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Entitled

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Iran's Nuclear Program in the Kayhan  
International and the New York Times Newspapers

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We hereby recommend that the thesis entitled ‘A Critical Discourse Analysis of Iran’s Nuclear Program in the Kayhan International and the New York Times Newspapers’ be accepted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

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*To*  
*My Loved Ones*

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<b><i>ABSTRACT</i></b>	
<p>This thesis explores the representations of Iran's nuclear program in <i>the New York Times</i> and <i>the Kayhan International</i> through critical discourse analysis. Three news reports from each paper have been randomly sampled and analyzed by means of Halliday's transitivity system and nominalization and passivization as well. Throughout a comparative analysis of the sampled data, this study reveals that there is sharp difference between the representations of Iran's nuclear program in the two papers. Using critical discourse analysis, I have tried to show how newspaper writers convey their ideologically loaded impressions through applying different linguistic devices. The findings of the thesis show that the sampled data from both papers adopt and maintain the dominant ideology of their respected countries. Thus, their impartiality is not preserved and this underscores the significance of critical language awareness for language teachers and learners.</p>	

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

Critical analysis of any form of media discourse is extremely important in modern days since the media\_\_ television, radio and the newspapers\_\_ constitute the main ways that large numbers of people receive information and entertainment. Governments and powerful groups typically use the media to promulgate their ways of thinking, stances, and ideologies. Woods (2006) believes that discourses and political discourse in particular have been profoundly affected by the rapid media expansion of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Today, discourse and politics have been mediatized intensely and it is no longer clear or possible to draw a sharp line between the discourses of politics and the media.

Bloor and Bloor (2007) argue that journalists usually report on other texts, cite speeches, attribute ideas when they record or describe events and they inevitably interpret reality on the basis of the way they viewed the event or the way they heard about it while reporting acts that have occurred; moreover, according to Johnstone (2008), “way of talking produce and reproduce ways of thinking, and ways of thinking can be manipulated via choices about grammar, style, wording, and every other aspect of discourse” (p. 54) thus there is direct

relationship linguistic features, which are used in a text, and ideologies, which lie behind the linguistic features.

For both language students and language teachers, “it is very helpful to ‘develop an ear’ for discourse\_\_ to learn to attend to the different strands of patterning in discourse and to focus on those contexts and linguistic strategies that are the most immediately relevant” (Schmitt, 2002, pp. 55, 56). Discourse analysis enables applied linguistics to analyze and understand real language data; it also enables us to understand better the kinds of discourse that language learners are exposed to outside the classroom” (ibid, p. 56). The language of newspapers, as it is chosen for this research, is an excellent example of the outside classroom discourse because “often, newspaper texts do not report what has already happened at all but report what ‘is to’ happen” (Bloor and Bloor, 2007, p. 51).

## **1.2 Significance of the study**

Locke (2004) believes that critical discourse analysis “is, specifically, concerned with the ways in which the power relations produced by discourse are maintained and/or challenged through texts and the practices which affect production, reception and dissemination” (Locke, 2004, p. 38) and Wodak (2001) believes that critical discourse analysis “takes an interest in the way in which linguistic forms are used in various expressions and manipulations of power” (p. 11).

It is an age in which the production and reproduction of the social order depend increasingly on practices and processes of a broadly cultural nature. Part of this development is an enhanced role for language in the exercise of power: it is mainly in discourse that consent is achieved, ideologies are transmitted, and practices, meanings, values and identities are

taught and learnt. This is clear from the generally acknowledged role of the mass media as probably the single most important social institution in bringing off these processes in contemporary societies (Fairclough, 1995, p. 219).

Fairclough (1995) believes that “ a rationale for critical language awareness work emerges from the general contemporary problematic of language and power: given that power relations work increasingly at an implicit level through language, and given that language practices are increasingly targets for intervention and control, a critical awareness of language is a prerequisite for effective citizenship, and a democratic entitlement.” (1995, p. 222).

Fairclough (1995) distinguishes a fundamental difference between language awareness (LA) and critical language awareness (CLA) in terms of their assumptions about what language awareness can do. Within LA, schools seem to be credited with a substantial capacity for contributing to social harmony and integration. Language awareness work is portrayed as making up for helping to overcome social problems. In the case of CLA the argument is that schools dedicated to a critical pedagogy should provide learners with understanding of problems which cannot be resolved just in the schools (1995, p. 223).

In respect of educational research, Locke (2004) believes that critical discourse analysis “has the potential to reveal the way power is diffused through the prevalence of various discourses throughout an education system, at both the micro-level of individual classrooms and the macro-level of large-scale reform” (p. 2).

### **1.3 Research question**

“Some media critics (Chomsky, 1989; Hackett, 1991; Karim, 2000; van Dijk, 1998b) believe that when it comes to representing international affairs the media reflect the foreign policy of the country where the media operate” (cited in Sheyholislami, p. 8). Based on this assumption the representation of the Iranian nuclear program in the US media is different from that in the Iranian media.

Fairclough (1995b) suggests that for a critical analysis of media discourse “the selection of data should correspondingly reflect areas of variability and instability as well as areas of stability” (p. 33).

This study analyzes the representation of Iranian nuclear program in two major English newspapers, *the New York Times* published in the US and *the Kayhan International* published in Iran during the time when Iran was considered as the ‘axis of evil’ by the White House.

Based on the aforementioned paragraphs, this study asks the following question:

Is there a difference between the representation of the Iranian nuclear program in *the New York Times* and in *the Kayhan International*?

### **1.4 Limitations of the Study**

There are a few factors which put a limit on the findings, discussions and conclusions of this study. First and foremost, I live in Iran, where one of the analyzed papers is published. This might influence the findings and conclusions and make them subjective, yet I tried my best to stay away from any ethnic or national bias in order to remain objective as far as possible.

Another factor to limit the findings and conclusions is the fact that I selected the needed data out of two newspapers only and they may not represent discursive practices and ideological perspectives that all newspapers in Iran and the U.S represent. Thus, the findings are tentative and should not be generalized to the discourse of all other papers in these two countries.

Due to the fact that the U.S is a native English-speaking country and Iran is not, the number of Iranian papers that are published in English is rather limited. This in turn might limit my study because it limited the number of my possible choices.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **2.1 Theoretical Background**

##### **2.1.1 Discourse**

Discourse is one of those elastic terms which one sometimes encounters in linguistics. It's often used quite loosely to mean any sequence of language in written or spoken form larger than a sentence. Richards and Plat (1992) divide 'discourse' into two major categories\_\_ spoken and written (p. 111). Some discourse analysts, such as M. Coulthard and J. Sinclair restrict the term 'discourse' to spoken language and view it as a series of connected utterances, the equivalent in spoken form to a written text while others, such as Mikhail Bakhtin, use the term in a more comprehensive sense to include fiction and poetry (Finch, 2000, pp. 219, 220).

Kaplan (2002) believes that the term discourse has been used interchangeably in two separate contexts\_\_ spoken discourse and written discourse. Written discourse analysis is obviously closely connected with work in literacy, but it implicates a great heterogeneity of topics and approaches, including at least some from psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics (p. 192).

There are some other distinctions as to the purposes for which language and discourse is used. Nunan (1993) distinguishes between 'transactional' language, which is language, used to

obtain goods and services, and ‘interpersonal’ language, which is language used for socializing. Yule (1996) distinguishes the same distinction but, with a difference in terminology, using ‘interactional’ for the latter. Luke (2002) applies the terms ‘subaltern’, ‘diasporic’, ‘emancipatory’, ‘local’, and ‘minority’ to mention some forms of discourse. However, it should be noted that “the distinctive aspect of ‘discourse’ is that it stresses the communicative dynamics of language” (Finch, 2000, p. 219).

Different practitioners use ‘discourse’ in a number of different ways. Some use it simply to mean “any actual talk, writing, or signing” (Johnstone, 2008, p. 29). Fromkin (2003) defines the term as any expression of “complex *thoughts and ideas*” (p. 209, my italics). Crystal (1992) defines it as “a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence, often constituting a *coherent unit*” (p. 25 as cited in Nunan, 1993, p. 5, my italics). “Stretches of language perceived to be *meaningful, unified, and purposive*” is Cook’s definition of the term (Cook, 1989, p. 156, as cited in Nunan, 1993, p. 6, my italics). Nunan (1993) argues that discourse refers to “the piece of communication in context” (p. 20). Elsewhere, Carter and Nunan (2001) define ‘discourse’ as “the organization of language beyond the level of the sentence and the individual speaking turn, whereby *meaning* is negotiated in the process of interaction” (p. 221, my italics). All these definitions underscore the state of being meaningful and regard ‘discourse’ as a coherent, meaningful whole initiated to establish communication.

Gee (1996) differentiates between what he terms “big ‘D’ discourse” from “little ‘d’ discourses” arguing for the primacy of the latter when acquired in the contexts of primary socialization (as cited in Luke, 2002, p. 96). Thus, discourses include much more than language. They are, according to Gee (1996):

ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles (or ‘types of people’) by specific *groups of people*, whether families of a certain sort, lawyers of a certain sort, bikers of a certain sort, business people of a certain sort, church members of a certain sort, African-Americans of a certain sort, women or men of a certain sort, and so on through a very long list.” He maintains that discourses are ... ‘ways of being in the world’; they are ‘forms of life’. They are, thus, always and everywhere *social* and products of social histories. (p. viii, as cited in Locke, 2004, p. 7, original italics).

When people draw on the knowledge they have about language to exchange information, express feelings, make things happen, create beauty, entertain themselves and others, and so on they actually draw on a set of generalizations, which can sometimes be stated as rules, about words generally mean, about what goes where in a sentence, and so on. This knowledge is often referred to as ‘language’ and as Johnstone (2006) argues ‘discourse’ is both the source of this knowledge (people’s generalizations about language are made on the basis of the discourse they participate in) and the result of it (people apply what they know in creating and interpreting new discourse) (p. 3).

### **2.1.2 Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis (DA) is the “study of how sentences in spoken and written language from larger meaningful units such as paragraphs, conversations, interviews, etc” (Richards and Plat, 1992, p. 111). According to Cook (2003), discourse analysis is “the study of how stretches of



language in *context* are perceived as meaningful and unified by their users, and/or the study of how different uses of language constitute and express the values of social institutions” (p. 127, my italics). On discourse analysis, McCarthy’s view is close to that of Cook by underlining ‘context’, stating that DA “is concerned with the study of the relationship between language and the *contexts* in which it is used” (1991, p. 1 as cited in Sewell, 2004, p.3).

Sewell (2004) summarizes the outcome of researches of others and puts it that DA “may include form-function relationships (McCarthy 1991: 2), patterns of functions (Brazil 1995: 5), relations between functions (Brazil 1995: 6), intonation (McCarthy 1991: 3), relations between participants (Brazil 1995: 9), speech acts, and conversational maxims (Coulthard 1985: 13)”.

Fromkin (2003) makes the domain of DA broader by combining these findings, claiming that it “involves questions of style, appropriateness, cohesiveness, rhetorical force, topic/subtopic structure, differences between written and spoken discourse, as well as grammatical properties” (p. 209).

Chimombo and Roseberry (1998) argue that the primary purpose of discourse analysis is to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of texts and how they become meaningful to their users (as cited in Paltridge, 2006, p. 3). Paltridge himself believes that discourse analysis considers “the ways that the use of language presents different views of the world and different understandings” (ibid, p. 20).

Language, per se, is neither ideology-free nor value-free; it “is not just a neutral medium of exchange; its uses take on *symbolic value*. Some uses are highly valued and others are lowly valued. These values are assigned through the various power relationships that exist” (Wardhaugh, 2002, p. 202, my italics). Johnstone (2008) argues that discourse analysis sheds

light on “how speakers indicate their semantic intentions and how hearers interpret what they hear, and on the cognitive abilities that underlie human *symbol use*” (p. 6, my italics).

Discourse analysis starts in linguistic analysis, and many of the people who developed the ways of working have been linguists, but linguists are not the only people interested in the field; so are sociolinguists, anthropologists, and psychologists. Discourse analysis is systematic to the extent that it encourages analysts to develop multiple explanations before they argue for one. Therefore, interdisciplinarity is “not just an attractive feature of discourse analysis but a central fact about it” (Johnstone, 2006, p. 271). Coulthard (1985) also emphasizes the significance of interdisciplinarity, noting that “there is no single discipline which concerns itself with the study of interactions”, and thus suggests that discourse analysis is at the intersection of many other fields including philosophy, psychology, sociology, and anthropology among others (p. 3, as cited in Sewell, 2004, p. 3). Discourse analysis is thus a methodology that is useful in answering many kinds of questions, both questions that linguists traditionally ask and questions asked by people in other humanistic and social-scientific disciplines.

### **2.1.3 Critical Discourse Analysis**

Van Dijk (1998) asserts that 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” (p. 352).

Critical discourse analysis is concerned with the relationship between language, ideology and power (Fairclough, 1989) and the relationship between discourse and sociocultural change (Fairclough, 1992). Like Fairclough, Luke (2002) points out the significant relationship between language, ideology and power, describing CDA as “an explicitly normative analysis of how texts and discourses work in ideological interests with powerful political consequences”. Thus one can claim that the right duty of CDA is “to reveal how language is used and abused in the exercise of power and the suppression of human rights” (Widdowson, 1998, p. 136, as cited in Wardhaugh, 2002, p. 14).

CDA is explicitly concerned with the discursive and social practices in which texts are embedded. Norman Fairclough, one of the founders of CDA, argues that CDA aims

to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power (1995, p. 132).

It is through language and discourse that political ideologies are transmitted and power is exercised. Rogers (2004) claims that discourses ‘are always socially, politically, racially, and economically loaded’. In a similar vein, van Rees (2007) argues that CDA involves “analyzing how the discourse serves the ideological interests of specific participants” and Locke (2004) rightly utters that “CDA’s concern is with the opacity of utterances\_\_ the discursive constructions or stories that are embedded in texts as information that is less readily available to consciousness. [And] analysis is a method of dealing with this opacity” (p.40). Therefore, the aim of critical approaches to discourse analysis is to help reveal some of the hidden and

'often out of sight', and sometimes opaque, values, positions and perspectives. Bloor and Bloor (2007) also believe that CDA is interested in "the way in which language and discourse are used to achieve social goals and in the part this use plays in social maintenance and change" (p. 2). It also examines practices and customs in society both to discover and describe how they work and also to provide a critique of those practices (p. 3).

Fairclough (1995) argues that social institutions contain diverse 'ideological-discursive formations' (IDFs) associated with different groups within the institution. He further argues that there is usually one IDF which is clearly dominant and each IDF is a sort of 'speech community' with its own discourse norms but also, embedded within and symbolized by the latter, its own 'ideological norms'. He also believes that a characteristic of a dominant IDF is the capacity to 'naturalize' ideologies, i.e. to win acceptance for them as non-ideological 'common sense'. It is argued that the orderliness of interactions depends in part on such naturalized ideologies. To 'denaturalize' them is the objective of a discourse analysis which adopts 'critical' goals (p. 27).

Because of its origins in linguistics, CDA is particularly well suited to the study of texts or transcripts, and it often articulates well with work by practitioners in rhetorics, anthropology, sociology, ethnography, anthropology, and interactional sociolinguistics, who bring to the table systemic approaches to the study of interactional and sociocultural contexts (Johnstone, 2006, p. 54, and Bloor and Bloor, 2007, p. 2). Working with scholars in other disciplines is what Wodak terms *interdisciplinarity*. CDA emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary work in order to gain a proper understanding of how language functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing social institutions or exercising power (Wodak, 2002, p. 10).