Ideology and Audience in the Translation of 'Geneva Joint Plan of Action': Focus on BBC, VOA, and Press TV

Farzan Hasani [1], Mohammad Reza Talebinejad[2]*

[1]English Department, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran

[2]English Department, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

Abstract

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This study aimed to investigate how and to what extent news agencies namely BBC, VOA and Press TV may manipulate a political or any given source text ideologically, as to suit their affiliations, how they present the news items and how that affects the audience. To this end, the researcher selected news items mainly in the form of audiovisual material broadcast by the mentioned news agencies regarding the interim agreement of Geneva. Drawing mainly on Van Dijk's (2004) CDA Socio-Cognitive Framework, the news items which were mostly in form of audio-visual material were transcribed and then analyzed to find out what proportions of the information extracted from these news items were ideologically manipulated compared to the source text and in what order. It was revealed that Lexicalization, Evidentiality and Implication were the most prominent strategies used in BBC, Lexicalization, Number Game and Authority were the most used strategies in VOA and Lexicalization, Categorization and Negative Other-Presentation were the strategies mostly used in Press TV.

Introduction

On November 2013, an interim agreement was reached between Iran and the P5+1. Since then, much bafflement has raised whether we lost or won the deal. There are some people who say that

*[2] Corresponding Author's Email:
mrezatalebinejad@gmail.com*

we have lost the deal and their proof is the four-page document signed in Geneva. There is another group that uses the same document to show that we have won the deal. The only official agency that has translated the 4-page-agreement is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other non-official entities have also tried to translate the same document, none of them prevailed to provide an accurate translation. The interim agreement of Geneva was reached after almost ten years of negotiations. It affects international relations. It is very important that the contents of this agreement be translated and interpreted correctly. But who is qualified to do that? This study most of all tries to find the ways language is used by the media in general and by BBC, VOA and Press TV in particular to represent and interpret the contents of the Joint Plan of Action.

In a similar study done by Shojaei, Youssefi and Hosseini (2013), it was attempted to show how "the use of language translation and sometimes non-translation and silence can change the meanings of ideas as well as reversing them in some cases". It is clear that media cannot be unbiased, but is it possible to detect the biased messages hidden in the media that they feed people? The Joint Plan of Action is only four pages. Had it been translated the first day it was issued, much bafflement and confusion in the political society would have been prevented. Was it intentional or not? Perhaps news agencies intentionally use its ambiguities for their own benefit.

The current study was done within the framework of CDA to show the underlying massage that different groups want to deliver to people. In this respect, they only need a source material to prove their impartiality and as a form of Evidentiality, but it is only a pretext, because as this study shows, each news agency represents and interprets the contents of the agreement in such a way to suit its political affiliations. Meanwhile, through Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach, it is shown that how these news agencies are different from each other in the form they use to emphasize a piece of news, namely the Interim Agreement of Geneva, to manipulate and influence the audience.

Review of Literature

BBC, Press TV, VOA and IRIB, all of them claim to be authentic and accurate. No one can be sure about that, unless one has a measure by which can detect whether they are biased towards a news story or not. In case of our study, it is very important to know where to look when we want to detect bias in these three news agencies. Although it is quite idealistic to walk towards objectivity in the business of journalism, all the news agencies at some point go in a direction that

satisfies a certain group. It may be unintentional, but there are ways by which one can detect bias better. Although the subject of this study is quite new, the nuclear negotiations has been on for almost ten years, studies of this kind within the framework of CDA have been done a lot. Notwithstanding the fact that the interim agreement of Geneva was signed around two years ago, even in this short period of time, some scholars tried to analyze it. The first part of this chapter deals with CDA and its framework.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Huckin (2002) writes that the main purpose of critical discourse analysis is to understand how people are manipulated by public discourse and thereby subjected to abuses of power. Van Dijk (2005) says: Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (van Dijk, T. A., 2005-- Critical Discourse Analysis).

Fairclough (1989) believes that critical discourse analysis subsumes a variety of approaches towards the social analysis of discourse (which differ in theory, methodology, and the type of research issues to which they tend to give prominence. He writes that his aim for writing a work on language and power is to give knowledge to people that there is a lot in language in production, maintenance, and change of social relations of power and also to help people free themselves and understand that language contributes to the domination of some people by others.

In our society, like many others, not everyone has enough resource to instill other people's minds with his/her own desired ideology. Only those in power can favor such means. As they may claim that they do not use it for their own good, and only seeking the truth is what they are after, having a tool at hand becomes necessary to find out whether they are telling the truth or not. The CDA Analyst has a mission and that is finding the truth and to enlighten people. According to Van Dijk (2005) CDA does not just try to describe discourse structures, rather it tries to explain them in terms of social interaction and social structure. He also says that (Van Dijk, 2005) CDA more specifically focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of power and dominance in society. Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-80 as

cited in Van Dijk 2005) explain that discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory and also discourse is a form of social action.

According to Van Dijk (2005), CDA is not done only in one direction and it does not have a unitary theoretical framework". CDA has many types and these types can be quite different from each other. Analyzing news items can be quite different from analyzing conversations. But, considering the general goal of CDA, it is possible to find frameworks that are related.

Ideology, Language and Power

According to Van Dijk (2005) any conversation and language use belong to the micro-level of social order. But power, dominance and inequality between social groups are typically terms that belong to a macro-level of analysis". For example, in the case of the present study, when there is a debate over the terms of the nuclear deal and the agreement of Geneva, the debate itself is a "discourse at the micro-level of social interaction in the specific situation of a debate"; at the same time, it affects the society and influences the minds of the audience at

the macro-level.

According to Van Dijk (2005), in a more contemporary, multidisciplinary approach, ideologies are described in terms of the axiomatic foundation of the social representations shared by groups. Ahmadian and Farahani (2014) write that in CDA, discourse is believed to be involved in the reproduction of ideologies. Fairclough (1989) believes that in our modern societies the exercise of power is increasingly achieved through ideology, and it is particularly done through the ideological workings of language. Fairclough (1989) believes that there is a distinction between the making use of power through "coercion" and the "exercise" of power through "consent". He finally says that the best "means of manufacturing consent" and thus make benefits of power is ideology.

Van Dijk (2005) believes that groups have (more or less) power if they are able to (more or less) control the acts and minds of (members of) other groups. For being able to do that, they need resources. One of the best means to control the acts and minds of other groups is the media. According to what Van Dijk says "action is controlled by our minds", so if we find a way to influence people's minds, e.g. their knowledge or opinions, we indirectly may control (some of) their actions". Those who have enough means and resources to transmit their discourse to people, have the most possibility to influence their minds and thus control their actions. Anyone who has

the ability to influence discourse of greater amounts of people, has more ability to control their minds and actions. Wodak and Meyer (2008) offer a brief history of the works done on political discourse which as they write "after the Second World War was triggered in part by the investigation of National Socialist (NS) language". They believe that at that time it was essential to understand and explain the roles and importance of language and communication in totalitarian regimes and their propaganda.

According to Farahani and Ahmadian, (2014) the ultimate goal of CDA is that of consciousness-raising and in this respect, the present study tries to show how one single event, that is the Interim Agreement of Geneva, is presented by different news agencies; namely' BBC, VOA, and Press TV. The researcher tries here to find whether there is any bias in presenting the news related to the agreement. Thus, effort is made to address the following research question:

RQ. How are ideological differences manifested in the discourse of BBC, VOA and Press TV in presenting the news related to the Interim Agreement of Geneva?

Method

Corpus of the Study

The material for this study consists of the news stories related to interim agreement of Geneva as presented in BBC, VOA and Press TV. The news stories are all related to the Interim agreement of Geneva, also known as the Joint Plan of Action. They have been released on TV between November 2013 and November 2015.

Procedures

After formulating the research question and selecting the source materials, a systemic and professional analysis was conducted.

When collecting the data, the researcher paid attention to the fact that some materials were in English and some were in Farsi. It was also important that the country of origin of the source materials were different. Notes were made on who wrote the source material, when, and was by whom. Also, a noteworthy point was when and where the researcher found them so that others whoever may read the work later might be able to contextualize them.

The researchers tried to find more information on the producer of source materials. They also tried to find more about the author and the editorial staff and to understand what the general political position of those news agencies were. In addition, they did their best to find out what their affiliations were. Information on general target audience and general information on these news agencies were to some extent available at their sites in the "about" section. The genre and medium of this work are mostly news reports and interviews in the form of debates. All the source materials are produced to be shown on TV, therefore, whoever with a TV could access them. The reports, news stories, debates and interviews were transcribed and then they were codified.

Although the researchers focused on finding interpretations and translations of the joint plan of action in the discourse of these three news agencies, other discourse strands were found that were worth noticing. So, along the work, the researcher took notes of them. These were interesting items that the researchers did not expect to find. As this work is done on three news agencies, the same procedure was followed for each separately. This procedure is called evolutionary coding (Mayring, 2002 as cited in Florian Schneider, 2012). Using different categories in Van Dijk's CDA, it could be shown how each news agency is different from the other two in case of using discourse. As the materials were transcribed in the word program, it was easy to assign each category a color. Using different colors, the researcher counted the number of words and phrases of each category and this was the quantitative part of the work.

The next step was to identify linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms. The vocabulary in each news agency was different from the other two. For example, BBC in contrast with VOA and Press TV uses more formal vocabulary. Attempts were made to see the features of word groups, grammar and rhetorical and literary figures.

Finally, the data was interpreted in order to answer the question raised at the beginning of the work.

Model of Analysis

In this study, the researchers used Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (2005) to analyze audiovisual materials. The model had the following categories for data analysis:

AUTHORITY

Van Dijk (2006) states that speaker often quotes from authorities or refer to them in order to give credibility to what they say. Based on their ideologies, People refer to different authorities.

CATEGORIZATION

Rashidi and Souzandefar (2010) define this category as "Assigning people to different groups" and Van Dijk (2006) believes that it is based on social psychology that "people tend to categorize people".

EVIDENTIALITY

Researcher here again refers to the 2010 work of Rashidi and Souzandefar as they present this category as when one is "Using hard facts to support one's ideas". Van Dijk believes that people use Evidentiality in order to make their ideas more "plausible". Evidentiality and Authority function the same.

IMPLICATION
LEXICALIZATION

Van Dijk believes that "opinions may be conventionalized and codified in lexicon" (1998, p. 205 as cited in Shojaei and Laheghi, 2012), in this way, negative or positive words with ideological connotations can be used with the intention to make a difference between in-group and out-group members. Lexicalization, or word choice, is "the major dimension of [ideologically controlled] discourse meaning" (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 259, as cited in Shojaei and Laheghi, 2012).

NEGATIVE OTHER-PRESENTATION
NUMBER GAME

The use of numbers and statistics in the discourse is a means to show that the writers/speakers are objective and that what they are discussing is not just their opinions but 'facts'. (Van Dijk, 2000 as cited in Farahani, Ahmadian, 2014)

Not all of these items can be found in any analysis, but depending on the weight of the ideology hidden in the discourse more and more of the items above can be found. All of these items mentioned here work in a direction that finally constitutes the ideological square (Van Dijk, 2000)

which has basically four principles of Emphasizing positive things about ourselves, emphasizing negative things about others, de-emphasizing negative things about ourselves, de-emphasizing positive things about others. (Van Dijk, 2000 p.44 as mentioned in Farahani, Ahmadian, 2014).

Data Analysis and Results

The analysis of the collected data, on the basis of the model of the study, provided the following results:

Overall, the most frequent CDA category found in the discourse of BBC was Lexicalization, and there was a big difference in its frequency compared to the other two news agencies. It was almost twice that of VOA and Press TV. The next most frequent CDA categories were Evidentiality, with 10 instances in BBC; Number Game, with 15 instances in VOA, and Categorization, with 43 instances in Press TV. The following tables demonstrate the results related to all the identified CDA categories in the three news agencies under investigation.

Table 1

Total Number of CDA Categories Found in the Discourse of BBC

1	**Lexicalization**	**114**
2	Evidentiality	10
3	Implication	8
4	Categorization	7
5	Number Game	7
6	Disclaimer	6
7	Vagueness	6
8	Us-Them	4
9	Presupposition	4
10	Counterfactuals	3
11	Consensus	1
12	Metaphor	111

Table 2

Total Number of CDA Categories Found in the Discourse of VOA

1	**Lexicalization**	**67**
2	Number Game	15

3	Authority	12
4	Vagueness	12
5	Categorization	10
6	Disclaimer	10
7	Implication	6
8	Evidentiality	4
9	Presupposition	4
10	Counterfactuals	3
11	Us-Them	2
12	Consensus	1
13	Norm Expression	1
14	Negative Other-Presentation	1

Table 3

Total Number of CDA Categories Found in the Discourse of Press TV

1	**Lexicalization**	**60**
2	Categorization	43
3	Implication	36
4	Presupposition	31
5	Negative Other-Presentation	26
6	Vagueness	19
7	Actor Description	14
8	Positive Self-Presentation	10
9	Evidentiality	8
10	Norm Expression	3
11	Populism	6
12	Authority	6
13	Us-Them	5
14	Metaphor	5
15	Victimization	3

16	Generalization	3
17	Counterfactuals	2
18	Exemplification	2
19	Disclaimer	1

Discussion

The above results obtained from the analysis of the data are discussed in this section.

Lexicalization

It seems that 114 instances of Lexicalization in the discourse of BBC indicates that this news agency does not hide its ideology. It is, in fact, very straightforward in expressing what it means by words. The 'sanctions', the 'crippling sanctions' and 'pressure of the sanctions' are the instances of Lexicalization in the discourse of BBC.

In the discourse of VOA and Press TV, Lexicalization is frequent too, but to a lesser degree compared to BBC. BBC tries to have a formal tone, but in "Ofogh" program in VOA, joking and funny words are used, and in Press TV, insulting and belittling each other in a program like "The Debate" is sometimes abundant.

Evidentiality

According to Van Dijk (2000), Evidentials are the important move to convey objectivity, reliability, and hence credibility. BBC offers evidentials to show that what it says is not hypothetical and it has proof for them. VOA and Press TV do not bother themselves much to offer evidentials. It seems that for these two latter news agencies it is not that important to provide proof for what they say.

Implication

Although lots of times BBC relates the nuclear agreement of Geneva to the 'sanctions', the 'crippling sanctions' and 'pressure of the sanctions' and states that these issues have brought Iran to the negotiations, there are many instances where the viewers are left on themselves to infer whether it was the sanctions that brought Iran to the negotiations. Van Dijk (2000) believes that for pragmatic reasons, speakers often do not say everything that is in their minds, instead they imply

a lot of what they want to say. "Such implicit knowledge" is taken for granted in Press TV and it is the third most used category.

Categorization

As shown in social psychology, people tend to categorize people (Van Dijk, 2000). Expressions such as 'Mr. Netanyahu and his American friends' and 'Mr. Rouhani and his negotiating team' are instances of Categorization used by BBC to somehow show the real confrontation. Although for BBC it is the fourth category and for VOA it is the fifth, for Press TV it is the second most used category with 43 instances. For Press TV all people are in some certain categories. They are either good or bad, either they are with the good people, or with the bad people. For Press TV, there are only two categories in the world. Either they are in the category of "Israel via France", "Washington and its western allies" or they are not.

Number Game

Just like Evidentiality, number game is also used to show objectivity and therefore a proof for Credibility. In the discourse of BBC related to the agreement of Geneva, number game is used around the concept of the value of Iranian Rial, the percentage of economy 'crippled' through sanctions and the like to emphasize that the agreement of Geneva is the result of the sanctions that affected the economy of Iran. Although in BBC number game is the fifth category, in VOA it is the second most used category with almost twice as many instances as in BBC. There is no place for number game in Press TV. In the words of Van Dijk (2000) "numbers and statistics are the primary means to show objectivity". Evidentiality is side by side the number game and both are used to show objectivity. In BBC there is a total number of 17 instances of evidentials and number game usage, in VOA it is 19 times. In Press TV this number is 8. This shows that, it is not very important for Press TV to show objectivity, and maybe, it boasts to be at the side that believes to be the good side and does not try to hide that.

Vagueness

Virtually in all contexts speakers may use vague expressions, that is, expressions that do not have well-defined referents (Van Dijk, 2000). 'Some', 'somehow', 'maybe', 'perhaps' are the instances of

Vagueness that BBC uses in the discourse related to the agreement of Geneva. But BBC is the third user of vagueness. Press TV with 19 instances of vagueness is the first.

Disclaimer

As Farahani and Ahmadian (2014) say, "This strategy is used to keep face by stating our positive characteristics first, and then focus on their negative attributes". This is a strategy that BBC uses to save face as an impartial news agency. In the news stories related to the agreement of Geneva only six instances of the use of Disclaimers were found in the discourse of BBC. In Van Dijk's words (2006) "A well-known combination of the ideologically based strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation are the many types of disclaimers". User of disclaimer implies that there is no other way to put the fact and there is no choice and if he/she uses this strategy, it is not his/her fault and it is a pure impartial move. As the researchers mentioned before, it seems that Press TV is not afraid to be known as biased and maybe it is a source of pride for this news agency to take side and be with the groups it considers righteous. That's why there is only one instance of using disclaimers in the discourse of Press TV whereas VOA uses disclaimers in 10 instances and BBC uses them in 6 instances.

Us-Them

Press TV uses this category 5 times. In the discourse of VOA there are only two instances of using this category. BBC uses phrases like "international community" to show that all those at the table in front of Iran are representatives of the international community. But of course, there were only four of such cases found in the discourse of BBC. This is a kind of polarization and "may apply to 'good' and 'bad' subcategories of out-groups, as is the case for friends and allies on the one hand and enemies on the other" (Van dijk, 2006).

Presupposition

Discourses are like the proverbial icebergs: most of their meanings are not explicitly expressed but presupposed to be known, and inferable from general socio-cultural knowledge (Van Dijk, 2000). 'Mr. Rouhani has concluded' and 'a program that could be used to produce a bomb' are instances that a report on the Geneva agreement uses and it falls in the category of presupposition as it

presupposes things that may not be true or can just be hypothetical. BBC and VOA are the same in number of times they use Presuppositions with each one only four cases of use. On the other hand, discourse of Press TV is filled with Presuppositions. Thirty-one instances of Presupposition are a sign that Press TV presupposes many of the facts it offers and expects its viewers to already believe them.

Counterfactuals

"if the sanctions are lifted, their economy improves, " is an example of the Counterfactuals BBC used in the discourse related to the agreement of Geneva. Counterfactuals are signs of sympathy and BBC wants to show that it is concerned that Iran would disrespect the terms in the agreement if the sanctions are lifted. But only 3 of such instances were found in the discourse of BBC related to the agreement of Geneva. In the use of this category all these three agencies are almost the same.

Consensus

It is a political strategy and only one case was found in the discourse of BBC which was 'all sides'.

Metaphor

'The spigot of cash' is the only instance of Metaphor found in the discourse of BBC related to the agreement of Geneva and it had intersexuality with the speech Barak Obama gave after the agreement that "what we would do, would be to open up the spigot a little bit for a very modest amount of relief" (US president Barak Obama's vision for Iran nuclear deal, 2013).

Conclusions

Throughout the current study, the researchers tried to find any signs to prove that the three news agencies were trying to give a true and honest interpretation, and maybe translation of some parts, of the nuclear agreement reached in Geneva in 2013. But what was found was that each of them only tried to use this agreement as a pretext to present its own beliefs. Thus, what the researchers inferred from scrutinizing the work of these news agencies concerning the agreement of Geneva is as follows:

BBC

BBC tries to be authentic and does that by giving evidence, but at the same time through use of lexicalization, leads the audience towards where it wants. BBC does not want the audience to understand that this news agency is biased and that's why the usage of lexicalization is very high. BBC intends to lead the audience, but not to know that it was BBC that has led him/her. BBC wants the audience to believe that it was him, not BBC, that has reached a certain conclusion. For that, BBC uses some hidden strategies that the researchers tried to disclose using Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach. As it was shown in the study, Lexicalization, Evidentiality and Implication were the most prominent strategies used in BBC.

VOA

Similar to BBC, VOA also tries to be authentic. Not as much as BBC, but also to some extent It is important for VOA to give evidence to what it says. But this news agency uses Authority and Numbers as proof. In order to do that, sometimes VOA first makes one of his experts on the show big, then refers to him as an authority. For example, in the section, the TV presenter emphasizes that the host has "been scrutinizing the details" in the last couple of years, has been "in close contact with the members of this group of negotiators", "both western and Iranian sides" so when the guest gives his expert opinion it would be considered as the best most truthful idea. Using Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, Lexicalization, Number Game and Authority were found the most used strategies in VOA.

Press TV

Press TV is not afraid to be known as biased. That's why usage of evidentials or authority is not that high. Press TV is the same as BBC and VOA in trying to lead the audience, but contrary to them, it is not afraid to be labeled as biased. As a matter of fact, Press TV deliberately wants to show what its beliefs are. Lexicalization, Categorization and Negative Other-Presentation were the strategies mostly used in Press TV. Another fact which was revealed in this study was the system of reasoning in Press TV. Usage of casuistry, chicanery and double standards abound. When the presenter in each one of the programs of "The Debate" changes, the percentage of usage of these strategies also changes.

The difference between the topics and the stories in most of the stories in Press TV

The Topics are only a pretext to have a story. Press TV wants to talk about something, it wants to express its beliefs through a story and every story needs a topic. That is the only reason for the name of the topics. For example, in "**Arak Site to Remain Heavy water Reactor",** there is not much mentioning of Arak itself, but rather, the debate, as most of the times, goes in the direction that finally leads "**negative other presentation"** as being one of the most used strategies in Press TV.

The impact of the guest, presenter and the program on each other

There are guests in Press TV and are of high stature. For that, they are invited to other debate programs in other news agencies of other countries. For example, Dr. Marandi is a constant guest in Press TV. His rhetoric is quite different when he is a guest in Press TV than when he is in a debate program like "Cross Talk" in Russia Today. Is it the presenter in Press TV or is the program that affects the guest and make him go in a certain direction?

Abundant mentions of Israel

Although these programs were supposed to talk about Nuclear Agreement of Geneva, Israel is mentioned 177 times during the stories Press TV presents.

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