

## Language in Media: A Tool for Expressing Political Views

Rouhollah Ghassemi<sup>1\*</sup>, Zahra Hemmatgosha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran,

<sup>2</sup>Azad University, Qom, Iran

**Corresponding Author:** Rouhollah Ghassemi, E-mail: r\_ghasemi@sbu.ac.ir

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### ABSTRACT

In any society there is a link between social-intellectual (ideological) views and discursive structures in media. Therefore, it is possible to discover this relationship by clarifying appropriate discursive remedies in text analysis and eventually determining how it is and its application. Some journalists are very skillful in literature, their discussion talent and their ability to manipulate the language result in complexity in language form and also in semantic features. Many fundamental factors are involved in production and comprehension of the press texts. The main objective of the current study is to investigate some of these factors such as powers relations in the society and also political and ideological institutions in press texts. Applying a discourse analysis approach and considering news theories, this study tries to analyze French press texts and explore the ways information is transferred to the addressees through word selection. The findings of this study indicate that mass media (and newspapers) are tools for expanding the ideology in the society because, facing the same issue, they take different positions according to their interests. The investigation of how this information is transferred is possible through discourse analysis. We try to show how French express media manipulate public opinion by using different vocabularies.

### INTRODUCTION

The study of press (media) language is complicated and controversial and its complexity and abstruse functions increase as the time passes. The underlying reasons of this phenomenon could be searched in today's increasing complexity of politics' language and social interactions (Forghani, 1998: 94-101).

The link between language and press is undeniable because language either in written or oral form, is a medium to convey the message in the media. Meanwhile, the relationship between power and ideology has a significant effect on conveying message in the media. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been known as a suitable method for analyzing the relationship between language and ideology in the discourse of media (Fowler, 1991:10). So "ideology therefore continues to be a significant theme and category for CDA" said Fairclough (2013:26).

Nowadays, media are widely present in people's life and affect all aspects of their social lives in different fields. In this process, cultural and political institutions shape the discourse and then over the time, the intended discourses with specific goals and ideology penetrate in the society through social institutions in a way that people consider them as something normal and logical and therefore accept it without

any resistance and imagine that they are thinking, judging and deciding freely.

Considering these points, the following questions can be posed:

- 1) Do the media use a specific structure to represent discourses?
- 2) Are the linguistic features and the expression of a specific type of discourse in media to consciously convey a specific type of ideology?
- 3) If so, are the concepts and ideological effects of these features in line with the dominant ideology of news production?

Considering the importance of writing style and structure in press texts, this study tries to have a new look at analyzing this kind of texts in order to determine the fundamental structures which are dominant in these texts.

Based on the Critical Discourse Analysis, in this study the researchers have tried to investigate how the language in newspapers is used to express the discourses in line the institutions' intended ideology or the dominant ideology. The principal aim is to show how language, especially French, can be used as a tool which serves political goals. It often happens that a discourse which can consist of events, verbal reactions, interviews, enacted laws, decisions, etc.

is expressed differently in different linguistic forms in newspapers. It means that each newspaper consciously applies its own linguistic style considering its own cultural, social, political and generally ideological point of view. "Van Dijk terms the syntactic structure as news schemata. News schemata are syntax of news stories, the formal categories into which news can be analyzed and their relations to each other" (Bell, 1991: 22).

Each of these linguistic forms subtly imposes its own ideology on its readers. In addition to each institution's specific point of view, the discourse of press is in line with the general ideology which is dominant in the society. It means that different vocabularies are used to express different political ideas; so a political regime always uses a terminology that can express and convey its point of view. On the other hand, some words are used by some media because of their significant charges that they can use to influence their audience. In French like other languages, these structures are used so often specially in political texts. Sometime they try to show a negative aspect of an issue and sometime they aim to approve another one. French language can help them to take different positions in face of the same issue.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Journalists use different linguistic forms to present news in order to talk influentially, clearly, stylistically and sometimes tactfully. These linguistic forms have also different applications and meet different goals. Therefore, the only way for knowing the hidden goals behind the press messages and their social consequences and effects is to investigate the superficial structure and obvious concepts of the media language (Forghani, 1998: 94-101).

Since 1980s, there has been a profound change in written press in France. The centralization phenomenon and formation of multifunctional media groups were the result of this period. French press system is totally different from the American system which is sometimes used as the reference. The French journalists' ability is almost their literature and their talent in discussion and manipulating the words. Collected evidences confirm this literary tendency among these journalists. Those texts that brought fame for some press such as *La Press* in 1839 and *Le Petit Journal* in 1863 were footprints written by some famous writers such as Balzac, Hugo, Dumas and Zola. From Zola to Camus, this tradition of writers' collaboration with newspapers was a significant feature of French journalism. The most dominant dimension of this feature was integration of writing and reporting.

One of the most important features of English-American journalism is to concentrate on reality. This feature includes giving preference to objectivity which is formed around getting news and separates information from interpretation of it. In fact, the journalist looks at people and events as objects to describe. This method can be based on the capacity of English language density in which two or three syllabus words are dominant. Although in French culture this writing method is considered as "writing with no introduction", this method has its own style and cannot be labeled as

"monotonous"; Ernest Hemingway was the one who brought this style to light (Erik Neveu, 2011: 36).

According to Philippe Gaillard, the writing style of the press mostly aims to make reading and comprehension easy for the readers. So as we can see the comprehension of a text and the meaning we can receive plays a key role in press.

Accurate writing and also simple, fluent and clear expression in conveying message are the main pillars in press texts. In addition to being straight and clear, the press news should be away from redundancy. The information in the press should be expressed by short and expressive and at the same time comprehensible structures. Understanding the concepts of each sentence has an inverse relationship with the number of the words of that sentence; the less the number of the words in a sentence are, the easier its comprehension is.

The utterance should be concise, comprehensible, appropriate and also beautiful. That means, in order to be effective, it should have a correct structure and be used in an appropriate texture. Clearly, it is not a simple task (Yar Mohamadi, 2010: 158).

This simplicity of language helps authorities and governments to show their opinions in society. Noam Chomsky believes that generally the dominant media in a society reflects the authorities' opinions and benefits (Chomsky, 1989: 10).

There is a determining relationship between ideological processes and linguistics because language and the world cannot be separated (Gee, 2008: 22). It means that journalists and translators' words selection can convey a meaning and also an ideology. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a tool elaborated in 1970s in order to investigate how to make the media language ideological and how the dominant ideologies in the society are consolidated in media texts by the use of linguistic structures.

Text is at the service of ideology. In the other word, we can find an ideology in every text. Although Fairclough accepts that both content and form of the texts are influenced by the ideological structures, he believes that it is not possible to trace the ideology only in the text. In his opinion, ideology can be recognized and analyzed based on what has happened so far and what happened in the past. So, Critical Discourse Analysis has been known as a suitable method for investigating the relationship between language and ideology in the discourse of media.

Critical Discourse Analysis which is a new trend in discourse analysis is rooted in Michel Foucault's opinions. In this critical approach, it is believed that some factors such as historical context, the power relations in the society, the institutions and social, cultural and ideological processes make text, which could be the demonstration of a language, and ideology, which could be found behind this demonstration.

In recent years, the linguistics of media has been one of the most serious and profound discussions among linguists. Some researchers including "Roger Fowler" even know the press language as an ideological language and believe that it has an ideological application. This language has found this specific role and application through the appropriate selection of words and specific concepts and also through a suitable word ordering process which can be called discourse engineering.

## JOURNALISM IN FRENCH STYLE

“Journalism” is a term which refers to all poetic and prose works which are affected by the events and topics of their times and usually get old and out of fashion as the time passes and the society changes. Journalistic literature uses the style of newspapers for writing, but its production is not necessarily newspaper. It is possible to write novels, poems and even critical and social articles with this style. In Europe, especially in France, great writers and poets have had a close relationship with the journals, and some great writers such as Sartre and Camus became famous because they worked with journals. Due to its complexity, describing the state of France media, particularly the press, is not that much easy. However, having a look at the state of press in this country, it can be concluded that the structure of its press is different from the structure of the press in other European countries.

Before the birth of public journals in a period called Golden Period (before World War I), the newspapers in this country were published without the presence of real journalists. The articles in these journals were written by the staff. But these people did not consider the job as a special skill and a profession with its logic to make their living; for them this job was like a waiting room to enter a political or literary profession. Balzac has described this phenomenon in two books, *Lost Illusions* and *The Monography of the Parisian Press* (Erik Neveu, 2011: 39-40).

Another tendency in French journalism was politics; most of these people introduced themselves with their political concerns and their tendency to a political party. Many of these journalists participated in political activities in the third republic period. Until the beginning of the fifth republic period (up to now), journalist continued in this way and a person was known as a political journalist only if this person had specific political opinions.

The essential advantage of French journalism is due to its expertise in writing style and defending a specific ideology in editorials. The content of the newspapers are basically focused on critics, reviews and weekly notes which expresses the great importance of interpretation and critical writing comparing to the news. In this type of journalism, the idea expression and changing events under the pretext of applying courageous stylistic features received a great priority from the press.

The academic ways to study the journals in France, are left to semioticians; journalism itself is considered as a literary writing styles, but it is possible to study this topic as a result of a mutual and systematic interaction between many fields.

## ENGLISH-AMERICAN PATTERN

Many studies done in the field of journalism indicates that the origin of what today is called “standard journalism”, is in England and mostly in the U.S. (Neveu, 2011: 34). One of the features of this pattern is the importance of data collection. An American journalist knows him/herself as an expert in data collection. The second feature of this English-American pattern is their focus on being real. It means

that giving preference to objectivity is form around news collection process and separates information from interpretation and commentary. In fact, in this method the people and events are viewed only as objects to be described and commentaries which are considered as prolixity are not approved. The consequence of this approach was devaluing the complex form of utterance and recording the events in the prevalent style or discussion-based style, which was in favor of the simple descriptive writing style. This method can be based on the capacity of English language in which two or three syllabus words are used frequently. Although in French culture this writing method is considered as “writing with no introduction”, this method has its own style and cannot be labeled as “monotonous” (Ibid).

## LIMITS OF CONFRONTATION

The comparison between French and English-American patterns shows that many of French journalism features are more disharmonious in comparison to the ones in the other pattern which has been used as the reference in many countries all around the world. In fact, the English journalism is a pattern full of contradiction that does not need any description, while, in French journalism descriptive literature is involved in the political writing. On the other hand, the principles and values of the American pattern do not, in any way, entail a uniform and stylistic method in writing; the objective perspective and their focus on the reality also rejects the stylistic framework. In the US, from the beginning, self-regulation of the “forth power” existed and the first amendment of the constitution confirmed its independency. In France, after 1789 revolution, there has always been a strong centralized government. Such a government played a major role in providing information and news to newspapers. Therefore, journalism in France was not run based on finding information from different sources; this was done under the government support. Because of that, French journalists were mostly focused on interpretation, criticizing and writing commentary instead of collecting news. This fact in French pattern is opposite the American one. The French people, like other people, beside looking for news in the newspaper, expect to get explanation and analysis for the events. Contemporary French journalism has consistently adhered to the long tradition that has become the habit of the French journals. As it was said earlier, in English-American pattern the focus is mostly on objectivity and realism that is the separation of information and interpretation (*revue d’information du Ministère des affaires étrangères*, January 1994, N. 14)

## THEORIES

### Media Audiences

The active audiences are those who considering the individual, social and cultural characteristics, have the ability for meaning construction and understanding of media texts and resist the meanings of message preference. In cultural studies, the media and the audience fall into the framework of the discursive and ideological structures of power. However,

avoiding the ideology critics' view which emphasizes on the ideological reproduction in the media, the theorists of cultural study theory believe that these structures do not have any consistency. In this approach, considering the inherent ambiguities of texts and the multiplicity of consumer social situations, "meaning" is always exposed to doubt and controversy. From one side, the texts are "polysemic" and open a wide horizon in front of the audience; from the other side, applying different deduction strategies, active audiences try to have their own interpretations about the news based on their interests. According to this pattern, media have wider arena for arguing on meaning. The arena in which ideology is constantly forming and reforming through mutual interaction between the text and the audience.

### Gatekeeping Theory

For the first time Curt Lewin, the American Psychologist, instituted the concept of gatekeeping in a scientific form. He coined this concept for the first time during the World War II (Badiei, 1980: 45). It is also clear that "Any public media such as newspaper, radio, television ... should make its choice from the nebula of data and information that the today's world is abounded with, because it would be never able to reflect all the events" (Sarookhani, 1992: 65). However, the principle question is that choice, and the aims and the effects of this choice within the society.

Usually, it is assumed that gatekeeping is the process of news selection for the newspapers. But it is more than a simple selection.

According to Titchner (1972: 43-45) gatekeeping is defined as a broad process of information control which involves all aspects of message encryption, not just selection but also the prevention of publication, transmission, shaping, presentation, and supply, repetition, and timing along the route from source to receiver. In other words, the gatekeeper includes all aspects of selecting, keeping, and controlling the message. With more accurate analysis, it can be said that gatekeeping is the Re-creating of an essential framework for the event and turning it into news so that communicators could select some elements of the message and reject the rest.

This is one of the most important points in journalism and Lewin in 1974, considered goalkeeping as a process that causes change in the society.

### Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda setting refers to prioritize a particular program, but in journalism, it means that the media determine the topics of public agenda through presenting the news.

Bernard Kohen (1963: 91) states that, "The press may not be able to tell people often how to think, but wonderfully they have been successful about what they (people) think about". Agenda setting means that the media, particularly in news, news reports and documentary programs, have the power to focus public attention on a set of limited issues and ignore the others. The result is that some of the specific topics are discussed by many people in public and out of

the territory of the media while some others receive less attention (O'Sullivan, 2006: 26).

The main axis of agenda setting is building public awareness of topics that are not talked about in the news media (topics that are confronted with the silence of the news media). The concept of agenda setting is not limited to selecting and giving priority to news, and events in newspapers and press. This process is more than prioritizing and has its own methods and complexity.

In media, it is tried to highlight some events and news through the words and language. In fact, by manipulating the language, it is possible to highlight something in audience's mind.

### LANGUAGE OF IDEOLOGY AND GLOBALIZATION

The relation between language and ideology in real context, called "globalization", can be considered as a two-way communication; it means that language is a medium for ideology, and ideology itself is a medium for continuity, institutionalization, and globalization. Of course, media and language are among the most important tools of globalization; the speed of globalization has increased due to the advent of some media like the satellite, the Internet, art, cinema, and so on. And language as a factor in facilitating communication, in the globalization context, plays a crucial role in bringing people closer together. Ideology, as it is analyzed by Van Dijk from a critical discourse analysis view, is a tool for creation and maintaining the power inequality in the society which is done by the assistance of language. In fact, ideology develops through social interactions between languages and institutions.

Considering the above mentioned theories, some samples from newspapers are analyzed and investigated. It is worth mentioning that the media and the audience fall into the framework of the discursive and ideological structures of power and because of this in this study these theories have been used.

We tried to show how language could be used as a tool that is able to manipulate peoples, to convey the powerful point of view and to influence the audience who do not have other information sources. For this reason, some French medias have been investigated and we tried to find out how they want to impose their ideology.

On the website of the French newspaper *Le Monde*, after the war in Syria and presence of this country in the international coalition against ISIL, the term "le régime syrien" was used frequently. As we can see, the newspaper used this term instead of the word "état" (government). The word "régime" refers more to a temporary state, while the "government" represents the established and stable one (Robert Dictionary). In fact, the journalist intends to convey his/her ideology through this term; using this term, "le régime syrien", shows that the writer does not approve Syria as a country neither the Syrian government as a state (Figure 1).

Meanwhile, on the "Russia Today" website, because of the kind of their look at the presence of ISIL in Syria and because they defend this country, the site used the term

“L’armée syrienne”. The difference between these two discourses shows the difference between their viewpoints of the same topic. Actually, when speaking of the “army”, the speaker implicitly accepts the existence of a legitimate government that the army serves (Figure 2).

This difference in point of views can be seen in the issues related to Yemen. From the beginning, the position of the Western countries to the Yemen War was clear; forming a militant Saudi Arabian-led coalition, Western countries tried to undermine Yemeni defenders in any way. Western media, have tried to use linguistic structures to represent this stance. These media use the term “rebelle”. In Robert dictionary, this term is translated as “One who does not recognize the legitimate government and fights against it”. In fact, this word has a negative meaning and refers to the people who have some illegal activities against a government which is legitimate. The use of this word to refer to Yemeni defenders has its root in the views of the Western countries that are trying to support their intended people in this country (Figure 3).

But if we see this news in Iranian media, the difference between the viewpoints of two sides are clear. For example,

the French website of Press TV of Iran calls these militant groups “Les Combattants d’Ansarallah” because they are revolutionary fighters who defend the soil of their country. The word “Combattants” is used for a person who participates in the war and defends himself. Regarding to its political point of view, Iran has always believed that Yemeni fighters have a legitimate right to defend themselves, and this legitimate defense has been always approved by Iran. Naturally, Press TV, as an Iranian State media, reflects the viewpoints of Iran government and because of this tries to show this position by selecting words. In fact, the hard battle on the battlefield has become a kind of soft war in the media campaign, which allows governments and countries to directly or indirectly convey their views within the context of the words to their audiences (Figure 4).

If we want to mention another example in this regard, we can talk about Western countries and most particularly France’s position to ISIL. In Iraq and Syria wars and with the advent of ISIL, from the beginning several Medias used the title of “Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham” was used, while the Western countries used the title “Islamic State”.



Figure 1. French news paper *Le Monde*



Figure 2. Russia Today agency, french version

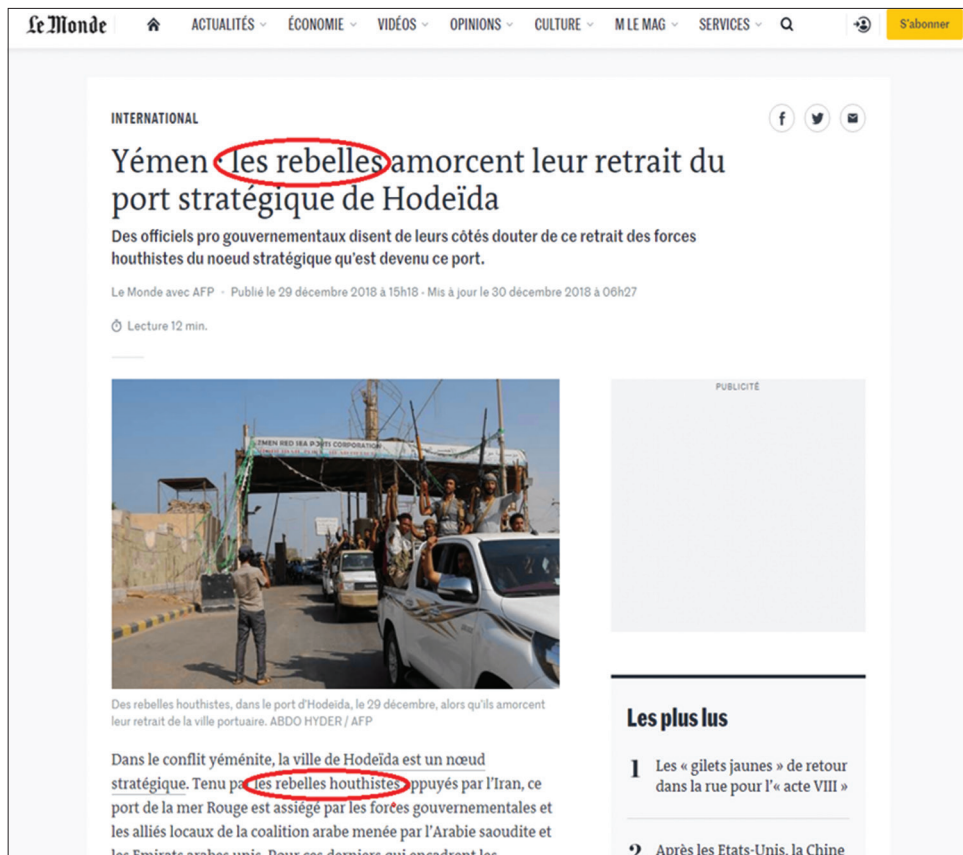


Figure 3. French news paper *Le Monde*



Figure 4. Iranian Press TV, french version

Using this phrase Western media only aimed at attributing the terrorist acts of this group to Islam and Muslims and to introduce Islam as a violent religion that theorizes such behaviors. Using this term was continued in France until the terrorists attacks happened in Paris. Since that time, with the

change in the ideology in this country, the term “Daesh” has been used. In fact, the strategy of France was clear in the language of the media of this country, and this radical transformation took place when they themselves were the target of the terrorist attacks (Figure 5).



Figure 5. French magazine *Le Point*



Figure 6. RTL media group

Le Point used the term “Etat islamique en Syrie” in September 2015 and on 16 November 2016, François Hollande used the term “Daesh”. This is exactly after the terrorist attacks in Paris. At the same time the Prime Minister, Wallace, used the same term which shows the change in the viewpoint and position of the country to this topic (Figure 6). As we can see here, French government changed its position and after terrorist attacks in his territory they consider Daesh as a terrorist group.

## CONCLUSION

The word choice of the journalists plays a very important role in affecting interlocutors. In other words, lexis and expressions in a text carry a great meaning load. The words that

a writer or a speaker uses are valued by their political, social or even ethical situation, or even more precisely, someone’s expression is valued by its social and political weight.

A critical discourse analyst, using the critical discourse analysis technics, looks forward to unfolding the form/surface of a text in order to go beyond the words and phrases and to reach and reveal what has rested hidden from the public eye; denaturalize what’s tried to be shown as natural so that people could figure out the truth and decide for their lives.

Press, as the most important and the most considerable news announcer in the societies, is considered as one of the most effective bases forming the discourse and power interactions. The recent study showed that the newspapers, using different language forms, without any direct and tangible

instrument, convey their oriented point of view to the interlocutors and through all this pursue their ideological goals. Press language is always one of the major factors that are used to influence the audience; political situations are always imposing their own point of view to the other components of human society. On the other word, a dominating political power can make use of different tools to spread an ideology all over the world; to achieve this goal it can take advantage of a great variety of linguistic forms. So we can see clearly how a language is used to manipulate different people. As we showed in this article, French express media use a great variety of words to face an issue and to expose their own political point of view. This is so variable and sometime they try to tone down their hostile positions because they want to ensure their own political point of view. On the other hand, Good and Evil depend on political aims; if a group can ensure one's interests it should be supported and considered as a resistance but when the same group does not ensure these interests, the it should be presented as terrorist and criminal. Political points of view determine if a political group is a good one or bad one.

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