Contrastive Analysis of Discourse Representation in Persian and English Online Newspapers: Reports on Iran's Nuclear Program

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Abstract: *News media, as an influential source of information and language production, has gained the attention of applied and sociolinguists in today's world since its discourse has cultural, social, and political impacts. Various contrastive studies have been carried out on the political news discourse in the past few years. This study intends to contrast English and Persian news reports with regards to mode and representing verbs particularly on the issue of Iran's nuclear program and tries to investigate the similarities and differences between these two corpora of political news reports discourse representations. The corpora consist of 24 Iranian newspaper reports (10,909 words) from The Hamshahri online and 24 American newspaper reports (18,087 words) from The New York Times online. The results suggest that the total use of the representing verbs, except manner-of-speaking verbs, in two modes of direct and indirect discourse differed in English and Persian reports. Moreover, the Persian reporters are anonymous and seem to have more influence on represented discourse in comparison with the English reports that appear to be less controlled.*

Key words: *contrastive linguistics, political discourse, represented discourse, mode, representing verbs*

Introduction

1.1 Discourse

In the last decade, texts linguistics as part of the larger area of discourse has been applied to analyze mass media messages systematically. Before, the attention was mainly paid to individual words, phrases, or sentences. However, the focus has been switched to discourse, that is structures and functions of actual forms of language use. Discourse can include different units of analysis such as individual words (lexical items), various structures of the clause, whole sentences, sequences of sentences (paragraphs), or whole discourses.

Fairclough (2003) differentiates between 'discourse' as an abstract unit for the domain of statements and 'discourses' concretely as groups of statements or for the regulated practice governing such a group of statements. He defines discourses as 'ways of representing aspects of

the world — the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the `mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world' (Fairclough 2003: 124). Moreover, he sees discourses as representative of the real world and the possible worlds. In other words, he distinguishes discourses both by their ways of representing and their relationship to other social elements. By ways of representing, he means a range of linguistic features realizing a discourse, the most prominent features of which are features of vocabulary.

The identification and analysis of discourses, as Fairclough (2003) believes, now preoccupies the humanities and social sciences. Van Dijk (2006) points out that politics, ideology, and discourse are the most closely related studies of social sciences. He also states that 'Politics is one of the social domains whose practices are virtually exclusively discursive; political cognition is by definition ideologically based; and political ideologies are largely reproduced by discourse' (2006: 728).

However, in a more productive way, it is better to focus on how different discourses structure the world differently and so on the semantic relationships between words rather than just focusing on various ways of wording the same aspects of the world as there may be a substantial overlap between the vocabularies associated with different discourses in a particular domain of social life (Fairclough 2003). Van Dijk (1983) also supports the idea that each lexical item should not be looked at separately as a surface structure. In other words, lexicalization should be treated as an indication of the underlying meaning and social functions.

Discourse analysis, from social view, has got two different approaches, namely critical and non-critical approaches. These two approaches are different in describing discursive practices and also how power and ideologies shape discourse as well as the way discourse shapes social identities, relation, and systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough 1992).

1.2 News discourse

News media has always been a matter of debate among applied and sociolinguists for the following main reasons: the availability of language data from the media, the importance of the media as a source of language production, and the way their discourses influence culture, politics and social life (Bell 2006). Media's role in the reporting of politics has changed from 'mediator or watchdog' to a 'political institution' (Lauerbach 2006). According to Cotter (2011), each news story contains not only cultural but also discursive complexity. As a result every journalist should pay attention to ideological, historical, time-contingent, and discursive aspects.

Van Dijk (1983) specified functionality and meaningfulness as the two general characteristics for news discourse. Functionality refers to the relationship between surface

structures and meanings, and the social context which is characteristics of the speaker, the relations between speaker and hearer, and the type of social situation. Unity and coherence are what he means by meaningfulness of a discourse.

According to Bell (2006), critical discourse analysis in news language is done through four basic approaches i.e. Van Dijk's (1980s), Fairclough's (1995), Bell's (1991), and the broadcast interviews analysis approach. This study is mainly concerned with the Fairclough's (1995) approach which has been developed based on Halliday's functional linguistic framework as well as knowledge of recent social theory added to it. Although he did not originally intend to work on media language, his samples were media texts which have a salient role in shaping discourses.

Fairclough (2003) has mainly worked on three dimensions of discourse analysis. The first is text analysis which focuses on the language text concerning both micro and macro levels of text structure. The second dimension is concerned with how the text is produced, interpreted and distributed. And the last dimension is the analysis of social practice focusing on social, institutional and cultural aspects of discourse and its relation to power and ideology (as cited in Bell 2006). So, it is of importance to take both linguistic and social dimensions into consideration in analyzing discourse representation.

Discourse can be represented through two modes of direct and indirect. Each of these modes can take different forms. Direct discourse representation can be direct, slip or free. While indirect discourse representation may be either indirect or free indirect discourse. What follows is a brief description of each of these forms (Fairclough, 1995).

Definition of key terms

2.1 Representing Verbs

Yamashita indicated that 'the choice of the representing verb is closely associated with the extent which represented discourse is controlled by representing discourse' (1999: 178). According to him, different kinds of representing verbs are used in the news report which can be divided into the following categories:

1. Reporting verbs (e.g. say, tell, report): A neutral evaluation of represented discourse is given by the reporter making the represented discourse not controlled. It is presented to the reader objectively. Floyd (2000) stated that these verbs, in direct or indirect speech, are less different in news discourse in comparison with other types of discourse.
2. Mental (thought) verbs (e.g. wonder, recall): These verbs are not usually used in the newspaper report to represent discourse. They present the internal states of the subject of represented discourse to the reader.

3. Manner-of-speaking verbs (e.g. shout): It transfers physical characteristics of represented discourse to the reader.

4. Speech act (illocutionary) verbs (e.g. warn, claim): Each of these speech act verbs has a different kind of illocutionary force which is given to represented discourse by the reporter. Therefore, the reader's interpretation of the represented discourse is controlled by the reporter.

2.2 Modes of Discourse Representation

Categorizing the modes of discourse representation is highly associated with the extent to which represented discourse is differentiated from representing discourse.

2.2.1 Direct Discourse Representation

1. Direct discourse: Direct discourse is comprised of a reported clause and a reporting clause which maintains the speech act value of the reported clause.

2. Direct discourse (slip): In the case in which indirect discourse slips into direct discourse, the represented discourse is partially a verbatim report of the original utterance. This can be included in the mode of direct discourse (Fairclough 1995).

3. Free direct discourse: In this mode there exists a reported clause and quotation marks but no reporting clause with no speech act value added to it and the reader has direct access to the represented discourse.

2.2.2 Indirect Discourse Representation

1. Indirect discourse: This form of discourse consists of the reporting clause and the reported clause with quotation marks. It is clear whose voice is represented. Moreover, the original utterance of the represented discourse is generally summarized or paraphrased. And in some cases, 'according to' and the colon, ' : ' are used to show whose voice is represented.

2. Free indirect discourse (unsignaled form of discourse representation): In this mode, there are no quotation marks. There is a mixing of representing discourse and represented discourse with no clear demarcation between them. Thus, discourse representation is double-voiced. As Fairclough (1995) mentioned, this unsignaled mode is for cases where what is clearly secondary discourse appears in primary discourse without being explicitly marked as represented discourse.

Methodology

3.1 Data collection

The study was done in sociopolitical context of Iran by making use of the corpus consisting of 24 Iranian newspaper reports (10,909 words) from Hamshahri (newspaper) and 24 American newspaper reports (18,087 words) from New York Times.

The corpus of the Iranian newspaper reports was collected from the World Wide Web site of Hamshahri published form 11 October 2006 to 24 September 2011. The corpus of the American newspaper reports was also collected from the World Wide Web site of New York Times published form 16 September 2008 to 16 December 2011 via the Internet. All the news reports were about Iran's nuclear program. The reason for selecting these two sources of news was the expectation of their reporting the same topic of Iran's nuclear program differently due to the fact that they hold different ideologies towards this issue.

3.2 Procedure

The research was directed toward studying discourse representation of English and Persian corpora in order extract the representing verbs and modes of discourse used in political news reports. At first representing verbs (reporting, mental, manner-of-speaking, and speech act verbs) were investigated in the headline, lead and body of the two corpora by using the list provided by Yamashita (1999). The modes of discourse (direct, direct (slip), free direct, indirect, and free indirect discourse) were also examined. Then, the frequency and percentage of both representing verbs and modes were estimated and presented in the following tables.

In the Persian newspaper reports there were some verbal phrases which were counted as verbs since there was only one or two of them in the reports. For example, the verbal phrase 'ba tækid- e bær … goft' (by emphasizing … said) was counted as 'goft' (said).

3.3 Data analysis

All of the four groups of representing verbs defined above were identified in the corpora. What follows is a detailed description of the representing verbs and the discourse modes found in the English and Persian reports.

3.3.1 Use of representing verbs in direct discourse

The representing verbs in direct discourse found in the English newspaper are as following: reporting verbs (98): say (78), tell (6), write (5), put (3), ask (3), quote (2), and report (1); speech act verbs (9): describe (2), add (1), warn (1), predicted (1), acknowledge (1), call (1), vow (1), and reply (1).

The representing verbs used in direct mode of discourse in the Persian reports are: reporting verbs (94): goft (tell:79), ?ezhar dasht (state: 8), bæyan kærd (say: 4), gozaresh dad (report: 2), nevesht (write: 1); speech act verbs (65): ?æfzud (add: 25), ?edame dad (continue: 11), tæsrih kærd (clarify: 11), xater neshan kærd (point out: 9), tæ?kid kærd (emphasize:6), ?e?lam kærd (announce: 2), ?ebraz aqide kærd (comment: 1).

In order to get an overall picture of the representing verbs used in the English and Persian news reports, verbs are divided into four basic categories of reporting, mental, manner-of-speaking, and speech act verbs. The frequency of the different types of verbs is shown in Table 1.

Table: 1

Observed frequency of representing verbs in direct discourse in the English and Persian corpora

Representing Verbs	English		Persian	
	N	%	N	%
Reporting verbs	98	91.59	94	59.12
Mental verbs	0	0	0	0
Manner-of-speaking verbs	0	0	0	0
Speech act verbs	9	8.41	65	40.88
total	107	100	159	100

Table 1 shows that the proportion of reporting verbs was remarkably higher in the English reports (91.59%) than in the Persian ones (59.12%). However, speech act verbs used in direct discourse were considerably higher in Persian reports (40.88%) than in the English ones (8.41%). Mental and manner-of-speaking verbs were used in neither of the two.

3.3.2 Use of representing verbs in indirect discourse

Representing verbs were also estimated in indirect discourse. The verbs used in the English newspaper were: reporting verbs (139): say (126), quote (5), tell (4), ask (2), report (1), and note (1); mental verbs (4): hope (3), and believe (1); speech act verbs (69): insist (6), signal (4), add(3), warn (3), accuse (3), contend (3), conclude (3), suggest (3), confirm (3), denounce (3), assert (2), vow (2), announce (2), describe (2), urge (2), criticize (2), argue (2), predict (2), call (1), rule out (1), catalog (1), hint (1), reject (1), question (1), support (1), express (1), claim (1), make clear (1), reiterate (1), demand (1), indicate (1), include (1), detail (1), admit (1), declare (1), acknowledge (1), propose (1), and offer (1); manner-of-speaking verbs (1): assault (1).
And the verbs in the Persian newspaper were: reporting verbs (19): goft (tell: 11), byan kærd (say: 3), khæbær dad (report: 3), nevesht (write:1), and soxæn goft (speak: 1); mental verbs (15): danest (know: 13), and ?ebraz-e ?omidvari kærd (hope: 2); speech act verbs (46):tæ?kid kærd (emphasize: 12), xast (demand: 6), moda?i shod (claim: 4), ?eshare kærd (mention: 4), xand

(call: 4), xater neshan kærd (point out: 4), ?ealam kærd (announce: 3), ?onvan kærd (title: 2), tæsrih kærd (clarify:1), tosif kærd (describe: 1), qædrdani kærd (appreciate:1), mæhsub kærd (consider: 1), tæhdid kærd (threaten: 1), be tæshrih pærdaxt (explain: 1), and ?era?e kærd (present :1); manner of speaking verbs (1): ?ebraz-e negærani kærd (worry: 1).

The results of this estimation can be viewed in Table 2.

Table: 2

Observed frequency of representing verbs in indirect discourse in the English and Persian corpora

Representing Verbs	English		Persian	
	N	%	N	%
Reporting verbs	139	65.26	19	23.46
Mental verbs	4	1.87	15	18.52
Manner-of-speaking verbs	1	0.47	1	1.23
Speech act verbs	69	32.40	46	56.79
Total	213	100	81	100

As it can be seen from the table, the percentage of the reporting verbs used in the English newspaper outweighs the proportion of the ones used in the Persian newspaper. While the use of mental, manner-of-speaking, and specially speech act verbs is more outstanding in the Persian newspaper.

In order to get a whole picture of the representing verbs Table 3 was drawn to demonstrate the total use of these verbs in both direct and indirect modes of discourse.

Table: 3

Total use of representing verbs in direct and indirect discourse in the English and Persian corpora

Representing Verbs	English		Persian	
	N	%	N	%
Reporting verbs	237	74.06	113	45.2
Mental verbs	4	1.25	15	6
Manner-of-speaking verbs	1	0.31	1	0.4
Speech act verbs	78	24.38	111	44.4
Total	320	100	250	100

As it is obvious from Table 3, the English newspaper made use of reporting verbs more than the Persian one did. The proportion of the reporting verbs is more prominent than the other three verbs in the English newspaper. The Persian newspaper, however, used almost the same proportion of both reporting (45.2) and speech act verbs (44.4). Mental and manner-of-speaking verbs were not employed a lot in both newspapers.

3.3.3 Overall Use of Discourse Representation

As it was discussed above, discourse representation may take two different modes of direct and indirect which can be subdivided into forms of direct discourse slipping into indirect, free direct, and free indirect discourse. As slipping was always into direct mode of discourse in the corpora, it was considered as a subcategory of direct discourse. Table 4 indicates the overall use of these modes of discourse in both English and Persian news reports.

Table: 4

Observed frequency of modes and forms of discourse in the English and Persian corpora

	English				Persian			
	Headline	Lead and body	N	%	Headline	Lead and body	N	%
Direct discourse (direct discourse slip)	0 (0)	109 (37)	109	31.41	6 (0)	162 (2)	168	63.64

Free direct discourse	0	16	16	4.61	4	0	4	1.52
Indirect discourse	9	197	206	59.37	10	76	86	32.58
Free indirect discourse	1	15	16	4.61	0	6	6	2.27
Total	10	337	347	100	20	244	264	100

In the English news reports, forms of indirect mode (63.98%) are used more frequently than those of direct discourse (36.02%). Moreover, as it can be seen in Table 3, reporting verbs frequency (74.06%) dominates speech act verbs frequency (24.38%) in both direct and indirect discourser showing that the reporter tends to make a neutral evaluation of the represented discourse. On the other hand, in the Persian newspaper reports, the frequency of the direct mode (65.16%) surpasses the indirect one (34.85%). In addition, reporting and speech act verbs did not have significant difference in their overall use.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the most important quantitative similarities and differences between the English and Persian news reports were deduced as follows:
The news reports of the two languages were similar in the following areas:
 - Absence of mental and manner-of-speaking verbs: Neither of the newspapers contained mental and manner-of-speaking verbs in direct mode of discourse.
- Dominant use of reporting verbs: The use of reporting verbs prominently outnumbered that of any other verbs in both English (74.06%) and Persian (45.2%) news reports.
The news reports of the two languages were different in the following areas:
- The use of direct discourse in Persian news reports (63.64%) was almost twice more than the English ones (31.41%).
- There were 16 (4.61%) examples of free direct discourse in the English sample news reports but only 4 (1.52%) in Persian ones.
- In a comparison between the English and Persian newspaper reports, it appears that
Indirect discourse was almost twice more frequent in the English corpus (59.37%) than the Persian one (32.58%).
- Although free indirect discourse was not used a lot in both newspapers, it was more frequent in English reports (4.61%) than in Persian ones (2.27%).
- Reporting verbs used in direct discourse occurred more frequently in the English corpus (91.59%) than in the Persian sample (59.12%). English and Persian reports were significantly different in the use of speech act verbs in direct mode of discourse (8.41% and 40.88% respectively).

- Reporting verbs in indirect were used almost three times more in the English sample (65.26%) than in the Persian one (23.46%).
- There were more speech act verbs in indirect mode in the Persian corpus (56.79%) than in the English sample reports (32.40%).
- Mental verbs were also more frequently used in indirect mode in the Persian newspaper (18.52%) than in the English corpus (1.87%).
- The total use of the representing verbs except manner-of-speaking verbs in two modes of discourse differed in English and Persian.

In most of the English newspaper reports in the corpus, the reporters are bylined by their full names. Therefore, the authorship of the news report is clearly presented. On the other hand, in the Persian newspaper report, the reporters are not bylined. That is, the identity of the reporter who writes a news report does not appear in the report. Consequently, the newspaper or people in general shoulder the responsibility of the reporter which also means that the reporter is not completely independent from the reader and the news source.

While the reporter in the English newspaper reports takes the responsibility for the newsmaker as well as the reader regarding the represented discourse. In spite of the fact that the reporters are bylined in the English newspaper reports, these reports seem to be less controlled than the Persian ones. In other words, although the Persian reporters are anonymous, they seem to have more influence on represented discourse.

What is of crucial importance is to avoid generalizing the results of this study as it was limited to only 48 political news reports on the mere topic of Iran's nuclear program. Future research should cover a larger corpus to take account of other topics as well. Use should also be made of other English and Persian newspapers as they are stylistically different. At the end, since this study worked only on one aspect of discourse representation, it is suggested that other aspects of it be taken into consideration.

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