1 Introduction

1.1 Aims

Just after Christmas in 2011, the British newspaper the *Daily Telegraph* published the following routine news article on asylum seekers:

Taxpayer funding £100,000 a day for failed asylum seekers

The taxpayer is spending more than £100,000 a day to house failed asylum seekers who have no right to be in the country.

By Tom Whitehead, Home Affairs Editor

8:00AM GMT 26 Dec 2011

The Home Office spent almost £40 million last year supporting so-called "hard cases" – asylum seekers who have had their claims rejected but cannot leave for one reason or another.

It is usually because of unsafe conditions in their home country, a medical condition or they have launched a judicial review on a legal point in their case.

But in the meantime the taxpayer must fund their accommodation and living allowances.

And the cost of the asylum system is growing after separate figures showed the number of asylum seekers who are still awaiting a decision and need accommodation increased in 2011.

Sir Andrew Green, chairman of Migration Watch UK, said: "This is a measure of the lengths to which people will go to stay in Britain.

"But in the end, if their cases fail they must leave or the credibility of the whole system is completely undermined."

Under what is known as Section 4 support, asylum seekers who have had their claim for shelter rejected but cannot currently return home are given accommodation and living support. In the 12 months up to September 2011, a total of 4,430 people were awarded such support – the equivalent of 12 a day.

Some of those will have since left the country but others may be here indefinitely if their particular circumstances do not change.

Over the period, the Home Office spent £38.2 million on Section 4 support or £104,658 a day.

To be eligible for such support, a failed asylum seeker must be destitute and satisfy one of the following requirements.

They [are] taking all reasonable steps to leave the UK, cannot leave because of a physical impediment to travel or for some other medical reason, cannot leave the UK because, in the Secretary of State's opinion, no viable route of return is currently available or have applied for a judicial review of their asylum application and been given permission to proceed with it.

As well as accommodation, recipients are given a payment card, worth £35.39 per person a week, which is used to buy food and essential toiletries.

However, they cannot use the payment card to obtain cash from a cash point or car fuel.

It emerged in May that the public are paying more than £1 million a month to "bribe" illegal immigrants and failed asylum seekers to go home.

Up to £74 million has been spent in the past five years on a voluntary return scheme for those who have no right to remain in the UK.

The programme offers packages worth up to £2,000 of "in kind" support, such as help setting up home or a business, in return for them not fighting removal.

Destitute asylum seekers whose cases are still being considered and who are not detained are also given support.

Some 2,406 applicants were given such support in the first nine months of 2011 suggesting the annual total will be higher than the 2,551 awarded it throughout the whole of 2010.

Copyright Telegraph Media Group Limited 2011

For readers to understand this news report, they need to have and activate a vast amount of 'knowledge of the world.' Among many other things, they need to know what asylum seekers and taxpayers are, what Home Office is referred to by the definite expression *the Home Office* (line 6) and which country by the expression *the country* (line 3), although the country has not been mentioned before in the article. The reader should also know that whereas there is only one Home Office and one country referred to, the definite expression *the taxpayer*, the first word in both the main headline and the sub-headline, is not referring to one taxpayer, but to all of them. And once they have understood what or who such expressions refer to, readers must also be able to understand that asylum seekers are people who can make claims, may be sent back to their country, and, especially in this article, that they allegedly cost a lot of money

to 'the taxpayer.' More specifically, apart from their general or generic knowledge of the world, readers are also assumed by the journalist to know about more concrete situations, such as the fact that there are asylum seekers in the UK in the first place.

Besides all this presupposed *old* knowledge, the *news* report is also about *new* knowledge, that is, knowledge the journalist assumes the readers did not yet have. It is precisely one of the functions of news reports to provide information so that readers can *update* their knowledge about current events in the world in general and their own country in particular. This new(s) knowledge is summarized in the complex headline, namely that the (British) taxpayers pay £100,000 a day for failed asylum seekers, and then further detailed in the rest of the article.

This book is about these and many other ways language users manage knowledge in text and talk. It deals with the kind of general, sociocultural knowledge journalists or readers, among many other language users, must have in order to be able to write or read and understand a news report, to engage in a conversation, to teach a class or to participate in professional meetings as well as in many other genres of discourse.

Before we are even able to study such specific uses of knowledge in the production or reception of news articles, conversations or textbooks, we shall start in the next chapter with the more fundamental issue of the very definition of knowledge as some kind of belief, and how it can be distinguished from other beliefs. Thus, whereas some information in the *Telegraph* article may be about facts as communicated by reliable sources, other information may be more speculative, for instance that asylum seekers may stay indefinitely in the country. In that case, we usually call such beliefs *opinions* and not *knowledge*.

On the other hand, beginning with the headline, the news report is replete with numbers, which seem to provide objective information from reliable official sources that may increase the credibility of the journalist and the newspaper. Notions such as objectivity, reliability, credibility are all related to knowledge, knowledge sources and people who know, and hence also need further analysis.

Similarly, we may want to inquire *why* specific information is spread (or not) in public discourse and why precisely the *negative* information that asylum seekers cost the taxpayer a lot of money is focused on in the article. Indeed, does the newspaper always mention for any public expenditure that it is a heavy burden for the taxpayers? Also, there are many other relevant facts about asylum seekers that are *not* mentioned or detailed in the article, such as daily discrimination and other hardships they suffer in 'the country.' At least for some readers, such daily repeated negative beliefs, especially about ethnically different Others, may be called stereotypes, prejudices and ideologies. Thus,

we need to address the classical question of the differences between knowledge and these other forms of socially shared beliefs.

The capacity to spread negative information about specific outgroups among hundreds of thousands of readers is a very important power resource of the mass media, so that we also need to pay attention to the relation between knowledge and power: who has more, and who has less knowledge, defined as a symbolic resource, and what types of knowledge are being acquired, sold or otherwise provided by the mass media, elite groups and other powerful groups and organizations (Van Dijk, 2008b, 2011a).

We have mentioned above that for readers to be able to understand this news article, they need to activate and apply vast amounts of knowledge of the world. Such understanding is usually studied in terms of mental representations and processes of language users involved as participants in communicative situations. Within the framework of the cognitive psychology of discourse, we therefore need to review what is known today about the nature and organization of knowledge in memory and how it is acquired, stored, activated and applied during discourse processing.

A crucial aspect of this use of knowledge in discourse is the establishment of local and global coherence, one of the fundamental properties of all text and talk. More generally, if speakers and writers assume that recipients share general sociocultural knowledge with them, they need not express such knowledge in discourse in the first place, and may assume that the recipients will make the necessary inferences from such knowledge, for instance to establish coherence. In this sense, discourses are like icebergs of which usually only the new information is 'visible' and explicitly expressed, but the vast amounts of known or inferable information remains largely 'invisible' or implicit.

If news reports presuppose vast amounts of knowledge among the readers, a more social psychological approach would ask how such knowledge is spread and acquired, and what the role of newspapers is in processes we may call 'knowledge distribution,' 'social information processing,' or simply 'public communication.'

The sociology of knowledge and discourse may then focus on such notions as epistemic communities in order to make explicit how various kinds of knowledge are shared by different groups in society. Similarly, apart from studying the role of the mass media in society, such a sociology of knowledge may also examine what other epistemic organizations or institutions, such as schools, universities, laboratories or academies are involved in the (re)production, regulation and legitimation of socially shared knowledge. For instance, in the article on asylum seekers, the journalist refers to the ministry as a reliable source of information, and readers of the *Telegraph* may in turn cite the newspaper as a reliable source of their knowledge and opinions about asylum seekers.

In the framework of journalism and media studies one might ask whether the information as brought by the *Telegraph* is being conveyed in the same way by other newspapers in the UK. Thus, it is likely that the 'same' events may give rise to different, more or less *biased* or *truthful versions* of 'reality.'

More broadly ethnographic or anthropological research may be needed to investigate how knowledge is defined, acquired and communicated in other cultures. Indeed, what in one period or culture is called, used or presupposed as knowledge, may be seen as mere opinion, prejudice or superstition in another time or culture. As is the case for different newspapers in the same country – and in the same culture – we see that also across cultures and history knowledge may be *relative*, that is, relative to the members and the criteria of different epistemic communities.

Finally, we observed that 'old' or 'known' knowledge is expressed in the news report by definite expressions, marked by the definite article *the*, which, however, also may be used generically, e.g., when referring to all taxpayers.

Moreover, discourse may mark as 'evidentials' *how* the journalist got his information, in this case by quoting several people, and whether or not the information is quite certain or less certain, as is the case for the use of the modal verb *may* in line 26. A more linguistic approach to knowledge thus examines the many ways old and new knowledge or *Common Ground* is implied, presupposed, signaled, and expressed in intonation (such as the special stress on new, focused information), in syntax (such as known information often expressed first in the sentence), in definite articles and pronouns (expressing known information), as evidentials (referring to knowledge sources), as well as many aspects of semantics, such as levels, degrees, precision and other aspects of descriptions. If people acquire knowledge largely by text or talk, such a more linguistic approach needs to detail the grammatical aspects of such communication. Other approaches in the field of discourse studies may then examine the many kinds of structure involved in the communication of knowledge by news articles, textbooks, argumentation or storytelling, among other formats and genres.

These and many other aspects of the study of knowledge and its relation to discourse define the object of investigation of a multidisciplinary field we may call **discourse epistemics**, as we also speak of discourse semantics or discourse pragmatics. This field of discourse epistemics is especially interesting on the one hand because most of human knowledge is acquired and shaped by discourse, and on the other hand because language use, in general, and the production and understanding of discourse, in particular, are impossible without the activation of massive amounts of knowledge of the world. These alone are excellent reasons to examine the many complex relations between discourse and knowledge.

There are many thousands of books on knowledge, in many disciplines, and many hundreds of books on discourse, but despite the many interesting relationships between the two notions, there is no single monograph that systematically studies these relationships. This book is intended to do just that.

1.2 The multidisciplinary study of knowledge

Especially for students of language and discourse, we may need to recall that knowledge is one of the fundamental objects of study in the humanities and social sciences. The respective chapters of this book will therefore briefly review how knowledge is studied in various disciplines, but will do so especially from a discourse analytical perspective. After this brief introduction, relevant references will then be provided in these next chapters.

Epistemology. Since Antiquity, epistemology has debated the fundamental nature of knowledge, and how it may be distinguished from mere belief or opinion. Traditionally, knowledge was defined as *justified true beliefs*, and much of the philosophy of knowledge has thus been concerned with making explicit what criteria, standards or methods are being used to justify beliefs as knowledge. In the news report on asylum seekers, the journalist does this by mentioning reliable, official sources, and citing 'objective' numbers.

In this book, instead of focusing on abstract philosophical notions such as absolute 'truth,' we shall rather focus on the more pragmatic conditions and empirical criteria being used in different periods, social situations and cultures in the justification, acquisition, presupposition, expression, communication and circulation of beliefs as knowledge. In that sense, knowledge is defined *relative* to knowers and communities of knowers who deal with knowledge 'for all practical purposes': *epistemic communities*. In the same way as linguists speak of 'natural languages' – e.g., in order to distinguish them from formal or machine languages – we shall thus talk about *natural knowledge* as the object of discourse epistemics and as shared by language users as members of epistemic communities.

Although much if not most knowledge is acquired by interpersonal and public text and talk, even the more empirical (cognitive, social, cultural) approaches in epistemology have largely ignored the role of language and discourse in the acquisition, diffusion and justification of knowledge. One major motivation of this book is to provide such a multidisciplinary discourse analytical approach to knowledge.

Psychology. On the other hand, psychology, including the study of Artificial Intelligence (AI), has taken a very active and fruitful interest in the mental representations and processes involved in the activation and use of knowledge in the (simulation of the) production and reception of discourse. If readers of the

Telegraph are assumed to know what asylum seekers are, a cognitive approach to knowledge would need to make explicit how such knowledge is acquired, stored and organized, and where in memory, the mind or the brain this happens. For instance, given the crucial role of the perception of, and the relations with, other groups for our daily interaction and discourse as group members, and the fact that we are members of many social groups, it is plausible that we have developed a special group schema that features categories representing the main social characteristics of groups. When comprehending a news article on asylum seekers, readers activate such a schema in order to construe their own interpretation of the article, that is, the subjective mental representation of the current events the article is about.

In other words, generic knowledge thus serves primarily to construe what are called *mental models*, that is, subjective event representations involved in the production and comprehension of discourse such as news reports or stories, and more generally to engage in everyday social interaction. We thus distinguish between generic, socially shared knowledge, on the one hand, and personal knowledge about specific events, on the other – although there may also be socially shared knowledge about specific events (such as 9/11) and personal generic knowledge (about our personal routines or people we know). Thus, the news report in the *Telegraph* is an expression of the subjective mental model of the recent events regarding asylum seekers as it is construed and expressed by the journalist, and the readers each construe their own personal interpretation, their own mental model, of the events as referred to by the news report.

As yet, little is known about the **neuropsychological** properties of knowledge as it is stored in the brain, but we shall see that some recent proposals emphasize the multimodal nature of knowledge as it is associated with visual, auditory, sensorimotor or emotional regions and processing in the brain. Although it may be asked whether such a multimodal characterization is also relevant for abstract, conceptual knowledge (indeed, what brain regions would be involved in our knowledge of taxpayers or immigration, in that case?), it is likely that such multimodality defines the concrete personal experiences as they are represented in mental models. Readers may have seen asylum seekers, if only on TV, and some may have various emotions when reading the article – e.g., anger at paying taxes to finance their stay in the country. This also suggests that mental models not only represent subjective knowledge of specific events, but that such knowledge may be related to current personal opinions or emotions, based on attitudes or prejudices about asylum seekers shared by specific groups, which in turn may be grounded in racist (or anti-racist) ideologies.

Social Psychology. Although one would expect differently, given their domain of study relating individuals and society, we shall see that most of social

psychology has paid scant attention to knowledge. Rather it has focused on attitudes, public opinion and persuasion, and hardly on the ways knowledge is communicated and shared among members of epistemic communities. Yet, this is no doubt the discipline that should deal with the relations between different kinds of social cognition, such as the relations between knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values and how they influence the interaction and hence the discourse among people as group members. Thus, we already suggested that, depending on their own attitudes and ideologies, at least some readers of the article in the *Telegraph* may associate the selective negative information about asylum seekers as a typical example of the reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices about immigrants and not as unbiased communication of objective knowledge.

Sociology. The sociology of knowledge is interested, among many other things, in the way the knowledge of the readers of the *Telegraph* is specific to a social group, class or community, an *epistemic community* that may be different from that of the readers of a tabloid newspaper, or readers in another country. Similarly, a sociological account of knowledge deals with the prestige of the press as an institution and as a reliable source of information and similar social conditions for the justification of knowledge. The discursive reproduction of knowledge, thus involves many social groups and 'epistemic professions' (teachers, professors, journalists, etc.) and social institutions. The very *power* of these groups and institutions also tells us something about the power of their knowledge and how they control the 'official' knowledge of epistemic communities and societies.

Whereas the study of the production of knowledge by groups, organizations and institutions such as mass media, schools, universities and laboratories is the classical domain of a macrosociological approach, the uses of *knowledge in conversation* represent an increasingly important topic of the study of the microlevel of society. Thus, speakers may have more or less access, authority or superiority, as well as other epistemic relations to the facts and among each other, and thus may be more or less entitled to express or convey knowledge to recipients in talk. Thus, an eyewitness of a car accident generally has more epistemic rights to tell a story about that than other participants who did not have this direct access to the events.

Anthropology. Anthropology has often defined culture in terms of the shared knowledge of its members, and hence specifically examines the way knowledge – and knowledge criteria – may differ from one country or society to the next. In this sense, the notion of epistemic community is both a social and a cultural notion we need to deal with in this study. Thus, not only social psychologists but also anthropologists may be interested in studying the cultural assumptions of journalists about people from other countries and cultures, as

they no doubt also influence the article in the *Telegraph*. More generally and critically, they may ask what kinds of knowledge and knowledge criteria dominate in the world, and why it is that speakers of ethnic minorities or developing countries are often found by 'our' journalists to be less reliable sources of information than professional, white, Western, middle-class male sources in the north-west of the world.

Communication Studies. The study of knowledge as we need and acquire it by reading the *Daily Telegraph* more specifically is within the scope of the study of communication studies, traditionally focusing on how information is spread in society by the mass media, on the role of the press and of journalists in this process and on the actual effects of news reporting on the (knowledge of the) readers. Yet, also in this discipline, the role of knowledge in the processing of media messages, as well as the role of the media in the (re)production of knowledge in society, has received relatively little attention. Our more general study of the relations between discourse and knowledge is also intended as contribution to the study of communication, as is also emphasized by our choice of a news article as the example in this chapter and as the standard way many people acquire new knowledge about the world.

Organization Studies. There has been a new and vast interest in knowledge in the field of organization studies since the 1990s, often in terms of *knowledge management* as a competitive strategy, to enhance innovation and organizational learning and in general to improve the organization. Unfortunately, there is no space in this monograph to review and integrate the massive current literature on this topic (but see Chapter 5 for some references).

Linguistics, Semiotics, Discourse Studies. And finally, as already indicated above, linguistics, semiotics and discourse studies focus on the structures and strategies of multimodal text and talk and the ways knowledge is presupposed, expressed, formulated, organized and managed in language use, communication and interaction. This may happen at the level of the sentence, such as the well-known distribution between old and new information in sentence topics and focus, how knowledge sources are indexed by evidentials or how the quality of knowledge is expressed by modalities. But it is also relevant at the level of whole discourses, still ignored by most formal linguistics, such as the way old and new knowledge is managed in, for instance, conversations, news reports, textbooks, interrogations and parliamentary debates, among hundreds of discourse genres and communicative events and practices.

Thus, as we have seen above, **conversation analysis** has more recently begun to explore which speakers may express what kind of knowledge to what kind of recipients, and how entitlements, responsibility, imbalances and norms influence such talk. For instance, in conversations, mothers are supposed to have more knowledge of their own children than strangers, and hence are

entitled to tell stories about them, and divulge details that other interlocutors cannot or should not express. In many forms of conversation, especially also of professionals, knowledge and its expression may thus also need to be *negotiated* among participants.

The study of discourse has become increasingly *multimodal*. Discourse is not only oral and verbal, but as written text also features relevant variations of typography (as in the bold and broad headline of the article on asylum seekers), images (in the article on asylum seekers the picture of an agent of the border police), music and other sounds, as well as many types of 'embodied' signs, such as gestures, facework, body position in spoken interaction, as studied in the **semiotics** of discourse. This means that knowledge may be acquired, presupposed and expressed also in these many multimodal forms, as they may directly influence the formation of the multimodal mental models language users construe when they understand text and talk.

1.3 The study of discourse

In the same way we summarized above various approaches to the study of knowledge for students of discourse, we also briefly need to say something on discourse studies for students of knowledge, although contemporary discourse studies are widely practiced and known in most of the humanities and social sciences.

It is important to stress at the outset that *discourse analysis* is not a method but a cross-discipline in which a large variety of qualitative and quantitative methods are being used – besides the usual methods of grammatical or linguistic analysis. Hence, we prefer the term *Discourse Studies* for this cross-discipline that increasingly merged with concurrent and initially largely independent other studies of text and talk in the 1960s and 1970s. We may summarize these different approaches as follows:

- After the earlier studies of folklore, myths and storytelling, the **ethnography of speaking** focused more generally on culturally situated and variable communicative events in different societies.
- **Text and discourse grammars** emphasized that both linguistic competence as well as actual language use is not limited to (knowledge of) isolated sentence structures, but has a much broader, textual or discursive scope, as is the case for the account of semantic coherence, narrative and argumentative structures, as well as many other 'global' structures of different **genres** of text and talk.
- Rejecting the more abstract structural approach of macrosociology, **ethnomethodology** and, more generally, **microsociology** focused on interaction as the basis of the social order, more specifically studying the details of informal and institutional conversation. Thus, **Conversation Analysis** became a

widely influential, and partly independent, approach in the general field of discourse studies.

- Unlike psycholinguistics, more closely related to dominant sentence linguistics, **cognitive and educational psychology** soon broadened its scope from the mental processing of words and sentences to the experimental study of text production and comprehension. It thus was able to explain for the first time how language users (despite their limited working memory) are able to strategically produce, understand and store and recall complex discourse, establish local and global coherence and activate and apply knowledge in the construction of mental models that represent the subjective interpretation of discourse.

After these initial developments, mostly between 1964 and 1974, Discourse Studies later spread to or merged with studies of text and talk in sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discursive psychology and communication studies. Of the social sciences, only political science has been quite impervious to this general discursive turn.

The methods of Discourse Studies range from the earlier ethnographic, grammatical and experimental studies of the structures and processing of text and talk, to contemporary approaches as multimodal semiotic studies, computer simulation and the automatic analysis of vast text corpora, as well as participant observation, or any other method of the social sciences. *Critical Discourse Studies* more specifically focuses on the role of discourse in the social reproduction of power abuse, for instance in sexist or racist discourse.

Despite various attempts towards a broad, multidisciplinary integration, for instance in my own earlier work on racism, ideology and context, there remains a regrettable gap in discourse studies between asocial cognitive (often experimental) approaches on the one hand, and (often anticognitivist) social approaches, especially in conversation and interaction studies, on the other hand.

Relevant for this book is the fact that despite the fundamental role of knowledge in discourse, discourse studies outside of cognitive psychology have paid very little attention to the role of knowledge at all levels of text and talk, especially beyond the information structure of sentences. This book is a first integrated attempt to remedy this lack of discourse epistemics in Discourse Studies.

1.4 The study of discourse and knowledge

In the brief summary of the study of knowledge in the humanities and the social sciences we already found that, with the exception of cognitive psychology,

research on the relations between knowledge and discourse is as yet quite limited. Philosophy, sociology and anthropology have extensively paid attention to knowledge, but have generally ignored the specific role of discourse in the study of the way knowledge is acquired, expressed or justified. Cognitive psychology has extensively shown, mostly through laboratory experiments, that knowledge plays a fundamental role in discourse production and comprehension, but has paid scant attention to the socially shared nature of knowledge. In social psychology there has been interest in lay epistemics and social representations, but the dominant paradigms have been more interested in opinions, attitudes or prejudice rather than in epistemic communities or knowledge-based interaction of group members. In linguistics the study of knowledge is limited to a few properties of sentences, such as the dynamics of information structure (topic–focus articulation), evidentials, modalities and presupposition, while often disregarding the fundamental role of knowledge in the semantics of discourse, for instance in the study of coherence, storytelling, argumentation, descriptions, explanations, definitions and the study of many genres.

We see that we need a general, multidisciplinary framework in the humanities and the social sciences that allows an integrated study of the ways knowledge is acquired, presupposed, expressed, communicated and justified in various genres of talk and text, and in the communicative situations of epistemic communities, societies and cultures. This book will attempt to elaborate such a framework by reviewing and discussing the literature on knowledge in epistemology, psychology, sociology and anthropology, and by focusing especially on the role of discourse in various ways knowledge is 'managed' by language users and epistemic communities.

It goes without saying that a single monograph cannot possibly review the thousands of studies on knowledge in the humanities and social sciences. For each discipline, thus, we shall largely limit our review to research that is specifically relevant for the construction of a multidisciplinary framework that can account for the fundamental properties of the knowledge–discourse interface.

1.5 The triangulation of discourse, cognition and society

The broader theoretical framework of this multidisciplinary study, as well as of my earlier work on racism, ideology and context, consists in a triangulation of discourse, cognition and society. Discourse is thus defined as a form of social interaction in society and at the same time as the expression and reproduction of social cognition. Local and global social structures condition discourse but they do so through the cognitive mediation of the socially shared knowledge, ideologies and personal mental models of social members as they subjectively define communicative events as context models.

We are thus able to account both for the social, political and cultural aspects of discourse and for the subjective ways individual social actors produce and reproduce social representations as well as social structure. As we have done before for the study of ideology, this integration of a structural and an interactional approach to knowledge and discourse may be seen as one of the ways the notorious macro–micro gap can be bridged in the social sciences.