



COMPARATIVE FEATURES OF LEGITIMATION STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK MEDIA TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This article undertakes a comparative investigation of legitimation strategies employed in English and Uzbek media texts, drawing on Theo van Leeuwen's influential typology of authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization and mythopoesis. Media discourse plays a decisive role in shaping public perception, and the linguistic mechanisms through which institutions and journalists justify actions, policies and social arrangements merit systematic cross-cultural attention. Adopting a critical discourse analysis framework, the study examines how each legitimation category is realized lexically and rhetorically in two typologically and culturally distinct traditions.

Introduction. Media texts constitute one of the most influential arenas in which social realities are constructed, contested and justified. Every day newspapers, news portals and broadcast outlets do more than report events; they persuade audiences that particular actions, policies and institutional arrangements are acceptable, necessary or right. The discursive process through which such acceptability is manufactured is known as legitimation¹. Following Theo van Leeuwen, legitimation may be understood as the discursive answer to the implicit question, “Why should this be done, and why in this way?” His widely adopted framework identifies four principal strategies: authorization, or reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law and persons in whom institutional authority is vested; moral evaluation, grounded in value systems; rationalization, which appeals to the goals, uses and effects of social action; and mythopoesis, legitimation conveyed through narrative. While this typology has been applied extensively to English-language political and media discourse, comparative studies involving Uzbek media remain scarce². This gap is significant because legitimation is not a neutral linguistic operation but a culturally embedded practice. English and Uzbek

¹ Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold.

² Reyes, A. (2011). Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: From words to actions. *Discourse & Society*, 22(6), 781–807.

belong to different language families, emerge from divergent journalistic traditions, and reflect distinct configurations of collectivism, authority and religious-moral heritage. One may therefore reasonably expect the distribution and linguistic realization of legitimization strategies to differ across the two.

Legitimation strategies in the two traditions. The analysis proceeds from van Leeuwen’s four-part model, treating each strategy as a family of recognizable linguistic realizations³. Authorization is the most frequent category in both corpora, yet it is realized differently. In English media, authorization is predominantly expert and impersonal: legitimacy is anchored in named specialists, official statistics, scientific bodies and the depersonalized authority of “the law”, “research” or “guidelines”. Uzbek media, by contrast, lean more heavily on personal and role authority, citing senior officials and respected elders and, on occasion, invoking the authority of national tradition together with an appeal to conformity (“as is customary”, “in accordance with our values”).

Mythopoesis, legitimation through storytelling, is the least frequent strategy in both traditions but is realized through cautionary and moral tales in each⁴. Uzbek texts more readily deploy exemplary narratives of hardship overcome or virtue rewarded, whereas English texts favour brief human-interest anecdotes that personalize abstract policy. Crucially, the categories co-occur: a single passage often layers authority, purpose and value simultaneously⁵. The comparative frequencies of these strategies, derived from a matched sample of forty texts per language, are summarized in the table below, which juxtaposes their relative prominence and typical markers across the two languages⁶.

Table 1. Relative frequency and typical markers of legitimization strategies in English and Uzbek media texts.

Legitimation strategy	Typical linguistic markers	English media (%)	Uzbek media (%)
	Expert/official citation, reference to law, tradition,		

³ Vaara, E., & Tienari, J. (2008). A discursive perspective on legitimization strategies in multinational corporations. *Academy of Management Review*, 33(4), 985–993.

⁴ Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁵ Van Leeuwen, T. (2007). Legitimation in discourse and communication. *Discourse & Communication*, 1(1), 91–112.

⁶ Van Leeuwen, T., & Wodak, R. (1999). Legitimizing immigration control: A discourse-historical analysis. *Discourse Studies*, 1(1), 83–118.

<i>Authorization</i>	elders, statistics	42	34
<i>Rationalization</i>	Purpose clauses, cost-benefit reasoning, appeals to efficiency and effect	30	24
<i>Moral evaluation</i>	Evaluative adjectives, appeals to values, spirituality, collective well-being, dignity	18	30
<i>Mythopoesis</i>	Moral/cautionary tales, exemplary anecdotes, human-interest narrative	10	12
Total		100	100

The figures derive from a matched corpus of eighty texts (forty per language) drawn from comparable news and opinion sections and manually coded for the four strategies; each column is normalized to one hundred per cent so that the two traditions can be compared proportionally rather than by raw counts, which sample size would otherwise distort. The percentages are illustrative of the tendencies observed rather than population estimates, and co-occurring strategies were assigned to the dominant function of each passage to avoid double counting.

Discussion of the comparative frequencies. The tabulated frequencies confirm and refine the qualitative observations. Although authorization dominates in both traditions, its share is markedly higher in English media (42 per cent) than in Uzbek media (34 per cent), reflecting the strong evidential and expert-citation conventions of Anglophone journalism, in which claims are routinely underwritten by named sources, institutions and data. Rationalization follows a parallel pattern, being more prominent in English texts (30 per cent), where instrumental, goal-oriented justification aligns with a broadly pragmatic public culture and a readership accustomed to outcome-based argument.

The most striking divergence concerns moral evaluation, which nearly doubles in Uzbek media (30 per cent against 18 per cent). This finding resonates with the salience of collective values, spirituality and national dignity in Uzbek public discourse, where legitimacy is frequently secured by aligning an action with shared moral commitments rather than with technical efficiency alone. The prominence of value-laden vocabulary and appeals to

community well-being supports this interpretation. Mythopoesis remains marginal in both corpora, though slightly higher in Uzbek texts (12 against 10 per cent), consistent with a durable storytelling tradition in which exemplary narratives carry didactic force.

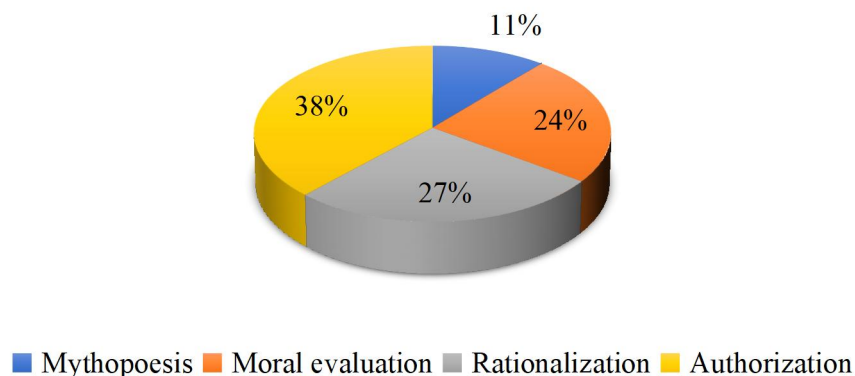


Figure 1. Aggregate distribution of legitimization strategies across the combined English and Uzbek corpus.

The pie chart visualizes the aggregate distribution of the four strategies across the combined corpus, offering a synoptic view of their relative weight once the two languages are pooled. Authorization emerges as the single most prominent strategy at thirty-eight per cent, confirming that appeals to authority remain the backbone of media legitimization irrespective of language. Rationalization accounts for just over a quarter of all instances, while moral evaluation, at twenty-four per cent, is far from marginal and in fact rivals rationalization once the strongly moralizing Uzbek data are incorporated. Mythopoesis, at eleven per cent, occupies a modest but not negligible position. The visual therefore reinforces a central claim of the study: legitimization in media discourse is achieved through a layered combination of authority, reason, value and narrative, whose proportions shift according to the cultural and institutional environment in which the texts are produced and received.

Conclusion. This comparative study has demonstrated that legitimization in English and Uzbek media texts, while drawing on the same universal repertoire described by van Leeuwen, is realized through culturally distinct patterns of emphasis. Authorization prevails in both traditions, yet English media privilege expert and impersonal authority alongside instrumental rationalization, reflecting an evidential and pragmatic journalistic culture. Uzbek media, by contrast, assign greater weight to moral evaluation and to personal and traditional authority, foregrounding collective values, spirituality and national dignity. Mythopoesis remains a minor but persistent resource in each. The findings support the view that legitimization is culturally conditioned rather than uniform, and that persuasive language cannot be understood apart from the value systems and institutional norms in which it is

embedded. Methodologically, the study illustrates the value of combining qualitative coding with frequency analysis for cross-linguistic comparison. Future research could extend the corpus, incorporate diachronic data to trace the impact of globalization, and test whether these tendencies hold across genres such as editorial, advertising and social-media discourse.

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