

IN THE NAME OF GOD

کلیه حقوق مادی مترتب بر نتایج مطالعات، ابتکارات و
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**Faculty of Human Sciences
Department of English language and literature**

M.A. Thesis

**Change In Practice: A Critical Discourse Analysis of New York
Times' Approach Toward Iran, Before And After Obama**

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February 2010



دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی

گروه زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی

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و بعد از اوباما

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بهمن ماه ۱۳۸۸



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Abstract

This thesis studies the representation of Iran and the matters related to Iran in the New York Times in two periods of before and after Barack Obama's inauguration on January 21, 2009. The significance of these periods is that, in the first period and before Obama, the general policy of the United States was based on preemption. According to that, the U.S. administration was after stopping Iran by intensifying the sanction against it and by posing a military threat. In the second period, the general policy of U.S. was based on negotiation with Iran to solve the existing problems. Throughout analyzing forty headlines and twenty full-text news stories, the study shows that there are some differences in the representation of Iran in these periods. In the first period Iran is introduced as a dangerous powerful enemy, while in the second one, the presented image of Iran is partly moderate. The study uses the analytical components of CDA and the grammar of transitivity of SFG to analyze these cases. The conclusion, made by this study asserts that, the change in the policy of government as the most powerful institute of the society has brought about change in the approach of the newspaper toward Iran.

چکیده

مطالعه حاضر به بررسی بازتاب ایران و رودایدهای مربوط به آن در روزنامه آمریکایی نیویورک تایمز در دو دوره زمانی قبل و بعد از باراک اوباما می پردازد. در این راستا با استفاده از ابزارهای تحلیلی تحلیل کلام انتقادی و نیز دستور زبان نقش گرای هالیدی سرخط های خبری و متن خبرها مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفته اند که نتایج این تحلیل حاکی از این است که همزمان با تغییر در سیاست های راهبردی دولت آمریکا در دو دوره ی قبل و بعد از اوباما ساختار زبانی روزنامه نیز دچار تغییر و تحول شده و در همان جهت سیاست های حکومتی شکل گرفته است. این مسئله گویای رابطه ی میان کانون های قدرت و رسانه ها ست و تأکیدی مجدد بر این گفته ی متفکران تحلیل کلام انتقادی است که معتقدند ساختار زبان در متاثر از ساختار قدرت است.

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List of Abbreviations

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
<i>NYT</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>
SFG	Systemic Functional Grammar
U.N.	United Nations
U.S.	United States

Chapter 1

Introduction

1-1 Goal of the research

This research is about the role of language in the construction of power relations. The language which is investigated here is not a mere individualistic instrument belonging to a perfect native speaker who can produce a set of finite or infinite number of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements as Chomsky believes (Lyons, 1981, p. 7). Contrarily, the meaning of language used in this study is a social one that looks at it, as a function of human's social life. Nowadays one of the most important outlets of this language is apparent in the media discourse and this is the only point that the study is going to survey and discuss in order to discover how language plays its function within the structure of the media as a power institution and what is/are the bilateral impact(s) of these two systems on each other.

Because of so many reasons, studying the media and analyzing the media discourse seem to be important and interesting. To put it in a simple language and cut the story short, one can begin with this reason that they are accessible and ready to use everywhere and every time and they are also tangible and in relation with people's everyday life. The subject of this study for example even at the time being is one of the most important international political issues and if it were not for the sake of analyzing and discussing data, even now, it would be possible to gather some data from *NYT* or any other sources for the sake of a more general study. It is also possible to gain this information from everywhere all over the world. This question can be treated from two perspectives; zeroing in on the former, different media all over the world are producing texts about the same issue and by focusing on the latter, a special medium is accessible all over the world, in different versions. For example, in the case of the present study, there is no limit to access the texts and contents of *The New York Times* in Iran although there is a lot of physical distance between Iran and the real place of circulation of the newspaper. Another reason is the influence and impact of media on people's social life. Not only do Media reflex and represent the social habits,

the life and the culture of people, the speech communities and above all the social meaning and models but also through (re)producing discourse and applying the power they have gained from their social position can influence people and social groups, and make some changes within these structures. In much the same vein, they can teach people many things about other nations and other people's culture and way of life that finally can be considered as a good direction to rectify and improve people's social habits.

Anyhow, there are some problems with media, in lockstep with some limitations on the domain of their activity leading them to mal-operation or at least preventing them from playing their effective social role and make them have special directions. Access to media, economy and politics of media, production and consumption and practices of media text are among the factors that may affect their general policies. Still another important factor is the general policies of the states, mostly seen in international events, and their representation and coverage in the media. Because of these effects and influences, media tend to represent special types of stereotypes most of which are based on the common beliefs of the West (Sheyholislami, 2001). This study is going to survey the representation of an international event in one of the most influential American newspapers and the role which language plays in establishing the images of this representation.

1-2 Iran and the United States¹

The first traces of effective U.S presence in Iran dates back to the last century when Iran was occupied during World War II by the Coalition Troops who were to provide Russians with their helps against German danger of total invasion of the Soviet Union. After the war, in 1951, the government of nationalist Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh nationalized the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. In the face of strong public support for Mossadegh, Shah fled to Rome. Although Mossadegh was not a communist,

¹ Most of the written text of this section have been retrieved from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5314.htm> under a text entitled "Background Note :Iran" which is prepared by Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs of department of state of U.S.