sky News does do this, but the evidence would suggest that it does this no more or less than

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[107] Thussu. Pg 122

the BBC does, at least in terms of selecting terminology and phraseology for the main purpose of audience entertainment.

The second part of this question more directly challenges the news broadcasters to respond to the criticisms of infotainment levelled at the industry as a whole from the academic world. For this section I will look at how each broadcaster's interviewees responded as each response highlights a different area of the realities of modern news broadcasting.

Peter Lowe from Sky News responded by saying, *"The principles you apply to language will be how you want our brand to be defined, we are a serious news organization and we want our writing to be clear, straightforward and elegant. One the one hand, never make it sound dull (as) you want people to be interested. On the other hand, never rely on jargon, tabloid journalese or hyperbole."* From this response we can take away three main points on Sky News and its terminological and linguistic decision making. Firstly, there is a "brand" to maintain. Even if the language being used by both broadcasters is very similar, there are differences, as has been explained, in terms of article focus. Moreover, the two agencies do look and feel different both on the TV and via their websites with the way in which information is presented and explained being slightly different in a way that the raw data in this research is not able to show. Second, that Sky News views itself as a "serious news organization", flatly refusing to accept the criticisms levelled by the literature and also the comments from the BBC that it is more tabloid. This clash of opinions is intriguing as, when looking at the original research data in this thesis, there is little to separate the BBC News and Sky News articles overall in terms of terminological selection and usage, so where does this perception o beingf tabloid come from? My argument would be that the use of the term "tabloid" stems from a lack of real-world understanding. News broadcasting has changed and the more "flashy" aspects of infotainment with regard to presentation styles and graphics do not mean a reduction in the quality of the news being shown and that "tabloid" could simply stem from a type of snobbery over newer styles of newscasting. Despite this, people in the survey still trusted the BBC News far more than Sky News, something that Paterson also pointed out in his interview saying that the BBC's reputation still stands true as when the Charlie Hebdo attack happened *"three times"* as many people visited the BBC's platforms as did their rival providers in the UK. The reasons for this must originate from this "tabloid" versus "broadsheet" notion. Although there seems to be very little within my research to truly define each broadcaster in such terms, both the public and the academic world seem to believe it to be true.

The interview with David Jordan revealed other dimensions to the debate as to the rise of infotainment in the news and the need to make the news something to watch and read. This research has been focusing on the differences and similarities of Sky News and BBC News' coverage of the Syrian Crisis as they are both key players within the UK market as well as being mentioned often within the literature base. However, Jordan does say that *"The differences between Sky News and BBC News pale into insignificance in comparison to comparing the BBC to Buzzfeed."* He went on to say that *"The BBC has been outflanked by online news providers such as Buzzfeed."* Unlike the primarily television-based news providers, purely online outlets are not regulated by OfCom and so are freed from the laws and regulations that govern what the more "traditional" news broadcasters are bound by. While

news broadcasters globally have declining viewing figures, with some US channels losing one million a year,[108] online and mobile outlets are booming. David Jordan recognised this and said that there had been a continuing decline in young viewers and that "*Young people know that Buzzfeed isn't 'real news' but it's fun*." Buzzfeed is arguably the epitome of infotainment, geared toward a young, busy and mobile population who need to be engaged in a "fun" approach to the news, the ultimate in tabloidization. However, Jordan did acknowledge that the BBC had and will continue to change the way it presents and approaches news saying "*The BBC covers a very large demographic with news tailored for each audience*." This is interesting as it represents an arguable Third Way and can explain why the two broadcasters' language is not as different as it "should" be. What a lot of the theory has failed to appreciate is that news broadcasters are on multiple platforms. This is primarily down to the fact that much of the literature is lagging behind where we are today. The BBC has many different platforms and channels to cater to each of its audiences, for example, News Beat on Radio 1 is aimed at a far younger audience than the BBC 10 O'clock News. How this applies to this research is that both news broadcasters are undoubtedly adopting areas of infotainment (they would have to to stay relevant in the 21st century), but that this does not necessarily walk hand in hand with a sensationalization and tabloidization of language on their main news platforms. Both broadcasters were similar in both the number of times they used the terms and fairly similar in how these terms were then used within the articles. This means that, although the BBC may see itself as different, there is little to separate them linguistically. But this does not mean that the quality of either has been diminished by embracing the modern age. News delivery has changed, but I do not think that this has meant a decline to a far more US-style of news as the rules and regulations that govern news in this country, along with the long-established history of quality news production in the UK, will mean that such tabloidization will find other routes, as can be seen in the rise of Buzzfeed which has emerged to fill a gap in the market.

5:6 Question 5

Q5) Syrian was a melting pot of groups, as the terms *rebel* or *opposition* or *terrorist* each polled so differently in the survey's negativity ratings (45%, 12% and 88% respectively).

A) What were the processes of defining groups as either "rebel," "opposition" or "terrorist?"

This question sought to understand just how BBC News and Sky News went about defining various groups and why they did so. Both Paterson at the BBC and Lowe at Sky News commented on how they did not follow the language used by the Assad administration when deciding who were "terrorists" or not.

"*We called the opposition fighters 'rebels' because they were rebelling against the Assad regime. To call them 'terrorists' – as the Assad government does – would have meant siding with the Syrian regime and not being impartial.*" – Lowe

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[108] Exoo. Calvin. The Pen and the Sword: Press, War and Terror in the 21st Century. Sage Publications: LA. 2010. Pg 163

This was echoed by Paterson who said *"The Syrian regime used the word 'terrorist,' but from Western analysis it is not 'terrorism'."* What both these comments show is that both broadcasters are following the political discourses of the countries from which they are based, following a Western linguistic and terminological framework. What is also interesting is the desire to be seen to *not* be seen to be supporting the claims by the Assad administration in an attempt to remain unbiased. This is perhaps somewhat counterintuitive, as a desire to not support one group's version of events over another is clearly not unbiased. However, as already said, it does show that theories that news agencies are bound by the metanarratives and political schema of where they are broadcasting from/to do greatly affect the way in which these broadcasters report on the world.

Paterson goes on to provide an explanation as to the high levels of the word "terrorist" within the news articles analysis, which was initially surprising due to the BBC's desire to label groups by their names rather than by a politically sensitive word such as "terrorist." He said that, *"Lots of Damascus-based sources use the term 'terrorist' and so the BBC is quoting these sources, rather than adopting the word as its own language."* This, at least in part, explains the high count of the word across the BBC News reports, especially when this is then coupled with both the BBC interviewees talking of the importance of UGC in the reporting of the Syrian Crisis as Nvivo's searches are not "smart" enough to be able to differentiate between *terrorist* being used by the BBC and *terrorist* being quoted by the BBC.

Finally, in answering this question all three interviewees commented on the flexible and changeable nature of terminological selection over the Syrian Crisis. Lowe said, *"[We are] continuing to reassess as the story develops*." This is something that should be taken into consideration and shows that news agencies do constantly look at the language they are using in order to see if they are still reporting accurately and using terminology that reflects public opinion and the wider political landscape. Both the BBC interviewees talked about the ability for groups to be redefined in terms of the word "jihadist" which was briefly looked at in Chapter 3 as an additional word, along with "Islamist", that appeared fairly frequently in the coverage of the Syria Crisis. Paterson said *"The word 'terrorist' was used more in terms of UK Jihadists [in Syria]",* with Jordan adding *"Jihadist groups in Syria moved from being 'rebels' to being seen as 'terrorists' over the course of the Syrian Crisis."* These moves can be seen in the context of a growing concern within the UK of UK citizens joining the Syrian fighting groups such as ISIS and other militant Islamic groups that emerged on the fringes of the Syrian Crisis to then overtake the Assad administration and its rivals' fighting.

5:7 Conclusion

In the Introduction three questions were posed: *Are BBC News and Sky News different?* And *How do BBC News and Sky News perceive themselves?* And lastly, *What does this mean for news media theory?*

The first two questions go hand in hand. Throughout this Chapter and the previous Chapter there has been the running question as to how far the two broadcasters differ or not in their linguistic choices and approaches and to see how they see themselves and each other. From each section of research, including the interviews, it has become more and more apparent

that the two news agencies do not differ very significantly in the way in which they use these key terms and the editorial ethoses behind these choices. Both deemed that, in the case of Syria the terms *regime* and *government* did become interchangeable as was suggested in the news article analysis and in the surveys. They agreed on their consistently applied division of *opposition* and *rebel* to mean the SNC and the FSA (and other armed groups), citing the use of force by the FSA to justify their decision to label them the "rebels", while the SNC's diplomatic credentials and relationship with the West meant that "opposition" was the accepted label for these groups, despite domestic Syrians perhaps seeing the legitimacy of the SNC as less than that of the FSA. This was quite candidly explained by the BBC interviewees as being due to the fact that they are a Western broadcaster in a Western country and so are bound to follow political and public norms. Both also agreed that the use of "exciting" language and a drive to make news more engaging to read at the expense of quality, as infotainment suggests, is rather unfounded. They both agreed that news stories had to be engaging to read but that this did not come at the price of losing their journalistic integrity. Sky News said that Syria was already dramatic enough without the need to sensationalize the Crisis and BBC News said that they have multiple platforms aimed at different areas of their audience so as to tailor the way in which news is presented to the audience. They also both agreed on the way in which terms can change over time in order to continue to better reflect political and public expectations and understandings. What the interviews shows, as the news article analysis showed, is that the two are not so very different to one another in the case of their coverage of the Syrian Crisis. This is despite the fact that the BBC News team viewed Sky News in a more similar way to the majority of the literature as the more tabloid new kid on the block of British news broadcasting, while Sky News itself views itself in a the same more broadsheet terms as BBC News, despite them both admitting they cater to slightly different audience demographics.

The point made by Jordan as to the differences and similarities of Sky News and BBC News paling into insignificance when compared to purely web and mobile-based news platforms such as Buzzfeed is worth noting. While the literature may worry about the effect of infotainment on the UK news market, it is unlikely to fall into the sensationalised and tabloid news of the US due to the UK's laws, regulations, regulators and the historical foundations of quality news broadcasting championed by the BBC News. This tabloidization though, is occurring in the UK market but is being filled by online providers such as Buzzfeed and Huffington Post rather than by the major TV news broadcasters and their various platforms. In addition to a more nuanced application of infotainment to the UK market, there is the underlying acceptance that news broadcasters do work from within the constraints of the frames and metanarratives of their country of origin and that they are fully aware of this and do not view "value-free" journalism as a necessity. However, both talked about the need for critical journalism that may generally follow the norms of the time, but still has the capacity to challenge politically and socially accepted language if they deem it suitable.

This section has proved very useful in challenging and accepting the findings of the news media literature base as well as the other original research conducted in this thesis.

Conclusion

To conclude this research we will look back at the four questions asked in the Introduction and explore the answers to each that have been demonstrated through this thesis:

1. How are these words used and what are does this show?
2. To what extent are BBC News and Sky News similar or different?
3. Is terminological selection important for audiences?
4. How far can we accept key literature and theoretical concepts, in particular the rise of infotainment and the relationship between encoders and decoders, when applied to the UK?

What can be seen from the news article analysis is that both Sky News and BBC News used the focal words in similar amounts and in similar ways. From the word counts, word frequencies and the word trees the data reveals that there is far more that brings these two broadcasters together than differentiates them. This challenges the opinions of the broadcasters themselves, as was seen through the interviews, where the BBC viewed itself as the more "broadsheet" of the two news broadcasters, as well the public's opinions, whereby Sky News was trusted less than BBC News, and also the theories put forward within the literature of Sky News as the beginning of more American tabloid news in the UK. From this perspective this thesis has proved very interesting. Apart from slight differences in the focus of the coverage with, arguably, BBC News focusing more on the political battles while Sky News focused more on the physical fighting, the differences between the way in which these terms were being used and how often they were used are very slight.

What the word trees and interviews revealed, which was also a similarity between the two broadcasters is that they agreed to be working from within the frameworks and metanarratives of the Western liberal democratic socio-political areas they are broadcasting from and to. This shows a clear acceptance of the theory-base which suggests that it is nearly impossible for news to not follow public and political accepted norms and views of the world. This can be seen in the clear and widespread acceptance of the application and interchangeable nature of the terms *government* and *regime* for the Assad administration. This highlights a desire by the news agencies to follow the Western political stance of the illegitimacy of Assad administration and the understanding that, although there is a dictionary-definition difference between these words, in the case of Syria these words became interchangeable and lost their differentiation. This fluidity between the "government" and "regime" in Syria is further highlighted by the survey, which clearly showed that this interchangeability was also accepted by audiences, who understood the two terms to be very different out of the context of Syria, but within the context of Syria their negativity ratings were nearly identical.

This trend continued in the usage of the terms *opposition* and *rebel*. Both broadcasters followed the same interpretations of the definitions of these terms by highlighting the use of force as "rebel" and the use of diplomatic channels as "opposition." Consequently, BBC News and Sky News followed the Western narratives of accepting the SNC as the opposition and the FSA as rebels, citing the use of force, the levels of contact and viewed legitimacy by the

West and the constraints of the English language and audience's abilities to understand the conflict as the reasons behind this division. This interpretation stems from the word trees and the interviews which clearly show how and why the news broadcasters divided the words in this way. The importance of this acceptance of Western framing of the conflict is added to by the way in which audiences responded far more positively to the term *opposition* than *rebel* and so, by following the political linguistic norms of the day, both Sky News and BBC News will additionally influence an audience's appreciation of the Syrian Crisis and who held more legitimacy in the opposition of the Assad administration.

What these points indicate is not only that Sky News and BBC News follow socio-political linguistic framing and norms in their coverage and that they are very similar to one another in their usage of these terms, but that terminological selection is important for audiences. The survey clearly showed how audiences reacted very differently to words on a positive to negative scale and so changing a word will affect the way in which an audience reacts and understands the world around them. This highlights the encoder/decoder debate by showing that linguistic selection by news broadcasters *does* have the ability to change the way people will interpret events. In addition to this, the interviews touched upon an area that can be seen to be reinvigorating the encoder/decoder debate. The rise of UGC and the meteoric rise in internet and mobile-based content shows a change in the dynamic of the relationship between encoders and decoders with the relationship becoming more cyclical in nature and still being primarily encoder driven but with the potential for decoders to influence and challenge linguistic choices and coverage by news broadcasters directly.

The final point that has been shown by this research is the firm ability to be able to challenge the notion of infotainment arriving in the UK in a blaze of tabloid news spearheaded by Sky News. While infotainment speaks of the tabloidization, sensationalization and commercialization of the news combined with flashy graphics, all at the expense of the quality and accuracy of news journalism in the US with the UK heading the same way. I think that this is not the case. The news article analysis shows that both Sky News and BBC News are using the same terms in similar amounts and in very similar ways. This clearly shows that, if Sky News is supposed to be the landing group for US tabloidization then the BBC must also be. Moreover, when looking at the use of the word "terrorist" it was clear that there were very strict guidelines as to how and when this word could be used, that both were following e*xactly* the same usage of the word and that both the news analysis and the interviews show that words were not being usage to grab headline attentions but because they were deemed the most suitable. Saying this, the BBC did believe that Sky News' headlines were more dramatic, but Sky News refuted this and, when looking at the way in which the language choices were made and used by the two news agencies I do not think that there is much to separate the two broadcasters based on language. Nevertheless, when asked about trust, the survey results showed that the BBC was still much more trusted than Sky News. The differences between perceptions and reality, at least on language in Syria, can perhaps be explained more towards the "brand" of each broadcaster rather than by any real differences in news coverage in terms of language. This ties back to infotainment in that I think a more nuanced understanding and application of infotainment must be taken when looking at the UK news market. From the evidence in this research it would be hard to accept the linguistic

tabloidization aspects of infotainment, but from the interviews and the visual aspects of research in the news articles I think it can be accepted that presentation of the news has changed and embraced the more infotainment aspects of news presentation. This is also evident in the desire for both broadcasters to embrace new media platforms and to engage a variety of audiences and to accept and encourage the rise in UGC. What is particularly important to note is that accepting these areas of infotainment and not those of linguistic sensationalization shows that modernising of news broadcasting is not at the expense of the quality of news journalism.

To summarise and conclude, BBC News and Sky News' coverage of the Syrian Criss shows that both news agencies used the terms in similar quantities and ways, adopting and accepting Western socio-political framings of the crisis; that audiences do view and respond to each of these terms differently but that in the case of Syria both broadcasters and audiences alike accepted that their interpretations and definitions changed in the context of Syria, that the encoder/decoder relationship will be reinvigorated by the rise of UGC through new media platforms; and finally, that the UK news market is different to the US market and so theory that has been created from a US example needs to be adapted, reapplied and reinterpreted for the UK.

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