

A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS STUDY OF THE TRUTH AND REALITY IN NEWS WEBSITES ABOUT THE WAR IN SYRIA BETWEEN AL-JAZEERA ENGLISH AND BBC WORLD

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ABSTRACT

Although news media are regarded as means of conveying truth and reality and considered to be based on such canons as "maintaining democracy", seeking truth and reporting it, minimizing harm, spreading peace, standing against discrimination, serving public interest, and the like, in reality, are not followed by most of the journalists, hence news websites. Most of, if not all, news media, nowadays, are under the control of powerful entities, such as people or organizations funding them, politicians, advertisers, and sometimes under the effect of, for instance, their own workers.

The present study aims at highlighting the difference in conveying messages via news by the selected channels and it also aims at showing the main differences between the use of words in BBC and Al-Jazeera and to bridge the gap between the East and West media by using the methods of critical discourse analysis.

However, the media became as a sub-branch of linguistics, which is called media linguistics. Media linguistics is the linguistic study of media speech. It studies the functioning of language in the media sphere, or the modern mass communication presented by print, audiovisual and networked media. Media linguistics is being formed in the process of differentiation of linguistics as a general theory of language, and its term turned out to be in line with psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, developmental linguistics, legal linguistics, political linguistics, etc.

SECTION ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The media language has become an essential part of importance for the linguists. There are four practical and principled reasons for this interest. First, the media provide an easily accessible source of language data for research and teaching purposes. Second, the media are important linguistic institutions. Their output makes up a large proportion

of the language that people hear and read every day. Media usage reflects and shapes both language use and attitudes in a speech community. For second language learners, the media may function as the primary—or even the sole—source of native-speaker models. Third, the ways in which the media use language are interesting linguistically in their own right; these include how different dialects and languages are used in advertising, how tabloid newspapers use language in a projection of their assumed readers' speech, or how radio personalities

use language—and only language—to construct their own images and their relationships to an unseen, unknown audience. Fourth, the media are important social institutions.

However, most of the News channels usually tend to fabricate the vocabulary in order to change the course of events or the context of the news in favor of channel orientations.

The present study aims at highlighting the difference in conveying messages via news by the selected channels and showing the main differences between the use of words in BBC and Al-Jazeera.

It is hypothesized that the gap between the news of the two channels can be realized by the use of certain lexical items. Also, the Lexical choice is not alike according to the two channels chosen in this work.

The current work is limited to the analysis of some textual features regarding the texts of the news in BBC and Al-Jazeera, and how each channel presents its own news.

The procedures followed in this study are dividing the research into three sections. Section one is the preliminaries that include, the problem, the aims, etc. Presenting the core of the study which deals with many aspects of the subject and it is followed by the explanations of Dijk's approach in the CDA. Giving a thorough about the analysis of the data. Showing the last section is the conclusions that have been reached at throughout the research.

SECTION TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTORY NOTE

As the news in this study are regarded texts in the language of discourse analysis. In general, the text refers to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 1). Widdowson (2007: 4) says that the difference between a text and a sentence is that the text is an actual use of language, while the sentence is an abstract unit of linguistic analysis.

According to Widdowson (ibid: 133), a text is defined as "the language produced by the first-person party (addresser) in the communication process. It is

the linguistic trace in the speech or writing of the first-person party intended discourse".

2.2 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

This study investigates the news coverage from a CDA perspective, so the phrase CDA is a linguistic field that aims to investigate the impervious links of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts. (Fairclough, 1995:135).

Language, for CDA, always carries some inferences of the world, i.e., it is never neutral, at least on a personal level (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258). This means that it is always interpretative and explanatory as doing ideological work.

In a similar vein, Van Dijk (1998) considers the critical approach to discourse analysis as a field that deals with (i) unpacking the discursive sources of power, inequality, dominance and bias by studying and analyzing written and spoken texts (ii) and examining the way these discursive sources are reproduced and maintained in a specific social, political, economic, religious and historical context (McClure, 2008:80).

The goal of critical discourse analysis is to highlight on the linguistic discursive aspect of social and cultural phenomena and processes of change in late modernity. A number of research in critical discourse analysis has dealt with fields like pedagogy, mass communication and racism, nationalism and identity, mass communication and economy (Richardson 1998), the spread of market practices (Fairclough 1993) and mass communication, democracy and politics (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002:61).

Habermas's work, Marxist critical theory, and specifically Foucault's theories have been counted within CDA's realm as they have provided the bases for CDA (Hart, 2010:3). Marxism and Foucault's power related research have been identified as the main influence behind contemporary CDA and particularly that of Fairclough (1979); a combination of Foucault's theories of power and discourse and Marxists' critical view of society is used in both

contemporary CDA and Fairclough's CDA (Foucault, 1970:51-56).

2.3 VAN DIJK'S APPROACH

The approach followed in this term paper belongs to an Dijk's approach or model in CDA. Teun Van A. Dijk (1979) is a leading figure in CDA, especially with reference to media discourse. His approach is named "Socio-cognitive approach" as the cognitive analysis is what distinguishes his approach from those of the others. Socio cognitive is a combination of two terms: social and cognition. Such set of functions as perception, representation, and thought are defined under the term cognition. According to this linguist, socio cognition is what mediates

between society and discourse (Van Dijk, 1995:64). He believes that "managing the mind of others is essentially a function of text and talk" (Van Dijk, 1993:254). He also believes that social power is a means of mind and action control. For him, discourse analysis is ideology analysis because discourses and communications are never non-ideological, even the non-verbal ones (Van Dijk, 1995:7).

Van Dijk's analysis takes place at two levels: micro level, including such notions as text, and macro level, such as social relations. He states that the notions of these levels are mediated by social cognition (Van Dijk, 1993:280). The socio-cognitive approach is best clarified as represented diagrammatically in the following figure:

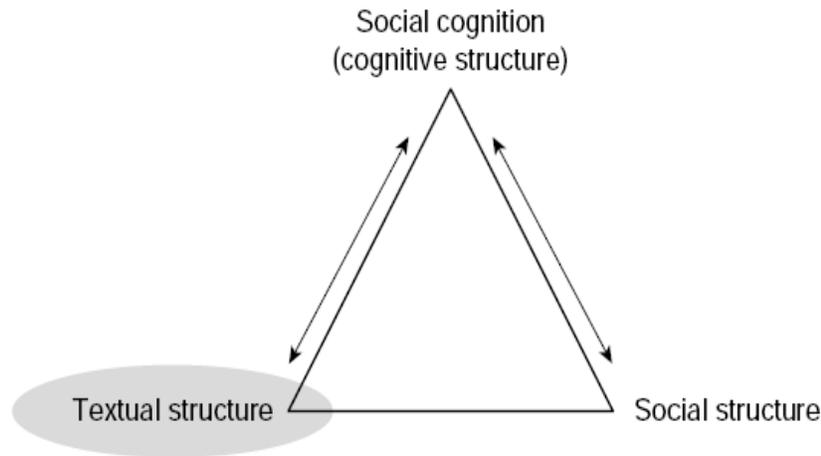


Figure (2.1) : Van Dijk's Textual-Cognitive-Social Triangle
Adopted from (Hart, 2010:15)

Van Dijk (1995) cited in (Bukhari and Xiaoyang, 2013:12) states that in order to "make transparent such as ideological dichotomy in discourse", the analysis must be in the following way:

- a. "Examining the context of the discourse: historical, political or social background of a conflict and its main participants"
- b. "Analyzing groups, power relations and conflicts involved"
- c. "Identifying positive and negative opinions about Us versus Them"
- d. "Making explicit the presupposed and the implied"

e. "Examining and evaluating all formal structures."

2.4 WODAK'S APPROACH

Another well-known approach in CDA is of Wodak. This linguist is another leading figure in CDA. She and her colleagues in Vienna have developed an approach to CDA. Their work that adheres to socio-philosophical and ethnographical orientations is referred to as "Discourse-Historical approach" because it emphasizes the development of discourse through historical continuum, both diachronically and synchronically. Within this approach, researches on

various issues of society, particularly sexism, racism, identity problems and anti-Semitism have been carried out (Hyland and Paltridge, 2011:43). The notion of language as a social practice is one of the basic notions in this approach. This approach focuses on the historical context of discourse in its analysis (Wodak et al., 1990:204).

According to Wodak and Ludwing (1999:12), CDA implies three main points:

- i. All discourses reveal ideologies and power.
- ii. Discourse is always historical; this is similar to Fairclough's "intertextuality". Thus, in order to help differentiate between Wodak and Fairclough's approaches, KhosraviNik (2010:84) states that Fairclough's research materials are considered "limited" when compared to Wodak's, because the former uses SFL theory in the analysis while the latter turns to inspirations from "sociolinguistic" traditions in addition to "ethnographic" ones.
- iii. Different interpretations might be given to the same discourse by different listeners and/or readers. Therefore, Wodak and Ludwing (1999) assert that "the right interpretation does not exist (and) a hermeneutic approach is necessary. Interpretations can be more or less plausible or adequate, but they cannot be true."

Another important thing to be mentioned is the "socio-philosophical" orientation of this approach which makes it in need to follow "a complex concept of social critique" which includes three "interrelated aspects" (Wodak and Meyer, 2001:64-5). These are:

- a. "Text or discourse immanent critique"
- b. "Socio-diagnostic critique"
- c. "Prognostic critique"

In any kind of investigation, according to (Wodak and Meyer, 2001:65), seeks to do the following:

First, combining as much as possible amount of available knowledge related to the event of discursive practice, social, political and historical. Second, investigating the changes occurring, diachronically, concerning a particular discourse genre for the purpose of clarifying "the historical dimension of

discursive practice". Third, explaining the context by integrating social theories.

2.5 IDEOLOGY

As long as the topic of ideology is a basic in the model of Van Dijk and in CDA in general, so, it is worth to explain it in this sub-section. The term ideology was mainly invented by Destutt de Tracy, a French philosopher in 1796. Since then, much scholars' attention, from different disciplines, has got attracted to this term. They offered a wide range of different definitions which "vary in focus" but emphasize similar "concerns"; in other words, they dealt with it from different perspectives (Alaghbary et al., 2015 :2).

According to the Marxist perspective, ideology is simply the study of ideas and beliefs (Richardson, 2007:134). In a similar vein, Eagleton (1991:30) states that ideology "signifies ideas and beliefs" and helps to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation. It "retains an emphasis on false and deceptive beliefs".

Ideology is a central point in languages and languages as a home of ideologies, many analytical approaches appeared to study this concept, such as CL and CDA (Alaghbary, 2015 :6). In Critical discourse studies, ideology is viewed in two ways: (i) as a natural system of ideas and beliefs (ii) and as false beliefs and values and a misrepresentation of reality (ibid). Within CDA approaches, Van Dijk (1998:1) views ideology as a system of ideas and beliefs in addition to values and attitudes. It is a representation of particular values and a picture of shaped relationships and identifications. It is a representation of "Us" and "Them". According to Fairclough (2003: 28):

Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation. They may be enacted in ways of interaction (and therefore in genres) and inculcated in ways of

being identities (and therefore styles). Analysis of texts ... is an important aspect of ideological analysis and critique.

He (ibid) also highlights the idea that unmasking ideologies in any text is "partly" a matter of "intertextuality" and it needs to be analyzed in terms of "thematization". Studying ideologies is studying social identity constructions. Ideology affects people's ideas and beliefs. "When most people in a society think alike about certain matters, or even forget that there are alternatives to the current states of affairs, we arrive at the concept of hegemony" (Parsa, 2008 :62) . This means that ideology leads to hegemony, thus it has a real effect that should not be neglected.

Positioning ideology in media studies, Richardson (2006:6) puts forward some of the main goals and functions of journalism, thus news websites. The main goal of these is to report the world and the events to the reader, mostly events that have not been seen by the readers themselves. This makes media proper means for conveying ideologies to the world. On this point, the present study is trying to show that this is not always the case, particularly in matters related to Islam, i.e., journalism does not always represent the reality; instead it employs discursive strategies in doing so. Media's reflection of the events relating to Islam and Muslims is ideologically shaped in a negative way. The act of choosing certain words rather than others, styling certain voices but not others in a particular way, and choosing particular events to be reported out of many events are all points that stress the fact that media are capable of doing the opposite of what it is actually supposed to do.

As Fairclough (1992: 67) states, "discourse as an ideological practice constitutes, naturalizes, sustains and changes significations of the world from diverse positions in power relation", i.e., ideology is a way of exercising power and one dimension of the struggle over it. It serves power.

2.6 POWER

As long as the use of power is one of the central concepts in the field of CDA because CDA aims at

analyzing language use of those in power, so this research paper tries to shed light on the role of language and how power influence the word choice between the channels of news. The power abuse of one group over another", i.e., a representation of social domination, and the discursive way used in representing these abuses in the discourse (Wodak, 2008:9).

Van Dijk (1993:254) illustrates the types of power aiming to control others under two main spheres: (i) sphere of actions: power based on force and money, i.e., those related to military/violent and to rich people respectively (ii) and sphere of cognition: power based on knowledge, information and authority that is used by journalist, thus media, professors, and parents. This latter type is the one CDA deals with. Van Dijk (ibid) asserts that it is more cunning and intricate than the former because it uses smarter strategies such as dissimulation, persuasion, manipulation and naturalization. It makes a change in one's own interest.

Wodak (2008:9) states that there are three approaches to power:

- "power as a result of specific *resources* of individual actors (related to French and Raven, 1959)",
- "power as a specific attribute of *social exchange* in each interaction (related to Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1962, 1975)" and
- "power as a systemic and constitutive element/characteristic of society (related to from very different angles, Foucault, 1975 and Giddens, 1984)".

For CDA, power is mostly understood in the third way. This is because of two main reasons: First is because Foucault is one of the "godfathers" of CDA, and the other is that text for CDA is socially determined.

2.7 COHESIVE CATEGORIES AND POLITICAL TEXTS

This topic is about the relationship between the political language and the discourse in linguistics. Analysis of political discourse has an interdisciplinary character: it reflects the relation

between language and power in the linguistic, sociological, interpersonal, cultural and cognitive aspects, (ibid).

Moreover, one can simply state the following aspects of political speeches according to Stayrk (2016:8):

Firstly, the tendency to map political speech is a domain of various disciplines which may be characterized by many studies focusing on different constitutive elements and using a variety of methods. It is, however, necessary to point out here that some of these studies and methods bear little or even no relation to any linguistic theory. For instance, content analysis, the goal of which is to map and count of themes in order to test hypotheses, is the branch of analysis typical for sociology, social psychology, media studies or political science. As such, it has just little to do with linguistic theory; however, it is related to pragmatics and the tendencies in political speeches.

A different level of power and its representation is aspect of political speeches. It is necessary to differentiate between two approaches - the study of the power in discourse and the study of the power behind the discourse. The first approach is characterized by a discourse where relations of power are present; behind the face-to-face spoken discourse and the mass media discourse, this kind of power is exemplified in cross-cultural discourse where its participants belong to different ethnic and social Groupings.

SECTION THREE: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.1 INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This study tries to investigate the notion of clash of news in English channels such as BBC and Al-Jazeera news in English regarding the clash in Syria.

3.2 DATA SELECTION

These criteria of choosing the data can be summarized as in the following points:

1. Some samples are chosen from BBC.
2. Some samples are taken from Al-Jazeera.
3. The texts deal with the clash in Syria and Al-Jazeera.

3.3 THE MODEL

This work follows the model of Van Dijk since it presents a good account about the discourse analysis regarding the texts selected in the study. The data are going to be analyzed according to Fairclough's the second level a social practice analysis is represented by analyzing the texts in relation to power, ideology and social events, i.e., going beyond the linguistic characteristics of the texts. The ideas will be stated following Fairclough's notion of thematization, i.e., in the form of themes.

3.4 TEXT ANALYSIS

1. Islamic State: Abu Muhammad al-Adnani 'killed in Aleppo'

Killed is a past tense verb. This headline is taken from BBC channel in 2017. It is said by the reporter declaring that AL-Adnani has been killed in Aleppo in Syria. This channel uses the word 'killed' which is a verb. It refers to a process of military operations that resulted this news. It also indicates that the speaker considers the dead ones as enemies. However, Al-Adnani is the chief strategist of the Islamic State group, whose calls for attacks against the West and during Ramadan led to mass bloodshed, has been killed in Syria, IS-affiliated media say. The Pentagon said an air strike had targeted Adnani in the town of al Bab and the results were being assessed. Reports of his death come as IS is suffering a series of military reverses in both Syria and Iraq. Adnani - who was also the group's spokesman - was "martyred while surveying the operations to repel the military campaigns against Aleppo", Amaq said, without giving details about how he died. Fighting has escalated around the city in recent weeks, with rebels

breaking a siege by government forces and Syrian and Russian warplanes bombing rebel-held areas.

2. *ISIL's Abu Mohamed al-Adnani 'dead in Syria's Aleppo'*

Dead is an adjective lexical item. This news is taken from Al-jazeera channel in 2017. It is said by the reporter declaring that AL-Adnani is dead in Syria particularly in Aleppo. In contrast with the previous one, this channel uses the word 'dead' which is an adjective. It refers to a process of a normal cases that happens to a human, but it is in not by any military operations.

This dead person is the main spokesman for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) armed group, Abu Mohamed al-Adnani, has been dead in the Syrian province of Aleppo, according to an ISIL-linked website. Amaq, the ISIL-affiliated media, said on Tuesday Adnani was killed while monitoring military operations in Aleppo. AUS defence official said the US-led coalition forces battling ISIL had conducted an air strike Tuesday targeting a "senior leader" of the group, without specifying who the leader was.

3. *Syria war: IS 'kills 35' government troops in desert attacks*

The lexical item 'Kills' is a plural noun. This news is taken from BBC channel in 2018. It is displayed by the reporter declaring that IsIs has killed 35 troops of the government in the desert attacks. BBC channel uses the word 'kills' which is a verb in the present tense. It refers to a process in normal cases that happens to a human but it is not by any military operations. Finally, Islamic State militants have killed 35 Syrian pro-government forces in desert attacks in recent days, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says.

4. *18 killed in huge blast in northwest Syria*

Again, in this example 'Killed' is a past tense verb. This headline is taken from Al-Jazeera in 2018. It is

said by the reporter declaring that a large number of people have been killed. The verb 'killed' refers to a process of military operations that resulted this news. It also indicates that the speaker considers the dead ones as enemies. Al-Jazeera uses this form of words to indicate that a powerful explosion on Wednesday in Syria's rebel-held northwest killed 18 people - including more than a dozen civilians - as rescuers searched for victims trapped under the rubble.

5. *Air raid on Raqqa 'killed 1,600 civilians'*

Raid is a noun. This lexical item refers to a short attack on a place of soldiers, planes, or ships intended to cause some damage. Thus, the raid is mostly done by the places of the other side of the war. BBC uses this lexical item to refer to less harmful issues that happened in a specific place to simplify the subject to the listeners and the watchers of the channel. However, this channel reflects the impression of the coalition about this issue. Coalition states - including the US, UK and France - have conducted 34,000 strikes in Syria and neighboring Iraq since 2014, when IS militants overran large swathes of the two countries and imposed their brutal rule on almost eight million people.

6. *Strikes on Raqqa 'killed 1,600 civilians'*

The word 'strike' is a noun. This lexical item refers to a military attack represented by planes that drop bombs. In other words, air strikes refer to an aircraft bombing rockets on a city, enemy soldiers or their suppliers by bombing guns. More than 1,600 civilians were killed in US-led coalition air and artillery strikes during the offensive to oust the Islamic State group from the Syrian city of Raqqa in 2017, activists say. Amnesty International and monitoring group Air wars said they had carried out investigations at 200 strike locations and identified 1,000 of the victims.

7. *Syria war: Kosovo brings back 110 citizens including jihadists.*

The word 'war' is a noun. This lexical item refers to a period of time in which there is an attack between

two sides in a particular area or country, BBC uses this lexical item to refer to the civil war that takes place in Syria. BBC also gives certain details about this news stating that the group contained 74 children, 32 women and four men suspected of fighting for the Islamic State group (IS) who were arrested on arrival. "An important and sensitive operation was organized in which the government of Kosovo, with the help of the [US], has returned 110 of its citizens from Syria," Kosovo's Justice Minister, Abelard Tahiri, said on Saturday.

8. Kosovo foreign fighters: 110 citizens repatriated from Syria

'Fighters' is a plural noun. This headline is taken from Al-Jazeera in 2019. It is said by the reporter declaring that the word 'fighter' refers to a person who is a member of one of Isis soldiers in Syria. It also indicates that the speaker considers the dead ones as enemies. Al-Jazeera uses the noun 'fighters' instead of using 'terrorists', and this is in contrast with the BBC Channel. There is debate among some European nations about what to do about women and children who have lived under the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS) in Syria. But in Kosovo, the government has decided to bring back more than 100 of its citizens.

SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSIONS

All in all, CDA can be applied as a conceptual framework for obtaining gender stereotypes in political media discourse. Language and gender studies in media discourse work with a various theoretical point of view supporting each particular work and are widely tied by a consideration for the reproduction of ideology in language use, which is also one of the goals of CDA. It's important to note that CDA has been received criticism in a previous time because of choosing and employing a narrow range of texts, leading to concerns of representativeness of the texts selected, and therefore vulnerability to the researcher's tendency in text selection for an intended analysis.

It is also worth mentioning that, the hypotheses of the study have been verified throughout the work

particularly the data selected are different in conveying the messages for the listeners. The media between the east and the west has certain forms of similarities at using the words.

In general, specialists working in the domain of CDA demonstrate that both of social practice and linguistic practice shape one another and focus on discovering how social power relations are established and reinforced through language use. According to what has been mentioned, CDA differs from discourse analysis in that it sheds lights on the issues of power imbalance, manipulation, abuse, and structural inequities in fields like education.

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