

Using corpus linguistics to explore the 'reading' of multi-semiotic play

Helen Caple

University of Wollongong
Australia



AAAL2009, University of Alberta, Canada



Overview

- Multisemiotic news stories
 - The corpus
- Analysing intertextual/intersemiotic play
 - A corpus linguistic approach
- Conclusion



the multisemiotic news story

EDMONTON ZONE 3 • CAPILANO • BONNIE DOON • UNIVERSITY

Examiner.com

HELPING TO CONNECT AND BUILD BETTER COMMUNITIES
SEPTEMBER 23, 2009

Inner City Agencies Foundation
Linked together to serve the community

OraFresh CLINIC
We treat the CAUSE of bad breath!
www.kucey dental.ca 780-468-7270

INSIDE THIS WEEK

EXAMINER EXTRA
Hey Bob, Lucy's doing just fine at her home in E-town!

EXAMINER SPORTS
Diminutive lacrosse player gets shot at the big time

WIN ON THE WEB

Enter to win a \$750 gift card from Exterior Express to put toward your outdoor home renovations. Go to edmontonexaminer.com and click on the contests button.

twitter
Follow Edm. Examiner on Twitter.com for community news and contest updates.

LET IT ROLL: St. Cecilia Grade 9 students Beilul Ghebrehiwet and Hilda Alaeddine work out on exercise balls while kicking off a school wellness project Friday.

School hosts VON centennial

Students, seniors join Victorian Order of Nurses for celebration **■ CAPILANO**

KEVIN MAIMANN
EXAMINER STAFF

Three generations came together at Capilano elementary school, 10720 54 St., last week to celebrate a landmark for the Victorian Order of Nurses.

The VON celebrated 100 years in Edmonton with cake, student choir performances and a fashion show featuring the charity's official uniforms from different eras.

"I just feel such a sense of pride to see everybody coming together, to have the children and the seniors," says Carol McNeil, executive director of VON's Edmonton site.

The nurses started running a day health program for seniors out of Capilano school in August. Last Wednesday, seniors who take part in the program joined VON alumni and their families for the celebration in the school gym.

The students have been interacting with the

seniors throughout September, mingling with them during school assemblies and reading them stories in honour of National Grandparents' Day.

"What a good way for the kids to learn to respect seniors and see the value of seniors and see that everybody has a contribution to make," McNeil says.

CONTINUED INSIDE

GRAND OPENING!

COME CELEBRATE OUR NEW LITTLE CAESARS LOCATION!!!

NORTH TOWN CENTRE
(9412-137 AVE)

\$5 HOT-N-READY
Medium Pizza with cheese

"How you find a great real estate Agent?"

ROYAL LEPAGE

Noralta Real Estate

South Edmonton 780-431-5600
West Edmonton 780-455-4181
Sherwood Park 780-467-7334
Ft. Saskatchewan 780-998-7801
Vegreville 780-632-2542



Gourd blimey



A paddler in a hollowed-out pumpkin heads for the finish line at a regatta on Falmouth Lake, in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia.
Photo: Reuters/
Paul Darrow



North, through Alaska



Musher John Baker drives his team of dogs during the running of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in Alaska. There are 79 teams competing in the 33rd running of the 1770-kilometre race from Anchorage to Nome. One of North America's great long-distance dog sled races, the event began on Sunday and still has about a week to run. Photo: AP/AI Grillo



Dry hard with a vengeance



Workers walk across the dried bed of the Hongyashan reservoir in Minqin, north-western China. The reservoir, which is the largest in Asia and can hold 98 million cubic metres of water, dried up last month for the first time since 1958, bringing hardship to the thousand of families depending on it.



the corpus

Trouble on oiled water



An oil spill, dispersed by tides and winds, creates a multi-coloured sheen on water lapping the beaches of Vashon Island, Washington state. Department of Ecology officials and spill contractors were trying to use booms to protect sensitive marine habitats. Photo: AP/Dean Koepfer/The News Tribune

- *Sydney Morning Herald*
- Broadsheet newspaper in Sydney, NSW, Australia
- Circulation of over 210,000 Monday to Friday and 365,000 on a Saturday
- Corpus of 1000 stories - June 2004 to Nov 2006



General Statistics...

- 64% International 36% local
(AP, Reuters, AFP)
- 86% soft news 14% hard news
- 85% exclusive to SMH
- 85% in colour
- 95% have an element of play between the heading and the image



How do they play?



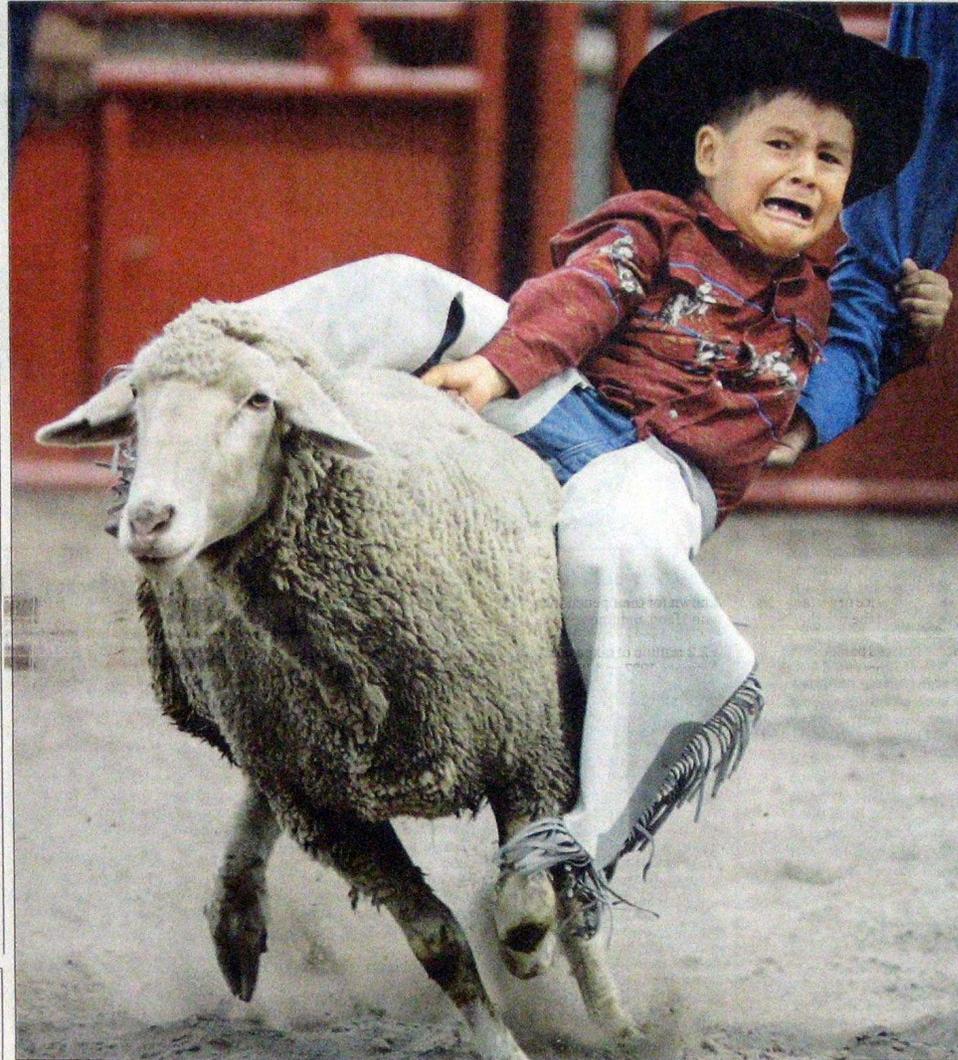
The cruel sea



Storm force ... waves pound part of a Malaysian cargo ship, Selendang Ayu, which broke in two after losing power and hitting rocks off Alaska on Wednesday. Six crew members are missing after a US Coast Guard helicopter crashed during a rescue attempt. Fuel from the freighter is threatening a nearby wildlife refuge on Unalaska Island. Photo: AP/US Coast Guard



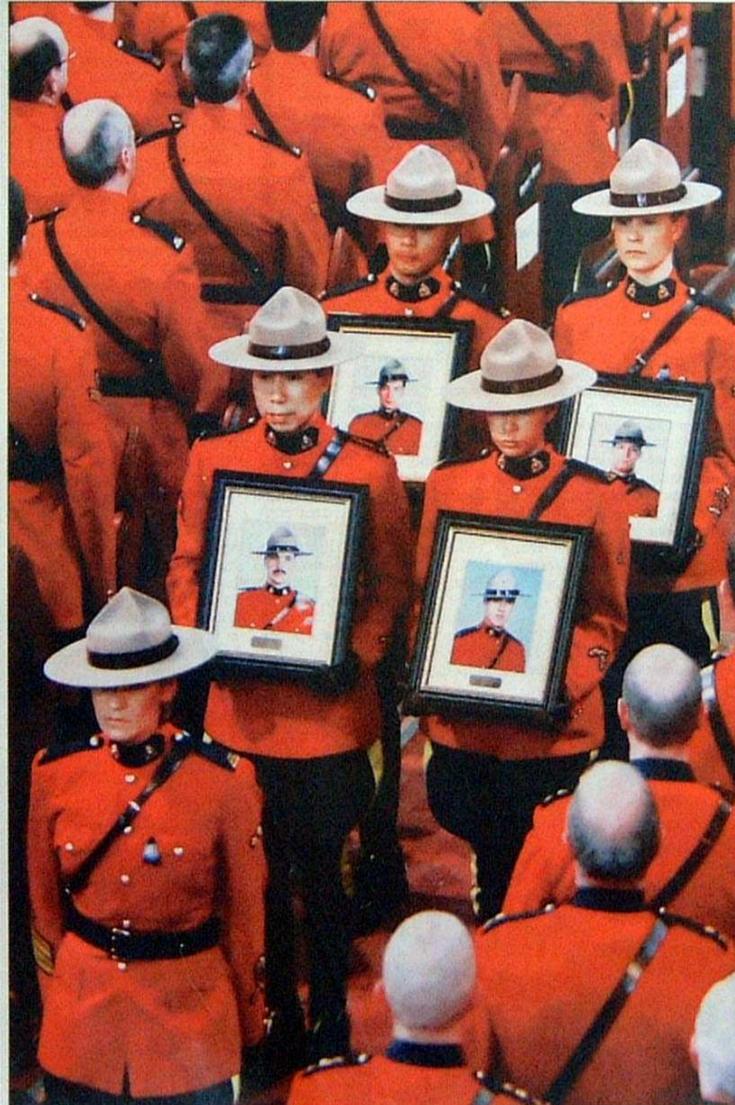
Feeling a little sheepish at rodeo



Sheep-shape and raring to go ... an aspiring young cowboy, Tyrel Benjamin, braves the ride at the Mutton Bustin event, at the annual three-day Chiniki First Nations Canada Day Rodeo in Morley, Alberta, on Sunday. Photo: Reuters/Patrick Price



In the line of duty



Members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police carry portraits of four slain colleagues at a memorial service in Edmonton, Alberta, on Thursday. The constables were killed while investigating a suspected marijuana-growing operation last week. Police said James Rosko, 46, committed suicide after shooting the four. Photo: Reuters/Jim Young



Mist opportunity



Lost highway ... early morning commuters head into fog covering part of the Capilano Bridge in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Photo: AP/Darryl Dyck



Analysing intertextual/intersemiotic play

- Interpreting intertextual/intersemiotic play
- Corpus linguistics: idiom vs. open-choice principle as ‘ways of interpreting language’ (Hunston & Francis 2000: 22)



Idiom-principle vs. open-choice

The principle of idiom is that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments (Sinclair 1991: 110)

- Larger units of meaning; importance of co-text; lexical priming (Hoey 2005)



Idiom-principle vs. open-choice II

This [the open-choice principle] is a way of seeing language as the result of a very large number of complex choices. At each point where a unit is completed (a word or a phrase or a clause), a large range of choice opens up and the only restraint is grammaticalness... Virtually all grammars are constructed on the open-choice principle (Sinclair 1991: 109-110)



Unexpected choices

- For Sinclair idiom principle takes priority; but 'choices which are unexpected in their environment will presumably occasion a switch' (Hunston & Francis 2000: 22)
- Lexical choices only discussed



Corpus and discourse community

The intuition of a language user regarding a particular lexical item is the product of tens, hundreds, or thousands of experiences of that item, scattered across years of heterogeneous language experience. In representing the discourse of a community, a very large corpus can mimic, though not of course, replicate, that experience (Thompson & Hunston 2000: 15)



Military at full stretch



Ukrainian Interior Ministry soldiers at the Petrovtsi training centre near Kiev prepare to rehearse for a military parade marking the 13th anniversary of Ukrainian independence next Tuesday. Photo: Reuters/Mykhilo Markiv



Military at full stretch

- *At full stretch*: 1. ‘using as much energy as possible, or the greatest possible amount of supplies’ vs. 2. ‘body fully stretched/state of body being stretched’
- First reading: meaning 1 (corpus evidence)
- Re-interpretation (meaning 2) because of ideational representation (‘legs at full stretch’)



Military at full stretch



Ukrainian Interior Ministry soldiers at the Petrovtsi training centre near Kiev prepare to rehearse for a military parade marking the 13th anniversary of Ukrainian independence next Tuesday. Photo: Reuters/Mykhilo Markiv



Double-take

- Both readings present!
- Simultaneous readings as key feature of punning
- Contrast claim that ‘both interpretations [open-choice vs. idiom-principle] are not simultaneously possible’ (Hunston & Francis 2000: 22)



Conclusion

- What kind of cultural practice is the *SMH* engaging the reader in here?
 - amused by our language (the ways in which it draws attention to itself)
 - Intersemiotic punning
 - Intertextual references
- The challenge to *SMH* readers - if we get it, we're part of the 'in-group' – what Chang (2004) refers to as “membershopping” or “insiderism”



Give the lady a big hand



A visitor to the Contemporary Art Museum in the French city of Lyons looks at a sculpture by Chinese artist Sui Jianguo that represents the arm of Mao Zedong. Photo: AFP/Fred Dufour