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Power and Ideology: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Media Texts

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Abstract

In media texts, we find rhetorical devices that relate to journalistic styles commonly termed as ‘reporter voice’ and ‘writer voice’ (Iedema et. al., 1994). In ‘writer voice’ texts, the subjectivity of the authorial voice is overtly revealed by language, while in ‘reporter voice’ texts the author’s value judgments are backgrounded or appear less prominent, and the more explicit material is usually attributed to external sources brought in the text. These particular rhetorical mechanisms employed by ‘reporter voice’ texts act to impart a sense of neutrality and objectivity to its news material.

This study aims at deconstructing this sense of objectivity and neutrality conveyed by such style of media texts, as a means to reveal authorial positioning and to thus uncover the ideologies and power relations that are enacted in the selected corpus of news texts reporting on the U.S. students’ performance on the 2012 PISA survey. To achieve that, this study relies on the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to media texts, and on the Appraisal system, which provides the tools for the linguistic analysis of the selected news reports. This study intends to shed some light on the ideological power behind ‘reporter voice’ texts that constitute a major part of journalistic discourse.

Keywords: Media Texts, Reporter Voice, Critical Discourse Analysis, Appraisal, Intertextuality, Evaluation

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1. Introduction

Given the prominent position that media occupies in our globalized contemporary society, Fairclough (1995) believes it is of great relevance to analyze the power of the media to influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, and social identities; a power to represent things, events and people in a particular way.

According to Iedema et al. (1994) media texts employ different sets of meanings, which relate to what is commonly termed as 'subjective' and 'objective'. From a journalistic perspective, 'reporter voice' texts are considered factual, objective and impersonal, whereas 'writer voice' texts are subjective, evaluative and personalized.

However, White (2009) rejects the notion of objectivity that is typically construed in discussions of media practice. He considers that all texts, including 'reporter voice', to be in some way subjective by necessarily being conditioned by its author's own social identity, ideological position and communicative objectives. The reporter's linguistic choices often impart value-laden perspectives on the events and people described. Hence White (2006, p.1) believes that news reporting is anything but objective, it is in fact "value laden, ideologically determined discourse with a clear potential to influence the media audience's assumptions and beliefs about the way the world is and the way it ought to be." Therefore, these linguistic choices/mechanisms employed by the writer have the potential to influence the reader's view and attitudes towards the event being reported and those involved in it.

'Reporter voice' texts operate ideologically by presenting themselves as factual and neutral, and the evidence for the effectiveness of this ideology is found in the commonsense view that quality and reliable journalism is objectively and evaluatively impartial (Martin & White, 2005).

This study aims to deconstruct the sense of objectivity and neutrality conveyed by media texts employing 'reporter voice' to reveal authorial positioning, and to ultimately uncover the ideologies and power relations at play in those texts. For that I selected three news reports covering the U.S. students'

2012 performance results on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) triennial survey. These three texts were written for the online version ‘event news section’ of three American newspapers of national relevance: The Washington Post, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal.

My motivation in selecting these news texts reporting on the PISA survey comes from the realization that, as language researchers, the issue of education is always present in our inquiries. The PISA is a well-regarded international survey and its results are key to understanding the education deficiencies, challenges, as well as advancements in several of the so-called ‘hegemonic nations’ and also in developing economies/countries. Especially for the U.S.A, the PISA results have become a sensitive issue among the education community and specialists, and also among politicians, because of the country’s poor results which did not yield any improvement from the last survey in 2009. These stagnant results, and the debate that emerges from them, make up for an interesting and relevant arena for exploring and analyzing the question of ideology and power that arises from the selected news reports.

In order to achieve my objective, I will work on exposing the ideologies conveyed as common sense assumptions, which are realized in those texts by particular linguistic resources. I will be taking into account the regime of strategic impersonalization that construes these ‘reporter voice’ texts, in which the subjective role of the author is backgrounded or appears less prominent. Therefore, despite all these authorial voice constraints, it is possible to assign the author’s evaluative positioning by analyzing his/her choice of sources, how they are quoted, framed and organized, and also the value positions advanced by the discourse of those attributed voices.

This study is divided into six chapters. In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework is introduced. The following chapter Language of the News presents some relevant aspects of journalistic discourse that relate to the scope of this study. Chapter 4 encompasses the methodology, based on qualitative research, used for the analysis of the selected corpus. Finally in Chapter 5, an analysis of the PISA news reports is carried out. In order to conduct the analysis of the selected texts, I rely on the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, specifically on Fairclough’s three dimensional model of discourse (Fairclough, 1995) and on the Appraisal system (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2012), situated

within the Interpersonal function of language in the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) paradigm.

Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of discourse aims at analyzing language and power in different types of texts. It conceives discourse as *text* (written or spoken), as *discourse practice*, and as *social practice*. The model not only explores text in itself, but also its production and interpretation within a larger social context. The text dimension involves the analysis of the language of the text, such as choices and patterns in vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure. The discourse practice dimension specifies the nature of text production, distribution and consumption in society. In this dimension, Fairclough (1995, 1992) emphasizes the relevance of Intertextuality, which is an aspect of discourse that links a text to its context. Finally, the social practice dimension focus on issues important to social analysis, such as the power relations and ideological struggles that discourse (re)produces, challenges and transforms in some way. Fairclough's model of discourse is built having in mind society's ideological processes, since discourse is viewed in terms of processes and changes in hegemony (Simpson and Mayr, 2010).

For the linguistic analysis at textual level, I am illuminated by the Appraisal system, which seeks to explore, describe and explain "the way language is used to evaluate, adopt stances, to construct textual persona and to manage interpersonal positioning and relationships" (White, 2012). The system explores how speakers/writers express judgment / appreciation and affection, as well as engage with other voices, thereby establishing alliances with those who share their point of view and distancing themselves from those who don't. These attitudinal and dialogical positionings may be explicitly present in the utterances or indirectly implied, presupposed or assumed (White, 2012).

By employing the CDA approach to media texts and the analytical tools of the Appraisal system, this study intends unveil the ideological power behind 'reporter voice' texts that constitute a major part of journalistic discourse.

2.Theoretical Framework

2.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Applied linguists see language as “tools for action and scaffolding for human affiliation within cultures and social groups and institutions” (Gee as cited in Martin, 2004, p. 321). In order to understand how language is used and in response to questions in applied contexts, such as in educational, literary and sociological settings, linguist Michael Halliday developed, in the 1950’s, the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory. The SFL model describes language as a set of choices of meanings. This set of options is called a system, and every choice made in an utterance or text carries meanings in terms of the potential choices *not* made. SFL theory proposes that the object of language should be the whole text (meaningful passage of language), and not some decontextualized part of it. SFL is a theory that focuses on the meaning making potential of language, and thus it explores the linguistic options/choices that are available to construct meanings in particular contexts (Martin, 2004; Christie & Unsworth, 2000).

SFL developed a model of language function in which the resources for scaffolding action and affiliation are organized as metafunctions – generalized kinds of meanings entitled Ideational and Interpersonal. These two modes of meanings are enabled by a third, Textual meaning, which organizes the Ideational and Interpersonal meanings as waves of information, setting the rhythm according to the context they are embedded in. In this model of language, the Ideational function represents experience, as it concerns domestic and institutional activity; the Interpersonal function enacts social relations by enabling and sustaining interaction between people; the Textual function manages the distribution of information, as it creates a cohesive and coherent discourse (Martin, 2004).

In the SFL paradigm, language and the social are interconnected, as people make use of language to make meanings in their social lives by selecting options available in the language system. Therefore, “the systematic description of language is theoretically linked to the systematic description of the social contexts in which language is used ”(Christie & Unsworth, 2000, p.3). But individual choices are not free willed; they are constrained by two factors. The first is the

fact that meanings are created within a context, which in turn limits the scope of meanings that can be selected. The second factor is that not all individuals have access to all possible contexts and ways of speaking/writing, due to their sociocultural positioning. SFL aims at describing the meaning-making systems of language, by simultaneously describing the different social contexts in which people use language. SFL interprets social contexts as two interrelated levels. One is the immediate context in which language is used – the Context of Situation. The other is the Context of Culture that encompasses the complete array of systems of situational contexts that the culture embodies. The way language is structured is not only influenced by the immediate Context of Situation, but also by the Context of Culture since “cultures evolve recognizable ways by which members can achieve their social purposes in the range of situations they typically experience. Any culturally recognized practice or *genre* entails its own characteristic text structure” (Christie & Unsworth, 2000, p.4).

The Context of Situation is defined in terms of three main variables that influence how language is used: Field is concerned with social activity, its content or topic; Tenor is the nature of the relationship among the people involved in the activity; Mode is the medium, that is, the role language plays in the situation. These situational variables relate to the three metafunctions of meanings: Ideational [Field], Interpersonal [Tenor] and Textual [Mode] (Christie & Unsworth, 2000). There is a consistent, bi-directional relationship between particular aspects of the context of situation and the metafunctions of language. The Context of Situation is characterized by particular contextual variables of Field, Tenor and Mode to which Martin (as cited in Christie & Unsworth, 2000) assigns the umbrella category of *register*. Consequentially, the dimensions of meanings or metafunctions are always constructed simultaneously with the context of situation. These three areas of meaning tend to be realized by particular systems within the grammar: the Ideational is realized by the transitivity system, the Interpersonal by the Mood system, and the Textual by the Theme/Rheme system.

This present study focuses on the dimension of Tenor, which comprehends meanings that relate to the power, social status of the participants, and the extent of their contact and affect. Halliday describes Tenor as such:

The TENOR OF DISCOURSE refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles: what kinds of role relationships obtain among the participants, including permanent and temporary relationships of one kind or another, both the types of speech role that they are taking on in the dialogue and the whole cluster of socially significant relationships in which they are involved. (Halliday & Hasan as cited in Christie & Unsworth, 2000, p.5)

Thus from the perspective of Interpersonal meaning, this study is concerned with how texts enact power and ideology, and how meanings unfold in them to position the author and ultimately their readership.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

According to Simpson and Mayr (2010), the term language usually refers to an abstract set of patterns and rules that operate simultaneously in different levels of the system such as the grammatical, phonological and semantic levels. Discourse, on the other hand, refers to the instantiation of these patterns in real contexts of use. Discourse refers to how language forms and patterns are substantiated in different social, political and cultural settings. Discourse can be understood as language in use, as well as the interactive strategies adopted by social groups and individuals in the production and interpretation of actual texts.

The conception of language as discourse and the interconnection between language and ideology is built from the premise that patterns of language are framed in a web of beliefs, opinions and interests. In discourse, the linguistic structure of text foregrounds certain privileged ideological positions while backgrounds others, as such that the linguistic choices of a text reflect its ideological orientation. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be understood as an attempt to develop an approach, which incorporates social-theoretical insights into discourse analysis that aims to comprehend the interconnectedness of discourse, power, ideology and social structure (Simpson and Mayr , 2010).

CDA development was influenced by the Critical Linguists (CL) Group founded by Roger Fowler and colleagues at the University of East Anglia. The CL group shared key theoretical positions with SFL, such as the view that human experience is influenced by language; register/functional variation reflects and constructs the division of labor in society; and finally that language is not only a reflection but also a part of social processes and organization (Matthiessen, 2012).

There is not a single, homogeneous version of CDA, although it is mainly associated with the works of Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk. CDA encompasses a shift from the descriptive goals of traditional discourse analysis to a focus on the ‘why’ and ‘how’ certain linguistic features are constructed. The CDA approach seeks to unravel or denaturalize ideologies that emerge in discourse as linguistic strategies that on the surface appear neutral or common sense; ultimately revealing how power structures are constructed in and through discourse (Simpson & Mayr, 2010).

Since the pioneering work of critical linguists at East Anglia, CDA and SFL have been closely associated. Fairclough (as cited in Martin, 2000, p.275) notes “that SFL is a congenial theory for CDA because its multifunctional, well adapted for text analysis and concerned with relating language to social context”. Martin (2000) states that SFL provides CDA with the technical linguistic tools to conduct a thorough analysis on language. In the context of CDA, SFL works to “ground the concerns with power and ideology in the detailed analysis of texts as they unfold, clause by clause, in real contexts of language use” (Martin, 2000, p.275). Therefore, SFL allows CDA’s analysts to look closely and precisely at meanings as they advance in a text, which provides for an explicit and transparent analysis.

SFL and CDA relate to each other as they share several commonalities in terms of theory and application; three of them can be readily distinguished. Firstly, they share a dialectical view of language as a social construct; the way society shapes language and in turn is shaped by language. Secondly, it is also a dialectical view that contexts and particular discursive events influence each other. Thirdly both CDA and SFL emphasize the cultural and historical aspects of meaning.

SFL and CDA have remained in constant exchange throughout the years, and from the point of view of SFL, CDA embodies the critical aspect of an applicable and accountable discourse analysis, located within applied linguistics. In terms of the semiotic environment in which discourse operates, CDA locates itself within the three parameters of context identified in SFL: Field, Tenor and Mode, and is particularly interested in the systems of power within the contextual parameter of Tenor. van Dijk (as cited in Matthiessen, 2012, p.30) states that “CDA focuses on the ways discourse structures, enacts, confirms, legitimates, reproduces, or challenges relations of power and dominance in society”.

The two fields also differ from each other in many aspects. SFL is a theory that studies the functions that language has developed to operate in society, by examining how meanings are construed in different contexts, which encompasses the analysis of real language in use and how it functions. CDA, on the other hand, focuses on the analysis of different discursive events that investigates the liaison between language and power, and the way language is used to produce, maintain and reproduce positions of power through discursive means. CDA is neither a methodology nor a theory, it is an approach towards a perspective on the analysis of social inequalities manifested discursively. Therefore, CDA aims at moving the linguistic field into a domain of social and political significance (Young & Harrison, 2004).

CDA's purposes not only reveal structures of dominations, but also provide the means to effectively change the manner in which power is distributed and exercised in social organizations and relationships. "Nevertheless, all researchers in CDA acknowledge that SFL is centrally important to the critical study of situated language events" (Young & Harrison, 2004, p.3).

2.2.1 Power and Ideology in CDA

As we have already seen, the question of power is at the core of the CDA approach. The aim of CDA is to reveal what kinds of social relation of power are present in texts, both explicitly and implicitly (van Dijk as cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012). This effort to reveal power relations is also what motivated this present analysis of media texts.

The concept of hegemony is crucial to the creation of legitimized power, since it constitutes the mechanism by which dominant groups succeed in persuade subordinate groups to accept their moral, political and cultural values and institutions. "Power is therefore not exercised coercively, but routinely" (Simpson & Mayr, 2010, p.3). Thus discourse construes hegemonic attitudes, opinions and beliefs that appear natural and common sense to the subordinate group. Hence one can say that the concept of ideology is intertwined with the concept of power.

We refer to ideology as to the way a person's beliefs, opinions and value-systems meet the wider social and political structures of the community they live in. Language is highly influenced by ideology, and all texts are in a way or

another inevitably shaped by a network of political beliefs and sociocultural practices. And thus texts are not neutral or disinterested. A close linguistic analysis of texts reveals how ideology is deeply embedded in language, and consequently exposes how the dominant ideologies of powerful groups and institutions are sustained through textual practices. This last proposition is what enlightens the analysis part of this study (Simpson & Mayr, 2010).

Ideology can be understood “as meaning in the service of power” (Fairclough, 1995, p.14). Ideology is found in texts as propositions in which assumptions are implicit, as taken for granted or common knowledge. Ideologies are also found naturalized in particular types of interaction. In order to show how meanings work ideologically, it is necessary to uncover the relations of dominance that are at work in a particular text, and it is important to note that ideology is more of an issue in some texts than in others.

According to Fairclough (1989, p.84), “common sense is substantially, though not entirely, ideological”. Ideological common sense contributes in the service of sustaining unequal relations of power. Ideology is more effective when their working is not visible, and therefore naturalized as common sense practices, values and beliefs. The author infers that “naturalization is the royal road to common sense” (Fairclough, 1989, p.84), which means that ideologies come to be ideological common sense to the extent that the discourse types that embody them become naturalized. But the naturalization of discourse does not depend entirely on whom exercises power and domination in an institution or society. When a discourse is naturalized, it appears to lose its ideological character, so it appears neutral in struggles of power. This apparent emptiness of power is paradoxically and fundamentally ideological, since ideology in this case works by disguising its nature. This invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to a text not explicitly, but as backgrounded assumptions, in which the text producer on one hand ‘textualizes’ the world in a particular manner, and on the other guides the interpreter to interpret the text in a particular way. “Texts do not spout ideology. They so position the interpreter through their cues that she [sic] brings ideologies to the interpretation of texts – and reproduces them in the process” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 85).

2.2.2 CDA Approach as a Sociocultural and Discursive Practice

CDA aims at developing a form of discourse analysis that can contribute to the social and cultural analysis, by relating its findings with close linguistic analysis of texts developed by language studies. The approach is called ‘critical’ in an attempt to expose that the general social practices and the use of language in particular situations are bound to causes and effects that people usually don’t realize. Particularly, the relation between the use of language and the exercise of power is not always clear (Fairclough, 1995).

Language use can thus be seen as social practice, a mode of action socially and historically situated in a dialectical relationship with other features of the social. By dialectics, Fairclough (1995) explains that language is socially shaped but also socially shaping – a social constitutive, and thus CDA explores these both sides of language use, without excluding one or the other. According to Fairclough (1995), language use, in any text, is always simultaneously and constituted of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief; which he labels, respectively, as Identities, Relationships and Representations. So any text can be analyzed in terms of making a small contribution in the shaping of these aspects of culture and society. Language, therefore, is constitutive of conventional practices, which help maintain the existing social identities, relations and systems of belief; but at any given time, it may as well work as a creative force to transform them.

Drawing from SFL theory of language, Fairclough (1995) views texts as heterogenic in meaning and form, and he takes a multifunctional view of them accordingly. Another important feature of the systemic view of texts is that it sees them as a system of meaning making possibilities, as a set of potential options or choices within this system. The selection of choices illuminates how a particular event or state of affairs is represented in a particular text, that is, to whom the text is directed at and what identities are projected. These choices are, in turn, linked at a different level: what genres to draw in producing and interpreting a text and what discourses to use. Such view of texts calls attention to the choices that are present and absent from them and why. Hence Fairclough (1995) ties the issues of representation to SFL’s Ideational metafunction, and identities and relations to the Interpersonal metafunction. “The value of such view of texts is that it makes it

easier to connect the analysis of language with fundamental concerns of social analysis, questions of knowledge, belief and ideology, questions of social relationships and power, and questions of identity” (Fairclough, 1995, p.17).

The CDA approach involves the process of looking at choices of words and grammar, as well as intertextuality, to uncover the underlying discourses and ideologies. Therefore, “a text’s linguistic structure functions as discourse to highlight certain ideologies, while downplaying and concealing others” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p.24). Fairclough (1992) calls attention to the important relationship between intertextuality and hegemony. The concept of intertextuality relates to the transformations of previous texts and the restructuring of existing conventions (genres, discourses) to generate new ones. But people do not have limitless access to this productive practice as an area for textual innovation. It is, in fact, an area that is socially limited and constrained by power relations. Since intertextuality cannot account for these social limitations, Fairclough (1992) proposes that it should be explored in accordance with a theory of power relations, how they shape and are shaped by social structures and social practices.

According to Fairclough (1995), the analysis of any particular type of discourse, such as the case of media discourse in this study, involves the alternate back and forth analysis of both *communicative events* and *orders of discourse*. On one hand, we have the analysis of the particular, a specific *communicative event* that is concerned with an actual newspaper, for example. The attention is on continuity and change, that is, in what ways this particular event is normative, drawing from familiar formats and types, and in what ways it is creative, by redefining and reshaping old resources. On the other hand, we have the analysis of the general, the overall structure of the *order of discourse*, and the way it is evolving in the context of social and cultural change. The focus is on the configurations of genres and discourses that constitute the order of discourse, the changing relationships between them and surrounding orders of discourses. Therefore, the discourse perspective on media language adopted by Fairclough’s analysis (1995), and by this study as well, is treated in accordance with the analysis of discourse practices and sociocultural practices.

Fairclough and Wodak (as cited in Matthiessen, 2012, p.447) argue that, “discourses do not simply mirror reality but bring into being situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities and relations between people and groups of

people.” And thus discourses project certain social values and ideas, and in turn contribute to the (re)production of social life. CDA faces the challenge of all socially oriented sciences, which is to relate the micro-patterns revealed by its analysis to the macro-patterns of culture and society that the discourse being analyzed functions. van Dijk tackles this challenge under the heading of “Macro vs. Micro [sic]”:

Language use, discourse, verbal interaction and communication belong to the micro level of social order. Power, dominance, and inequality between social groups are typically terms that belong to the macro level of analysis. This means that CDA have to theoretically bridge the well-known gap [sic] between micro and macro approaches (van Dijk as cited in Matthiensen, 2012, p.447).

In order to address this challenge and bring micro and macro analysis together, Fairclough (1995) proposes a Social Theory of Discourse, which comprises a three dimensional conception of discourse analysis involving *text*, *discursive practice* and *sociocultural practice*. The general framework includes, within CDA, “the traditions of close textual and linguistic analysis; the macrosociological tradition of analyzing social practice in relation to social structure; and the interpretivist or microsociological tradition of seeing social practice as something which people actively produce and make sense of on the basis of shared commonsense procedures” (Matthiensen, 2012, p.447). The Social Theory of Discourse is represented by the diagram below:

Fig.1 Three dimensional model of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, p.73)

The analysis chapter of this study is informed by the three dimensional model of discourse analysis, and it will show how these dimensions are interconnected, in a tentative way to unveil the ideologies and power relations that permeate the discourse of the selected news reports.

The sociocultural dimension of a communicative event involves the analysis of layers that constitute a particular event. These layers have different levels of abstraction, from the more immediate context of situation to the broader institutional practices the event is embedded in, and to an even broader frame of context and culture (Fairclough, 1995). According to Simpson and Mayr (2010, p.116), analyzing a text in term of social practices gives us an insight into “what society it was produced in and the society it as produced for; and the impact it has on social relations”. We begin to start looking into the “social and cultural goings-ons which the communicative event is part of” (Fairclough, 1995, p.57), and that is when discourse analysis becomes critical.

The discourse practice dimension of a communicative event involves the institutional processes and discourse processes of text production and consumption. The institutional processes or routines of a text refer to, in the case of mass media communication, to the editorial procedures involving the production of media texts and its forms of private consumption (readers). The discourse processes involves the transformations a text undergoes in its production and consumption. Discourse practices can be understood as mediation between the text and sociocultural practices, in which properties of sociocultural practices shape texts, but indirectly, by way of shaping the nature of discourse practices - the ways that texts are produced and consumed - which are in turn realized by features of texts. Therefore, discourse practices are situated in the division between society and culture on one side, and discourse, language and text on the other. (Fairclough, 1995)

An important marker of discourse practice is intertextuality. Fairclough (1995) suggests contrasting the linguistic analysis of texts with its intertextual analysis. Hence intertextual analysis aims at signaling the various genres and discourses that are drawn upon and articulated together in a text, as well as marking the linguistic features that realize them in the text. “Intertextual complexity in the mixing of genres and discourses is realized linguistically in the heterogeneity of meaning and form” (Fairclough, 1995, p.59). Therefore,

linguistic analysis is more descriptive, while intertextual analysis is more interpretative. According Fairclough (ibid), “linking the linguistic analysis of texts to an intertextual analysis is crucial to bridging the gap between text and language on the one hand, and society and culture on the other”. Hence linguistic features of texts provide evidence that can be used in intertextual analysis which is, in turn, a particular type of interpretation of that evidence. When working with intertextual analysis, we are dealing with social and cultural knowledge, which situates the text in relation to discourse practices and orders of discourse.

Finally, the text dimension analysis covers the traditional forms of linguistic analysis, but it also involves the analysis of textual organization above the sentence, such as cohesion and, in this particular study, the overall structures of a newspaper article. The analysis of a text is concerned with its meaning and form, which are interrelated, since meaning is necessary to realize form, and differences in meaning entail differences in form (Fairclough, 1995).

2.3 The Appraisal System

The Appraisal System is an on-going work developed almost 20 years ago by a group of researchers lead by Professor James Martin from the University of Sydney. This system provides the analytical tools for the linguistic analysis of this study.

The Appraisal system has evolved within the general theoretical framework of SFL, and is situated as an interpersonal system at the level of discourse semantics. According to Martin & White (2005), the Interpersonal in language explores how language construes social roles and relationships and the potential of language to work rhetorically to influence beliefs, attitudes, expectations and social relations. The interpersonal deals with the subjective presence of writers/speakers in texts, as they adopt stances regarding the material they present and the persons with whom they communicate. One of its major concerns is with evaluative meanings, how writers/speakers come to applaud, judge, criticize, effuse, approve and disapprove, and also how they eventually position their audience to do likewise.

White (2012) explains that the Appraisal system seeks to analyze the rhetorical power of language by investigating the linguistic resources used by

speakers/writers to express, negotiate and naturalize particular inter-subjective and ultimately ideological positions. The system focuses on the language of evaluation, attitude and emotion, specifically on the meanings employed to express the writer/speaker's engagement with their utterances that explicitly position a text's proposition interpersonally. White (2012) identifies some relevant issues explored by the Appraisal system that also guide this study:

- How different genres and text types may conventionally employ different evaluative and otherwise rhetorical strategies;
 - The communicative strategies by which the discourse of the media constructs supposedly objective, neutral or even impersonal modes of textuality;
 - How the different uses of evaluative language by writers act to construct different authorial voices and textual personas;
 - The underlying, often covert value systems, which shape and are disseminated by the writer's utterance;
 - The different assumptions which speakers/writers make about the value and belief systems of their respective intended audience.
- (White, 2012)

The Appraisal system performs the evaluative functions of attitudinal and dialogistic positionings, and is composed of three interacting domains – Attitude, Engagement and Graduation, as we can see in Fig.2.

Fig 2. An overview of appraisal resources (Martin & White, 2005, p 38)

The three domains and its sub-categories are explained and exemplified in the following sections of this chapter, and they will be used as the analytical tools for the linguistic analysis of this study in Chapter 4.

2.3.1 Attitude¹

The appraisal sub-system of Attitude includes utterances, in which writers/speakers bestow an intersubjective value or assessment, either positive or negative, to participants and processes by reference to emotional responses or to culturally determined value systems. Attitude is further divided into three sub-systems of ‘Affect’, ‘Judgment’ and ‘Appreciation’ (White, 2012).

2.3.1.1 Affect

Affect is concerned with evaluations of emotional responses and dispositions, by the use of nouns and nominalizations and through mental process of reaction and attributive relations of affect. These values of affect provide the most obvious ways the writer/speaker can adopt a stance towards some phenomenon, and thus offer the resources to indicate how a phenomenon has affected them, as well as to effectually praise that phenomenon (White, 2012).

2.3.1.2 Judgment

Judgment relates to the evaluation of human behavior by reference to a set of institutionalized norms that take form of rules and regulations, or of less precisely defined social expectations and systems of values. Judgment is highly determined by cultural and ideological values. Judgment is divided into two broad categories (either positive or negative) of ‘Social Esteem’ - with sub-categories of ‘Normality’, ‘Capacity’ and ‘Tenacity’, and ‘Social Sanction’ - with sub-categories of ‘Veracity’ and ‘Propriety’; and can either be distinguished as ‘inscribed’ (explicit) or as ‘tokens’ (implicit) of judgment. Under the inscribed category, the evaluation is explicitly presented by means of a lexical item carrying

¹ More details in Martin & White, 2005 and White, 2012

judgment value. In tokens category, the values are triggered by superficially neutral, ideational meanings which have the capacity to illicit judgmental responses on the reader, depending on their socio-cultural and ideological position (White, 2012).

2.3.1.3 Appreciation

Appreciation comprehends values related to the aesthetic evaluation (or other system of social values) of products, processes and entities. While Judgment evaluates human behaviors, Appreciation typically evaluates natural objects, manufactured objects, texts, as well as more abstract constructs such as plans and policies. Humans may also be evaluated by means of appreciation rather than judgment, when viewed more as entities than participants. Values of appreciation may focus on the compositional qualities of the evaluated entity, or they may focus on aesthetically-related reaction in which the entity is associated – aesthetic impact (White, 2012).

According to Martin & Rose (2007), there are several instances of attitude that we find in texts that could perhaps be analyzed as either judgment of character or appreciation of things, and this brings us to the borderline of character and value. For example, in the analysis section of this study, we find “*the data show the U.S has been going down the wrong path.*” (Text 1, paragraph 8). This locution *going down the wrong path* could be an instance of negative judgment in relation to the government, or an instance of negative appreciation when we focus on education policies. The authors (ibid) signal that when analyzing these particular cases, it is crucial to take into account the context in which the text occurs.

2.3.2 Engagement

The Engagement domain, which is the main aspect of Appraisal system explored by this study, follows Bakhtin’s/Voloshinov’s notion of dialogism and heteroglossia, according to which all verbal communication is dialogic, since it refers to or it is influenced by previous interactions/texts, and it also

simultaneously anticipates an actual or potential/imaged audience response (Martin & White, 2005). Engagement includes options for both omitting and referencing dialogism in discourse, with the option of being monogloss (elide dialogism), which construes a proposition with no reference to sources or alternative positions, and the option of being heterogloss (reference dialogism), which eludes to different voices via modalization, projection and negation, counter-expectation and restricted provenance (Martin, 2004).

One example of a monoglossic utterance is the 'bare assertion', which does not explicitly make reference to other voices or acknowledge alternative positions. Thus the communicative context for the utterance's brief textual moment is built as single voiced or in Bakhtin terms 'monoglossic' and 'undialogised'. The proposition is presented by the textual voice as not overtly dialogized, as one that doesn't need to be engaged with or recognized, it has no dialogistic alternatives and, therefore, can be stated categorically in the current communicative context. The 'bare assertion' functions when it is assumed that the textual voice and the audience operates with the same knowledge, beliefs and values (Martin & White, 2005).

For Bakhtin (as cited in Martin & White, 2005, p.92) every utterance exists "against a backdrop of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgments...pregnant with responses and objections". Bakhtin's notion of 'heteroglossia' explores the intertextual nature of texts that "necessarily make reference, respond to, and to lesser or greater degree, incorporate other texts both actual and prospective" (Martin, 2001, p.16). Bakhtin (ibid) argues that, "any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances".

Utterances, according to the heteroglossic approach, function to invoke acknowledge, respond to, anticipate, revise, challenge or even negate a range of more or less convergent and divergent alternative utterances and hence social positions. This perspective challenges the common sense view that certain utterances are interpersonally neutral, and therefore factual and objective; while others are interpersonally charged, and thus opinionated or attitudinal. Those utterances taken as factual, those constructed to background interpersonal values, "are nevertheless interpersonally charged in that they enter into relationships of

tension with a related set of alternative and contradictory utterances” (Martin, 2001, p.19).

Engagement reveals the degree to which writers acknowledge these prior voices and how they engage with them and, therefore, how the authorial voices reveal themselves as aligned or disaligned, undecided or neutral, in relation to other voices and their value positions presented in the text. This dialogistic perspective of communication also exposes the anticipatory aspect of a text, in which writers foresee how the addressee (his intended audience) is going to respond to the current proposition and value position being advanced by the text. This value position could be taken for granted by the audience, or may somehow be new, challenging, problematic or controversial, one that is likely to be questioned, resisted or even rejected by them (Martin & White, 2005).

When the authorial voice expresses their own mind, they concurrently summon the addressee to share their feelings, opinions and points of view. “Thus declarations of attitude are dialogically directed towards aligning the addressee into a community of shared value and belief” (Martin & White, 2005, p.95). Hence, Engagement is also concerned with the negotiation of alignment and meaning making that occur between writers and their presumed readership. Specially in mass communication texts in which the attitudinal resources employed by the writer work to ‘write the reader into the text’. These instances will be highlighted in the analysis chapter of this study.

Therefore, the Engagement subsystem seeks to extend our understanding, through the issue of alignment/disalignment, of how solidarity is built in mass communication texts. Solidarity is not only a matter of degree of attitudinal agreement. The writer can sustain solidarity with those they disagree by indicating that they recognize divergent viewpoints as valid and legitimate, and that they are willing to engage with those who hold alternative positions.

The Engagement domain focuses on meanings in context and on its rhetorical effects. Consequently, it brings together a variety of lexically and grammatically selection of locutions that bear the writer’s stance in respect to the value positions being referenced in the text. According to White (2003), Engagement is concerned with how relations of power, status, social interaction and solidarity appear in a text, and how they are construed from lexico-

grammatical choices that reflect the different types of authorial personae and positionings, as well as how these texts create from themselves an ideal audience.

In order to identify how such positionings are achieved linguistically, White (2003) and Martin & White (2005) present a framework for analyzing the linguistic resources of intersubjective positioning. They offer a typology of these linguistic resources, following Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, with categorizations referring to the different ways the textual voice engages with alternative voices (sources) and/or points of view mentioned or brought to light by the text. The authors present these heteroglossic resources as divided into those that entertain or open up the space for dialogic alternatives, and those that suppress or close down the space for such alternatives. These categories will inform the analysis part of this study, and they are detailed in the following sections.

2.3.2.2 Heteroglossic Engagement – Dialogic Expansion²

Martin and White (2005) refer to two primary modes of dialogic expansion that they label 'Entertain' and 'Attribute'. 'Entertain' is a dialogically expansive resource, through which the authorial voice entertains and makes space for dialogic alternatives by clearly stating that the position being advanced is contingent and one of a variety of possible positions. The proposition is thus construed as overtly dialogized and is grounded on, and relied upon, the individual subjectivity of the writer. The textual voice is highly invested in the proposition and acknowledges its heteroglossic backdrop by presenting it as potentially at odds with some dialogically alternative.

'Attribution' deals with propositions that are disassociated from the text's internal authorial voice and thus are attributed to external sources/voices. This rhetorical resource is achieved through the grammar of directly and indirectly reported speech and thought. The framing of such propositions are construed via communicative process verbs, with formulations that involve nominalizations of these process verbs, and various adverbial adjuncts. This category also includes instances of attribution in which no source is specified (that is, categorized as

² More details in White, 2006 and Martin & White, 2005.

hearsay). Attribution is divided into ‘Acknowledge’, ‘Distance’ and ‘Evidential Standing’.

In ‘Acknowledge’ there is no explicit indication in the locution, via choice of framer, to where the authorial voice stands in relation to the proposition. These instances of acknowledgement are realized by reporting verbs such as *say*, *report*, *state*, *declare*, *announce*, *believe*, and these semantic framers can act to disassociate or not the authorial voice from the current proposition, and thus they can be considered ‘neutral’ framers.³ ‘Distance’ involves rhetorical instances in which the semantics of the framer employed acts to explicitly distance the authorial voice from the attributed sources. It is realized by reporting verbs such as *to claim* and by the use of ‘scare quotes’. ‘Evidential standing’ is when the nature of the source is of such relevance and/or importance that it can position the reader to regard the attributed material and its associated value position as well-founded, credible and trustworthy. This mechanism operates even when a ‘neutral’ acknowledging locution/framer is employed.

2.3.2.3 Heteroglossic Engagement – Dialogic Contraction⁴

The categories of dialogic contraction are divided into ‘Disclaim’ and ‘Proclaim’. According to Martin & White (2005), although these categories construe a backdrop for the text of dialogic voices and positions, they work towards excluding, or at least constraining, alternative voices and positions of any subsequent communicative interaction, and therefore committing the reader to a particular point of view.

The category of ‘Disclaim’ encompasses meanings through which the dialogic alternative is explicitly rejected/superseded, or is represented as not applying. And so, a prior utterance or alternative position is invoked and recognized, but only to be rejected or replaced. This category is divided into ‘Deny’, which includes formulations that work by introducing and acknowledging an alternative position into the text so as to reject it latter on; and ‘Counter’, in

³ For more information on ‘neutral’ and ‘non-neutral’ framers see White, 2009

⁴ More details in White, 2006 and Martin & White, 2005.

which the current proposition replaces or counters a proposition that would have been expected in its place. ‘Countering’ is usually conveyed by conjunctions and connectives such as *although*, *however*, *yet* and *but* and via a small set of comment adjuncts/adverbials, including the adjuncts *even*, *only*, *just*, *still*. “These concessive resources can be said to contract the range of voices at play as they adjust audience expectation by countering predictions readers might be making about the way in which the discourse will unfold” (Martin, 2004, p.332).

‘Proclaim’ encompasses meanings that, through interpolation, emphasis or intervention of the authorial voice, work to confront, overwhelm or even exclude the dialogic alternative. It is divided into ‘Concur’, ‘Pronounce’ and ‘Endorse’.

In ‘Concur’ the authorial voice appears to have the same knowledge as the projected dialogic partner, who is usually the text’s intended audience. Examples are *of course*, *naturally*, *certainly* and etc. Such formulations are contractive in that they characterize the shared belief and value as universal in the current communicative context. And thus they have the effect of excluding any alternative voices/positions that might oppose to what is allegedly common sense.

The category ‘Pronounce’ involves rhetorical resources that convey authorial emphasis or explicit authorial interventions or interpolations, such as *The fact of the matter is*, *We can conclude*, *You must agree* and etc. Such formulations constitute an overt interference on the text by the authorial voice to assert or insist on the validity of the proposition.

In ‘Endorsement’ the authorial voice intervenes in the meaning making to present the external source propositions as correct, valid, undeniable, proven and greatly warrantable. These rhetorical resources are construed via verbal processes (and their nominalizations) such as *show*, *prove*, *demonstrate*, *find*, *point out* and etc. The dialogistic aspect of these formulations are retrospective, as they make reference and endorse utterances of a prior speaker that enters in a relationship of alignment with the authorial voice. Like ‘Attributions’, these formulations make use of reported speech to ground subjectively the proposition. In ‘Attribution’, the reported speech acts to unambiguously disassociate the proposition from the internal authorial voice, while in ‘Endorsement’ the authorial voice is not disassociated from the proposition. Henceforth, the authorial voice takes or shares responsibility with the source for the proposition, and so the subjectivity is a multiple one, creating a heteroglossic backdrop of potential alternative

viewpoints. However, ‘endorsement’ acts to exclude any proposition that is not considered highly warrantable by the authorial voice, and therefore this contractive aspect evidently aligns the reader with the value position being advanced.

For a better illustration and clarification of heteroglossic engagement, I present bellow a graph showing its categories and sub-categories with examples (in bold) taken from the PISA news reports and that appear in the analysis section of this study. Due to the style of ‘reporter voice’ employed by the selected texts, some examples from the sub-categories are not present in the analysis section, and therefore appropriate examples were borrowed from Martin & White, 2005.

Fig 3. An overview of heteroglossic engagement categories

2.3.3 Graduation

The appraisal sub-system of Graduation encompasses values by which writers/speakers graduate (raise or lower) or scale an utterance in term of interpersonal force, volume or impact, and values by which they graduate an utterance in terms of preciseness or sharpness of focus. Therefore, Graduation is divided into ‘Force’ – variable scaling of intensity, and ‘Focus’ – sharpening or blurring of category boundaries. Values of ‘Force’ (gradable) can be further divided into ‘Implicit’ and ‘Explicit’, and Focus (non-graded) into ‘Sharpen’ and ‘Soften’ (Martin, 2012).

Graduations also play a dialogistic role by revealing if writers are more or less aligned with the value position being advanced by the text, thus exposing how they place themselves in the communities of shared value and belief associated with those positions (Martin & White, 2005).

3. Language in Journalistic Discourse

In this chapter, I present an overview of the contextual and theoretical framework of Language in Journalistic Discourse, which guides this study. I present the importance of media discourse and its practices in our society, by focusing on the social construction aspect and on the power and ideology behind it, as well as on the relevance of discourse representation in news texts. I close this chapter by presenting the evaluative keys in which media texts operate, giving special attention to ‘reporter voice’ text’s rhetorical mechanisms, which is the category that the selected news reports on the PISA survey fall into.

3.1 News as a Social Construction

Fowler (1991) argues that language is not neutral, it actually acts as a constructive mediator. Especially the language of the news, which contents are not actually based on facts about the world, but based on ideas about it. Therefore, news is socially constructive, it is a representation of the world in language, and since language is a semiotic code, it imposes a structure of social and economical values in whatever it represents. There are always different ways in saying the same thing, and each choice is not accidental, but entails ideological distinctions and hence differences in representation. “Thus news is a practice: a discourse which, far from neutrality reflecting social reality and empirical facts, intervenes on the social construction of reality” (ibid p.16). The author (ibid) goes further to assert that news is not a natural occurrence but a product. It is shaped by an industry with bureaucratic and economic agendas, as well as by the relations between the media and other industries, political and financial organizations, and the government. “From a broader perspective, it reflects, and in return shapes, the prevailing values of a society in a particular historical context” (ibid p.400).

According to Iedema et al. (1994), people use language to construe rather to reflect reality. Any interpretation of reality is thus a social construct, since any observation and perception is constrained and determine by cultural preconceptions and traditions. Therefore, in media’s reality, any event observed, interpreted and reported will always be conditioned to the social background and ideological perspective of journalists, editors and managers. Even the most factual

report will be the product of numerous value judgments. All these will determine that one event is to be considered newsworthy, while others won't. It will also influence how a particular event is going to be featured, which part is going to be the focus of the report, which viewpoints will be foregrounded and which participants such as experts, eyes witness will be called for comment and so on. Consequently, any news report encompasses complex systems of evaluative meanings.

Real events are not naturally considered newsworthy. They are subjected to the media's processes of selection for inclusion in news reports, and hence the majority of real/world events are not reported or mentioned in the news. Therefore the audience is given only a partial view of reality, one that fits the media's criteria of what is newsworthy.⁵ This selection comes together with transformation, and each news institution varies its content and presentation according to several political, economical and social factors. Fowler (ibid) describes the world of the press as not the real world, but a world skewed and judged. He calls attention to the fact that the word 'bias' is not a suitable term for these skewed and judgmental processes of the media; rather the words 'mediation' and 'representation' are more appropriate.

News is not gathered or found, it is in fact a creation of journalistic process, an artifact and even a commodity. This complex set of criteria for news selection is called 'news values', that is, events that are regarded as newsworthy. The more an event fills this set of criteria, the more it is likely to be reported. News values are set to include values "about society such as consensus and hierarchy, journalistic conventions, nature of sources, publication, frequency and schedule, and so on" (Fowler, ibid, p.34).

News values can be held as intersubjective mental categories, which reporters and readers make reference to in cognitive psychology and semantic as 'frames', 'stereotypes', 'schemata', 'paradigms' and 'general propositions'. People use these stereotypes in creative way to construct the world and make sense of it. And so the stereotype's relationship with the news media has a substantial influence in this process of reality construction. Fowler (ibid) infers that the formation of news events and news values is a reciprocal, dialectical

⁵ For more information on these criteria see Fowler, 1991

process to which stereotypes serve as currency in negotiation. This notion of socially constructed news involves a cognitive perspective, which suggests that news stories are shaped on the basis of mental categories that exists in readers that are built on by the media.

Fowler (ibid) also points to the manufactured nature of news. He reveals that the real product of the media, in a commercial sense, is not actually news or newspapers (though both are clearly made) but readers, since the profit comes mainly from advertising revenue. And so, it is undeniable that the media is an industry and a business with a strategic position in the world's economic, political and social affairs. This industrial and commercial aspect of the media is bound to exert an effect on what is published as news and how it is presented. Thus media news is particularly concerned with financial institutions, other industries, official agencies and other sources of hegemony.

Fairclough (1995) sees the media functioning within a social system, and so he brings forth the issue of how the media affects and is affected by power relations within this social system. The mass media operates in a dichotomy of two social worlds that are brought together by the mediation employed in news discourse: the public - institutional world, and the private - family world. Hence, the mass media ideological power comes from the fact that they are able to say the same thing to millions of people simultaneously. Their power also stems from the media's political and economical circumstances that ensure that ideas and points of view are mediated from particular perspectives, varying somehow from news outlets (Fowler, 1991).

Therefore, according to Fairclough (1995), the issues of representations, identities and relations, already presented on Chapter 2 of this study, are crucial to the analysis of the ideological work of media language, which constructs particular ways of representing the world, of building social identities and relations. In any representation of a news item, the writer/reporter has to decide what to include and to exclude, what to foreground and background. And to guide the analysis of such news items, Fairclough (1995, p.4) introduces three sets of questions:

- Representations - How is the world (events, relationships, etc.) represented?
- Identities – What identities are set up for those (reporters, audiences, etc.) involved in the programme or story?
- Relations – What relationships (e.g. reporter-audience, expert-audience or politician-audience) are set up for those involved?

He calls attention, in accordance to Fowler (ibid), to the fact that ideology should be not compared to bias or manipulation of the truth. He argues that media discourse should be regarded as a site of complex and often contradictory process, including ideological processes. He explains that:

Media texts function ideologically in social control and representation; but they also operate as cultural commodities in a competitive market, are part of the business of entertaining people, are designed to keep people politically and socially informed, are cultural artifacts in their own right, informed by particular aesthetics; and they are at the same time caught up in – reflecting and contributing to – shifting cultural values and identities (Faiclough, 1995, p.47).

Therefore, we can assume that the media's ideological power is not cohesive, but instead works naturalized as cultural commodities capable of influencing its readers' value positions and identities in the world. Also, the potential effect of the media's ideological power comes not from individual, isolated texts, but from accumulated ones, operating in conjunction with other relevant texts encountered by the reader, as well as in conjunction with the reader's own background and experiences that influence their value-judgments and world views. What is significant is that the material carried out by the texts is usually taken as face value by the reader, as common sense assumptions, and it presents itself as a factual, impartial and objective report (White, 2009).

However, Fowler (ibid) argues that readers are not entirely powerless, since they have to decode the values and beliefs represented in a news report. By living in a society that shapes the media discourse, the reader is equipped with the necessary understanding of the significance of the various journalistic codes employed by the media. "Unconsciously, readers 'read in' – a more active process than 'reading off' – the ideology which shapes the newspaper's representation of reality" (ibid, p.91). Therefore, values that are already established by society are reproduced in this discursive interaction between media text and reader.

3.2 Practices of Media Discourse

According to Fairclough (1995), one important dimension of communication in the mass media is the institutional practices associated with the production and consumption of media texts. The production of a text takes a collective effort of journalists, producers, and various categories of editorial and technological staff. Consequently, the processes of text production are accomplished through a set of institutional routines, from collecting and selecting the sources materials to transforming and editing them into the news report format.

In a moderate-sized newsroom, a single story may be worked on by an average of eight people including the journalist's first draft, and the subsequent changes made by the chief reporter, the news editor, the editor, the chief sub-editor, a page sub-editor, a copy sub-editor, or the desk sub-editor; all of these changes corresponding to about eight version of the same story. Additionally, since the majority of news items are produced by news agencies, these news items go through the same process in each newsroom, before appearing in a newspaper or news broadcast. Therefore, news items usually have a heavily embedded and layered character, in the sense that earlier versions are embedded within later versions (Bell as cited in Fairclough, 1995).

At each stage in the construction a story, earlier versions are transformed and recontextualized in ways that correspond to the concerns, priorities and goals of the current stage. Also, the sources which the story of the communicative event is based upon, such as interviews, political speeches, press releases, official documents and so forth, are transformed, recontextualized and embedded in the final text. "The production of media texts can thus be seen as a series of transformations across a chain of communicative events which links source events in the public domain to the private domain consumption of media texts" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 49).

In relation to sources, it is remarkable how journalists rely on a "tightly delimited set of official and otherwise legitimized sources which are systematically drawn upon, through a network of contacts and procedures, as sources of facts and to substantiate other facts" (Tuchman as cited in Fairclough 1995, p.49). These include organizations considered as legitimate, such as

government sources, the police, political parties, prominent scientists, scholars and so on. On the other hand, people and organizations that are not considered official are excluded or less referred to as sources. The issue of sources and discourse representation is discussed in detail in the section that follows.

3.3 Discourse Representation in News Reports

Texts are inheritably intertextual, as they are constituted by elements of other texts. “These words of others carry with them their own expressions, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework and reaccentuate.” (Bakhtin as cited in Fairclough, 1992).

Discourse Representation is a form of intertextuality, in which parts of other texts are incorporated into a text by means of quotation marks and reporting clauses. Discourse representation is a major part in the construction of a news text, as it represents what is newsworthy, its sources and what ordinary people said. Therefore a very high proportion of media output in news consists of the mediation of the speech or writing of prominent people of various domains of public life. A single media text usually weaves together representations of the discourse - (voices) - of a number of people (Fairclough, 1995). Consequently, discourse representation is an important element for both the language of texts and for the social practice dimension (Fairclough, 1992).

In discourse representation, there is a well-defined distinction between direct and indirect speech representation. Both consist of a reporting clause followed by a representation of discourse. In direct discourse, there is a clear boundary between the authorial voice and the represented voice, since it usually incorporates the exact words of the source being reported by means of quotation marks. Direct quote is a device used by the media to give a “semblance of facticity and authenticity, which is a powerful ideological tool to manipulate readers’ perception and interpretation of people and events” (as cited in Simpson and Mayr, 2010). In indirect discourse, the boundary between the voices is less demarcated, the represented discourse is summarized rather than quoted, and the words of the source may appear embedded in those of the authorial voice (Fairclough, 1992).

The media discourse usually portrays the idea of balance between the represented voices, which creates the impression of objectivity, but in reality the web of voices represented in a news discourse is usually never balanced nor equitable. Fairclough (1995, p.81) describes how positioning in a news report works: “Some voices are given prominence, and some are marginalized. Some are used to frame others. Some are legitimized by being taken up in a newsreader’s or reporter’s voice, others are not”.

All this points to the fact that news reports employ a myriad of voices in order to create a sense of objectivity and impartiality, by exposing different sides on the social and political issues of the topic or subject reported. But these voices are subjected to social control by the use of mechanisms for ordering them. Sentence connectors and conjunctions, for example, can be markers for the ordering of voices and their shifts. Also, the analysis of frames on a reporting voice gives an insight into how the surrounding features can influence the audience interpretation of that particular voice. “Framing can be blatantly manipulative”⁶ (Fairclough 1995, p.84).

One important distinction in discourse representation is the difference between the discourses attributed to sources through quotations and summaries, and the unattributed discourses, which are drawn up by the reporter’s voice. Hence Fairclough (1995) raises the question of where the reporter voice comes from, because one can see the same discourses being employed by reporters and official voices. There is a continuous interchange between the media and official sources. The media continually takes up the discourse of its official sources, and they in turn issue press releases and statements to fit the discourses favored by the media. The author (ibid) points to the fact that in some reports the discourses of preferred sources is often foregrounded and greatly present, while the discourses of oppositional sources are usually backgrounded or excluded entirely. Fairclough (ibid) explains that the analysis of news reports should be concerned with both the selections made between these discourses, and the ways in which they are articulated together, which between them allows the analyst to describe the range of discourse practice in the coverage of these issues.

⁶ More details in section 2.3.2 of Chapter 2

3.3.1 Power and Accessed Voices

Who holds power in a particular article? Fairclough (1989) raises this question since the journalist usually works under editorial control, and the editor in turn follows the newspaper premises as an institution. But power in news discourse also comes from outside the institutional collective, since the media systematically transmits someone else's representation: that of its sources. The people and organizations the media uses as sources in news reporting do not equally represent all social groupings in society. Although the media tries to convey a balance of sources and perspectives, it is clear that who gets interviewed and who gets their viewpoints represented is highly selective in favor of the existing power holders, i.e. the so-called official sources. Fairclough (1989, p.51) assumes that "one can see media power relations, as relations of a mediated sort, between power-holders and the mass of the population." And this mediated power is also a hidden one, because it appears implicitly rather than explicitly in the media practices. In some news reports, it is a common feature that the wordings and interpretations of the power-holders appear as those of the newspaper. And thus power is exercised as disguised, a way to constrain content to favor some wordings and interpretations, while excluding others.

The term 'access' is used to refer to the media use of sources. It constitutes a reciprocal relationship between official sources and the media. These sources routinely deliver their statements and in turn are granted access to media outlets to convey their views. On the other hand, ordinary people are voided of this relationship. Thus, the political effect of this division between the accessed and unaccessed voices is an imbalance in the representation of the privileged and the unprivileged, resulting in the legitimization of the views and status quo of the official authorities and the powerful (Fowler, 1991).

According to Fowler (ibid, p.50), the media concentration on selected accessed voices results in the linguistic consequence of partiality, "not only in *what* assertions and attitudes are reported – a matter of content- but also in *how* they are reported – a matter of form and style, and therefore, I would claim, of ideological perspective". Consequently, specific powerful institutions are frequently accessed, whereas other less influential people and organizations are neglected. These powerful voices provide the media news with modes of

discourse that reflect the attitudes of the elite, and so the media adopts this language for their own and sets to reproduce this discourse. These adopted discourses, with their particular linguistic features and ideological structuring, literally construct the news as it is written about.

3.4 Evaluative Keys and Stance in Media Discourse: Reporter Voice Texts

In journalistic discourse, we can recognize rhetorical devices which relate to objectivity and subjectivity in news texts. In news report subjective texts or ‘writer voice’, at least some of the author’s value judgments are explicitly revealed in the language. The contrary is observed in objective texts or ‘reporter voice’, in which value judgments are backgrounded or naturalized, or attributed to external sources/voices. The difference between describing an event objectively or subjectively has to do with the degree of the author’s commitment to the truth-value of what he is reporting. And so it deals with levels of certainty about the degree to which reporters use language to represent reality (a particular event). Therefore, an absolute degree of certainty that their expressions reflect reality marks the complete absence of authorial reference, whereas lower degrees involve language structures that refer explicitly to the author as an observer (Iedema et al., 1994).

According to Iedema et al. (ibid), impartiality and factuality do not accurately mirror reality, but reflect the success in a text to present its underlying set of value judgments and ideologically informed responses as natural and normal, as fact rather than opinion, as knowledge rather than belief. Objectivity is more of a rhetorical effect created through language rather than a question of being true to nature.

Following the work in Iedema et al. (ibid), Martin & White (2005) recognize in media texts certain conventionalized styles of evaluative positioning which can be related to particular authorial identities. These evaluative styles, especially in the broadsheet media, operate with particular compositional conventions that strongly condition the writing style employed by authors. These styles can be considered, through the SFL point of view, as linguistic phenomena which reflect particular social settings and choices in meaning making

possibilities. Martin & White (ibid) name these contextually conditioned configurations of linguistic options as ‘registers’ or ‘keys’ (the latter in terms of the Appraisal system).

The authors (ibid) identify, within journalistic discourse, three evaluative ‘keys’ operating at its register level. They label these ‘keys’ as ‘reporter voice’, ‘corresponded voice’ and ‘commentator voice’ (these last two labels fall into the category of ‘writer voice’). Such ‘keys’ can be observed in print media news reports, in which a taxonomy of journalistic styles seems to operate. This taxonomy is divided into labels such as ‘news’, ‘analysis’, ‘opinion’ and ‘comment’, with each label attached to either individual news items or to divided-off sections within the newspaper. Although these labels are not consistent with linguistic features, the authors argue that it is possible, nevertheless, to relate them in an informal way to regularities in the use that journalistic texts make of evaluative resources. Within ‘key’, the authors (ibid) highlight more delicate distinctions among journalistic voices, and they refer to these sub-keys as ‘stance’. Therefore ‘stance’ explores particular patterns of use of evaluative resources, associated with particular rhetorical objectives and evaluative positionings of these voices. In the analysis section of this study, the focus is on ‘stance’ in ‘reporter voice’ texts and its evaluative instantiations.

News reports that employ ‘reporter voice’ are a common feature of print and online newspapers. This type of text conveys what is prototypically considered as news events, i.e. accidents, natural disasters, crimes, election results, survey results, acts of warfare, medical breakthroughs and so on. It is through this type of news reports that journalist institutions assert the impartiality and factuality of their discourse (White, 2005).

‘Reporter voice’ texts usually background or obscure the subjective, mediating role of the journalist, and so they are considered balanced and free of any of the author’s own opinions and perspectives. News reports that employ ‘reporter voice’ operate with significant constraints on the use of a range of evaluative meanings. And thus the journalistic author usually “does not include explicit references to his/her own emotional response, does not command or issue directives and does not explicitly pass judgment on the behavior of human participants, confining any such assessment to material attributed to outside sources” (White, 2009, p.31-32).

Attribution⁷ is a recurring evaluative rhetorical device employed by ‘reporter voice’. As we have already seen in previous sections of this chapter, the journalistic author, through various forms of directly and indirectly reported speech, manages the attribution of observations and value positions of its sources. This routine use of quotations and/or indirect speech to introduce all types of opinions, accusations, criticism, demands, and belligerent assertions on the part of politicians, experts, interested parties, community leaders, victims, witnesses and so on has important rhetorical effects, and is widely used by the media to convey a sense of neutrality and objectivity (White, 2006).

This commonly used journalistic method excuses the author of any responsibility for the evaluative material, since it has been attributed to some external source. But White (2006) emphasizes that the very act of selecting a source and a particular sub-selection of their words in the report carries with it evaluative and ultimately ideological effects. This procedure signals to the audience that the selected point of view is newsworthy and relevant.

The attributed materials of the quoted sources are often explicitly attitudinal and are conveyed as opinions, assessments, directives and/or recommendations. According to White (2009), in some texts, it is possible to identify instances where the writer’s attitudinal positioning (either inscribed or evoked) is supported by the words/value-judgments of the referred/quoted sources. He (ibid) also identifies instances where the writer chooses to quote various attitudinal assessments of the same point of view from one or more sources, which are not balanced or answered by any counter viewpoints. Thus, the writer’s own words can be seen in some texts as laying the groundwork for attitudinal positions that are more overtly and forthrightly advanced by the attributed material. All these mechanisms act as cues to reveal the authorial positioning, and they will be explored in more detail in the analysis chapter of this study.

Therefore, the potential ideological effect of ‘reporter voice’ texts is one in which the compliant reader’s viewpoint is naturalized, confirmed as a value position arising inevitably from observations of relevant current issues. It is possible as well that texts of this type might have the potential to influence the

⁷ More detail in section 2.3.2.2 of Chapter 2

reader's understanding and attitudes when the issue/event being covered is new to them and outside the scope of their past experiences (White, 2009).

4. Methodology

The aim of this study is to deconstruct the sense of objectivity and impartiality conveyed by media texts, as a means to reveal authorial positioning and to ultimately uncover the ideologies and power relations enacted in a selected corpus of news texts. For that, I situate my analysis on the qualitative linguistic approach to media texts, within CDA and the Appraisal system, which were discussed on Chapter Two.

Qualitative research encompasses an overarching category covering a wide range of approaches and methods found within different research disciplines; it is mainly a naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena such as actions, beliefs, values, decisions and so on, within their social reality. Therefore, it aims at providing an in-depth and interpretative understanding of the social world (Snape & Spencer, 2000).

The paradigm that guides this study is the critical perspective (Richards, 2003), which involves a range of positions that rejects that the social construction of reality is essentially unproblematic, and that is possible to adopt a neutral position with regard to its representation (Kincheloe & MacLaren as cited in Richards, 2003). The critical perspective seeks to uncover the underlying and taken for granted assumptions to expose the power relationships that permeate social structures and interactions, and to ultimately open up the possibility of change. Thus, the critical paradigm pursues not only understanding, but also change by means of transformative and emancipatory research processes (Richards, 2003).

The methods employed in this research are Documentary Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis. I chose to carry out a mixed method approach, since each one brings a particular kind of insight to this study (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Documentary Analysis involves the study of existing documents, in this case

media texts, either to understand their substantive content or to illuminate deeper meanings which may be revealed by their style or coverage (Ritchie, 2003).

The CDA approach, with its variety of grammatical tools, is suitable, according to Fairclough (1995), to the linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis of media texts, since it pays attention to the linguistic detail, to the form and texture of a text. Wodak & Bush (2004) also suggest employing CDA, since it combines content analysis with text-linguistic and discourse analytical approaches.

According to Wodak & Meyer (2009), CDA does not constitute a well-defined empirical method, but rather a bulk of approaches with theoretical similarities and research question of a specific kind. The authors (ibid) place CDA methodology in the hermeneutic, rather than in the analytical-deductive tradition. Different from other approaches of text and discourse analysis (such as Content Analysis, Grounded Theory and Conversation Analysis), CDA strongly relies on linguistic categories. This does not mean that topics and contents do not play a role at all, Wodak & Meyer (ibid) note, but the core operationalizations depend on concepts such as actors, mode, time, tense, argumentation and so on. They (ibid) also point that the complete list of linguistic devices for CDA cannot be given, because their selection depends mainly on specific research questions.

4.1 Data Selection and Analysis Approach

The corpus of this study is constituted of naturally occurring data (Snape & Spencer, 2003) collected from three American newspapers: The Washington Post, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. The news reports that constitute the corpus of this study are three signed news texts, published on December 3, 2013, on the online version of the above newspapers. They report on the performance of U.S. students on the 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey. They are identified as Text 1: *U.S students lag around average on international science, math and reading test*; Text 2: *American 15-year-olds lag, mainly in Math, on International Standardized Tests*; and Text 3: *U.S. High-School Students Slip in Global Rankings*.

The analysis in this study involves applying the CDA approach, more specifically Fairclough's three dimensional model of discourse to analyze the three aforementioned media texts. In order to select the appropriate and relevant

linguistic categories to conduct the analysis, I chose to work with the analytical tools offered by the Appraisal system for analyzing intersubjective stance.

Martin (2004, p.323) describes the Appraisal system as an attempt to balance close linguistic analysis with the analysis of social discourses; “it involves shunting back and forth between linguistic and social categories, exploring how one realizes the other”. Thus, the focus of this study is on stance in ‘reporter voice’, more precisely on instances of both the author’s and attributed voices’ evaluative positions/meanings.

4.2 Conceptual Framework

The first step of the conceptual framework of this study was to identify, in the selected texts, ideological themes that permeate all three of them. The next step consisted in the selection of categories, based on the Appraisal system, in which relevant instances of values of engagement, attitude and gradation were recorded to reveal dialogical and attitudinal positionings. These selected categories signal the rhetorical resources that explicitly or implicitly convey these ideological themes, either by the writers or the sources. The categories are as follows:

1. *Framers*: What type of semantic framing is ascribed to particular sources, in order to reveal heteroglossic expansion or contraction, as a means to reveal the authorial voice engagement to the sources and their value positions.
2. *Concessive resources* (connectives/conjunctives/connectors) that appear in the text as markers for dialogic contraction of voices, as well as reader’s expectations.
3. The relevant instances of *Attitude* (Affect, Judgment and Appreciation) and *Gradation* (Force and Focus) conveyed by the authorial voice and the attributed voices that act as rhetorical mechanisms that instantiate the ideological themes.

These categories intend to shed some light on authorial positionings, as a means to deconstruct and denaturalize the sense of objectivity and impartiality of

the type of news report analyzed, and to eventually uncover the power forces at play in the selected material.

4.3 Contextual Framework

This section presents the newspapers in which the selected news reports appear. It also introduces the PISA survey and describes the key findings of the OECD report on the U.S. students' performance on the 2012 PISA survey.

4.3.1 The Newspapers

This section briefly describes the selected newspapers for this study. It gives a general description of the editorial line and subjects covered by them.

The Wall Street Journal is an international daily newspaper published in New York City, which primarily covers American economic and international business topics, as well as financial news and issues. The newspaper is the largest in the United States by circulation.

Published in New York City, the daily newspaper The New York Times print version is the largest local metropolitan newspaper in the United States and the third-largest newspaper overall. The paper's motto, "All the News That's Fit to Print", appears in the upper left-hand corner of the front page. The newspaper covers a variety of topics from news business and politics, to sports, arts, styles and other features organized into sections.

Once considered one of the most important newspapers of national circulation, The Washington Post has recently lost most of its structure, but remains the most widely circulated daily newspaper published in Washington, D.C. The newspaper has a particular emphasis on national politics, focusing on the political reporting of the White House, the Congress and other aspects/sectors of the U.S. government (Wikipedia, 2014).

4.3.2 The OECD and PISA Survey

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international economic organization of 34 countries founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. It is a forum of countries committed to democracy and the market economy, providing a platform to compare policy experiences, seeking answers to common problems, identify good practices and coordinate domestic and international policies of its members (Wikipedia, 2014).

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the OECD is a triennial international survey that tests the reading, science and mathematics knowledge and skills of 15-16 years old students worldwide. Each year of assessment focuses on a subject, and the 2012-year was mathematics. Around 510,000 students in 65 economies participated in the PISA 2012, representing about 28 million of 15-16 years old students worldwide.

The PISA survey does not directly relates to the schools' curriculum, it accesses to what extent students can apply their acquired knowledge and skills to real life situations near or at the end of their required education, in order to be prepared to function in society. Information is also collected through background questionnaires that provide additional material and social context to analysts interpreting the results. The test takes about 2 hours and it consists of a combination of open-ended and multiple-choice questions organized in groups based on an episode of real life situation. Students take different combinations of different tests. They and their school principals also answer questionnaires to provide information about the students' backgrounds, schools and learning experiences and about the broader school system and learning environment.

Since PISA is a triennial survey, it provides the countries and economies participating in the test the opportunity to evaluate the effect of educational policy decisions by comparing the student's performance over the years.

The OECD key findings of The United States' result on the 2012 PISA survey show that, among the 34 OECD countries, the United States performed below average in mathematics. Performance in reading and science are both close to the OECD average. There has been no significant change in these performances over time. Mathematics scores for the top-performer, Shanghai-China, indicate a

performance that is the equivalent of over two years of formal schooling ahead of those observed in Massachusetts, a strong-performing U.S. state.

Just over one-quarter (26%) of 15-year-olds in the United States did not reach the PISA baseline Level 2 of mathematics proficiency, at which students begin to demonstrate the skills that will enable them to participate effectively and productively in life. This percentage is higher than the OECD average of 23% and has remained unchanged since 2003. By contrast, in Hong Kong-China, Korea, Shanghai-China and Singapore, 10% of students or fewer are poor performers in mathematics.

At the other end of the performance scale, the United States also has a below-average share of top performers in mathematics. These students can develop and work with models for complex situations, and work strategically using broad, well-developed thinking and reasoning skills. Only 2% of students in the United States reach the highest level (Level 6) of performance in mathematics, compared with an OECD average of 3% and 31% of students in Shanghai-China. The proportions of top performers in reading and science in the United States are both around the OECD average. An alignment study between the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and PISA suggests that a successful implementation of the Common Core Standards would yield significant performance gains also in PISA.

While the U.S. spends more per student than most countries, this does not translate into better performance. Socioeconomic background has a significant impact on student performance in the United States, with some 15% of the variation in student performance explained by this, similar to the OECD average. Although this impact has weakened over time, disadvantaged students show less engagement, drive, motivation and self-beliefs.

Students in the U.S. are largely satisfied with their school and view teacher-student relations positively. But they do not report strong motivation towards learning mathematics: only 50% students agreed that they are interested in learning mathematics, slightly below the OECD average of 53% (OECD homepage).

5. Analyses and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the selected news reports on the U.S. Students' performance on the 2012 PISA survey.

5.1 Introduction

The analysis part of this study is informed by Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of discourse analysis. In the next section, we find the corpus of the study. I start the analysis by acknowledging in this introductory section three ideological themes that permeate all three news reports. These ideological themes will guide us throughout the analysis. They are as follows:

- *Ideological theme 1:* The U.S. poor results on the PISA exam show that the country has become average, losing its hegemony in the world.
- *Ideological theme 2:* The PISA results and recommendations have sparked an education policy debate in the country.
- *Ideological theme 3:* Some sectors of society tend to disregard the PISA survey findings, since they argue that it cannot properly measure the quality of education in the country and its consequences.

The ideological themes act to set the overall situational and cultural context in which these texts were produced. They function as a means to start exploring the "social and cultural going-ons" (Fairclough, 1995) behind the PISA news reports. Therefore, these ideological themes can be understood as the underlying ideologies taken as common-sense assumptions conveyed by the discourse orientations of the three influential newspapers that were chosen for the corpus of this study.

In section 5.3, the focus of the analysis is on the discursive practice dimension, in which the intertextual aspect of the texts is explored. The intertextuality aspect of these news reports is crucial to their communicative and rhetorical purpose, which is achieved by the discourses of its multiple voices. Therefore, I believe this is a suitable way to start our critical analysis since, as

already mentioned in this study, intertextual analysis “bridges the gap between text and language on one hand and society and culture on the other” (Fairclough, 1995, p.60).

Next follows the textual dimension analysis, in which a close reading of the texts, divided into the three ideological themes, is conducted using the analytical tools of the Appraisal system.

Finally, I discuss how meanings unfold in the texts to position both author and audience in relation to these ideological themes, as I attempt to uncover the power relations that are enacted in the news reports.

5.2 The Corpus

In this section the three news reports on the 2012 PISA survey are presented. The paragraphs of each text are numbered for easy identification in the following sections of the analysis. For the purpose of analysis, some passages of the texts will be repeated in the next sections to exemplify the argumentations.

Text 1

U.S. students lag around average on international science, math and reading test

By Lyndsey Layton, December 3, 2013 – Washington Post

[1] Scores in math, reading and science posted by 15-year-olds in the United States were flat while their counterparts elsewhere — particularly in Shanghai, Singapore and other Asian provinces or countries — soared, according to the results of a well-regarded international exam released Tuesday.

[2] While U.S. teenagers were average in reading and science, their scores were below average in math, compared to 64 other countries and economies that participated in the 2012 Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA. That pattern has not changed much since the PISA test was first given in 2000.

[3] “Our scores are stagnant. We’re not seeing any improvement for our 15-year-olds,” said Jack Buckley, commissioner at the National Center for Education Statistics, the research arm of the Education Department. “But our ranking is slipping because a lot of these other countries are improving.”

[4] Education Secretary Arne Duncan called the scores a “brutal truth” that “must serve as a wake-up call” for the country.

[5] The test scores offer fresh evidence for those who argue that the United States is losing ground to global competitors and others who say a decade’s worth of school reform has done little to improve educational outcomes.

[6] “While the intentions may have been good, a decade of top-down, test-based schooling created by No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top — focused on hyper-testing students, sanctioning teachers and closing schools — has failed to improve the quality of American public education,” said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers.

[7] Some observers, including education historian Diane Ravitch, noted that American students have never been top performers on international tests dating back to the 1960s, but that has not prevented the country from becoming one of the most successful and innovative in the world. Ravitch accused Duncan of trying to “whip up a national hysteria” over the PISA scores.

[8] Shanghai dominated the PISA exam, taking the top slot in all three subjects. The Chinese province catapulted to the top after focusing on teacher preparation and investing in its most challenging classrooms, among other things.

[9] Germany, Poland and Italy were among several countries that made significant improvements in scores while Finland, which had been a top scorer in the past several exams, recorded a drop.

[10] Overall, 40 of the 65 countries and economies made some progress, said Andreas Schleicher, deputy director for education and skills at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. “In general, we’ve seen remarkable progress in education over the decade in the industrialized

world,” he said.

[11] China, the world’s most populous country and a fast-growing economy, did not participate in PISA, although several of its provinces did.

[12] The test, administered every three years by the OECD, is designed to measure whether students can apply what they’ve learned in school to real-life problems. Approximately 510,000 15-year-olds in public and private schools took the paper-and-pencil exam in the fall of 2012.

[13] On the math portion, 29 countries tested better than the United States. Aside from the Asia powerhouses of Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei, Korea and Japan, the United States was outscored by European countries including Latvia, Britain, Poland, France, Germany and Slovenia.

[14] In science, 22 countries posted better results than the United States, including Vietnam, Canada and Poland. In reading, 19 countries had higher scores than U.S. students, including Estonia and Liechtenstein.

[15] Three states — Massachusetts, Connecticut and Florida — had students take the test to see how they compared internationally.

[16] Students in Massachusetts and Connecticut scored above both the national and PISA average in math, while Florida scored below those averages. Massachusetts also beat the U.S. and OECD averages in science while Connecticut scored above the U.S. average and below the OECD average. Florida scored below both the U.S. average and OECD average in science. In reading, Massachusetts and Connecticut scored above the U.S. and OECD averages while Florida teenagers scored about the same as the U.S. and OECD average.

[17] Not only did the United States score below average in math, it had fewer top performers. These are students who can develop “models for complex situations, and work strategically using broad, well- developed thinking and reasoning skills,” according to the OECD. While just 2 percent of U.S. teenagers reached that level in math, 31 percent of Shanghai students achieved it. The OECD average was 3 percent.

[18] Even the top-performing U.S. state — Massachusetts — was outperformed by Shanghai. In math, 19 percent of Massachusetts students who took the exam placed in the top two levels of proficiency, while 55 percent of students in Shanghai reached those tiers. That difference is equivalent to more than two additional years of formal schooling, the OECD said.

[19] At the other end of the spectrum, about 25 percent of U.S. students tested in the lowest levels of math proficiency — more than the OECD average. That statistic has not changed since 2003.

[20] U.S. students are particularly weak in performing math tasks with higher cognitive demands, such as taking real-world situations and translating them into mathematical terms, according to the OECD report.

[21] Despite their tepid math scores, U.S. teenagers were more confident about their math skills than their international counterparts, the report found.

[22] Some observers say the United States does not perform well in international competitions because it is a large, diverse country, with the highest child poverty rate among industrialized countries.

[23] But countries like Vietnam, where 79 percent of students are economically disadvantaged, outscored U.S. students in math.

[24] “So it’s not demography itself. Those demographics are a factor, not the only factor,” Buckley said.

[25] A weak curriculum could be the culprit, the report suggested.

[26] “Perhaps the application problems that most students encounter today are the worst of all worlds: fake applications that strive to make the mathematics curriculum more palatable, yet do no justice either to modeling or to the pure mathematics involved,” the OECD said. Providing students with better opportunities to learn will help them develop skills to make frequent and productive use of math in their work and daily life, it said

[27] The new Common Core academic standards in math and reading, which

have been fully adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia, could help pull up the nation's PISA scores, according to the OECD. While the standards are now being implemented in most U.S. classrooms, there has been growing political opposition from the right, left and center.

[28] One clear finding from the PISA test was the impact of preschool education. Across countries, students who were enrolled in preschool consistently performed better on the test, Schleicher said.

[29] Dennis Van Roekel, president of the National Education Association, said the country should end divisive debates about policies and adopt methods that are working in top-scoring nations. "We need to say we know what works, take it out of the political arena and do what's right for kids," he said.

[30] Shocked by its moderate PISA results in 2000, Germany adopted national education standards and has taken steps to improve teacher education and establish a common test for final high school exams in all 16 German states. Germany's 2012 PISA scores improved in math, reading and science.

[31] The United States should also take several actions simultaneously, Duncan said. The country must "invest in early education, raise academic standards, make college affordable, and do more to recruit and retain top-notch educators," he said.

[32] Buckley cautioned against using the PISA results to draw conclusions about whether education policies are working.

[33] "People like to take international results like this and focus on high performers and pick out areas of policy that support the policies that they support," he said. "I never expect tests like these to tell us what works in education. That's like taking a thermometer to explain why it's cold outside."

Text 2:

American 15-Year-Olds Lag, Mainly in Math, on International Standardized Tests

By Motoko Rich, December 3, 2013 – The New York Times

[1] Fifteen-year-olds in the United States score in the middle of the developed world in reading and science while lagging in math, according to international standardized test results being released on Tuesday.

[2] While the performance of American students who took the exams last year differed little from the performance of those tested in 2009, the last time the exams were administered, several comparable countries — including Ireland and Poland — pulled ahead this time.

[3] As in previous years, the scores of students in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and South Korea put those school systems at the top of the rankings for math, science and reading. Finland, a darling of educators, slid in all subjects but continued to outperform the averages, and the United States.

[4] The Program for International Student Assessment, commonly known as PISA, was administered to 15-year-olds in 65 countries and school systems by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a Paris-based group that includes the world's wealthiest nations. Just over 6,100 American students took the exams.

[5] In the midst of increasingly polarized discussions about public education, the scores set off a familiar round of hand-wringing, blaming and credit-taking.

[6] “The United States’ standings haven’t improved dramatically because we as a nation haven’t addressed the main cause of our mediocre PISA performance — the effects of poverty on students,” Dennis Van Roekel, president of the National Education Association, the nation’s largest teachers union, said in a statement.

[7] Some scholars warned that the lagging performance of American students

would eventually lead to economic torpor. “Our economy has still been strong because we have a very good economic system that is able to overcome the deficiencies of our education system,” said Eric A. Hanushek, an economist at Stanford University. “But increasingly, we have to rely on the skills of our work force, and if we don’t improve that, we’re going to be slipping.”

[8] The United States’ underperformance was particularly striking in math, where 29 countries or education systems had higher test scores. In science, students in 22 countries did better than Americans, and in reading, 19 countries.

[9] The results painted a slightly different picture from tests administered to fourth and eighth graders in 2011 through the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. Those results indicated that the United States was about on par with international averages.

[10] But both exams showed that the percentage of students who scored at the highest levels in math and science was much greater in several Asian and European countries.

[11] In the United States, just 9 percent of 15-year-olds scored in the top two levels of proficiency in math, compared with an average of 13 percent among industrialized nations and as high as 55 percent in Shanghai, 40 percent in Singapore, and 17 percent in Germany and Poland.

[12] Jack Buckley, the commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, noted that American students from families with incomes in the highest quartile did not perform as well as students with similar backgrounds in other countries.

[13] Richard Rothstein, a research associate at the liberal Economic Policy Institute and a fellow at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law, said he put little stock in the PISA results. He said educators and academics should “stop hyperventilating” about international test rankings, particularly given that students are already graduating from college at higher rates than can be absorbed by the labor market.

[14] Others criticized recent efforts to reform public education by using

measures like student test scores to evaluate teachers. Such policies “contribute to an environment in which young people who are making decisions as to whether they can go to work at a place like Google or the school down the street simply won’t consider going into teaching,” said Marc S. Tucker, president of the National Center on Education and the Economy, a nonprofit think tank.

[15] An increasingly vocal group of parents, teachers, union leaders and others have also objected to a focus on standardized tests at the expense of values like creativity.

[16] “The question is, can we walk and chew gum at the same time?” said Michael J. Petrilli, executive vice president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a conservative education policy group. “There’s no reason why we can’t keep the creativity that we value while also teaching kids how to do math better.”

Text 3

U.S. High-School Students Slip in Global Rankings

By Stephanie Banchemo, December 3, 2013 – The Wall Street Journal

[1] U.S. 15-year-olds made no progress on recent international achievement exams and fell further in the rankings, reviving a debate about America's ability to compete in a global economy

[2] The results from the 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which are being released on Tuesday, show that teenagers in the U.S. slipped from 25th to 31st in math since 2009; from 20th to 24th in science; and from 11th to 21st in reading, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, which gathers and analyzes the data in the U.S.

[3] The PISA is administered every three years by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. A representative sample of about 510,000 students took the exam in 65 countries and locales, representing 80% of the world economy.

[4] U.S. scores have been basically flat since the exams were first given in the

early 2000s. They hover at the average for countries in the OECD except in math, where American students are behind the curve. Meanwhile, some areas—Poland and Ireland, for example—improved and moved ahead of the U.S., while the Chinese city of Shanghai, Singapore and Japan posted significantly higher scores.

[5] The stagnant U.S. results are certain to spark more hand-wringing by politicians, business leaders and policy makers concerned that American students are not keeping pace with counterparts in other countries.

[6] They are also likely to fuel the debate over which policy fixes could be instituted to boost results. Many U.S. schools already have undergone decades of policy overhauls, including grading teachers on student test scores, expanding school-choice options and instituting more rigorous math and reading standards.

[7] U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan called the results a "picture of educational stagnation" and said it was at "odds with our aspiration to have the best-educated, most competitive work force in the world."

[8] But Dennis Van Roekel, president of the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers union, said the data show the U.S. has been going down the "wrong path," and said high-scoring countries don't use student test scores to pay and fire teachers or to rate and punish schools. "There is a road map out there," he said. "But we are not following it."

[9] In the U.S., about 6,000 randomly selected students from 161 public and private schools participated. For the first time this year, Florida, Connecticut and Massachusetts tested enough students to get state-level data. The two Northeastern states equaled or bettered the OECD averages on all exams, while Florida fell below in math and science. Other areas that aren't countries, such as Shanghai, tested enough students to have individual rankings.

[10] Unlike many other standardized exams that assess students' knowledge, PISA measures whether students can apply that knowledge to real-life problems.

[11] The exams are scored on a 0-to-1,000 point scale. U.S. teenagers scored

497 in science and 498 in reading, tying the OECD averages. They scored 481 in math, below the OECD average of 494. The U.S. positions in the international rankings include numerous statistical ties.

[12] Experts caution against reading too much into the rankings without a deeper understanding of the differences in socioeconomic and racial composition among countries. The U.S., for example, has more children living in poverty than do many other industrialized countries, and 15% of the variance in test scores can be explained by socioeconomic status, according to the OECD analysis.

[13] The analysis found a strong correlation between higher test scores and students' school attendance and punctuality. But it found a low connection between class size and test scores.

[14] Martin Carnoy, a professor at Stanford University's Graduate School of Education who has studied PISA results, said policy makers often draw "oversimplified conclusions" from international tests. "These results don't tell anything about the quality of teaching or the quality of the curriculum in countries," he said.

[15] For the last few years, many U.S. educators and policy makers have looked to Finland, noting its high test scores and laser-like focus on attracting and retaining the best teachers. Although Finland still posts high scores, they have slid in the past few years.

[16] Poland, on the other hand, has seen sharp improvement. The only European country to have avoided the recession, Poland undertook a host of education overhauls in 1999, including delaying by one year the system that places students into academic or vocational tracks, and crafting better systems to identify struggling students and get them help.

[17] "Poland launched a massive set of reforms and, while we cannot say for sure they caused the improvement, they certainly are...a sort of plausible explanation," said Andreas Schleicher, deputy director for education and skills at the OECD.

[18] In Massachusetts, educators and policy makers credit the good showing,

in part, to a 1993 effort that boosted spending and ushered in rigorous standards and achievement tests that students have to pass to graduate.

[19] Andrew Vega, an eighth-grade teacher at Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School in Boston, said that when he moved from California, he "was completely blown away by what we ask students to do." He said the state exams are so rigorous "the teaching quality also has to be higher-quality." He said he focuses on teaching students how to think critically.

[20] "My job is: No matter where you go, you're going to do well."

5.3 Intertextuality - Sources and discourses brought by the PISA news reports: an overview and discussion

The Pisa news reports weave together the discourses of several sources. In order to start the intertextual analysis, I provide Table 1 below as a means to identify these sources and their discourses. This table presents the name, social occupation and type of the source, together with their respective discourses and the ideological theme(s) they enact, as well as the text(s) that quotes them. I also present some unattributed sources, whose discourses are brought into the texts by the writers, and that are of equal relevance.

Table 1: PISA news reports: the sources and respective discourses

Source	Discourse
Jack Buckley (Text 1 and Text 2) Commissioner at the National Center for Education Statistics, the research arm of the Education Department	<i>Discourse of the U.S. Government</i> Ideological theme 1 and 3 He analyses the PISA survey data and asserts that the country scores are stagnant, but their rank is slipping because other countries are improving. He believes that child poverty, cultural diversity and demographics are not the only factor for the U.S. poor performance. He notes that American high-income students did not perform as well as students with similar

	background from other countries. But he questions using the scores to evaluate education policies.
Arne Duncan (Text 1 and Text 3) Education Secretary	<i>Discourse of the U.S. Government</i> Ideological theme 1 and 2 He criticizes the student's scores and asserts that the country is losing ground to global competitors. He urges the country to take multiple steps to improve education quality, such as the reforms adopted by the top-performing economies.
Some Observers (unattributed) and Diane Ravitch - Education Historian (Text 1)	<i>Discourse of Scholars and Specialists</i> Ideological theme 3 They notice that American students have never been top performers in international exams dating back from the 1960's. Nevertheless the country has remained the world's leading nation.
OECD Report (Text 1, Text 2 and Text 3)	<i>Discourse of OECD - The PISA survey official source</i> Ideological theme 1 and 2 (Read the details of their report on the U.S. performance and the overall purpose of the exam in section 4.3.2 of chapter 4)
Andreas Schleider (Text 1 and Text 3) Deputy director for education and skills at the OECD	<i>Discourse of the OECD</i> Ideological theme 1 and 2 He states, according to the OECD reports, that all countries have made some progress. He cites the importance of education reforms in the countries that have improved. He notes the importance of pre-school education.

<p>Randi Weingarten (Text 1) President of the American Federation of Teachers</p>	<p><i>Discourse of Teachers</i></p> <p>Ideological theme 2 He criticizes the current education policy stating that, although the intentions have been good, their practices have failed to improve the quality of education.</p>
<p>Dennis Van Roekel (Text 1, Text 2 and Text 3) President of the National Education Association</p>	<p><i>Discourse of Educators</i></p> <p>Ideological theme 2 He observes that the country's mediocre scores are due to the effect of poverty on students. He also states that the country should end divisive debates and adopt policies and methods that are working for top-scoring economies. He says these countries do not use test scores to fire teachers or rate and punish schools.</p>
<p>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (Text 2)</p>	<p><i>Discourse of International Surveys/Organizations</i></p> <p>Ideological theme 1 and 3 The results indicated that U.S students are on par with international averages. But still, Asian and European countries have greater percentage of top-scoring students.</p>
<p><i>Some Scholars</i> (unattributed) and Eric A. Hanusheck - Economist at Stanford University (Text 2)</p>	<p><i>Discourse of Scholars</i></p> <p>Ideological theme 1 They assert that the students' poor performance may lead to economic torpor, but the country still has a strong workforce to overcome the education system deficiencies. Nonetheless, if they don't improve, they are going to lose ground to global competitors.</p>

<p>Richard Rothstein (Text 2)</p> <p>Research Associate at the Liberal Economic Institute and a fellow at the University of California</p>	<p><i>Discourse of Specialists</i></p> <p>Ideological theme 3</p> <p>He states that academics and educators should not rely on the PISA results or any international survey to measure student's performance. The country has more students graduating from college than the labor market can absorb.</p>
<p>Others (unattributed) and Marc S. Tucker</p> <p>- President of the National Center on Education and the Economy</p> <p>(Text 2)</p>	<p><i>Discourse of the Community and Educators</i></p> <p>Ideological theme 2</p> <p><i>Others</i> are critical of the efforts made recently in education reform. The idea is continued by the words of Tucker. He believes that the current education policies are discouraging newly university graduates to consider going into teaching.</p>
<p>Michael J. Petrilli (Text 2)</p> <p>Executive Vice President of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute</p>	<p><i>Discourse of Specialists</i></p> <p>Ideological theme 2 and 3</p> <p>The country should focus on values such as creativity instead of standardized test scores. He asserts that it is possible to improve education while being creative.</p>
<p>Martin Carvoy (Text 3)</p> <p>Professor at Stanford University's Graduate School of Education</p>	<p><i>Discourse of Scholars</i></p> <p>Ideological theme 3</p> <p>He states that policy makers draw oversimplified conclusions from international tests, and the results don't tell anything of value about the quality of teaching and the curriculum adopted in the countries.</p>
<p>Andrew Vega (Text 3)</p> <p>Eight-grade teacher at Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School</p>	<p><i>Discourse of Teachers</i></p> <p>Ideological theme 2</p> <p>He says that the quality of teaching in some states such as California is excellent, the exams are rigorous, but the focus is on teaching students how to think critically.</p>

	He states that teachers need to do a good job no matter where they are teaching.
<i>Some Observers (Text 1)</i> (unattributed)	<i>Discourse of Specialists and Scholars</i> Ideological theme 3 They say the USA does not perform well on international exams since it is a vast territorial country with many sociocultural differences. It also has the highest rate of child poverty among the industrialized countries.
<i>Vocal group of parents, teachers, union leaders and others (Text 2)</i> (unattributed)	<i>Discourse of the U.S. Community</i> Ideological theme 3 They object to a focus on standardized tests on the expense of teaching values such as creativity.
<i>Experts (Text 3)</i> (unattributed)	<i>Discourse of Specialists and Scholars</i> Ideological theme 3 They caution about reading too much into the results without a deeper understanding of the difference in socioeconomics and racial composition among the countries. They cite the U.S. as having the higher percentage of children living in poverty among other industrialized countries.
<i>Educators and policy makers from the state of Massachusetts (Text 3)</i> (unattributed)	<i>Discourse of Educators and Policy Makers</i> Ideological theme 2 They credit the education reforms that took place in the state for their good results in the PISA exam.
<i>Politicians, business leaders and policy makers (Text 3)</i> (unattributed)	<i>Discourse of the U.S. Community</i> Ideological theme 1 They are concerned that the American students are not keeping pace with their international counterparts.

We notice in the table that some prominent voices appear in more than one text, which signals the importance and relevance of their discourse. We can also note that some of the discourses depicted bring forth more than one ideological theme, which demonstrates that these themes are dependent on one another to legitimize the power relations and struggles they enact in the news reports.

In the table, we observe voices conveying discourses that are critical and pessimistic about U.S. student's performance. Some discourses clearly see the need of an urgent change in education policies, while some voices partly or totally disregard international standardized tests. The latter discourse tend to be more conservative, stating that the country should not take into account these scores and their lower ranking to measure its uniqueness as the most creative and competitive nation in the world. But other discourses, mainly of the government, argue that the country should follow the steps of the education reforms that took place in the top-scoring economies. Their discourse seems to be more in tune with a globalized reality, in which it is vital to encourage a greater interaction between cultures and nations. Thus, they argue that the country should be more open to foreign ideas and practices that are making these nations excel as leading economies.

We perceive another proposition present in the discourse of several sources: the issue of child poverty in the U.S., which purports an important dispute that surrounds the education policies debate. We can assume by the sources' assertions that the student's poor results is not only a matter of education reforms, but of wealth distribution as well. But we notice some sources that background this concern stating that U.S. high-income students have also performed poorly on the exam, whereas other countries with greater economical disadvantages have outperformed them.

With this brief interpretation of the discourses depicted in the selected news reports, we can observe intertextuality acting as a rhetorical functionality, which is constructed by encompassing several different voices/discourses that alternate along the communicative process of the texts. In some instances, these discourses support and even frame each other (and the authorial voice as well), while in other instances they appear to clash, counter and even invalidate the proposition of one another. In the next section of this chapter, these instances will be identified and analyzed.

5.4 The Ideologies Conveyed by the PISA News Reports and the Evaluative Positions that Support Them

In the last section, we could notice that the voices of the sources act to naturalize and legitimize the ideological themes, so as to give the reader a sense of impartiality, factuality and objectivity, which is the main characteristic of news reports employing ‘reporter voice’. Hence, the value judgments carried out by the sources appear as common sense assumptions, since they stem from official, trustworthy sources of higher social relevance and hierarchy.

As a means to identify this process of legitimization/naturalization of the ideological themes, this section carries out an appraisal analysis of the selected corpus, in which instances of evaluative meanings/resources reveal attitudinal and dialogistic positionings that function as rhetorical mechanisms conveyed by the voices of the authors and the sources. The close reading of the texts is organized by ideological theme in the following sub-sections. For each theme, I will bring examples from the texts, which will be analyzed using the categories presented in the methodology chapter.

5.4.1 Ideological Theme 1: The U.S. poor results on the PISA exam show that the country has become average, losing its hegemony in the world

This first ideological theme encompasses the assumption that the U.S. has become an average country, losing its hegemony as the world’s leading nation. Since the PISA exam assess the skills of students in real life situations problems to participate effectively and productively in life, the U.S. student’s performance show that the country may be losing its competitive edge and innovational capacity, while other countries are improving and becoming top-performers, coming forth as the world’s new powerhouses. The country mediocrity is reflected on their students’ survey results that are stagnant, mainly because the education policies adopted over the last decade have failed to boost their performance.

Text 1 addresses this ideological theme right in the headline: *U.S. students lag around average on international science, math and reading test*, an instance of authorial negative judgment: capacity on the students’ performance. The writer

goes on to make another negative judgment: normality saying that they were ^[2]*average*. The textual voice naturalizes this assumption by making a monoglossic bare assertion stating ^[2]*that pattern has not changed much since the PISA test was first given in 2000*. This is confirmed by OCDE report, embedded in the author's words and saying that ^[20]*U.S. students are particularly (graduation: focus) weak (negative judgment: capacity) in performing math tasks with higher cognitive demands*. But the text changes this picture to a more positive view on the students by saying that the report also found that ^[21]*despite their tepid math scores, U.S. teenagers were more (graduation: force) confident (positive judgment: capacity) about their math skills than their international counterparts*.

The text also conveys a negative appreciation of the U.S. scores on the exam, stating that they were ^[1]*flat*, and a positive appreciation of the Asian counterparts' scores saying that they have ^[1]*soared*. This ^[1]*according to a well-regarded international exam* – an instance of explicit authorial positive appreciation, which indicates that the journalist believes in the importance of the survey and in the reliability of the results. These assertions are further confirmed by the words of Jack Buckley and Arne Duncan below:

^[3]“Our scores are stagnant (negative appreciation). We're not seeing any improvement (negative appreciation) for our 15-year-olds,” **said** Jack Buckley, commissioner at the National Center for Education Statistics, the research arm of the Education Department. “But our ranking is slipping (negative appreciation) because a lot of these other countries are improving. ” (positive appreciation)

^[4]Education Secretary Arne Duncan **called** the scores a “brutal truth” that “must serve as a wake-up call” for the country”.

For both voices, the writer employs dialogic expansive framers: acknowledge *said* and *called*, indicating disassociation from the propositions. Especially in Arne Duncan's quotation, we see his attitudinal positioning as greatly invested in the proposition, employing an aggressive and mandatory tone, when he uses the graduation *brutal* and the modal *must*, to convey an instance of judgment: obligation.

To add to Arne Duncan's assertion, the author invokes other unattributed voices, embedded in his proposition: ^[5]*those who **argue** (contraction: proclaim: endorsement) that the United States is losing ground (negative judgment: tenacity) to global competitors*. We note the framer *argue* working here as an instance of authorial commitment to the proposition.

Text 2 also begins in the headline with a negative judgment: capacity by stating that *American 15-Year-Olds Lag, Mainly in Math, on International Standardized Tests*. The authorial voice next, via the data provided by the OECD report, makes another negative judgment: capacity on U.S. students saying that they ^[1]*score in the middle of the developed world in reading and science while lagging in math*. The textual voice employs next a sarcastic tone, by praising the country Finland, as ^[3]*a darling of educators* (positive appreciation), while stating that it has ^[3]*slid in all subjects **but** continued to outperform the averages, and the United States*. Here the writer conveys a negative judgment of Finland *slid in all subjects* just to counter it by using the conjunction *but* to introduce a positive judgment *outperform the averages, including the United States*. Hence, the authorial voice seems to be aligning the reader to a community of share values that is pessimistic toward the U.S.' future as a leading economy.

The text next brings the voice of Dennis Van Roekel to support these judgments and add another concern, that of child poverty.

^[6]“The United States’ standings haven’t improved (negative judgment: capacity) dramatically (graduation: force) because we as a nation haven’t addressed the main cause of our mediocre (negative appreciation) PISA performance — the effects of poverty on students”

The writer follows this line of thought with another indirect quotation by ^[7]*some scholars* who **warned** (contraction: proclaim: endorsement) *that the lagging performance of American students would eventually lead to economic torpor*. We notice here the framer *warned* indicating strong authorial alignment with the proposition that conveys a negative judgment: inclination. This proposition is more or less denied by the voice of scholar Eric A. Hanushek, who claims, via direct quotation, that the economy is still strong because of a good economic system. He immediately counters his earlier statement by using the

conjunction *but* in his next assertion ^[7]“**But** increasingly, we have to rely on the skills of our work force, and if we don’t improve that, we’re going to be slipping”. This choice in the quotation signals an adjustment in reader’s expectations, and somehow reaffirms the ominous assertion of economic torpor.

The textual voice goes on to make an explicitly negative appreciation saying that the country’s ^[8]*underperformance was particularly striking in math*. The instance of graduation *particularly striking* emphasizes the writer concern with the country’s ranking in the exam and its possible consequences.

As we saw in the previous texts, Text 3 also passes in the headline a negative judgment: capacity on the student’s performance saying that *U.S. High-School Students Slip in Global Rankings*. The textual voice next makes another negative judgment: capacity on the students stating that they ^[1]*made no progress on recent international achievement exams and fell further in the rankings*, which reflects the national concern about ^[1]*America’s ability to compete in a global economy*, another negative judgment: capacity, this time on the entire country. The authorial voice, using the OECD report data, makes some negative appreciations about the U.S results that were ^[4]*basically flat*, ^[4]*hover at the average* and ^[5]*are behind the curve*. To avow to these evaluations, the writer introduces into the text unattributed voices, embedded in her arguments:

^[5]The stagnant U.S. results are certain to spark more hand-wringing by politicians, business leaders and policy makers **concerned** (contraction: proclaim: endorsement) that American students are not keeping pace (negative judgment: capacity) with counterparts in other countries.

In this passage, the textual voice employs the rhetorical device *certain to spark*, which conveys a dialogistic contraction of pronouncement that indicates authorial emphasis on the proposition. Also the framer *concerned* aligns the textual voice and her audience with the issue under discussion.

In order to legitimize and also naturalize this ‘concern’, the text introduces the voice of Arne Duncan, the highest authority on the education subject, who passes negative appreciations on the results claiming they are ^[7]“*a picture of educational stagnation*” and ^[7]“*at odds with our aspiration to have the best-educated, most competitive work force in the world.*” The instances of graduation

best-educated and *most competitive* emphasize the source's positioning towards keeping his country a top nation in the world.

5.4.2 Ideological Theme 2: PISA results and recommendations have sparked an education policy debate in the country

The second ideological theme concerns the fact that the PISA results and recommendations have sparked a discussion between various social and political sectors of the nation on what type of policy is best for the country, as a means to improve its performance on international tests.

In text 1, the writer introduces the ideological theme into the text by acknowledging the voice of Randi Weingarten, who asserts, via a negative locution of judgment: tenacity, that the recent education programs employed by the government have ^[6]*failed to improve the quality of American public education*.

The authorial voice next explicitly appraises the Shanghai province, contrasting to the speech of Weingarten:

^[8]Shanghai dominated the PISA exam, (positive judgment: tenacity) taking the top slot in all three subjects. The Chinese province catapulted to the top (positive judgment: tenacity) after focusing on teacher preparation and investing in its most challenging classrooms, among other things.

The writer also brings forth an OECD recommendation, based on an education reform employed in the District of Columbia, which somehow counters Weingarten assertion:

^[27]The new Common Core academic standards in math and reading, which have been fully adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia, could help pull up the nation's PISA scores, (judgment: capacity) **according to** the OECD. While the standards are now being implemented in most U.S. classrooms, there has been growing political opposition from the right, left and center.

In this passage we notice the OECD assertion, which is evoked via indirect quotation and the neutral framer *according to*, being interspersed by voices of

political opposition from the right, left and center. We can conclude that this paragraph is highly dialogistic, as the writer recognizes, by bringing into the text these opposing voices, that the OECD assertion is problematic, and likely to be contested by the purported readership.

To balance this contentious discussion being forwarded, the textual voice acknowledges the voices of Andreas Schleicher and Dennis Van Roekel, respectively, both via indirect quotation and the neutral framer *said*:

[28]One clear finding (positive appreciation) from the PISA test was the impact of preschool education.

[29]the country should end devise debates (judgment: propriety) and adopt methods that are working in top-scoring nations

Notice here that the locution *One clear finding*, in Schleicher discourse, almost functions as a bare assertion. Therefore the reader is guided to consider it as commonsensical, no matter his/her position regarding the exam.

These assertions are further reinforced and added to by the voice of Arne Duncan:

[31]The United States should also take several actions simultaneously, Duncan said. The country must “invest in early education, raise academic standards, make college affordable, and do more to recruit and retain top-notch educators,” he **said**. (expansion: attribution: acknowledge)

We note here the use of the modals *should* and *must*, which signals that Arne Duncan’s attitudinal position is highly invested in the proposition he advances, at the same time that he is aware of the opposition behind his assertions.

In text 2, the authorial voice addresses the ideological theme by presenting it as [5]increasingly polarized (graduation: force and focus) *discussions about public education*, and indirectly calling for unattributed voices: [5]familiar round of hand-wringing, blaming and credit-taking, which are assumed to be known by the audience (the use of the adjective *familiar*) and marks writer-reader alignment.

Although, for this ideological theme, the text acknowledges an heteroglossic backdrop of ^[5]*polarized discussion*, it only conveys one side of it, that of criticism of the current reforms in public education, as we can see in:

^[14]Others **criticized** recent efforts to reform public education by using measures like student test scores to evaluate teachers. Such policies “contribute to an environment in which young people who are making decisions as to whether they can go to work at a place like Google or the school down the street simply won’t consider going into teaching,” **said** Marc S. Tucker, president of the National Center on Education and the Economy, a nonprofit think tank.

The framer *criticized* indicates dialogic contraction: proclaim: endorsement, a sign of authorial alignment, which is reinforced by the voice of Marc S. Tucker, by means of the neutral framer *said*. We can assume here that the authorial voice supports these unattributed sources, but is disinterested in demonstrating position regarding Tucker’s argumentation.

Text 3 tackles this ideological theme by entertaining the heteroglossic debate that arises from the stagnant results, as we can see by the use of the modal attribute *likely* and the modal auxiliary *could* in:

^[6]They are also likely to fuel the debate over which policy fixes could be instituted to boost results.

The writer next introduces the voice of Dennis Van Roekel to further acknowledge the debate, but also to convey that this *policy fixes* are not suited to improve results. Roekel passes a negative judgment: tenacity on the country’s education policies saying that ^[8]*the data show the U.S. has been going down the “wrong path”*. He also states ^[8]*“There is a road map out there. But we are not following it.”*

The text seems to show the reader this ‘road map’ by appraising the education reforms that took place in Finland and Poland, the efforts made in the state of Massachusetts, and by acknowledging the voice of Andrew Vega:

^[15]For the last few years, many U.S. educators and policy makers have **looked**

(contraction: proclaim: endorse) to Finland, noting its high-test scores and laser-like focus (positive judgment: tenacity) on attracting and retaining the best teachers.

^[16]Poland, on the other hand, has seen sharp improvement... (positive judgment: tenacity)

^[18]In Massachusetts, educators and policy makers **credit** (contraction: proclaim: endorse) the good showing...

^[19]Andrew Vega, an eighth-grade teacher at Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School in Boston, **said** (expansion: attribution: acknowledge) that when he moved from California, he "was completely blown away (affect) by what we ask students to do."

We notice the frames *looked* and *credit* aligning the authorial voice to the value positions advanced by these unattributed educators and policy makers. The text also highlights an emotional response on the part of Vega that, together with these framers, aligns the reader to a community that shares the values of such positive education reforms.

5.4.3 Ideological Theme 3: Some sectors of society tend to disregard the PISA survey findings, since they argue it cannot properly measure the quality of education in the country and its consequences.

The national debate on education policies leads us to this third ideological theme. Specialists/scholars and policy makers tend to disregard the PISA survey findings, asserting that the U.S.A still has a strong work force. They also argue that because of the country's economical and socio-cultural disparities, the PISA cannot foretell the nation success in holding its leading financial, political and influential position among other powerful nations.

In text 1, the authorial voice introduces this ideological theme by engaging with unattributed voices and that of education historian Diane Ravitch:

^[7]Some observers, including education historian Diane Ravitch, **noted** (expansion: attribution: acknowledge) that American students have never been top performers on international tests (negative judgment: capacity) dating back to

the 1960s, **but** (contraction: disclaim: counter) that has not prevented the country from becoming one of the most (graduation: focus) successful and innovative in the world (judgment: tenacity). Ravitch **accused** (contraction: proclaim: endorsement) Duncan of trying to “whip up a national hysteria” (negative judgment: propriety) over the PISA scores.

In this passage the words of *some observers* and of Ravitch appear embedded in the writer’s argumentation. These voices firstly convey a negative evaluation on American students saying that they *have never been top performers on international tests*, which is then countered by a strong positive evaluation regarding the country as *the most successful and innovative in the world*. In this sense, the positive evaluation annuls the negative one, and indirectly withdraws all credibility from the PISA results. To legitimize this move, the text quotes Ravitch as she expresses a negative judgment of social sanction on Duncan, the highest source of the government regarding education, for *trying to “whip up a national hysteria”*. This passage clearly signals authorial disalignment concerning the PISA survey, and also indirectly indicates disalignment from the current government and its education policies.

The text goes on to justify once more why the country does not perform well on international tests by stating, again using unattributed voices embedded in its proposition, that:

^[22]Some observers **say** (expansion: attribution: acknowledge) the United States does not perform well in international competitions (negative judgment: capacity) because it is a large, diverse country, with the highest (graduation: force) child poverty rate among industrialized countries (negative appreciation).

This proposition is countered by the results provided by the OECD report and the voice of Buckley:

^[23]**But** (contraction: disclaim: counter) countries like Vietnam, where 79 percent of students are economically disadvantaged, outscored U.S. students in math (positive appreciation).

[24]“So it’s not demography itself. Those demographics are a factor, not the only factor,” Buckley **said** (expansion: attribution: acknowledge).

[25]A weak curriculum could be the culprit, (judgment: capacity) the report **suggested** (expansion: attribution: acknowledge).

What is noteworthy about these three passages is that they are highly dialogistic, and they act to counter the assertion of poor performance in international tests because of child poverty. Through this problematic discussion on what is to blame for the student’s bad results, the OECD voice is given prominence and is able to reinstate its credibility with the reader. Notice here as well that Buckley’s quotation acts as a mediator (*Those demographics are a factor, not the only factor*) between the voices of *some observers* that disregard international tests and the OECD’s voice. The text ends by highlighting the voice of Buckley:

[32]Buckley **cautioned** (contraction: proclaim: endorsement) against using the PISA results to draw conclusions about whether education policies are working.

[33]“People like to take international results like this and focus on high performers and pick out areas of policy that support the policies that they support,” (Judgment: Propriety) he **said** (expansion: attribution: acknowledge). “I never expect tests like these to tell us what works in education. That’s like taking a thermometer to explain why it’s cold outside.”

Notice the framer *cautioned* which indicates an instance of authorial alignment with the proposition, and invites the reader, who is not already in line with the argumentation, to do likewise. Buckley’s words (*I never expect tests like these to tell us what works in education*) overtly (attention to the use of the adverb *never*) disregard the PISA exam. In his last quotation, he invokes an ironic tone, naturalized as a common sense assumption, in which the PISA results are taken as redundant (*That’s like taking a thermometer to explain why it’s cold outside*). This proposition acts as an attitudinal token to invite the reader to share the value position of Buckley. Therefore, even though these last quotations are neutrally framed (*said*), they act as an authorial positioning mechanism of “evidential

standing” (White, 2006), in which the authority of Buckley is such to signal that his value position is well founded and trustworthy.

Text 2 addresses this ideological theme by first making a comparison to another international survey similar to the PISA, in which:

^[9]The results **painted** (contraction: proclaim: endorsement) a slightly (graduation: focus) different picture (positive appreciation) from tests administered to fourth and eighth graders in 2011 through the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. Those results **indicated** (expansion: attribution: acknowledge) that the United States was about on par (positive judgment: capacity) with international averages.

The textual voice indicates that the PISA results are not the final word regarding U.S student’s performance, however it adjusts the reader’s expectation by introducing the next paragraph with the concessive resource *but* in:

^[10]**But** (contraction: disclaim: counter) both exams **showed** (expansion: attribution: acknowledge) that the percentage of students who scored at the highest levels in math and science was much greater (graduation: force) in several Asian and European countries.

Notice here the graduation *much greater* emphasizing the discrepancy between the averages and the top-performers.

The text next introduces the voice of Rothstein, who passes a negative appreciation on the exam saying that ^[13]*he put little stock in the PISA results*. He also socially sanctions ^[13]*educators and academics* by arguing that they ^[13]should “stop hyperventilating” (judgment: propriety) *about international test rankings*.

His assumption is further reinforced as the writer lists several voices of the community:

^[15]An increasingly (graduation: force) vocal (positive judgment: propriety) group of parents, teachers, union leaders and others have also **objected** (contraction: proclaim: endorsement) to a focus on standardized tests at the expense of values like creativity.

We notice in this passage how the authorial voice, through the tokenized attitudinal resource *increasingly vocal group*, invites the reader to ‘take part in this group’ and share such value position.

To sum up the discussion, the textual voice, through the words of Michael J. Petrilli, presents a proposition which brings balance between the points of view of the community and that of education policy makers. Petrilli questions this *vocal group* with an ironical proposition conveying an instance of judgment: capacity: ^[16]“*The question is, can we walk and chew gum at the same time?*”, which is further explained with another instance of judgment: capacity. ^[16]“*There’s no reason why we can’t keep the creativity that we value while also teaching kids how to do math better.*”

Text 3 introduces this ideological theme by bringing the unattributed voices of ^[12]*Experts* embedded in the authorial voice in which they ^[12]**caution** (contraction: proclaim: endorsement) *against reading too much* (graduation: force) *into the rankings without a deeper* (graduation: force) *understanding of the differences in socioeconomic and racial composition among countries*. Note here the two instances of graduation which emphasis the authorial position that thoughtfulness is needed when tackling the results and subsequently criticizing it negatively.

This proposition is rectified by the voice of the OECD report analysis which says that U.S has more children living in poverty than its industrializes counterparts, ^[12]*and 15% of the variance in test scores can be explained by socioeconomic status*, (judgment: capacity) **according to** (expansion: attribution: acknowledge) *the OECD analysis*.

The text next conveys the voice of Martin Carvoy to further reinforce the value position of the *experts* in which he says that ^[14]*policy makers often draw "oversimplified conclusions" from international tests*. (judgment: propriety) *"These results don't tell anything (negative appreciation) about the quality of teaching or the quality of the curriculum in countries," he said*. We can assume here that Petrilli’s value positions withdraw the OECD report validity, even though the report states that the test scores are not only a matter of education quality but of socioeconomic disparities.

5.5 Power and Authorial Positioning in the PISA News Reports

In this section I close the analysis, but by no means exhausting it. Here I discuss how the presence (the choice in) of several sources, together with the evaluative and dialogical positions they entail, reveal the power relations present in these news reports.

We first begin by acknowledging how these ideological themes are overtly expressed in the texts through the sources and their discourses, which is a typical rhetorical mechanism of ‘reporter voice’ texts. But we can also notice that there are a few instances in which the authors’ subjectivity seems to stand out in some linguistic features that explicitly convey their personal evaluation on the subject matter. Note, however, how these inscribed positions are supported/framed by either unattributed sources or by quoted voices, as a way to lessen the authorial subjective load, while at the same time legitimizing it.

Therefore, we can perceive that these three texts, while falling into the category of ‘reporter voice’, appear at some points to intertwine instances of ‘writer voice’. That could be explained by the fact that, although the texts all appear at the online ‘event news section’ of their respective newspapers, they are signed pieces, that is, the reporters who wrote the articles are identified after each headline. All three reporters can be considered specialists in covering all sorts of issues related to national education in the U.S. Thus, we can assume that, because the audience of each newspaper is already familiar with their names associated to news reports on national education, writers are granted (with the consent of editors of their respective newspapers) more flexibility in employing linguistic devices that openly convey their position regarding the subject. And because of this sense of familiarity, it is easier for them to engage in solidarity and alignment with their assumed readership.

The matter of author-reader alignment and solidarity is achieved in these texts by several dialogistic mechanisms. First is the choice in sources, all texts bring forth the opinions and points of view of well-regarded, official and trustworthy sources, such as the voices of national institutions and union representatives, experts, scholars, and government representatives; their social positions act to reassure the audience that the propositions and discussions being advanced by the texts are relevant and worth giving attention to. Even the reader

who is not familiar with the survey or the sources' opinions gets involved in the strong argumentations to eventually form an opinion of his/her own.

One important intertextual aspect in these news reports is the voices that are given less space or are suppressed at all. This entails an unbalance in the represented voices and thus reveals authorial positioning. For example, in all three texts, the voices of the high school students who took the exam are not present. Although they are the actual performers behind the scores, their discourse is disenfranchised to give space to the discourse of education policy makers – a clear demonstration of the power of the official voices that the media constantly takes up. We note that only Text 3 gives voice to an eighth-grade teacher, but mainly to praise the educational policies adopted by the state of California (he also praises and values his profession though).

The second mechanism is how these voices are framed in the texts. A constant mechanism that we could observe was the use of neutral frames in direct quotation, and in most quotations in which the source is identified. In quotations that refer to unattributed sources and that are embedded in the author argumentations, we can observe framers of the heteroglossic contractive: endorsement type, signaling authorial commitment to the propositions.

We could notice as well how all news reports begin with similar headlines and leads (introductory paragraph), but each one ends with strong quotations of different sources. These assertive endings are the last thing the audience reads, and they are chosen for the purpose to linger in the reader's mind. We can say that this rhetorical mechanism may signal strong authorial commitment in aligning with its readership and indirectly positioning them in relation to the subject matter being forwarded by these closing paragraphs.

In sum, we can conclude that these texts and their sources' voices corroborate with the overall discussion of this study that the media enacts and reproduces unequal power relations, even though depicting a myriad of voices to convey a sense of neutrality and balance of opinions. As we saw throughout this analysis, the discourses of powerful institutions and personas of society are greatly present, while the voices of the 'commons', such as teachers and students, are given less prominence or no prominence at all. What truly matters in these texts is not how education policies and surveys affect these 'lesser voices', but rather the country as a whole, especially its economical and competitive dominance.

Therefore, the debate regarding students' education sets the background of the bigger picture behind these ideological themes, which is the nation's loss of power.

6. Conclusion

In this study, I tried to deconstruct the sense of objectivity and impartiality conveyed by media texts employing reporter voice, as a means to reveal authorial positioning and thus to uncover the ideologies and power relations that are enacted in the selected news reports.

In order to achieve this objective, this study employed the CDA approach, whose "aim is to shed light on the discursive aspects of societal disparities and inequalities, by detecting the linguistic means used by the privileged to stabilize or even intensify inequalities in society" (Wodak, 2008, p.32). CDA presents an analytical framework for researching language in relation to power and ideology, which is suitable for media text analysis since the media portrays itself as a site of neutrality and openness of public debates and opinions, while also conveying the perceptions and arguments of its newsmakers.

Fairclough (1995), however, shows the fallacy of such assumptions, by revealing the mediating and constructing role of the media in social and cultural processes. Mass media discourse is unique in the nature of power relation it enacts, because it involves participants who are separated in place and time, and thus their relation is not really clear, but hidden. Media discourse is directed to a mass audience and this discourse is built having in mind an ideal subject who readers/listeners/viewers have to negotiate with. News producers exercise power over its audience, as they have the sole power in determining what it is to be included or excluded as newsworthy material, as well as define the subject position of their audience (Fairclough, 1989).

The analysis chapter of this study was guided by Fairclough's (1995) three dimensional model of discourse analysis, which provided an approach capable of bridging the gap between micro and macro analysis, making it thus possible to understand the relation between common sense ideologies, the various sources and their discourses taken up by the texts, as well as the value positions conveyed

by them and the writers. This, according to Fairclough (1992, p.161), makes it possible “to reveal the ideological work of the media in offering images and categories for reality, positioning and shaping social subjects, and contributing for the most part to social control and reproduction”.

The linguistic analysis of the news reports was informed by the analytical tools of the Appraisal system, which offers a framework for analyzing evaluative mechanisms the media employs and how individual news items (such as in the case of this study ‘reporter voice’ texts) vary in the mechanisms they employ to ultimately achieve their ideological effects (White, 2006). Therefore, according to White (2009), the attitudinal and dialogical mechanisms employed by ‘reporter voice’ texts allow them to work rhetorically and eventually ideologically, even when the journalist author refrains to use any explicit evaluation or express viewpoint.

This study is of relevance not only for language and media studies on journalistic discourse, but for education as well. Specially for a new subject being introduced in schools and universities, called Critical Media Literacy, which aims to expand the notion of literacy to include different forms of media culture (such as multimodality), information and communication technologies, as well as deepen the potential of literacy education to critically analyze relationships between media and audience, information and power. This approach seeks to expand textual analysis to include issues of social context, control, resistance and pleasure, by including different tools and modes of communicating. Critical Media Literacy embraces the notion of the audience as active in the process of making meaning, which can be understood as a cultural struggle between dominant, oppositional or negotiated readings (Kellner & Share, 2007).

The significant but limited scope of this study, including the analysis of three news reports, allowed for a first glimpse into the ideological power of media texts. Future studies could include a multimodal analysis, with images and graphs, for instance, combined with the written part of such news reports (perhaps also with a more significant number of news reports on the subject). Another interesting possibility would be to carry out a contrastive study between these American news reports written in English, with similar texts in Portuguese, reporting on the Brazilian students’ performance on the PISA survey.

Contrastive rhetoric is premised on the insight that, to the degree that language and writing are cultural phenomena, different cultures have different rhetorical tendencies. Hence, it considers texts not merely as static products but as functional parts of dynamic cultural contexts (Connor, 2002). However, this is not so straightforward for media texts analysis, since it's a genre with many similarities in style across western nations, especially nowadays given how fast news disseminates across the globe, because of the Internet and other communication technologies. This could pose an even more interesting challenge to the researcher, while conducting a contrastive rhetoric analysis between media texts of different languages.

As we can see, there are several possibilities to tackle the ideological power of the media, using the methodological tools provided by CDA and the Appraisal system. The outcome is certain to be very fruitful and compelling not only for the researcher, but for the overall of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

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