

“IT IS SO COLD-BLOODED IT MAKES YOU WANT TO CRY”:

A critical discourse analysis on representation of fox hunting in British press

Bachelor’s thesis

Aino Huotari

University of Jyväskylä

Department of Languages

English

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Erilaiset joukkoviestimet, kuten sanomalehdet, toimivat yhteiskunnassa tiedon lähteinä ja ovat täten merkittävässä roolissa ihmisten arkielämässä. Ihmisten hankkiessa tietoa maailmasta eri tiedonlähteistä, nousee merkittäväksi kysymyksi se, miten ja millaisessa muodossa tietoa näissä lähteissä tarjotaan ja rakennetaan kielenkäytön kautta. Erilaiset representaation muodot ovat nousseetkin yhdeksi kielentutkimuksen yleisimmistä kiinnostuksen kohteista, erityisesti kriittisen diskurssin tutkimuksen piirissä. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset tällä kentällä ovat kohdistuneet tutkimaan erilaisten, usein vähemmistö – tai aliedustettujen ryhmien asemaa ja esittämistä niin mediassa kuin muussakin julkisessa diskurssissa. Näin ollen kriittisen diskurssin tutkimuksen yhtenä päämääränä on nähty valtasuhteiden esille tuominen ja niiden mahdollinen kritisointi. Analyysin myötä on pyritty myös vaikuttamaan tutkimuksen kohteena oleviin asioihin, pyrkimyksenä muutos parempaan.</p> <p>Ketunmetsästys on noussut Isossa-Britanniassa yhdeksi kirjoitetuimmista aiheista sanomalehdissä 2000-luvun aikana ja niinpä sen luomat diskurssit tarjoavat mielenkiintoisen tutkimuskohteen tarkastella sitä, millaisia esittämisen muotoja itse ketunmetsästys näissä diskursseissa on saanut. Tämän tutkielman lähtökohtana oli siis määrittää, millaisia representaatioita ketunmetsästyksestä on esitetty kahdessa Iso-Britanniassa ilmestyvässä sanomalehdessä sekä tuoda esille käytetyissä diskursseissa vallitsevat ideologiset, poliittiset että sosiaalis-kulttuuriset merkitykset.</p> <p>Analyysin kautta saadut tulokset osoittivat käytetyn diskurssin moninaisuuden ja siinä rakennettujen representaatioiden heijastavan monin paikoin erityisesti ilmiön poliittisia sidoksia, mutta myös viitteitä sen sosiaalisista vaikutuksista ja kulttuurisesta asemasta. Uutisartikkeleiden analyysi osoitti myös sen, kuinka lehtien käyttämä diskurssi heijastaa tietynlaisia ideologisia käsityksiä vallasta. Ketunmetsästyksen esittämisen tapojen lisäksi analyysissä muodostui kuva lehtien käyttämän diskurssin eroista ja yhtäläisyyksistä. Syntyi käsitys myös siitä, etteivät lehtien käyttämät diskurssit ole yksiselitteisiä ja niinpä paikoitellen erot lehtien välillä eivät aina ole kovin suoraviivaisia.</p> <p>Analyysin rakentuessa nousivat esille myös sen tuloksiin vaikuttavat tekijät. Vaikka analyysin kautta saatiin kohtalaisen kattava kuva ketunmetsästyksen esittämisen muodoista, olisivat runsaampi aineisto ja hieman rajatumpi analyysi lisänneet tutkielman validiteettia.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords fox hunting, representation, critical discourse analysis, newspaper discourse	
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1 INTRODUCTION

In the current world, it is difficult to escape the influence of the media and the flow of information that is provided by its different venues. The role of language in media should therefore be by no means underrated. As people want to receive information from the world around them, the ever growing number of different sources of information is there to satisfy their needs. Consequently, the way language is used, how it affects people on a personal level, and how it is used in society as a means of power in different contexts has become the center of interest of many academic disciplines, of which language studies form a notable part.

Within the study of languages, the study of discourses and critical discourse analysis in particular, has been interested in studying the many forms of language use. Previous studies done in the field of critical discourse analysis have often concentrated on the representation of groups, such as women or immigrants, whose position in society or representation in political decision making has been considered to be inferior, unequal or unjust compared to the majority (Pietikäinen 2000). In addition to groups of people, political phenomena have triggered attention, as the study by Carvalho (2005) on politics of greenhouse effects clearly shows. In her study she examined the political discourse of greenhouse effect in the British press and what kinds of discourse strategies were used in articles related to the topic. Furthermore, issues like sexism and racism have been among the topics of study (Pietikäinen 2000:205).

As an answer to an ever increasing competition of power and visibility in the field of mass media, newspapers have experienced a new era as many of them have gone online, providing their readers with online publications, some of them even free of charge. Both broadsheets, *The Guardian* and *The Times*, have their online publications, where one of the heated issues in recent years has been fox hunting. Due to the fact that especially to people outside Britain, fox hunting might not appear as a problematic issue at first hand and that it differs in comparison

to previously studied issues, it provides an interesting phenomenon to be studied from the point of view of critical discourse analysis.

2 REPRESENTATION OF FOX HUNTING IN BRITISH PRESS: A CRITICAL APPROACH

2.1 Discourse studies and constructive nature of language

In the field of linguistics, the concept of *discourse* comprises broadly the various uses of both written and spoken language (Pietikäinen 2000:192). In contrast, as Kress (1990:86) points out, when people actually use language in different contexts to perform varying actions, the outputs, either in written or spoken form, are described as *texts*. To be more specific, Gee (2001:7) argues that the concept of discourse is used when people want to emphasize or refer to the use of language with a number of non-linguistic materials, such as ways of behaving, believing, doing, dressing, using symbols, and technologies. In other words, people use language in multiple ways to express information, represent their daily experiences, and reflect their social identities as well as the social reality around them (Gee 2001:1). From this perspective, language seems to be present in different forms and for different purposes in every area of people's social lives.

This all-embracing nature of language use has been captured by the French philosopher Michel Foucault who presented a theory of discourses being characteristically socially constructive (Foucault 1981, as quoted by Pietikäinen 2000:192). According to Foucault, the way people use language in different contexts and for different purposes, constructs the social reality, but simultaneously the world people live in influences the way language is used. Similarly, Gee (2001:1) suggests that on one hand, cultures, social groups, and institutions are based on the social use of language, as they get reproduced, altered, and sustained by language use. On the other hand, cultures, institutions, and the social groups people belong to, shape, construct, and transform language (*ibid.*). Following these ideas, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009:53-58) draw attention to the way discourses are used to deliver information to people in certain forms that are constructed by following both social conventions and linguistic choices. Consequently, they continue to argue, the social reality reveals itself to us in a form of representations which reflect varying perspectives, drawing on different ways of building information. As a result, according to Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009:55), the constructed representations can imply a certain political and ideological aspect and influence the way people imagine things and events. This idea of language being socially

constructive is viewed as a fundamental idea behind the studies done in the field of discourse, in particular when a critical perspective is applied (Fairclough 1995; Kress 1990).

2.2 Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis is one of the tendencies in the broad field of discourse analysis. Several researchers in the field including Fairclough (1995:9), Kress (1990) and Pietikäinen (2000:193) agree that although sharing a number of features with other discourse analysis styles, it stands out as having developed a different approach to studying language in use. First of all, critical discourse analysis has acquired a critical point of view, leading to an analysis which aims at explaining and reasoning the causal relations within texts. Secondly, it applies a manner of analysis in which it includes not only the features and content of the texts to its sphere of study, but also the social, political, and ideological connections and relationships represented and reflected by linguistic features. Thirdly, it stresses the fact that discourses cannot be studied without taking into consideration the context, the institutional and social frames within which the texts have been produced.

According to Pietikäinen (2000:204), the main interest of critical discourse analysis can be traced to revealing and questioning the existing power relations, social problems and inequalities, as well as the ongoing ideological processes in society. In general, Fairclough (1995:17) considers the way discourses are utilized to represent the reality around us ideological, consequently maintaining and reproducing existing power relations and ideologies. Pietikäinen (2000:204-205) then argues that by decoding and unveiling the structures and meanings in texts, critical discourse analysis aims at criticizing these ideologies and inequalities. Furthermore, Kress (1990:85) stresses that the stand taken by the field of study is explicitly political and considers this, combined with its critical approach, a means to prove the field's scientific credibility. Within critical discourse analysis, in order to expose the underlying power structures and other social and political factors, texts are often studied according to a three leveled model introduced by Norman Fairclough. These include the analysis of text, the analysis of conventional processes of how texts are produced, consumed, and interpreted, and the analysis of the relationship between the language and the wider socio-cultural context (Fairclough 1995:23).

In addition to Foucault's views on language being socially constructive, both Fairclough (1995) and Pietikäinen (2000) among many others in the field view the three leveled analysis used in

critical discourse analysis drawing fundamentally on M.A.K Halliday's systemic functional view on grammar. Halliday (1978:186-192) suggests that language should be seen as a system and continues to point out that in order to understand the internal structure of language, one has to approach language from a socially functional perspective, paying attention to its connections with social circumstances. He continues to argue that the linguistic variation is the result of various functions language is being used for and since language is intertwined with its social context, it cannot be separated from it. Halliday's (1978:45-46; 187) systemic functional grammar classifies language as having three different functions. Firstly, language has *ideational meaning*, mirroring the social reality around people, reporting how people personally experience it. Secondly, language functions *interpersonally*, creating, sustaining, and reproducing social relationships between human beings. Lastly, language works *in relation to itself*, building a coherent system which is intertwined to the socio-cultural context. Fairclough (1995), Fowler (1991) and Pietikäinen (2000:194) all agree that since the meanings in texts are negotiated in relation to and founded on these three levels, they are seen to be socially motivated, instead of random choices. In other words, discourses are used to carry ideological meanings (ibid.).

2.3 Discourse and ideology

Both Kress (1990:86) and Gee (2001:1) agree that from a point of view of critical discourse analysis, verbal communication is seen as a continuous socially motivated process of making choices, deciding what is expressed and what is left unsaid. Discourses, therefore, are venues for values, opinions, political and social views, in other words for ideologies (ibid.). The way ideologies function in society is illustrated by Richardson (2007: 134): "Ideological practices work through signs – that is through the circulation of ideas, representations and portrayals of social reality." Furthermore, not only are linguistic choices considered ideological, but the processes of discourse production and consumption are similarly seen to be intertwined with existing ideological forces (Fairclough 1995:25). Gee (2001:2) considers all language use political, drawing attention to how social groups view certain social aspects, such as money, academic knowledge, or verbal skills as sources of values, power, and knowledge. Hence, the features of grammar and vocabulary along with other characteristics ranging from politeness conventions to choices in style are considered having ideological implications as they are used to represent social reality in texts (Fairclough 1995:2; Kress 1990:86-88).

According to Fairclough (1995:24-25; 34-35), the perspective adopted by critical discourse analysis views discourses as a means by which different ideologies try to achieve the status of dominant discourse. The importance of a dominant discourse lies in its ability to disengage the origins of certain ways of using language, leading to a situation where people begin to consider the dominant discourse as commonly acceptable background knowledge, which they then use in social interaction and through which they view their social reality. The use of language, therefore, in politics, decision making, the media, and as a means for reflecting the reality around us cannot be considered inconsequential (Fairclough 1995:73; Fowler 1991:4-5; Pietikäinen 2000:191; 193).

2.4 Discourse in newspapers

The media in general constructs a great venue for discourses in society. Both Fowler (1991) and Richardson (2007) agree that as an evident part of media discourses, *newspaper discourses* form a set of discourses with shared characteristics, being shaped and restricted by surrounding society as well as by the journalistic conventions themselves. Fowler (1991:4) continues to emphasize that the studies done in the field of critical discourse analysis have especially been interested in understanding how language is used in newspaper articles to present events in the world and in particular, what kind of representations are provided to readers. Since newspapers form a notable and clearly visible part of everyday communication, Richardson (2007:6-10) argues that the role and power of journalism and news production in society as a mirror of social reality and representatives of information are worth questioning.

The purpose and position of newspapers in society is controversial. According to Fowler (1991) and Richardson (2007), on one hand, newspapers can simply be seen as a venue for informing people about issues and events taking place in the surrounding world. On the other hand, Fowler (1991:20) suggests that newspapers can be equated with any other business where the aim is to attract advertisers' money or possibly to satisfy the current government in order to receive financial support. Fowler (1991:10-13) continues that the former view sets newspaper reporting in a neutral light as if the papers straightforwardly and objectively informed readers about the world. However, as the latter view suggests, news hardly ever is randomly chosen events in the world. Instead, means used to choose and construct news are multidimensional and intertwined with dominant ideologies and value systems (ibid.).

Discourses used in newspapers, as discourses in general, are sets of signs, formed in a social context and are engaged in creating meanings by using categories and relationships; these in turn are neither given nor naturally within language, the main emphasis being laid on the arbitrariness of this relationship between the actual linguistic realization and its referent or meaning (de Saussure, as quoted by Fowler 1991:3). Thus, language use in general, and in newspaper discourse in particular, reflects values and ideological, cultural, social, and political aspects by continuously choosing how to represent things and events, what to express and what to rule out, in other words, what is considered as valuable news (Fowler 1991:4). Richardson (2007:8) argues that the way language is used to produce meanings in newspaper articles, therefore, is considered to reside within both the form and the content of an article.

As language use is considered a highly conscious process where every linguistic aspect contributes to the way meanings are created, it cannot be separated from the values and ideologies which it represents and constructs (Fowler 1991:4). MacDonald (2003:9) emphasizes how the way people build up meaning for words is influenced by and simultaneously enhances the perceptions of our culture. As a consequence, as Fowler (1991:10) points out, every news article can be seen to be biased, since it brings out values and ideologies of those institutions and cultures that are involved in its production. The fact that newspapers possess differing political, economical and social ties, results in differences in their representation of social classes, leading to different perspectives on reporting news (ibid.). According to Fowler (1991:22-23), this unequal representation of social classes is in the core of ideological implications in linguistic variation.

Richardson (2007:20) argues that in the scope of critical discourse analysis, the main emphasis is laid not only on what the articles are about but on the means used to write about things and events in the world. Related to this aspect and theories of critical discourse analysis in general, Richardson (2007:25) draws attention to Halliday's functionalist view of language use. He points out that in addition to the way language use is always dependent on the social context, involving the speaker or writer, text and audience, one must pay attention to the socio-political, cultural, and historical connections that influence and control the process of communication and meaning making.

2.5 Fox hunting

One of the most popular issues in British newspapers in the early 21st century has been the discussion concerning the ban laid on fox hunting with hounds. Although the typical image of

English cultural scenery for many portrays traditional fox hunters with their hounds, riding on horseback somewhere in the countryside in pursuit of finding a fox, in Britain, the tradition of fox hunt is relatively newly established compared to the traditions of deer and hare hunting (Hunting inquiry 2000:33). During the first settlements in Britain, foxes caught people's interest due to their fur, but they were also used as food (Harris 2007:11). The earliest references to people hunting foxes with hounds are from the late 13th century when King Edward I was recorded to have hounds for hunting purposes (MacDonald 2000, as quoted by Hunting inquiry 2000). After the Act for Preservation of Grayne, foxes were classified as pests and their hunting became more popular (Harris 2007:11). At the time of the Tudors' reign, hounds were used in addition to nets to catch the foxes. The characteristic fox hunt with horses and hounds, however, dates back to late 18th and early 19th century, originated by Hugo Meynell who was the Master of the Quorn Hunt (Harris 2007:69). In general, fox hunting in Britain has been one of the leisure time activities in the countryside, mostly practiced by the nobility and upper social classes (BBC UK Three centuries of hunting foxes 1999).

The tradition that seems to have a remarkable position in British culture has become an explosive issue both in politics and in the media as it became one of the heated topics during the UK general election held in 1997 (BBC Archive Swingometer 1997). To illustrate its importance, in its political manifesto for the election, the Labour party promised the following:

We will ensure greater protection for wildlife. We have advocated new measures to promote animal welfare, including a free vote in Parliament on whether hunting with hounds should be banned by legislation. (The Labour Party's manifesto 1997).

In short, this ban forbids the hunt of foxes along with other animals to be hunted with dogs. As the Labour party experienced an overwhelming electoral victory over the Conservatives, they promoted a ban on fox hunting with hounds, officially known as Hunting act 2004, which was then introduced in 2005 (BBC Archive Swingometer 1997; House of commons 2002). Since then the hunting act has divided opinions, resulting in those who strongly object to the hunt with hounds and those who are in favour of this old tradition, supporting the conservatives' attempt to repeal the ban pushed through by the Labour party (Mullholland 2010). A survey on attitudes to the Hunting Ban, conducted by Ipsos Mori in 2005, showed that in Great Britain from adults aged 18+ 32% strongly supported the Hunting Ban and 13% strongly opposed it (Ipsos Mori Poll 2005). The study showed that the support of the ban was decreasing and especially the number of neutral opinions was increasing (ibid.)

A look into the Hunting inquiry (2000) reveals that fox hunting is a controversial issue, which, in addition to a number of political issues around it, is related to many moral and social questions as well. On one side, supporters actively appeal to the social impacts of the hunt. According to Masters of Fox Hunting Association (MFHA), the meaning of hunting to communities living in rural areas transcends the mere purpose of hunting foxes as sport, a means of pest control, or otherwise taking care of the wildlife. In many respects, it contributes to the community and people by creating a feel of connectedness amongst the villagers. For instance, events arranged by hunters in rural areas offer especially the elderly people a chance to socialize during the winter time (Hunting, wildlife management and the moral issue 2002).

On the other side, people who support the ban, draw attention the cruelty of hunt, which they consider just a cold blooded sport without consideration of animal rights and humane ways of killing them (League against cruel sports 2009; Hunting Sport or Cruelty? 2010). Drawing on the above mentioned, the social structure of fox hunting consists of the upper class that performs the actual hunt, but the lower class people in the countryside are actually the ones who seem to benefit most from the events and all the social and economical activities attached to them. As a result, in recent years, fox hunting has been seen as one of the heated issues in UK politics, causing tensions in class relations and between different organizations, and therefore, could be considered as having created its own discourse reflecting the political, social, and ideological disputes around the issue (Chambers 2009; Foggo 2009).

3 DATA AND METHODS

3.1 The research question

Newspapers are consumed worldwide in order to receive information about the present, past and future, which makes them one of the most visible and influential venues for various discourses. The role of newspapers is to work as a middleman, between the public and the outside world, offering the topics that people talk about and providing the required information so that they can form their own opinions about the way the world, from their perspective, is. However, as both Fairclough (1995: 73) and Fowler (1990:66-67) argue, due to their popularity and their essential role in everyday life in society, newspaper discourses are considered to be loaded with values and ideological implications, being the battlefield for power and dominance. This again, is commonly viewed as leading to differences in their representation of things and events in the world (ibid.).

Consequently, questions such as how and why, and with what kinds of consequences something is represented in the article or, on the contrary something is not, lay in the heart of critical discourse analysis. Newspaper articles, therefore, offer an interesting and a popular research topic to be studied. The aim of my study is to examine the representations of fox hunting in the British press, more specifically, in two different online newspaper articles from *The Guardian* and *The Times*. The following questions are used in order to reach an extensive analysis:

How do the linguistic choices, the conventions of discourse production and interpretation, and the relationship between the micro (linguistic) and macro (socio-cultural) level create meanings?

Do the used discourses legitimize, emphasize, or naturalize any political, cultural, social, or ideological issues?

3.2 Data: online newspaper articles

I will analyze two newspaper articles which have been taken from the online publications of British newspapers, *The Times* and *The Guardian*. The idea to use these two newspapers emerged as I read an article by Carvalho (2005) on Representing the politics of the greenhouse effect: Discursive strategies in the British media. Carvalho had studied how environmental politics and especially the greenhouse effect had been represented in three British newspapers, *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. Carvalho's (2005) study indicated that partly due to their different political and social backgrounds, the representations showed variation accordingly. In other words, the study suggested that the articles published in the three different newspapers differed in their representations.

In the beginning, the purpose of my research was to choose three articles, one from each newspaper mentioned above, but since I was not able to find three articles that were about the same event I chose two of them instead. Both articles are about the Boxing Day fox hunt in 2005, an event that took place a year after the ban on hunting foxes with dogs had been approved. The aim was that by analyzing how the two newspapers write about the same event would show what kinds of discourses are used, and especially, whether their representations of fox hunting would either differ or show similarity.

The news articles in the analysis were taken from the online publications of the newspapers. The history of those websites is shorter and differs from that of the actual broadsheets. For the purpose of this study, the introduction of histories of the broadsheets themselves seemed to be of more importance.

The roots of *The Guardian* date back to the early 19th century Manchester where a man called John Edward Taylor established this newspaper as a reaction to Peterloo Massacre and Corn Laws. Newspaper's foundations drew on liberalistic views and after one hundred years, in the 1970s towards 1980s, the paper's political stand on the left, and close connections to the Labour party were undisputable. *The Times* in contrast is seen to be situated more to the right in a political sense (History of the Guardian 2010). However, the many surveys on readers' voting intentions, conducted by Ipsos Mori during 1992-2010, indicate that readers of both *The Times* and *The Guardian* show fluctuation in political commitment depending on the news (Ipsos MORI 2010). The political difference between the two newspapers, therefore, might not be as clear cut as it may first seem.

3.3 Method of analysis

I will approach my study from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. It provides a critical perspective and an extensive theoretical, yet dynamic and flexible, framework for studying the social and cultural phenomenon in question. In my study, I will use the three leveled model of analysis established by Fairclough (1995:23; 74). As the aim of critical discourse analysis is not only to settle for analyzing the linguistic content of discourse, but to search and question the wider ideological, political, and socio-cultural connections and effects of discourses and aim for better, Fairclough's model for critical discourse analysis is suitable for my study.

First of all, according to Fairclough (1995:74), critical discourse analysis is interested in looking at **linguistic choices** made within a particular discourse, which in my study means the discourse used in the newspaper articles. These linguistic choices include features from different areas of linguistics, analyzing characteristics of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. However, in the framework of this study, I will not be able to include all the features and aspects in the analysis, and therefore, I will choose a number of features from each of these three levels of linguistic analysis. As a result, at the level syntax I will be interested in analyzing tense, mood, modality and types of verbs. Within the field of semantics I will emphasize the choice of words and how the different

participants have been named in addition to the semantic roles the participants take in the articles. From pragmatic perspective, the organization of the news as well as the presuppositions and the assumed background knowledge, which, according to Fairclough (1995: 44-45), in the field of critical discourse analysis arouses a great deal of criticism, are to be studied. Fairclough (1995:2) points out that as discourses are studied from a critical point of view, the main idea, at the level of linguistic choices, is that words along with syntactic structures and pragmatic features carry ideological meaning with them. Since the aim of critical discourse analysis is to reveal and explain the ideological, political, social, and cultural connections and relations between the particular linguistic choices and the social issue at hand, I will, therefore, use it in my study (ibid.).

Secondly, Fairclough's model (1995: 2-3; 74-75) views **the conventions of discourse production, consumption, and interpretation** as a crucial part in creating meanings, therefore making it an important part of the whole analysis. Both Fairclough (1995) and Fowler (1991) see this aspect as worth taking into account, since the conventions of news article production and interpretation affect the way meanings are created. My aim, therefore, is to shed light on the relationship between the representations, the way news are produced following certain journalistic conventions, and how this relationship manifests itself in the way meanings come across. As the newspapers from which the articles are chosen, represent different political and social backgrounds, the consumption of the articles as well as the interpretation of their content is influenced by the reader's own political and social background (Fowler 1991; Stevenson 2005).

Thirdly, Fairclough (1995) draws attention to the **meaningful relationship between the micro level**, meaning the linguistic choices and the conventions related to the production, consumptions and interpretation of newspaper discourses, and **the macro level**, pointing to the socio-cultural dimension of discourses. In other words, Fairclough (1995:97) sees the context as an essential link between the meaning creation and the linguistic representations. This aspect is relevant to my study, since in order to understand the constructed representations I need to pay attention to the way syntactic and semantic choices, along with pragmatic features, as well as the processes of production, consumption and interpretation, reflect and illustrate fox hunting, its political, ideological, social, and cultural ties and implications. According to Fairclough (1995:97) and Pietikäinen (2000), the attempt is to tie the different layers together in order to understand the relevant connection between discourse and the social reality. They state that this connection is the core of the whole meaning creating process, and within this connection, the power relations, the

attempts to affect people ideologically or politically, or to give certain value to some cultural and social issues, are most visible.

Lastly, as an additional toolkit for my study I will take advantage of the group of questions provided by Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009:172-173) for analysis:

Where does the data come from and where is it going? (Its context and historicity.)

How does the chosen discourse describe and represent the phenomenon?

What kinds of tensions exist in between the freedom and conventions of language use of an individual language user?

Asking for instance these questions while reading the articles will facilitate the process of analysis since they provide relevant perspectives on each three dimensions of analysis. It is worth pointing out that within the critical discourse analysis there are no absolute truths or answers to be found and the role and influence of every individual reader and researcher should be acknowledged while conducting the study. Although the study by Carvalho (2005) suggested differences in representation between the newspapers, the aim of my study is to approach the research question without any expectations made in advance.

4 CONSTRUCTING REPRESENTATION OF FOX HUNTING

The following section looks at the different stages through which representations of fox hunting were constructed in newspaper discourses used in the articles. The study was conducted by using Fairclough's three leveled analysis, in addition to Halliday's systemic functional theory of grammar. The construction of representations is a diverse process, and therefore, the analysis included many different stages.

In the analysis, examples taken from the articles are marked in two ways, either by mentioning the name of the newspaper first and then giving the line number later or by giving both the first letter of the newspaper and the line number in brackets right after the example, for instance, (g.15) would mean *The Guardian* line number 15.

4.1 Ideational meanings – transitivity

Richardson (2007:54) highlights the essential role of transitivity in studying representations. To put it simply, according to him, the core of representation is within the relationship of “who is doing what to whom”. According to Halliday’s (1978:132) theory on systemic functional grammar, transitivity is the key to understand the ideational meaning of texts, pointing to the ability of language to describe the social reality around us as one perceives it to be. Moreover, as Richardson (2007: 82) argues, the choice of words can be viewed as a reflection of a culture, comforting to and serving the interest of the existing ideologies.

4.1.1 People and organizations involved in fox hunting

The first step of my analysis was to study who the people and organizations related to fox hunting were and how they were presented. A closer reading of both articles showed that the used discourse divided the participants roughly into three groups, including those who support fox hunting, those who oppose it and lastly, officials and authorities. In *The Guardian* the group of supporters included: **hunters:** *tens of thousands of riders (6), more than 250 hunts (10), and the riders in red and black tunics (29)*; **hunt supporters:** *thousands (1), lawbreakers (2), at least 4000 supporters (15), and hundreds of supporters (28)*; and **authorities:** *The Prince of Wales, his sons – William and Harry-, the Princess Royal(16-17), the local conservative MP, Stephen O’Brien (32), and Jill Grive, a spokeswoman for the body which led opposition to the Hunting Act (66)*.

The group of supporters was presented similarly in the article in *The Times*. The expressions used to present **the hunters** were: *the pink jacketed members of the Bicester with Whaddon Chase Hunt (8), the hunts (12), around 80 horsemen and women in traditional red and black tunics (45), the riders (47), and the hunters (50)* while *thousands (1), tens of thousands of hunt supporters (3), record crowds (5), an estimated 4000 supporters (6), two thousands more (8), entire families (33), and hundreds of local supporters (47)* were along the expressions used to point to **the supporters**. Supportive **authorities** were mentioned once, that being *Stephen O’Brien, the local Tory MP (50)*.

On the contrary, those **who were** either **against fox hunting** or **who simply expressed that the ban is not working in a desired way**, were less visible in the article. In *The Guardian* the number of instances where the group’s presence could be acknowledged was clearly smaller compared to the number of instances presenting the supporters. Expressions used for **the anti-hunt supporters** in *The Guardian* were for instance: *animal welfare groups (5), Jim Barrington – former director of*

the League Against Cruel Sports, who acts as a consultant to the Parliamentary Middle Way group and has called an end to the ban (21), The League Against Cruel Sports (43), Mike Hobday, the League's spokesman (45), and The Association of lawyers for Animal Welfare (52).

A similar relation can be seen in *The Times*, where participants belonging to this group were named *the League Against Cruel Sports (22), only two anti-hunt supporters (36), Caroline Black, 64 (38), 1000 supporters (40), 2000 (41), and Mike Hobday, head of public affairs for the League Against Cruel Sports (63).*

Lastly, there was **the group of authorities** which in *The Guardian* was presented with expressions such as: *police (4), The Home Office (8), the assistant chief constable of Sussex, Nigel Yeo, who is the public order spokesman for the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo) (36), spokeswoman (66), police officers, Westminster (61), and Downing Street (62).* *The Times* article was numerous with regard to this group, including: *police chiefs (14), Charles Clarke, the Home Secretary (15), officers (15), forces (17), Nigel Yeo, Assistant Chief Constable of Sussex and the public order spokesman for the Association of the Chief Police Officers (Acpo) (18-19), the Home Office (21) and Thames Valley police (42).*

There are a number of other notable semantic choices to be considered. To begin with, both newspaper articles took advantage of numerals as they wrote about the hunt supporters. Expressions such as *tens of thousands of hunt supporters, thousands more, more than 250 hunts, and at least 4,000 supporters* are examples of how the number of those who support hunting is emphasized, consequently implying that despite the ban, the support still exists and it is strong. In contrast, the number of opponents is not highlighted as clearly, the only instances being in *The Times* which mentions that "...only two anti-hunt supporters were seen in the crowd." Another instance is from a quotation of one anti-hunt supporter where she explains: "*Last year we had 1,000 supporters on foot, and this year we have 2.000.*"

Whereas the group of hunt supporters is represented by using a lot of numbers, the group of anti-hunt supporters or people who are not satisfied with the current situation is represented by names of organizations or their representatives as in *The Guardian animal welfare groups, critics on both sides of the blood sport, and Mike Hobday, the League's spokesman.* Following a similar pattern *The Times* used expressions such as: *the League Against Cruel Sports, the League, Caroline Black, 64, Mike Hobday, head of public affairs for the League Against Cruel Sports.*

4.1.2 Foxhunting

Secondly, the analysis concentrated on how fox hunting was presented and referred to in the articles. In both articles, the expressions used to refer to the issue gave rise to four different themes; **law, politics, hunting as an activity, and animal welfare**. To illustrate this, expressions used in *The Guardian* to bring about the legal aspect of the issue were for instance: *illegal hunts, a private prosecution, a disputed loophole in the legislation, the licensing of hunts, a ridiculous piece of legislation, and the law*, whereas *the Hunting Act, hunting ban, this stupid act, curb on hounds, the passage of the Hunting Act, and opposition to the Hunting Act* were expressions used to write about the same issue in order to indicate its political nature.

In addition, there were a number of expressions that described fox hunting in a more traditional way, emphasizing its role as a sport or activity. Examples of these were: *country pursuits (3), the first Boxing Day meeting (7), hunting with dogs (7), hunts, its hounds (17), the Cheshire Hunt (29), items connected with hunting, some hunts*.

Lastly, there were only two expression used to convey a more negative meaning and point to the fact that animal cruelty or inhuman characteristics could be involved in hunts by the use of *the blood sport controversy (9)* and *greater animal suffering (26)*, which appeared in a direct quotation. By using the word blood, which in this context could be interpreted as having negative connotations, implying death, suffering, being hurt and injured, the newspaper constructs a negative image of the sport and in this way relates the sport to something that might cause suffering.

The differences in naming the issue followed the same lines in *The Times* as well with the exception that the fourth category, **animal welfare**, was more visible in its article. The fact that fox hunting has been and still continues to be a heated political issue in Britain, was indicated by: *the national ban on fox hunting with hounds (4), the hunting ban (11), the ban, and the new Hunting Act (21)*.

The legal consequences of the political decisions made on the issue were pointed out by: *the letter of the new Hunting Act shooting foxes flushed out by birds of prey or using only two dogs instead of a full pack, illegal hunting (14), hunting crimes (16), "recordable offences" (16), widespread flouting of the ban (23), a scent line instead of a fox in accordance with guidelines laid down by the new laws (34-35)*.

Hunting in the form that people in general take it to be was presented as: *the hunt, the sport (11), hunts (51), to chase foxes (68), items connected with hunting (26), The East Devon Hunt ride out (55), the famous Beaufort Hunt (7), the first Boxing Day hunts (3-4), their local hunts (10), and hunting activity*. Lastly, there were a few expressions such as *animal cruelty (66), cruelty (67), and chasing and abusing animals for entertainment (70)*, mainly in the direct quotations by people belonging to animal welfare groups.

4.1.3 The use of different verb types and tense in the articles

In addition to the semantic roles the different participants take in the texts, an essential part of transitivity is to pay attention to the verb types that accompany these choices. Consequently, the way verbs were used to convey meanings and what kinds of relationships they constructed between different participants formed the next part of the analysis.

In terms of different verb types in the texts, four main groups could be raised from both articles. Drawing on to Downing and Locke (2002:112), first of all, there was a group of verbs that expressed material processes (*gathered, assembled to watch, turn out (g), cheer out, paraded, gathered, turned up (t)*) and were accompanied by semantic role of agent, often expressing what the hunt supporters did. The second group was formed by verbs indicating verbal processes and these verbs were mainly used to express direct discourse, referring to direct quotations, or indirect discourse, meaning reported statements and directives by different participants (*suggested, said, claimed, told, backed, called on (g) said, reported, addressed, (t)*). These verbs were mainly used in combination with semantic role of sayer, giving a voice to a person or organization. Verbs indicating mental processes were the third group, only present where direct discourse was used, (*know, have heard, don't think (g) and think, don't know, don't believe (t)*). As a fourth group there were verbs of relation, with the forms of the verb *be*, accompanied with the semantic role of carrier.

There were notable differences in the choice of verbs by the newspapers which also influenced the way the news articles were organized. As the Guardian used verbs such as *turn out, accused* and *fails* in its headline and sub headlines, The Times had *cheer out* as the only verb in its headline. The chosen verbs already indicate a great difference in reporting the news, but the difference becomes even more obvious as the context of these verbs is revealed:

The Guardian

Thousands turn out to defy hunting ban

Landowners accused of shielding lawbreakers

Curb on hounds fails to halt country pursuits

The Times

Thousands cheer out Boxing Day hunts, despite ban

In the articles, past tense was used to give background information, to describe the scene and surroundings, to report what was taken to happen at that particular point in time. Illustrated by Downing and Locke (2002:359), the use of past tense in English in referring to definite events in the past has two semantic functions, which both were utilized by the used discourses. First of all, the writers of both articles have used the past tense to set the events in certain points in time and as the event being written about has happened some time before the articles have been produced, there is this time gap that is indicated by the use of past tense (ibid.). In addition, past tense is used when the writer wants to emphasize the gap between a finished action and the present time.

In contrast, present tense is mainly used in direct quotations, as if the person was speaking at the moment the text was written, giving a more face-to-face feeling to the reader. Moreover, present tense is sometimes used to refer to actions and events in the past, which according to Downing and Locke (2002:357), is a means to add a more dramatic feel to what is happening, creating an illusion that the event is actually happening at the moment of reading. Both *The Guardian* and *The Times* take advantage of this feature of English present tense in their headlines as they write about the event that took place before the articles were produced. The contrast in the use of tenses could be also a means to lift and give more emphasis to the comments in contrast to the rest of the text used to give background information

4.1.4 Semantic roles and features

The analysis of **the semantic roles** adopted by different participants sheds light on the types of relationships that exist between the different participants and consequently, helps readers to form a picture of different participants in terms of their position around the issue. The three different groups of participants presented in the articles varied in regard to **the semantic roles** they took. In *The Guardian* the supporters as well as the people and organizations against fox hunting were

mainly presented as **sayers** or **agents**, being the ones behind verbal actions, for instance giving comments in the form of direct quotations, or the ones performing some other kinds of actions:

Thousands turn out to defy hunting ban (agent) (g.1)

More than 250 hunts gathered across the country in high streets... (agent) (g.10)

At least 4,000 supporters assembled near Didmarton, ... (agent) (g.15)

*Some landowners may be denying..., *animal welfare groups* suggested... (sayer) (g.4-5)*

The choices in semantic roles in terms of hunt supporters and anti-hunt supporters in *The Times* followed a similar pattern:

Tens of thousands of hunt supporters turned out to cheer out... (agent) (t.3)

*Stephen O'Brien, the local Tory MP, addressed the hunters... *He* said: "In the light of legislation, hunts are quite rightly looking..." (agent - sayer) (t.50-51)*

Mike Hobday, head of public affairs for the League Against Cruel Sports, said:

"Overall the impression we get is that..." (sayer) (t.63-64)

However, semantic roles of the anti-hunt supporters showed difference in a few instances. In addition to **sayer** and **agent** other roles such as **affected** (e.g. *only two anti-hunt supporters (t.36)*), and **source** (e.g. *the League Against Cruel Sports (t.22)*) were also adopted.

The last group was that of authorities which in *The Guardian* adopted the following semantic roles:

*Some landowners may be denying *police* access to fields and woods... (recipient) (g.4)*

The Home Office is now coming under pressure to strengthen... (affected) (g.7-8)

The assistant chief constable of Sussex, Nigel Yeo... (sayer) (g.36-37)

The Home Office yesterday said... (sayer) (g.58)

In *The Times*, the same group took roles such as:

Police also want hunting crimes to be "recordable offences", ... (agent) (t.16)

with *Nigel Yeo, Assistant Chief Constable of Sussex and the public..* (accompaniment) (t.18)

It reported that *Charles Clarke, the Home Secretary*, is being urged (affected embedded in reported statement) (t.15)

Both in *The Times* and *The Guardian*, the way the group of authorities is represented varies according to the semantic role they are given. The semantic role of agent is acquired when authorities are represented as either active participants as the police, claiming their own rights and more powers or the government and the Home Office as they show their reluctance to act. When authorities are seen in a more passive part being told, asked, or used for something or unable to act, they acquire the semantic role of a **affected**, **recipient**, or **accompaniment**.

The **semantic roles** of fox hunting were somewhat different from those adopted by the participants. In *The Guardian* fox hunting took a number of semantic roles. First of all, fox hunting took the role of affected when it was the target of some action, giving it a more passive role

Thousands cheer out *Boxing Day hunts*, despite ban (affected) (t.1)

Sometimes its role was faded to become merely a part of circumstantial information as in:

Thousands turn out to defy *hunting ban* (circumstantial, referring to purpose) (g.1)

...in order to shield *illegal hunts* from prosecution (circumstantial, referring to purpose) (g.4-5)

as *the first Boxing Day hunts since the national ban on fox hunting with hounds* produced what appeared set to be record crowds (circumstantial, referring to time) (t.3-4)

to support *the East Devon Hunt ride out* from ancient Woodbury Castle. (circumstantial, referring to purpose) (t.55-56)

In few instances the semantic role of fox hunting was simply to modify or give further information about some other entity (Downing and Locke 2002:459-475):

the Hunting Act, which critics on the both sides of *the blood sport controversy* describe as unenforceable (part of a nominal group as antecedent – giving further information about the Hunting Act)

the only difference being *fewer hounds* and *the presence of birds of prey* hired by hunts to exploit *a disputed loophole in the legislation* (first two identifying the carrier and the third one being part of the circumstantial, referring to purpose)

In this part of the analysis the effects of choosing either direct or indirect discourse become visible. Since newspaper articles include a number of instances where the words of some other person than of the journalist are reported, the semantic role of fox hunting was often part of a reported statement, within which it acquired a rather passive role. The clearest instances were found in the article in *The Times*:

Although all concerned said that the hunts were respecting the letter of the new Hunting Act, shooting foxes flushed out by birds of prey or using only two dogs instead of a full pack,... (part or reported statement) (t. 12-13)

The Times reported this morning that police chiefs are demanding new powers to tackle illegal hunting. (part of reported statement) (t. 13-14)

Robert Valance, the hunt secretary, said that the hunt would be watched closely by Thames Valley police... (part of the reported statement) (t. 42-43)

The role of fox hunting was further disregarded when it was seen as a carrier of e.g. circumstantial information instead of doing something as an agent: eg. **carrier** (*a private prosecution*) or when its role was to accompany some other participants, instead of being an instrument, a means to get something done: e.g. **accompaniment** (have all ridden *with its hounds* in the past).

Taking these observations into account, foxhunting itself was hardly ever given an active role, being an active participant, the **agent** of the clause. With the exception of instances which appeared in direct quotations, there was only one instance in *The Guardian* where the role of agent was adopted by an expression referring to fox hunting in any sense:

Passage of the Hunting Act provoked fury at Westminster... (agent) (g.61)

4.2 Interpersonal meanings – mood and modality

Following Downing and Locke (2002:171-173), the two newspaper articles are following a pattern characteristic to newspaper discourses in terms of the use of mood and modality. Since newspapers are considered to inform people of what is happening in the world, declarative mood is mainly used to express statements. In regards to modality, in the form of modal auxiliaries, both articles were somewhat poor, as they have few instances where modality is used. In *The Guardian*, modality was used at the beginning of the article, *may be denying*, to introduce the topic of the article, the possibility that some landowners might be protecting illegal hunts. There is a notable contrast in the sub headline of the article where a performative verb *accuse* is being used to point to the same issue *Landowners accused of...* and the main text *Some landowners may be denying...animal welfare groups suggested* where the same issue is mitigated by the use of a modal auxiliary and the performative verb *suggest*. Otherwise, modality is used in the comments of representatives of the anti-hunt group to indicate for instance prediction and intention *will be talking*, possibility *could be included*, and necessity *must have* (Downing and Locke 2002:388-394). Most often used modal auxiliaries in the article in *The Times* were *would* which is used to indicate possibility or prediction in future as in *would be watched*, *wouldn't have turned out*, or *would argue* and *will* which is used with similar meanings *will be used* and *will be killed*. The sparse use of modality in these articles might be due to the type of news they represent. As it will be pointed out later in this analysis, the news genres differ in terms of their interpersonal features.

4.3 Textual meaning

In the theory of Halliday (1978) textual meaning of language use related to the way language is organized so that it forms a coherent and understandable whole. As a result, in addition to semantics and syntax, a number of pragmatic features are an essential part of the study. Fairclough (1995:5; 28-29) has particularly drawn attention to presuppositions and assumed background knowledge, which both can be viewed as possibly ideological concepts. Another meaningful feature in terms of text organization is the theme - rheme division.

4.2.1 Theme and rheme

From this perspective, the division of clauses into theme and rheme is an important part of the analysis. This aspect is worth paying attention to, since, according to Downing and Locke

(2002:223), theme is in the position of revealing the perspective taken by the speaker or writer to express the linguistic content. They continue that theme is the starting point from which the whole construction process of what the message is about begins. Following the ideas of Downing and Locke even further, from the scope of critical discourse analysis, the major interest lies on the marked themes of the articles, meaning themes that deviate from the common pattern, the agent of the clause being the most used theme.

A typical pattern to the newspaper articles in regards to theme – rheme division seems to be that complete direct quotations or reported statements are thematically fronted, with the effect of a great amount of new information available to the reader immediately. Instead of emphasizing who are saying and how something is said, new information and the content of the comment is given more value by fronting it. To illustrate this, *The Guardian* included these examples:

Some landowners may be denying police access to fields and woods in order to shield illegal hunts from prosecution (theme), animal welfare groups suggested yesterday (rheme)

“There is strong anecdotal evidence that some hunts are flouting the law (theme)”, he suggested yesterday (rheme).

In contrast, while it is important to pay attention to who are saying what and how something is expressed, the agent also can be thematically fronted in a sentence where an adverbial would typically be the first element in the clause, and therefore a theme. In *The Guardian* there are numerous illustrations of this kind:

The League Against Cruel Sports (theme) yesterday supported demands for greater powers and claimed not all landowners were cooperating with the police (rheme).

The Home Office (theme) yesterday said it was not aware of any formal request (rheme), but ...

Downing Street (theme) yesterday confirmed it had no plans fresh legislation (rheme).

The Countryside Alliance (theme) yesterday disputed claims that landowners were obstructing the police (rheme).

All these instances indicate that instead of emphasizing the expression of time, **the sayers** is pushed first, giving emphasis on who is verbally doing something. Based on these examples, *The Guardian*

seems to draw attention to the fact that fox hunting is highly controversial and disputed issue around which different authorities are competing over the power of decision making.

In *The Times* the marked themes differ compared to the style used in *The Guardian*. The most striking difference was that there were a number of circumstantial elements thematically fronted:

In villages and market towns across the country (theme), thousands more cheered out their local hunts, defying attempts to kill off the sport then months into the hunting ban (rheme).

Meanwhile (theme), the world's oldest surviving club, the Cheshire Hunt, was out in force for the first ... (rheme).

Founded in 1762 (theme), the club around 80 horsemen and women in traditional red and black tunics, paraded in the village of Tarpoley, Cheshire, before setting off to hunt foxes (rheme).

..although to comply with the law (theme) the riders were accompanied by just two hounds and a European eagle owl (rheme).

In terms of thematical fronting of information the newspaper articles show a great deal of difference. Whereas *The Guardian* seems to emphasize the actors on both sides of issue and struggle of power and opinions between them, *The Times* concentrates on fronting background information by describing the scenery, emphasizing the legitimacy of hunts, stating historical facts, to mention a few.

4.2.2 Presuppositions and assumed background knowledge

According to Fairclough (1995:28-29) and Kress (1990:91), presuppositions are one of the core structures where ideologies can be seen to be embedded. To put it simply, Richardson (2007:11) points out that there are many instances in language use that are not open to readers unless they try to make sense of the text by making reasonable ties in between the gaps by using the assumed shared background knowledge. The notion of background knowledge has been widely discussed especially in the works of Fairclough (1995) and it is this assumed background knowledge that people are considered to draw on while they try to make sense of presuppositions within a text.

In this part of the analysis, the articles showed notable difference in results. Concerning this study, there are three main means by which presuppositions are created. These are introduced by Reah (2002, as quoted by Richardson 2007:63) who lists the following: the use of the definite article *the*

as referring that a definite actual thing or event exists, the use of possessive personal pronouns and the use of particular verbs such as state verbs or verbs that comprise an implication.

The Times article included the following presuppositions: “**the** famous Beaufort Hunt” (t.6-7) which implies that this particular hunt is considered famous amongst the public, and by later mentioning that the royal family has participated in it in the past, gives social value to the activity. “**Their** local hunts” (t.10) triggers a presupposition that there are some local hunts which people relate to, that are “owned” by the public, showing again the social value of the issue. The mentioning of “**the** sport” (t.11) could illustrate the newspaper’s view on fox hunting, that despite all the political disagreements, it is viewed merely a sport. In *The Guardian*, on the contrary, “critics on both sides of **the blood sports controversy**” (g.9) presupposes something totally different, that fox hunting is a blood sport, that is associated with death and possibly some other negative issues such as pain and suffering that can be associated with the word “blood”, and furthermore, that it includes a controversy. The controversy in this context implies that the issue divides people and opinions, making it political in this sense. Other presuppositions included “Curb on hounds fails **to halt** country pursuits” (g.3) and “**the only visible difference** being” (g.12-13). The first, presupposes that there have been some people who have continued to perform hunting despite the ban and now the attempts to stop these “country pursuits” as the journalist calls them, have failed. The second one comprises proposals partly due to its context. It suggests that despite the ban on hunting, the hunts are as usual with the exception of this one particular difference in how the hunts are using dogs. To sum up, presuppositions used in *The Times* seems to draw on and assume certain kind of background knowledge which considers fox hunting as a sport, a local activity that nevertheless is the activity of the royalty as well. In contrast, *The Guardian* assumes that the sport is negatively associated and a controversial issue and that the ban has not brought any change to the issue.

4.4 Conventions of newspaper discourse

Fairclough (1995:133) and Fowler (1991:66) both agree that the ways people perceive and construct meanings while they read newspapers are not purely dependent on the linguistic choices made by the journalists. In other words, the meaning construction goes beyond the text itself, and therefore, other processes of meaning creation should be studied when a critical discourse analysis is in question. Fairclough (1995) and Fowler (1991) along with others have previously suggested a close study of newspaper discourse production and interpretation is an essential part of critical discourse

analysis. However, taken the circumstances of this study, I will only offer my own interpretation, based on the work of a number of researchers, on what factors I assume to be of most importance while these articles were produced and while they have been interpreted by readers.

4.4.1 Newspaper discourse production

According to Fowler (1991: 10-11; 20) there are a number of factors that influence the process of newspaper discourse production. To begin with, the history of both newspapers reveals that they have been established on differing political grounds. *The Guardian* and *The Times* represent different social classes being the voices for different political views (The History of Guardian 2010). *The Guardian* has traditionally been a leftist newspaper and according to its own webpage, takes a partial credit for certain political achievements the Labour Party has received in previous years, whereas *The Times* is often pointed as a more conservative newspaper, presenting the side of the Conservatives. As a consequence, due to the fact that the political parties these newspapers are taken to represent are situated on the different sides of the Hunting Act issue, they could be seen as opposed to one another when they talk about fox hunting. However, the issue is not as straightforward as it may seem. As both of the newspapers are considered quality newspapers, differences in representation might not be as striking as it could be if compared to some tabloid paper.

Hand in hand with the political aspect of news production, there are economic motivators that clearly have an effect on how newspapers articles are produced. On the one hand, Richardson (2007: 77) sees a connection between newspapers and other profit making businesses whose actions are dependent upon a product that can be sold to customers. He continues that as any other product, a newspaper article has to be made as alluring as possible so that it would attract the attention of the reader who is also the customer of the newspaper. On the other hand as Richardson (2007:38-39) points out, although news articles are written by individual journalists, the actual force behind the journalistic process of producing a piece of news is, nevertheless, an institution. The example given by Richardson (2007: 38-39) is a text from *The Sun*, but similar notions could be seen valid in regard to every newspaper. He argues that this institutional voice constructing the text has its economic and political motifs which are dependent upon the papers position in society. As a result, *The Guardian* and *The Times* partly position themselves similarly in society, referring to their status as quality newspapers, but at the same time they have differing political backgrounds (History of Guardian 2010).

Lastly, as Fowler (1991:20) points out, in news production the conventions guiding the work of journalists are considered a factor influencing the way people perceive offered representations. In terms of this study, there were two issues to be considered. First of all, according to Taylor (2005:118; 122-121), there are certain well-established genres in news production that guide the processes of reading and interpreting the text as well as the choices by journalist. Drawing on Taylor's notions on genres, the analyzed articles could be classified as **news features** which clearly deviates from the style adopted by, for instance, an editorial. Whereas the editorial is explicitly subjective, a news feature follows as a more analytical piece of text, accompanied by background knowledge and comments (ibid.).

Another issue concerns the question of whose voice is to be heard in the news. Since news features are accustomed having commentary by different people, they are likely to comprise both direct speech and indirect speech; in other words, direct discourse and indirect discourse (Fairclough, 1995: 55-56). The analyzed articles included a great number of both direct and indirect discourses, which had two kinds of effects on the analysis of representation. The variation in voices within the same article makes it difficult to identify whether the constructed representations are those of the journalist or the newspaper, or those of the people being interviewed, who are giving their comments on the issue. According to both Downing and Locke (2002:296-298) and Fairclough (1995:55-56), this sets the discourse in a certain light where the actual words and events have been transformed into the form of indirect discourse and in case of direct quotations, it is up to the reader whether one is willing to relate to the words of the speaker and believes them to be uttered in that particular way in reality.

4.4.2 Newspaper discourse consumption

People read newspapers since they want to get information about the current state of the surrounding world. Since people cannot be all around the world themselves, they rely on these types of sources of information as they form a picture of the way the world is. In other words, people use the information derived in the newspapers to form their own opinions. In this respect, newspapers and their manner of news selection and news representations is in a major role in society.

Following Stevenson (2005: 43-44), both newspapers, and consequently their online publications as well, in which these articles were published are considered British quality newspapers, broadsheets. Although the history of *The Guardian* suggests differing political views between *The Guardian* and

The Times, the readership, drawing on the division done by Stevenson (2005: 43-44), shows great similarity, being classified as “educated, mid-to high- income professional readers”. Consequently, the audience, expects to receive quality news, meaning that the reader is likely to expect good language and quality articles, which differ from articles or news found for instance in tabloid papers. In short, the person who reads an article either in *The Times* or in *The Guardian* seeks for news that are not exaggerated as they often are in tabloids, which draw on authoritative sources with knowledge. Since fox hunting continues to be a political issue and continually present in the media, there are probably a great number of people who are interested in following how the issue is reported in the news. The public might want to keep on track the latest changes in opinion polls and political decision so that they can update their views and opinions as well as form their own image of the issue. Given the strong political opposition of the ban and the number of anti-hunt supporters as well, fox hunting could be viewed as a possible issue clearly present in the next election as well (Pavia 2008; Vidal 2008). The political significance along with more emotional motifs could be regarded as a relevant motivator that has an effect, first of all, on why people read articles about fox hunting, and how they perceive, interpret, reconstruct, or question the provided representations of the issue.

4.4.3 Newspaper discourse interpretation

As Fowler (1991: 41) stresses, the process in which people engage themselves as they read newspapers is a complex one, not being merely a single way relationship where a reader simply adopts the text in the form it is presented in an article. It is a reciprocal relationship where the reader constructs one’s own interpretation drawing on the person’s own socio-cultural and political background by using the already known information in combination with the information provided by the article one is reading. In this process there are times when the text is not in line with the reader’s worldview, and since a reader tries to understand the text and relate to it, he or she needs to make compromises or on the contrary, try to settle with parts that do not correspond to the reader’s own view (Pietikäinen 2000:197).

Within this context, the newspapers chosen for the analysis have their own readerships that have already partly taken their form during the time when the newspapers were established (The History of Guardian 2010). In general, the assumed differences in political views and in representation of social classes can be taken to influence the way news are interpreted. However, since the

newspapers in question are considered quality papers, there might not be major differences in the social status or class of the readers, as was already pointed out previously in this study.

4.5 Representations - in between the language and reality

The final level in Fairclough's (1995) three leveled analysis is the process of reasoning the relationships between the micro and macro levels of analysis. As a result, after the texts had been studied in terms of their linguistic features and the conventions related to their production, consumption and interpretation, their relation to political, ideological, social, and cultural effects were to be studied. This relationship lies in the heart of the critical discourse analysis when the aim is to reveal the constructed representations. Moreover, this part of the analysis, in particular, shed light to the research questions within this study.

First of all, the analysis clearly showed that fox hunting is represented as a political issue, being in the center of political and legal debate. This was indicated by how the different participants and fox hunting itself were named in the articles. The articles included a number of authorities, including politicians and representatives of the police forces. Fox hunting then was referred to with vocabulary related to politics and law. These choices in representation in combination with the variation in semantic roles, illustrate the issue as political, and consequently legal, around which different participants positioned themselves depending on either their personal or political stand.

The relationships between fox hunting and the people and organizations involved with it inferred unequal power relations. In the articles, fox hunting acquired a rather passive role, whereas the supporters, anti-hunt supporters and authorities were seen in a more active role, performing in relation to fox hunting, either physically acting or verbally commenting on the issue. A surprising notion was that there were hardly any instances, where the action of actually hunting a fox would have been described. This could be taken as an implication, that in mass media at that time, fox hunting was rather represented as a question of political or legal power, instead of a sport, a national activity or a moral question of animal welfare. At least these other forms of representation were less visible in the texts. In this sense, fox hunting can be seen to be represented as a key to power over which politicians and other authorities are competing.

Secondly, choices made in terms of mood, modality and tense could be seen rather conventional to the type of news which the articles represent. As the news are provided mainly in the form of declarative mood, being statements about the state of some event or issue, they are most likely taken as facts, which again is the purpose of an informative news article. Sparse use of modality is typical, since the articles in question were not editorials and they were taken from quality newspapers which do not aim at shocking people or exaggerating. Choices in tense were not unusual either, further emphasizing the factual nature of this type of news reporting. In conclusion, this type of news articles are consumed as “truths” since the used discourse, in terms of mood, modality and tense, does not give many reasons to question or judge the validity of the news, nor does the journalist bring about one’s own views and opinions explicitly (Downing and Locke 2002; Taylor 2005).

A dominant characteristic of the type of news article the texts were presenting is the use of direct discourse in the form of direct quotations. This leads to the question of who has the power and authority to comment on issues such as fox hunting and what kinds of consequences does this lead to. The dubious use of power over the issue is visible in the discourse used to represent fox hunting which is illustrated by the diverse use of different, competing voices. In *The Guardian*, this was further illustrated by the marked themes which drew attention to authorities commenting on the issue.

Since fox hunting and the legislation concerning it was a part of Labour Party’s election promise, it is clear that the issue has achieved a powerful role in politics and both parties, the Labour Party and the Conservatives, want to get hold of the issue, presumably in a way that would satisfy the voters and be favorable regarding the next elections. Fox hunting, therefore, is clearly in the middle of ideological struggle over power and the ability to influence. The use of vocabulary associated with law and politics, in addition to the choice of who gets once voice heard, reinforces this aspect since the ones that are in control of political and legal institutions and decision making are traditionally seen as most powerful in society. *The Guardian* raised this ideological aspect by including a direct quotation by David Thomas, one of the directors of the Association of Lawyers for Animal Welfare.

“...Some [hunts] appear determined to show they are *above the law*, which is clearly unacceptable in *a democracy*.” (g. 55-57)

The cultural and social meanings of fox hunting on the contrary, were not as explicitly represented as the political nature of the issue. The cultural and historical aspects were most visible as the

surroundings in which the events took place were described. This became evident in *The Times*, as many instances of adverbials describing the scenery and people or historical facts were thematically fronted. Furthermore, references to fox hunting itself were often merely a part of this background information. As a result, the used discourses seemed to naturalize the historical and cultural meanings of fox hunting, representing it as part of the way things normally are.

Similarly, the social effects of fox hunting became most evident while paying attention to the ways the articles described the Boxing Day hunt as an event that gathered people together to the countryside. Moreover, both articles included one direct quotation, by the local Conservative MP Stephen O'Brien, that implied the social role of fox hunting in Britain:

“In the light of legislation” he said “hunts are quite rightly looking carefully to ensure they comply with the law and *carry on with traditions which exemplify the very highest values within our rural communities.*” (g. 32-34)

“In the light of legislation, hunts are quite rightly looking carefully to ensure they comply with the law and *carry on with the traditions which exemplify the very highest values within our rural and village communities.* (t. 50-52)

“Ten months after the ban, *it's wonderful to have them in the hearts of our community. It is a tremendous turn-out.*” (t. 53-54)

The organization of the articles created a contrast between the social and political aspects of the issue, especially in *The Times*, by reporting about the actual event and comments of politicians and other authorities in turns.

Overall the content of the news articles reflected the results of the opinion poll introduced earlier in this study. The quotations by representatives of the anti-hunt supporter group were not always dramatically opposing traditional fox hunting, but rather reflecting either puzzled feelings towards the whole issue or disappointment with the ban.

“...*The Hunting Act is a ridiculous piece of legislation. It is unenforceable and will cause greater animal suffering. Hunting with dogs, whatever you think about it, does not wound the fox. It is all or nothing.*” (g.25-27)

In *The Times* the comments were pointing to the moral questions related to fox hunting, however, sometimes in the context, in which the comment could be taken to enhance the belief the hunts were respecting the law.

“...They are following *a line*, but it is *so cold-blooded* it makes you want *to cry*.” (t.38-39)
 “We don’t believe there is any mood against the public to think that *chasing and abusing animals for entertainment is acceptable for a modern society*.”(t.70-71)

The conventions of news production, consumption and interpretation influenced the constructed representations too. The fact that the papers represent differing political views could be seen to be reflected in their use of verbs and how the news articles were organized. *The Guardian* did not emphasize the role of the supporters as much as *The Times* and it used more modest verbs to report the event compared to the verbs chosen by *The Times*. Whereas *The Times* left the actual topic of the news till the thirteenth line, giving more space in the beginning for describing the strong support of the hunts, *The Guardian* reported the topic already in its sub headlines. In addition, there were more presuppositions used in *The Guardian* than in *The Times* that implied criticism towards fox hunting.

Lastly, there is the question of ideology. In the articles, fox hunting was represented as an issue which in 2005, most importantly, was in the middle of a political struggle over power. In newspaper discourse it was illustrated by the choice of words to represent both fox hunting and the people and organizations involved with it and the processes in which they were engaged, by the structuring of the text to give more emphasis to some features over others, and by the choice of whose comments were included in the texts. The political struggle seemed to overrule the other themes around the issue, since implications to animal welfare and the social and cultural significance of the issue were not as clearly present in the articles.

The difference in representation of different participants could be taken to have another ideological implication as well. First of all, both papers left anti-hunt supporters rather hidden in their articles, giving visibility to authorities and hunt supporters. Whereas anti-hunt supporters are presumably people with more leftist political views and they are associated with environmental issues, the group of supporters is considered including people who are the supporters of the conservatives who are attempting to repeal the Hunting Act, consequently positioning them more to the right in political sense. The articles were published right after the general elections and the ban had been recently

established. Thus, the discussion concerning fox hunting seemed to concentrate more on politics and the side that had lost the political power, the conservatives. If the publication in question were a paper specializing in environmental and animal welfare issues or in communal and social aspects, the dominant discourse could have been totally different in its representations.

The analysis showed that there were both similarities and differences in the representations constructed by the two newspapers. The ways the newspapers showed their own stands were more implicit, and therefore, might not reach the reader during the first reading. Taking into account the papers' political backgrounds there were four instances that could imply a difference in approaching the issue of fox hunting. First of all, *The Guardian* article included more emotionally and morally loaded presuppositions that implied the cruelty of fox hunting or the flaws of the ban. Secondly, the structuring of the news differed a great deal. In addition to the fact that *The Times* postponed the actual news topic it included a number of expressions that mitigated the accusations embedded in the news topic:

Although all concerned said that the hunts were respecting the letter of the new
Hunting Act... (t.12)

..although to comply with the law the riders were accompanied by just two
hounds...(t.47-48)

To conclude, the constructed representations of fox hunting in these articles were diverse and they varied from time to time between the newspapers too. On one hand, the representations and the used discourse showed similarity between the articles, emphasizing, legitimizing and naturalizing the same aspects and views. On the other, as the analysis went further on to the more implicit features of language use, the used discourse, and consequently, the constructed representations, slightly varied. These variations then could be seen to have relations to the political and cultural backgrounds of the newspapers in question. In general, *The Guardian* seems to be more critical towards and concerned about the ban, whereas *The Times*, emphasizes and legitimizes the support of fox hunting along criticism towards the ban.

5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to reveal how the two online newspaper publications *The Guardian* and *The Times* represented fox hunting in their articles in 2005, at the time of the traditional Boxing Day hunts. By using Fairclough's three leveled method of analysis, a diverse set of representations was revealed. However, the strictly limited data and the fact that the study had to be accomplished within certain limits affected the results in certain ways. First of all, if the study had included a broader selection of articles, the results would have been more valid and applicable. Secondly, the use of several articles would have made it possible to concentrate on a smaller number of features which then could have been given more emphasis. However, despite the restrictions set by the data and the limited length of the analysis, a fairly clear image of the issue was formed.

Fox hunting is clearly a diverse issue in the sense that it comprises questions of both political power and its social aspects, meaning its value to rural societies as a social activity and its direct or indirect role as being part of many sources of livelihood. In addition, it includes moral questions of animal welfare, questions of its necessity in modern days and its cultural meaning to the countryside communities and Britain in general. All these issues are found in the discourse used to write about fox hunting and the way the representations are constructed. As both of the newspaper articles illustrated, the representations of fox hunting are by no means one sided and do not appear as simple straightforward issues. Thus, they are seen to have formed also their own ideological struggle, in which the role of fox hunting in its all forms is a key to have political and social power over others.

As it is assumed to be with any other controversy, the aim of fox hunting struggle could eventually be to find a solution that would end the disagreements between the different sides around the issue. In the future, in order to ease the tension between the participants, change is required and this change could be triggered by language use. Aspects that might influence the used discourse and the constructed representations could include a more diverse discussion of all the aspects related to the issue backed up with opinion polls and research of the real effects of fox hunting on society. A clearer and more established legislation and consistent rights of authorities such as police could result in a more established, stable, and less controversial language use and lead to more neutral news reporting as well. However, since the issue involves animals and is therefore emotionally loaded as well, the discourse used to write about the issue might never achieve a value-free status.

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Thousands turn out to defy hunting ban

- Landowners accused of shielding lawbreakers
- Curb on hounds fails to halt country pursuits

Owen Bowcott

The Guardian, Tuesday 27 December 2005

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Some landowners may be denying police access to fields and woods in order to shield illegal hunts from prosecution, animal welfare groups suggested yesterday.

The allegation surfaced as tens of thousands of riders and spectators braved the cold for the first traditional Boxing Day meetings held since hunting with dogs was banned. The Home Office is now coming under pressure to strengthen the Hunting Act, which critics on both sides of the blood sports controversy describe as unenforceable.

More than 250 hunts gathered across the country in high streets, outside public houses and on the lawns of stately homes to demonstrate continued defiance of the law. The Boxing Day turnout this year was one of the largest in memory, the only visible difference being fewer hounds and the presence of birds of prey hired by hunts to exploit a disputed loophole in the legislation.

At least 4,000 supporters assembled near Didmarton, Gloucestershire, to watch the Beaufort Hunt, one of the country's largest. The Prince of Wales, his sons, William and Harry, and the Princess Royal have all ridden with its hounds in the past.

"Everything is pretty much as normal for a Boxing Day meet, but support is up, definitely," said Nigel Maidment, the Beaufort's secretary. "There's a very resilient feeling - people want to see an end to this stupid act."

Among those present was Jim Barrington, former director of the League Against Cruel Sports, who acts as a consultant to the Parliamentary Middle Way group and has called for an end to the ban. He advocates the licensing of hunts.

"A ban is not the right way forward," he said. "My aim is not to target hunters but to improve animal welfare. The Hunting Act is a ridiculous piece of legislation. It is unenforceable and will cause greater animal suffering. Hunting with dogs, whatever you think about it, does not wound [the fox]. It is all or nothing."

In the village of Tarporley hundreds of supporters lined the streets to cheer on the Cheshire Hunt, which was founded in 1762 and is the oldest surviving club. The riders, in red and black tunics, set out accompanied by only two hounds and a European eagle owl.

The local Conservative MP, Stephen O'Brien, addressed the crowd. "In the light of legislation," he said, "hunts are quite rightly looking carefully to ensure they comply with the law and carry on with traditions which exemplify the very highest values within our rural communities."

The assistant chief constable of Sussex, Nigel Yeo, who is the public order spokesman for the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo), yesterday called on the Home Office to provide extra powers so that police can monitor what is happening on private land.

"There is no power of entry for police in the [Hunting] act," he told the Times, "though there is a power of entry to seize items connected with hunting. There is not a power of entry to see what is going on ... [Acpo] have made the observation to government that that right is not there and it could be an impediment on occasions."

The League Against Cruel Sports yesterday supported demands for greater powers and claimed that not all landowners were cooperating with the police. "I [have heard] that landowners are refusing police the right to go on their land," Mike Hobday, the League's

spokesman, said.

"Surely there are landowners out there who know the law is being broken? I have spoken to police officers who have asked for access to watch and people have said no. We will be talking to ministers about this." The new powers could be included in clauses of the animal welfare bill, currently before parliament, or the next criminal justice bill, he suggested.

The Association of Lawyers for Animal Welfare also backed demands for additional powers. "There is strong anecdotal evidence that some hunts are flouting the law," said David Thomas, one of the organisation's directors. "The police must have the powers to ensure they can enforce it properly, as with any criminal offence ... Some [hunts] appear determined to show they are above the law, which is clearly unacceptable in a democracy".

The Home Office yesterday said it was not aware of any formal request, but a spokeswoman said: "As we normally do in such circumstances, if the police ask us for greater powers to enforce a law we will look at it."

Passage of the Hunting Act provoked fury at Westminster and the government has shown no eagerness for reopening the issue. Downing Street yesterday confirmed it had no plans fresh legislation.

The Countryside Alliance yesterday disputed claims that landowners were obstructing the police. "Landowners and hunts have been working very closely with the police," insisted Jill Grieve, a spokeswoman for the body which led opposition to the Hunting Act. "We are working within the law. There's a good relationship between them all. I don't think there's any obstruction or ill will there."

There have been no convictions of hunt officials or followers since the law came into force last February. A private prosecution, brought by the League Against Cruel Sports against the huntsman of the Exmoor Foxhounds is due to be heard in Barnstaple, Devon, early next year.

FAQ The law and the loopholes

What does the Hunting Act permit?

Hunts may use two dogs to flush a fox or other quarry towards someone who will shoot it. Hunts may also deploy a full pack of hounds to follow a scent trail or for exercise.

How have hunts responded to the restrictions?

Some hunts have been advised that several pairs of hounds can be used in different parts of the same field in the process of flushing a mammal towards a gun. A number of hunts admit they have had "accidents" when packs of hounds out exercising or trail hunting came across a fox.

Why have some hunts bought eagles?

To exploit clauses within the act intended to enable falconry to continue. The government, however, has warned that using a pack of hounds to flush a mammal towards a bird of prey would not give legal cover for a traditional chase.

What is the problem with access to private land?

The act permits the police to enter private land to seize items connected with illegal hunting. Officers do not have the automatic right to access merely to watch or monitor a hunt. Animal welfare groups claim that hunting is continuing out of sight and unaffected by the ban.

How many foxes have died since the ban started?

Prior to the ban, Defra estimated 100,000 foxes were deliberately killed each year in England and Wales. Of those, four-fifths were shot. The Countryside Alliance maintains the ban will lead to the shooting of many more foxes.

THE  TIMES

Thousands cheer out Boxing Day hunts, despite ban

By Philippe Naughton
December 26 2005 12:00AM

Tens of thousands of hunt supporters turned out to cheer out the men and women in pink today as the first Boxing Day hunts since the national ban on foxhunting with hounds produced what appeared set to be record crowds.

An estimated 4,000 supporters gathered at Worcester Lodge at Didmarton in Gloucestershire to see off the famous Beaufort Hunt, which has been joined in the past by the Prince of Wales and his two sons.

Two thousand more watched the pink-jacketed members of the Bicester with Whaddon Chase Hunt set out from Winslow in Buckinghamshire.

In villages and market towns across the country, thousands more cheered out their local hunts, defying attempts to kill off the sport ten months into the hunting ban.

Although all concerned said that the hunts were respecting the letter of the new Hunting Act, shooting foxes flushed out by birds of prey or using only two dogs instead of a full pack, *The Times* reported this morning that police chiefs are demanding new powers to tackle illegal hunting.

It reported that Charles Clarke, the Home Secretary, is being urged to give officers a right of access on private land to check hunting activity and make arrests. Police also want hunting crimes to be "recordable offences", allowing forces to keep track of persistent offenders.

The call for more controls was revealed in an interview with Nigel Yeo, Assistant Chief Constable of Sussex and the public order spokesman for the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo), who advises forces on how to police the hunting ban.

Mr Yeo has already been asked by the Home Office for his early comments on the new Hunting Act and its enforcement. This follows concerns from the League Against Cruel Sports that police are taking a "soft approach" to upholding the Act even though it believes there is widespread flouting of the ban.

"The League would argue there is more activity of hunting on private land and not in the public view. I think that is right," Mr Yeo said.

"There is no power of entry for police in the Act though there is a power of entry to seize items connected with hunting. There is not a power of entry to see what is going on or even to effect an arrest. Unless we have permission from the landowner we can't go on private land as of right to effect an arrest.

"We (Acpo) have made the observation to Government that that right is not there and it could be an impediment on occasions."

He added: "I don't know if this was an oversight or if a view was taken in Government that they did not wish to give us an unfettered right of access. It is a serious step and this country takes privacy very seriously."

At Winslow, entire families donned Wellingtons and waterproof jackets and braved the murky conditions to send the 160-strong hunt out to chase a scent line instead of a fox in accordance with guidelines laid down by the new laws.

Supporters described the atmosphere as "very friendly", and only two anti-hunt supporters were seen in the crowd.

Caroline Black, 64, said: "This is the first time in 35 years that I have not gone out with the hunt. They're following a line but it's so cold-blooded it makes you want to cry."

"People have come out to show their support though. Last year we had 1,000 supporters on foot, and this year we have 2,000. That shows how people feel."

Robert Valance, the hunt secretary, said that the hunt would be watched closely by Thames Valley police and urged hunters to hunt within the law.

Meanwhile, the world's oldest surviving hunt club, the Cheshire Hunt, was out in force for the first traditional Boxing Day meet since the ban. Founded in 1762, the club of around 80 horsemen and women in traditional red or black tunics, paraded in the village of Tarporley, Cheshire, before setting off to hunt foxes.

Hundreds of local supporters lined the streets to cheer and clap, although to comply with the law the riders were accompanied by just two hounds and a European eagle owl. These will be used to hunt down the foxes in the countryside outside the village, and once found the fox will be killed by being shot.

Stephen O'Brien, the local Tory MP, addressed the hunters and supporters before they set off. He said: "In the light of legislation, hunts are quite rightly looking carefully to ensure they comply with the law and carry on with the traditions which exemplify the very highest values within our rural and village communities."

"Ten months after the ban, it's wonderful to have them in the hearts of our community. It is a tremendous turn-out."

Around 60 people on horseback and 1,000 people on foot turned up to support the East Devon Hunt ride out from ancient Woodbury Castle. The huntsmen set off from the castle, an Iron Age hill fort constructed before the Romans invasion of Britain, at 11am.

Michael Moore, one of the hunt's joint masters, said the Hunting Act had no impact on the turn out today.

He said: "As far as today is concerned there has been no impact at all from the ban. Everybody is cheerful and supportive. It's about the same turn out as normal. Last year was a record year when they knew the ban was coming and this year is no different."

He said supporters ranged from the oldest at 78 to the youngest aged five.

Mike Hobday, head of public affairs for the League Against Cruel Sports, said:

"Overall the impression we get is that turn-out is high. What's more difficult to judge is the reason for that."

"We are getting reports of a number of people who are saying they wouldn't have turned out for the hunt if

they were chasing foxes and they thought animal cruelty was going to be involved.

“There’s a whole group of people in the countryside who don’t believe in cruelty, who don’t believe it is right to chase foxes and who are free for the first time to get involved with hunts.”

But Mr Hobday said anyone waiting for the hunting ban to be lifted “should prepare for a long wait”.

He added: “We don’t believe there is any mood amongst the public to think that chasing and abusing animals for entertainment is acceptable for a modern society.”

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