

Research Space
Conference paper

Interculturality and the media. Building bridges or burning them?

Castaldi, J.

Interculturality and the Media: Building Bridges or Burning Them?

Canterbury Christ Church University
Cutting Edges Conference 2019

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Overview of the presentation

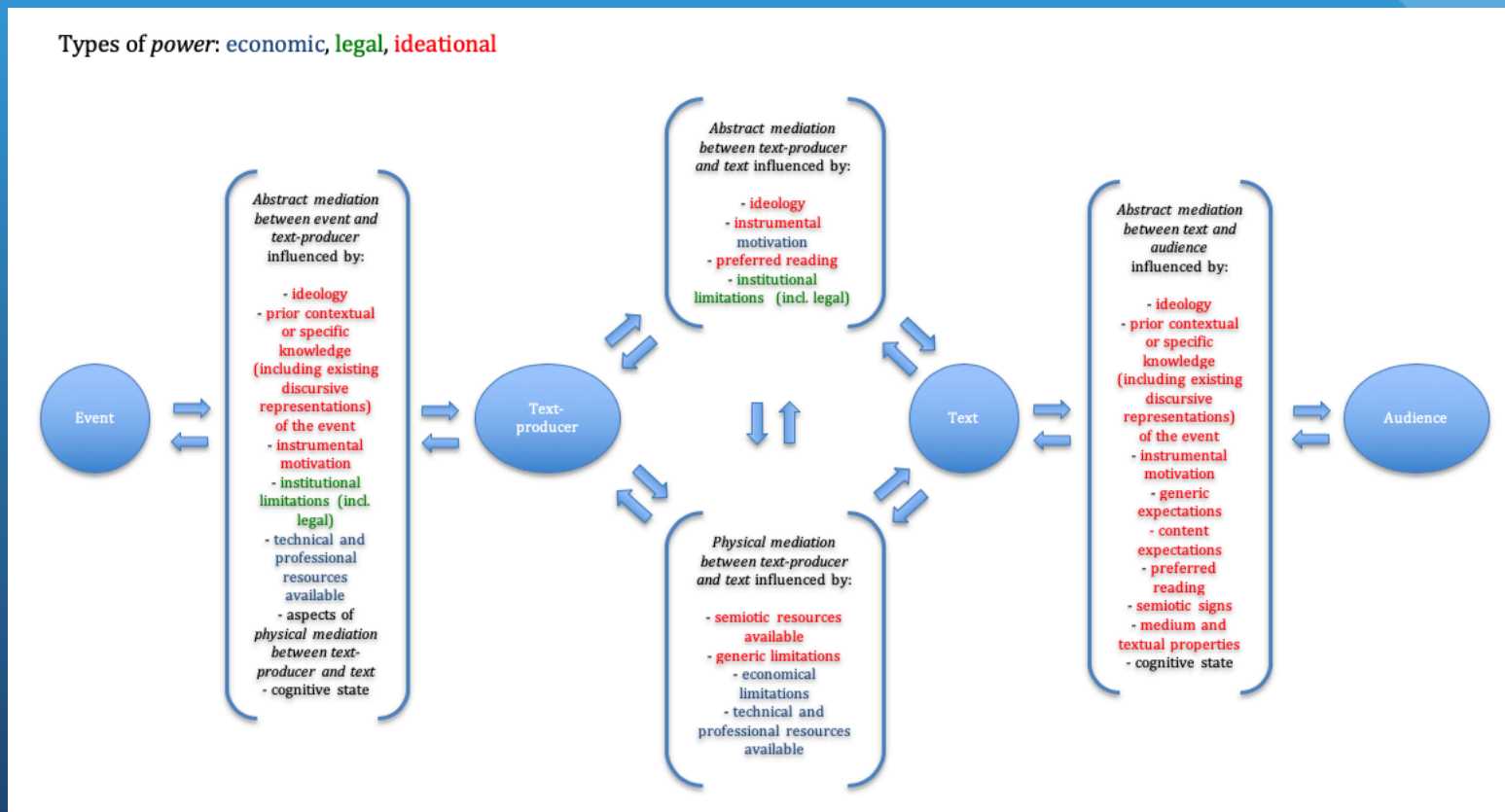
- My research
- The pilot study
- Themes:
 - The British Empire and Myanmar
 - Buddhism and Spiritism
 - “Good” Buddhism vs. “Bad” Buddhism
- Conclusion

My Research - Overview

- Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (van Leeuwen, 2005; Machin and Mayr, 2012; Djonov and Zhao, 2014; Jancsary, Höllerer and Meyer, 2016)
- Socio-economical and intercultural issues
- TV Travel and Cultural programmes
- Focus on the reception/ perceptions of audience

My Research - Analytical Framework

The *Mediation Analytical Framework* (after Hall, 1980/2005: 119 and Charaudeau, 1997: 72)



My Research - Methodology and Research Instruments

- Qualitative study
- Participants choose the television programme (with some restrictions ☺) and watched it how/when they want - Questionnaire and Follow-up Interview
- Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the text chosen with focus on the following aspects
 - *Linguistic*: lexis, representation of actors (van Leeuwen, 1996) and processes (or *transitivity*, e.g. Langacker, 2008:147-151; Hart, 2014: 22-30)
 - *Audio*: music and sound (e.g. van Leeuwen, 1999; Machin, 2014)
 - *Visual*: e.g. settings, salience, distance, gaze and poses, camera angle, frame position (Iedema 2001; Machin and Myar, 2012)
- Reception Study: critical thematic and linguistic analysis of the questionnaire and interview data

Pilot study: *Burma with Simon Reeve* (BBC, episode 1)

The text



The screenshot shows the BBC website interface for the program 'Burma with Simon Reeve'. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the BBC logo, a sign-in button, and links for News, Sport, Weather, iPlayer, Sounds, and More. A search bar is also present. Below the navigation bar, the page title 'TWO Burma with Simon Reeve' is displayed. A main image shows Simon Reeve standing in front of a train. To the right of the image, there is a 'Last on' section indicating the program aired on BBC FOUR on Tuesday, 5 Mar 2019 at 21:00. Below this, there are sections for 'More episodes', 'PREVIOUS' (You are at the first episode), and 'NEXT Episode 2 Series 1'. The 'Episode 1' section is highlighted, showing it is Series 1, Episode 1 of 2. The description for Episode 1 reads: 'Adventurer and broadcaster Simon Reeve heads to beautiful and troubled Burma - or Myanmar as it is now officially called - for a new two-part series. Cut off for decades under military rule, the country now has a democratically elected government led by world-famous Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. But in August 2017 the world was left stunned when a brutal military operation drove hundreds of thousands of ethnic Rohingya Muslims from their homes. In this first episode, Simon travels to Burma to find out the roots of this crisis - as well as heading to Bangladesh to witness the drama that is still unfolding. He begins his journey in the biggest city in the country, Yangon, and drives north into Burma's Buddhist heartlands and the stunning ancient capital of Bagan - a sight that rivals the great wonders of the world. He meets the monks who supported the people through the darkest days of dictatorship. And he is granted an audience with some of the most contentious figures in the country - ultra-nationalist monks preaching hate against the country's Muslim Rohingya. Stopped from visiting the scene of the military crackdown against the Rohingya, Simon travels to Bangladesh to meet the refugees traumatised by the violence. In what is now the biggest refugee settlement in the world, he learns about a crisis that has been brewing for decades, with no sign of ending, and potentially grave consequences for the wider region.' A 'Watch now' button is visible below the image.

Credits

Presenter	Simon Reeve
Executive Producer	Sam Bagnall
Executive Producer	Sarah Waldron
Producer	Ruth Mayer
Director	Ruth Mayer

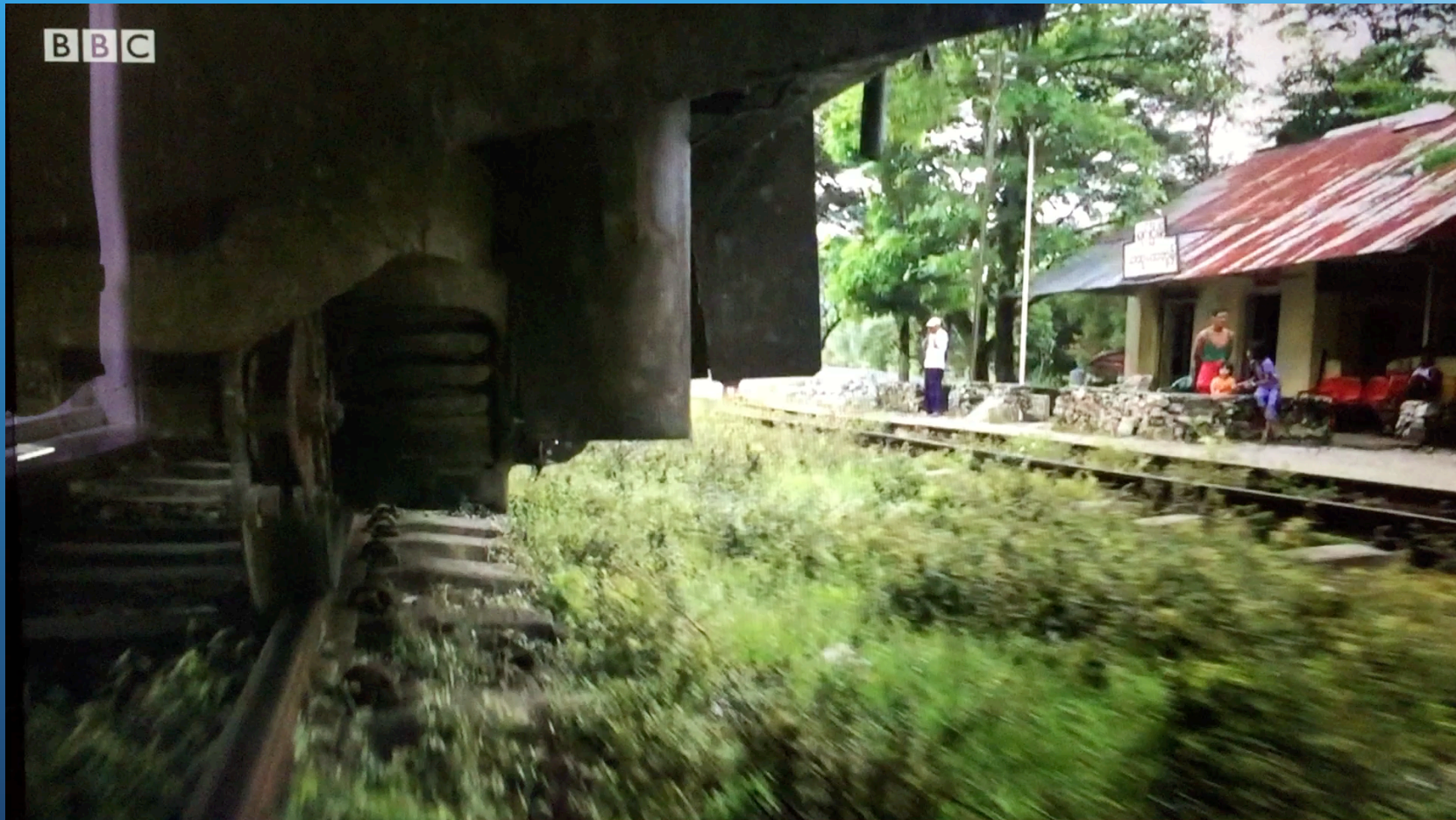
Broadcasts

 Sun 13 May 2018 21:00 BBC TWO EXCEPT WALES	 Sun 13 May 2018 22:00 BBC TWO WALES	 Mon 14 May 2018 23:25 BBC TWO EXCEPT NORTHERN IRELAND & WALES
 Sat 19 May 2018 00:05 BBC TWO WALES	 Wed 6 Jun 2018 01:15 BBC TWO	 Tue 5 Mar 2019 21:00 BBC FOUR

Show less

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b3g1nm>

Theme 1: The British Empire and Myanmar



Theme 1: The British Empire and Myanmar

Critical Multimodal Analysis

Linguistic Analysis			Audio Analysis		Visual Analysis		Overall meaning-making
Lexis	Representation of actors and places	Representation of processes	Music	Sounds	Representation of actors and places	Representation of processes	
<p>“Burma [...] <u>was once part of the British Empire</u>” “the first <u>colonial capital</u>”</p> <p>“let’s catch a train” “I <u>was travelling</u> to Burma’s biggest city, Yangon”</p> <p>“This is so <u>atmospheric</u>, it really is” “a really <u>stunning</u> landscape” “In the late 1800s the British <u>began building</u> railway lines running almost the <u>entire length</u> of the country”</p> <p>“<u>we went for ordinary class</u> with solid wood benches, rather than upper class, where you get comfier padded seat, but with <u>added lice</u>. <u>We thought</u> this would be a better bet”</p> <p>“The British <u>ruled</u> Burma for more than a century.</p> <p>After <u>a long struggle</u>, Burma <u>finally gained independence</u> in 1948”</p>	<p>Burma, collectivised</p> <p>British Empire, collectivised</p> <p>SR</p> <p>Burma</p> <p>British, collectivised</p> <p>SR</p> <p>British, collectivised</p> <p>Burma, collectivised</p>	<p>State</p> <p>State</p> <p>Active</p> <p>State</p> <p>Active</p> <p>Active</p> <p>Active</p> <p>Active</p>	<p>Slow and kind of epic to begin with (over the aerial shots); followed by faster, joyful music (when catching the train and while talking about the British Empire and railway); Followed by slower acoustic, melancholic music while talking about Burma gaining independence and the subsequent military rule</p>	<p>Sound of train chugging</p>	<p>Aerial shots of religious places, including a church (sun is shining, probably not shot just before SR starts his journey as he seems wet outside); close up and medium shots of SR catching the train (carrying all his luggage like a traveller) and looking outside of the window; aerial shots of the train on its journey; close-up (low angle) of SR, looking into the camera, talking about choice of seats</p>	<p>Aerial shots give feelings of space and freedom while talking about the railway system; close up of SR create a sense of proximity and complicity with the viewer</p>	<p>The <i>states</i> (“facts”) are: Burma was part of the Empire; Burma is beautiful. The railway system built by the British is seen as something positive, that enables the host and the audience to appreciate the beauty of the landscape and the country. The host is a genuine traveller, and this instils a sense of authenticity and trust in the viewer. Also, by associating the train journey with the beauty of the country the following association may be created: British built the railway > railway allows you to appreciate the beauty of the country > British rule = beauty of the country</p>

Theme 1:

The British Empire and Myanmar

Participant's representation

JC: "OK, so that's what you were kind of expecting then, "talking about an oppressive government and previous rulers

P: yeah, so like the colonial

JC: were you expecting that as well, then?

P: yeah, I thought that would be touched upon because, obviously, my understanding of the current situation is all related to the history of the country and yes, so I did

JC: so, you were aware about that before, like, that it was part of the British empire?

P: yeah, yeah because at school I was quite interested in the colonial empire, Rudyard Kipling and all those references relate back to Burma

JC: Ah OK, so it would be, like, back to school days, I mean your knowledge about all of this

P: So, yeah, about the empire. That always interested me, not in a... not like I'm mad on the British empire but as a kid I was like "oh, that's quite cool about the British empire, it stretches across the world", before you learn about the travesty of the empire. So, yeah, it's always been... those countries have always been something very interesting and their current political situation or economical/ financial, just what those countries are like now" (lines 96-111)

P: "As you saw, the train system is dilapidated. You thought that now that there is additional tourism and income, companies from outside, the Burmese would be developing that infrastructure. It didn't really appear happening" (lines 194-196)

P: "I can very much relate to the train in Kenya, where the British were very concerned in having these great rail networks across the country and they slowly just deteriorated." (lines 461-463)

P: "I've been on trains like that in Africa. The railway Nairobi to Mombasa is still the old train I travelled, like, when I was a child in the 1980s, still diesel, engines have not been updated at all. It's crazy" (lines 201-203)

P: "yeah, my general experience, as, obviously... for example the British empire had a huge impact on three quarters of the world, or what have you, but, since that time they've messed with other countries, other regimes have gone in, ultimately worse, or more recent, but it distracts from that. So, like when I lived in Kenya, no one was bitter about British people. They were more bitter about their current political climate or like the Kikuyu, like the genocide... that's not Kikuyu, but the various tribal fighting there. You think like, India suffered a lot after just for poor managing. Burma, they had the militants coming and messed with the country. There's lots of like examples of like... when I was in Poland, for example, they were... I was speaking to them about the Germans, because they'd gone to [unclear] and taken over, they conquered Poland. But they didn't give a shit about Poland [meaning Germany], they were pissed off with Russians. I think... I think, because perhaps the British empire brought in some Western ideas, or innovations to other parts of the world, they see that and there's... I don't know, but who am I talking to? Like people on... like I'm on holiday or I'm going to places where tourists go, they're not gonna say like 'ah, you dickhead, you English'" (lines 713-727)

Theme 2: Buddhism and Spiritism



Theme 2: Buddhism and Spiritism

Critical Multimodal Analysis

Linguistic Analysis			Audio Analysis		Visual Analysis		Overall meaning-making
Lexis	Representation of actors and places	Representation of processes	Music	Sounds	Representation of actors and places	Representation of processes	
SR: "With the help of a local guide I stopped off to meet one of Burma's most famous spirit mediums. <u>People consult them with their every day problems. They are important and influential.</u> "	Burmese people (collectivised)	Active	Cheerful music;	Surrounding noises; original celebration music and noises;	Fairly close shots of SR from within the car (SR also looking directly in the camera); shots of people from the car; shot of guide telling the driver to stop;	SR is shown, as often, as active, close to the audience, and also as "given"; the Nat Ga Daw is also shown close to the audience, but combined with the fact that she is shown as "new", this can create an uncomfortable feeling in the audience. The all scene is made quite quirky, mainly because of the content itself, which is very culturally different from a Western audience.	<p>The <i>states</i> ("facts") are: spirit mediums are important and influential. The scene is sandwiched between talking about the generals, with their belief in astrology and other "unorthodox" practices, and interviews with gay men, dressed as women, about being homosexual under the new democratic regime. There are a number of potential meanings involved: 1) the generals didn't simply consult astrologers, but rather these almost caricatural (particularly from a British perspective, as they are not commonly seen in everyday lives) figures that are associated with "unorthodox" practices in the sequence; 2) the combination of Buddhism and Spiritism is presented as something not to be taken seriously (linguistically we have "I have you to thank" "a bit of a party" and "baffled guests"; visually we have the depiction of what can be interpreted as extreme representations (the lady with the cigar, the gay men, the medium herself shown in a trance while drinking and smoking); 3) the non-seriousness of the "unorthodox" practices is therefore associated with the non-seriousness (and non-trustworthiness) of the generals; 4) likewise, the improvements brought in by the new democratic regime in terms of non-discrimination of gay people may also not be taken seriously and trusted, despite the gay men asserting so.</p>
SR: "I can see there is a busy figure over here smoking a massive cigar! <u>What's going on there?</u> "	Spirit mediums	State			Shots of the inside of the "temple"; medium-length shots of people near the temple; close-up of the Nat Ga Daw talking to SR (not looking in the camera, right in frame); indoor shots of the temple, including musicians, statues (close-up of an unusual female statue with a cigar, more close-up shots of the medium talking (still on the right); shots of the celebrations, with close-ups and depiction of unusual things happening		
SR: "I get one wish and if it comes true, <u>I have you to thank</u> "	SR	Active					
SR: "Even before Buddhism came to Burma, people here worshipped the spirits. Today, <u>aspects of the two religions have merged</u> in a wonderful, unusual way <u>that can often involve a bit of a party.</u> "	Burmese people (collectivised)	Active					
SR: "Followers, locals, and <u>slightly baffled guests were all being encouraged</u> to make donations to the spirits in return for luck and prosperity"	Aspects	Passive					
	Followers, locals and guests	Passive					

Theme 2: Buddhism and Spiritism

Participant's representation

P: "I think he thought some of it was just mad, that they had this sort of mystics. Yeah, that was another weird thing, where Buddhism and Mysticism sort of melded together. I think he seemed quite cheerily baffled by it, but that sort of made me think of sincere, it wasn't like a professional and this is sort of like keeping it a little bit... a bit like "what is this?". So, which made it feel more authentic, I think" (lines 409-413)

Theme 3: “Good” Buddhism vs. “Bad Buddhism”



Theme 3:

“Good” Buddhism vs. “Bad” Buddhism

Critical Multimodal Analysis

Linguistic Analysis			Audio Analysis		Visual Analysis		Overall meaning-making
Lexis	Representation of actors and places	Representation of processes	Music	Sounds	Representation of actors and places	Representation of processes	
SR: “Buddhism is generally seen as the most peaceful of the world’s major religions. But <u>there is now a darker side to Buddhism in Burma: some of these monks here are turning militant</u> ”	Buddhism, collectivised “Dark Buddhism” Monks	Passive, agency suppressed State Active, negative	Traditional Buddhist music; change to graver music when approaching and in inside the MaBaTha monastery. Music stops during interview with senior monks	Road noises	Shots of street life; shot of SR’s eyes through the car mirror over the words “some of these monks here are turning militant”; fairly close shots of SR from within the car (SR also looking directly in the camera); close-up of SR talking into the camera about negotiations about filming and some shots around the monastery; medium-length to far shots of the senior monks (from low-angle), followed by close-ups of both SR and individual monks talking (not looking in the camera, right side in the frame); final shot on a figure of Buddha	Similar proximity created between SR and audience, to the level of complicity with the very close eye-contact through the mirror in the fight against militant monks. The senior militant monks are initially portrayed from a safety distance and in a position of power (low camera angle) and are then the “new” information, shown at an intimidating close distance (as they are shown as very grave or as laughing at some of the serious concerns put forward by SR, e.g. whether they see Islam as a threat). The final shot of Buddha that connects this scene with the following may imply to say: “I wonder what Buddha thinks about this”	The <i>states</i> (“facts”) are: there is a darker side to Buddhism; there is ethnic cleansing happening in Rakhine State. The narrative threads here are: 1) “dark” Buddhists approve of what is going on in Rakhine as they have a long-standing problem with Muslims whom they see as spreading too fast endangering Buddhism in the Rakhine State and Burma; 2) they also actively (“their ravel rousing”) influence people in their hatred campaign and are therefore dangerous, intimidating and, since they manage to laugh at some of the serious concerns raised by SR about ethnic cleansing, also a bit sadist; 3) the whole of the religion is put under question: would Buddha approve of this?
SR: “I’ve gone to visit a group of monks called MaBaTha, the committee to protect race and religion. <u>They’re supposed to be banned and are controversial</u> because of their <u>ravel rousing</u> , particularly against Rohingya Muslims, but <u>they’re still active</u> and <u>I was meeting</u> their senior members”	SR MaBaTha, collectivised Rohingya Muslims	Active Passive Active, negative Passive					
SR: “Right now <u>the United Nations says there is an ethnic cleansing under way</u> in Rakhine State. What do you say is happening in Rakhine at the moment?”	The united Nations Ethnic cleansing	Active State, nominalised					
MONK 1: “ <u>In the past, Muslims scared the Rakhine people</u> . You can’t walk past Rohingya villages after 4pm, it’s too risky and dangerous, <u>they rob you and could even kill you</u> ”	Muslims, collectivised People, generalised	Active, negative Active					
MONK 2: “ <u>The Muslims want to take the land for themselves</u> , that’s why we have a problem”	Muslims, collectivised	Active, negative					

Theme 3:

“Good” Buddhism vs. “Bad Buddhism”

Participant’s representation

P: “you always think as Buddhism as like completely peaceful faith, at one with everything. When you’re thinking of reincarnation and it’s something that can go... a faith that can go hand in hand with any sort of religion, you don’t think of it as a... yeah, you don’t think of wars that have been started by Buddhism like you do with Christianity or Islam and various others. So, I was shocked by that, I just thought they were peaceful people. In my mind I didn’t think about them as politically active, I guess. I thought they were separate to that, although, as I said, in Tibet they’ve had their struggles there but it was mainly peaceful protests for what I remember” (lines 177-184)

P: “I talked about it a few times at work, like “Oh, I didn’t know there’s militant monks”. I thought they only existing in, like, comics”
(lines 322-324)

Conclusion

- The framework seems to be useful in tracking the various mediations that occur between an event, the text producer, the text and the audience, while taking into consideration the bi-directional and non-linear nature of the overall process
- A multimodal analysis gives the opportunity to see how the different semiotic signs interact in the meaning-making process
- A qualitative analysis of the audience, together with the possibility for the participant to choose their own programme seems to provide useful insights on which themes are considered as relevant and processed and which ones aren't
- In the case of the themes and data presented there seems to be a remarkable alignment between the meaning-making that can be interpreted from the text and the representation that the participants provided of those themes
- This type of research is, of course, completely subjective depending both on the participant and on my own biases as a researcher. The choice of the text by the participants themselves, however, may help in reducing my biases and let similarities emerge in terms of both generic feature and cognitive-pragmatic mechanisms at play both in the production of a text and in its reception

Thank you

A large, white, stylized question mark is centered on a blue gradient background. The background transitions from a light blue at the top to a dark blue at the bottom, with a subtle curved shadow effect on the right side. The question mark is composed of a thick, curved hook and a solid circular dot below it.

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