"Ket me out of here":
The Thai cave boys' rescue and the popularisation
of technical-scientific information in the news media

On 23 June 2018, a football team of 12 boys between 11 and 17 and their coach ended up trapped in Tham Luang cave in the North of Thailand, after entering it for a short walk and being surprised by an unexpected flood. As the water filled the cave, for several days the world followed in suspense the fate of the imprisoned team, an emotionally engaging story especially for the young age of the people involved. A heated debate among professionals as well as lay people ensued on the possible ways of saving the boys, all eventually rescued alive from the cave 22 days after. The worldwide media coverage of the news was immense, and unprecedented as regards speleological accidents.

The rescue operation required a very complex effort, necessitating professional knowledge and experts of multiple disciplines, including geology, hydraulics, medicine to name some, on top of caving and diving. This study aims to analyse how the large amount of technical-scientific information related to the rescue was transferred to a lay audience: e.g., on 11 July 2018, a *Sun* headline read "Ket me out of here", referring to the boys apparently being dosed with ketamine in order to be saved. How much background knowledge is to be assumed? How much to be provided for the informative scope? How is specialised terminology 'dosed out' to the public for this objective?

The analysis will be carried out on a collection of texts from English-speaking news media sources worldwide, including Thai local ones (e.g. *The Bangkok Post*), collected between 23 June and 31 December 2018. The focus will be terminological, but a discursive interpretation will be attempted along the lines of Critical Discourse Studies. The corpus will be investigated and interpreted qualitatively, from the perspectives of domain-specific languages (Gotti 2011, 2014), science popularisation (Garzone 2006), appraisal in the media (Martin & White 2005) and Critical Discourse Studies (Wodak & Meyer 2016; Flowerdew & Richardson 2018), though tools for quantitative analysis, e.g. *SketchEngine* (Kilgarriff & Rychlý 2003) may be employed to support and integrate the data.

This investigation is expected to shed light on the novel ways in which news stories involving specialised knowledge and enjoying global coverage are reported to mass audiences, in a mediating process that presupposes – in the current interactive use of the web – a negotiable co-construction of knowledge and opinions.

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