

COURSE:  
MULTIMODALITY IN LITERARY TEXT

# Representing People: Language and Identity

Lecture 7

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# Learning Objectives

1. Representational strategies in language
2. Ten classifications of social actors





# **Representational strategies in language**

# Breaking the silence on Muslim men suffering with mental health issues

By [Zena Chamas](#)

Posted Sun 4 Sep 2022 at 2:19am, updated Sun 4 Sep 2022 at 7:36am

Figure 1 (Chamas, 2022, ABC News)

Representing participant with 'Muslim men'.

Reisigl and Wodak said that each label above can represent either psychological, social, or political purposes for the writer and reader (2001 in Machin and Mayr, 2012).

Main source of this chapter is taken from the book entitled "How to Do CDA" by Machin and Mayr in 2012.  
However, other related sources from books, journal articles, and news articles are added to enrich this chapter



# Breaking the silence on Muslim men suffering with mental health issues

By Zena Chamas

Posted Sun 4 Sep 2022 at 2:19am, updated Sun 4 Sep 2022 at 7:36am

Figure 1 (Chamas, 2022, ABC News)

Changed into:

Breaking the silence on unemployed men suffering with mental health issues.

First example: emphasize the 'otherness' of a men

Second example: show a sense of humanizing the man

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Van Dijk (2013), in his writing about Ideology and Discourse, stated about '**context model**' in discourse. It refers to how the **language is written in a certain way to frame or shape** a certain meaning about events, environments, and people. The choice of language in representing people serves its ideas and values in which the person is embedded to a certain **identity that represent them**. The identity of the represented people in a discourse relates with the events people talk about or to the environment people currently engaged. This context model becomes a crucial part in the media production.



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**A young man** hangs out to a brand-new club downtown.

**A student** hangs out to a brand-new club downtown.

Fact: a 20-year-old male

'A student' who goes to club can create a bad perception to his image as a student, no matter how old he is. On the other hand, 'a young man' sounds more general and neutral in which he is free to go to the club.



02

**Ten classifications of  
social actors**

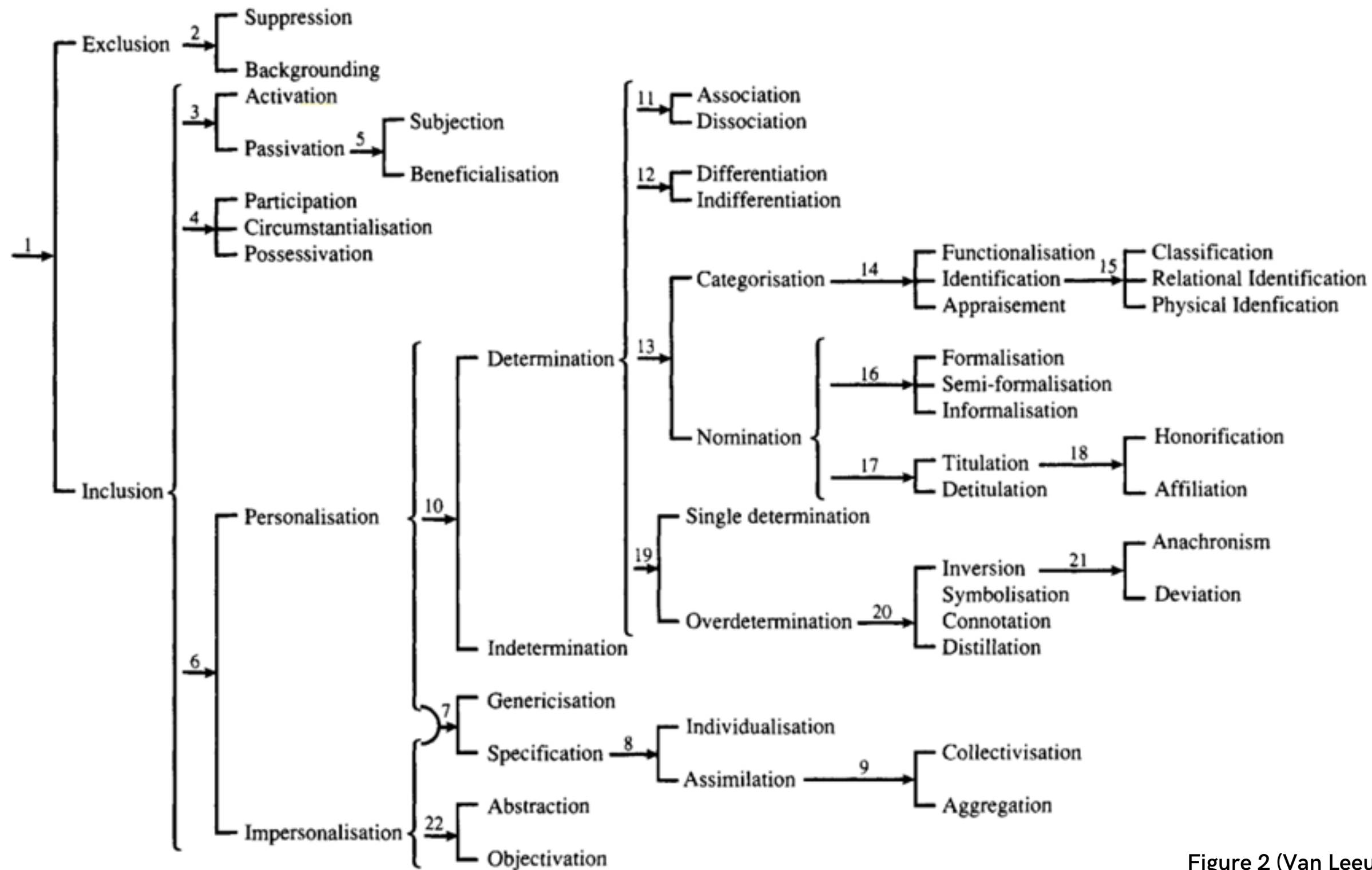


Figure 2 (Van Leeuwen, T. in Coulthard C.R.C., Coulthard, M., 2003)



# Personalization and Impersonalization

United States

## United States tells citizens: Leave Russia immediately

Figure 3 (Faulconbridge, 2023, Reuters)

From this headline, it is seen that impersonalization is used to emphasize a statement by attributing it to a country than individual. Instead of stating a participant (or more) who needs something, it is framed as if the entire country requires it. This impersonalization sentence tries to conceal certain issues.



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This article is written due to the war in Ukraine and the risk of arbitrary arrest or harassment by Russian law enforcement agencies to several US citizens. However, the whole article does not reveal the exact actor or participant who authorize it. It is represented by the US Embassy which stated:

"Russian security services have arrested U.S. citizens on spurious charges, singled out U.S. citizens in Russia for detention and harassment, denied them fair and transparent treatment, and convicted them in secret trials or without presenting credible evidence," **the embassy said.**

(Falconbridge, 2023, Reuters)

The **change of US into US Embassy** does not change it into personalization because it still does not specifically refer to a certain authorized person.



## Impersonalization:

United States

**United States tells citizens: Leave Russia immediately**

Figure 3 (Faulconbridge, 2023, Reuters)

## Personalization:

**“US Minister of Foreign Affairs tells citizens: leave Russia Immediately.”**



# Individualization and Collectivization

JAKARTAGLOBE

## Police General Ferdy Sambo Charged with Ordering Murder of Subordinate

Figure 4 (Aulia, 2022, Jakarta Globe)

The above headline shows the definition of **individualization** because it mentioned the police's name. Starting from his status as a police general then his full name. If the sentence only mentions, for example "senior police officer" then it becomes very general which could refer to anyone.



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“Police general Ferdy Sambo, a former Head of the National Police's professional and security division, charged with ordering murder of subordinate.”

It serves a different effect to the readers. The focus is not only to Ferdy Sambo as an individual suspect but also his previous position. The reader can interpret that his former position could give him **more access and power** to murder his subordinate.



**Therefore,  
it is necessary to pay attention which actor is individualized and which one  
is collectivized in a discourse to see what it is trying to emphasize.**

# Specification and Genericization

A man, Mazar Hussein, challenged a policeman today.

A black man challenged a policeman today.

The man is associated as part of a black community in the second sentence. He is represented to a certain type. It can be also assumed that the police is a white because only the actor is mentioned as a black. This generic label of 'black' could lead to a racist interpretation. It generalizes the rebellious attitude of black community toward the law enforcement.



## **Nomination and Functionalization**

**Social actor in a discourse can be presented not only as individual, but also how they function based on their role in the society.**

# Nomination and Functionalization



## North Korea tells South Korean president to 'shut his mouth' after offer of aid

Figure 5 (Roh, 2022, Reuters)

The representation of country in the above statement brings huge effect, as well as unclear effect. It is not specifically mentioned who the social actor is. By using the **functionalization**, the sentence appears to be **more official**, while the **nomination is more personal**. Functionalization can decrease or even hide the actor's responsibility to his or her action as it is shown to be more legitimate (Machin and Mayr, 2012).



To see the real social actor of the above headline, we have to read the full article that stated:

“North Korea's **Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong Un**, said on Friday South Korea's president should "shut his mouth" after he reiterated that his country was willing to provide economic aid in return for nuclear disarmament.”



# Use of Honorifics

The use of 'functional honorifics' can also be used to define the representation of social actor through what they do. The terms used suggest the **degree of seniority that requires respect and honor**. Usually, it refers to the official position, such as President, Judge, or Minister. The use of honorifics emphasizes **the importance of the social actors and their capacity**.

(Machin and Mayr, 2012)



A government spokesperson said yesterday that there was no official involvement in the affair.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said yesterday that there was no official involvement in the affair.

The use of functional honorifics in the second sentence makes the person appear to be more official and authoritative. Her level of authority is automatically lower by changing the honorifics which makes her appear to be more general as stated in the first sentence.



# Objectivation

Machin and Mayr (2012) said in *Objectivation*, the social actors are represented through features.

Example:

'**Kupu-kupu malam**' = a female commercial sex worker.

'**Cantik**' = refers to a certain society standard

Standard of beauty is identified by long black hair, long neck, sensual lips, body fragrant, white-toned-smooth-skin, and slim body (Julian, 2016).



# Anonymization

WORLD

Sebuah sumber mengatakan bahwa pasukan Rusia membahas pembunuhan warga sipil Ukraina dalam transmisi radio yang dicegat oleh Jerman

 Norman Binder © April 8, 2022

**Taktik Rusia bantah kekejaman terhadap warga sipil Ukraina: 'Ini dilakukan profesional, mungkin oleh Inggris'**

Jenny Hill  
BBC News, Moscu

8 April 2022

A source said that Russian troops discussed killing Ukrainian civilians in radio transmissions intercepted by Germany.

Figure 6 (Binder, 2022, Kabartotabuan)

Russian tactics deny atrocities against Ukrainian civilians: 'this was probably done by professionals, perhaps by the British.'

Figure 7 (Hill, 2022, BBC News)



WORLD

Sebuah sumber mengatakan bahwa pasukan Rusia membahas pembunuhan warga sipil Ukraina dalam transmisi radio yang dicegat oleh Jerman

 Norman Binder © April 8, 2022

A source said that Russian troops discussed killing Ukrainian civilians in radio transmissions intercepted by Germany.

Figure 6 (Binder, 2022, Kabartotabuan)

The phrase '**sebuah sumber**' in figure 6 means '**a source.**' As stated by Machin and Mayr, that 'a source' frequently used in mass media when the journalist wants to conceal the social actors even though they have the details of official sources. It usually refers to certain organization, institution, or community.



## Taktik Rusia bantah kekejaman terhadap warga sipil Ukraina: 'Ini dilakukan profesional, mungkin oleh Inggris'

Jenny Hill  
BBC News, Moscú

8 April 2022

Russian tactics deny atrocities against Ukrainian civilians: 'this was probably done by professionals, perhaps by the British.'

Figure 7 (Hill, 2022, BBC News)

Meanwhile the word 'profesional' in figure 7 means 'professional.' Through such representation, the informants can avoid providing specific details while they are constructing a comprehensive argument. This allows them to easily introduce arguments that can subsequently be easily dismissed due to the unclearness identity.



# Aggregation

Aggregation means that the social actors are represented in numerical statistics (Van Dijk, 2013).

In mass media, the use of aggregation can also intend to exaggerate or minimize the effect. As a result, it is frequently employed to shape practices and create consensus. It is concealing the facts by appearing to be as neutral as possible.



**Iran protests: BBC identifies many more people killed in demonstrations after Mahsa Amini's death**

© 6 December 2022

Figure 8 (Owen, L., et al., 2022, BBC News)

**France protests: More than 100 police hurt in May Day demonstrations**

© 1 May

Figure 9 (Greenall, May, BBC News)

The above two headlines are taken from BBC News. The phrases 'many more people' and 'more than 100 police' are the examples of how mass media use aggregation in the news articles.



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The journalist tries to give an objective impression based on the credible statistical calculation. In fact, those phrases do not state the specific data on those headlines, unless we refer to the full article.

Readers might criticize why the specific numbers are not mentioned in the text? What or who is the text trying to conceal? In these kinds of cases where aggregation is involved, where the real social actors are substituted with such abstract representations, we can always question about the ideological purpose behind it.



# Pronoun and Noun

The use of pronouns in the text, such as: we, our, us, and them, are employed to associate the readers with or set the readers against certain idea. That kind of texts can make their own notions appear as if they are shared by us and establish a collective “other” opposing these common ideas (Machin and Mayr, 2012).



Example:

"Mari kita teruskan perjuangan Bung Karno di era yang lebih modern ini."

"Kenaikan harga BBM ini tidak adil untuk mereka yang berpenghasilan UMR."

"Program MBKM ini akan membawa manfaat yang baik bagi kalian para mahasiswa di seluruh Indonesia."



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Fairclough in Machin and Mayr (2012) pointed out that **the use of 'we' can be biased**. Journalist, editors, and even politicians use this term as which **make the statement unclear and hide the power relations** in it. Who does 'we' refer to? To themselves and their community? Are the other participants really included? The social actor can be included and excluded in these pronouns.



# Suppression

Literally, suppression means *penekanan* in Indonesian. Fairclough (2003) once said that **what is concealed in a text could be as important or even more important than what is shown.**



## Summary and Conclusion

In this lecture, we have discussed how people are named and represented. When communicators represent a person, they have various ways to do so. However, the ways are never neutral. The choices are based on how the communicator wants to show what kind of person they are representing and how they want to depict them as social actors taking part in activities.

These choices can implicitly validate or invalidate the actions of participants because representational choices imply broader associations of ideas, values, and motives. We must also carefully consider how linguistic and visual representations of social actors relate to each other.

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**Thank you**



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Figure 1

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Figure 2

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Figure 3

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Figure 4

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Figure 5

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Figure 6

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Figure 8

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Figure 10

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