

In the Name of God



SHEIKHBAHAE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

**The Use of Hedging Devices in Western News Reports on
Iran's Nuclear Issue and Their Persian Translations by
Iranian News Agencies: Intentional Manipulation or
Professional Obligation?**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIRMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE CONTENT, FORMAT AND QUALITY OF
PRESENTATION OF THE THESIS SUBMITTED BY

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**THE USE OF HEDGING DEVICES IN WESTERN NEWS
REPORTS ON IRAN'S NUCLEAR ISSUE AND THEIR
PERSIAN TRANSLATIONS BY IRANIAN NEWS
AGENCIES: INTENTIONAL MANIPULATION OR
PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION?**

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I declare that this thesis was composed by my-self, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

To The Last Savior, Imam Mahdi, God May Hasten His
Arrival

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Abstract

The present study aimed to examine how the Western news reports focusing on Iran's nuclear program use hedging devices in their news discourse, and also to see how the devices have been treated in the translations of those news reports by Iranian news agencies. Therefore, a set of political news reports on the issue in question was prepared as the material of the study, and then 45 samples of English news and their Persian translations were extracted from Western news agencies, and *Irannuc.ir* website which is an Iranian nuclear news portal, respectively. The unit of discourse was sentence. The news encompassed a 6-month time interval of the Geneva negotiations, from the December, 2013, to the November, 2014. To this end, the news and their translations were carefully read and the occurrences of hedges in each extract were underlined, then categorized based on the Fraser's taxonomy of hedging. The results of the study showed that Western media used hedges as linguistic devices to produce vagueness around Iran's nuclear issue. Also as the results showed, reducing the speech act hedges in the translations, the Iranian news agency translators reduced the lack of Western media commitment to the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program and downplayed the possibility of its military dimensions. Finally, as of the approaches adopted by the Iranian news agency translators towards the translations of hedges, they have adopted three strategies; omission, addition, and translations of a hedge to a hedge.

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List of Abbreviations

n: noun

adj: adjective

adv: adverb

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Here in this section, firstly, some information is represented around the subject of the present study to provide an introductory background on the issue in question. Secondly, there is the statement of the problem. Next, the research questions are presented. Then, the significance of the study is discussed. After that, the purpose of the study is mentioned, and finally the key terms of the study are defined.

1.2 . Background

1.2.1. The Media

During wars, propaganda in media engulfs everything including journalism and the news reporting system and influences them. This propaganda is conducted to the interest of the elite group in power (Chomsky, 2001, 2003a, 2003b). The propaganda itself involves creating a context in which the propagandist (institution, state, or even journalists themselves) go through to distort the reality that is to represent it other than what it is. Creating a context or at least to be anticipating a suitable context created, propagandists much more easily could make people's minds ready to accept what they want to impose on them through mass media system in general and journalism in

particular. Consequently, this leads to a newly emerged concept in the area of media and war on terror, “language wars” (Lewis, 2005).

Language wars have to do with some sort of conflict, a contention that is the result of the confluence of historical and contemporary cultural conditions that by no means cause constructing, deconstructing, and challenging new modes of meaning making (Lewis, 2005). Thus, the concept is indicative of a meaning making process, yet, in which the media plays an indispensable role, since meaning making and the media are closely related to discursive issues, and that the media (propagandist) give direction to these wars.

However, the other side of the language wars is the media audience response to such concepts as war, warfare (nuclear threat), terror, etc., which is formed through the interaction of people with the media. In other words, the response of audience is formed through their being exposed to the productions of the media meaning making system. These productions are, by a big part, manifested in political discourses produced and disseminated.

Meaning making procedure, as Lewis says, is not the one that is limited to merely the media, but a procedure that indeed is exercised in the triangle of context, production, and consumption with each of the angles having a reciprocal relation to each other.

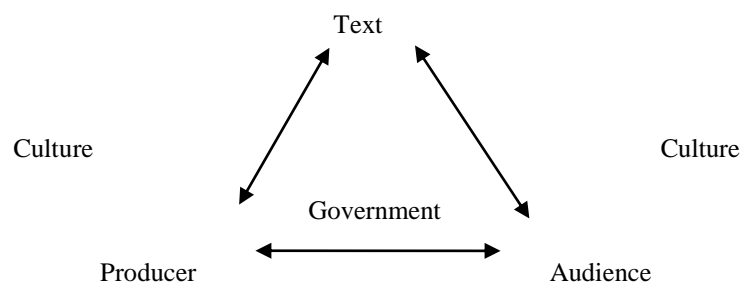


Figure1. The media triangle (Lewis, 2005, p. 6)

This media triangle resembles discourse analysis process being shaped at the stage of discursive practice in Fairclough's model of CDA (2003), a practice in which texts are analyzed as they are embedded within the social conditions of production and consumption of (news) texts.

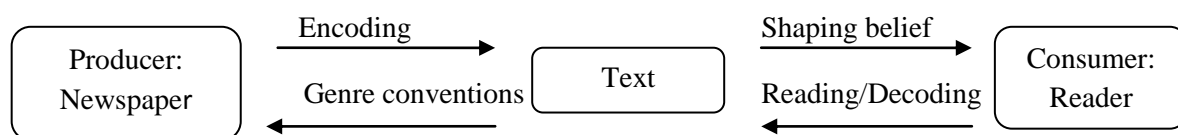


Figure 2 Discourse Analysis Process (Richardson, 2007, p. 39)

As an outstanding feature of news writing whether in printed papers or websites news services, linguistic styles plays a key role in processing news. Linguistic style deals with formal aspects of news writing. In fact, linguistic style is an attempt to allow for the variations at lexical and grammatical level to influence readers. But, what determines the linguistic style adopted in the news agencies is the context in which the news reports are to be broadcasted and of course news-broadcast company itself. Therefore, the arrangement of lexical items and syntactic structures chosen by news papers is not something whimsical, but something purposeful. In this regard, Cameron (1996, cited in Richardson 2007, p. 69) believes that “media institutions typically do have explicit policies on at least some aspects of language use so, when analysts look for ideological effects resulting from lexical and syntactic patterning in news discourse, it needs to be acknowledged that some textual regularities may be the outcome of explicit style rules rather than implicit assumptions about the matter in hand”. Therefore, it could be said that

if some news agency or journalist employs particular syntactic structures or lexical choices, it is because of the policy of that news agency rather than some political-ideological orientations. However, this does not suggest that linguistic styles adopted by news agencies or journalists are free from any political-ideological orientations. Therefore, Cameron notes

Style policies are ideological themselves. Though they are framed as purely functional or aesthetic judgments, and the commonest criteria offered are apolitical ones such as clarity, brevity, consistency, liveliness and vigor, it turns out that the stylistic values are not timeless and neutral, but have a history and a politics. They play a role in constructing a relationship with a specific imagined audience, and also in sustaining a particular ideology of news reporting. (ibid, p. 96)

1.2.1.1. Rumor

As a media campaign, psychological war plays an important role in influencing people's minds. Psychological war is simply defined as to play with words, people's minds, and their reactions in such a way that lead to a series of reactions being in harmony with the intended goal (Salah Nasr, 2001). Among the mechanisms of psychological war perhaps rumoring is the most effective way to influence general public behaviors and attitudes towards an issue. Rumor is a term referring to a concrete attitude which is proposed so that its hearers or readers believe it. As the definition suggests, rumoring is a weapon designed to make people think the way the media propagandist wants.

To rumor requires fulfilling two conditions; first the issue rumored should be of a paramount importance, and second, the issue must be engulfed by a foggy and vague atmosphere. In this regard Salah Nasr presents an equation for rumor:

$$\text{Rumor} = \text{Significance} \times \text{Vagueness},$$

where the absence of either of significance or vagueness would lead to the nullification of rumor.

That an issue to propagandize is of significance is determined by media “agenda-setting” (McCombs, 1991). Noam Chomsky (1989), in this regard, states that the elite media are sort of the agenda-setting media. That means the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the major television channels, and so on. They set the general framework. Local media more or less adapt to their structure.

But vagueness is a factor that should be created in some ways. Vagueness is produced when the news reports broadcasted on an issue are distorted before being received by its receivers. In this regard, linguistic devices including hedging could be highly helpful. They can be used to produce expressions that are ambiguous or vague; ambiguous in the sense that the expressions produce at least two different meaning in a given context, and vague in the sense that the expressions are not clear in a given context.

1.2.2 Translation and media

News processing could be investigated from the point of view of translation studies, since there are thousands of news being translated in the world. Narrative theory

(Baker, 2010), is the one from its perspective news processing, especially news translating, could be looked on. Mona Baker's narrative theory, in fact, says that an event, i.e. news, could be processed and narrated in myriads of forms. Baker says

Narratives are stories that we come to subscribe to – believe in or at least contemplate as potentially valid – and that therefore shape or reshape our behavior towards other people in which we are embedded in. (2010, p. 117)

As the definition above suggests, we are all engaged in producing narratives in one way or another, hence our behavior and attitude including our discourse may change. This is true also about the discursive behavior and practice of translators as social actors. Subsequently, the theory, as Baker continues, encourages us to reflect on and question the narratives we come in contact with and that shape our behavior, but there is no assumption here that we can suppress our subjectivity or stand out of those narratives, even as we reason about them.

Within the theory embedded another notion, that is the notion of framing. Framing, in fact, is a notion considered as a process of making a mental framework for audience through the narrative presented. This way the framed narrative becomes a differentiated one that causes social movement reactions in a bilateral path of communication. In this sense, framing processes provide a mechanism through which individuals can ideologically connect with movement goals and become potential participants in movement actions (Cunningham and Browning, 2004, p. 348).

Naturally, news writing and news translating are not exceptions in the theory. Both of them should seek framing for their work in order to shape and reshape their audience