Critical Discourse Analysis: A Functional Research Tool for News Reports Analysis
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Abstract

This paper investigates how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to reveal the relationship between the linguistic choices and socio-ideological context in news reports. The study adopts Fairclough's framework for CDA to analyse the lexical choices used in Al-Jazeera English reporting of the Iraq war. The findings reveal that the lexical choices reflect the social and ideological practices of the network. The study concludes that CDA is an effective research tool to unveil the ideological meaning of news texts and language use, hence it helps raising awareness towards language power.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Fairclough's framework, ideology, news language.

تحليل الخطاب النقدي: أداة بحث عملية لتحليل التقارير الإخبارية

ملخص

يبحث هذا المقال في كيفية استخدام تحليل الخطاب النقدي "CDA" للكشف عن العلاقة بين الخيارات اللغوية والسياق الاجتماعي –الأيديولوجي في التقارير الإخبارية. تعتمد الدراسة نموذج "CDA" لفيركلوه "Fairclough"، لتحليل انتقاء المفردات اللغوية المستعملة في أخبار حرب العراق لقناة الجزيرة بالإنجليزية. أظهرت النتائج أن انتقاء الجزيرة لهذه المفردات يعكس الممارسات الاجتماعية والأيديولوجية للشبكة. خلصت الدراسة إلى أن تحليل الخطاب النقدي هو أداة بحث فعالة لكشف المعنى الأيديولوجي للنصوص الإخبارية واستخدام اللغة، وبالتالي يساعد على رفع الوعي لقوة اللغة.

الكلمات المفاتيح: تحليل خطاب نقدي" CDA"، نموذج فيركلوه " Fairclough"، إيديولوجيا، لغة أخبار.

Analyse Critique du Discours: Outil de Recherche Fonctionnelle pour L'analyse des Reportages

Résumé

Cet article se réfère à l'analyse critique du discours (ACD) pour l'explication de la relation entre les choix linguistiques et le contexte socio-idéologique dans les reportages. Sur la base du modèle de l'ACD de Fairclough, l'analyse des choix lexicaux dans les reportages d'Al-Jazeera English sur la guerre d'Irak, révèle que les choix lexicaux reflètent les pratiques sociales et idéologiques du réseau. L'étude conclut que l'ACD est un outil de recherche efficace pour la découverte du sens idéologique des reportages, contribuant ainsi à la sensibilisation au pouvoir de la langue.

Mots-clés: Analyse critique du discours (acd), modèle de Fairclough, idéologie, langage des reportages.

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Introduction:

Discourse analysis is widely used in media research, as media are dominating presenters of language in society and the world at large. However, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is considered one of the best research tools to approach the study and analysis of the language of media. Moreover, of the different media genres, prominent CDA scholars have given news the most attention as news reporting comes from institutions that are socially, economically, politically and culturally situated. Linguistically, the text is central to news, so we need a close analysis of the news text. CDA emphasizes the need to examine critically the role of news language as it is articulated from some particular ideology, and CDA researchers focus on the relationship between language and discourse in the structure and representation of society to describe, interpret, and explain such connections. This paper investigates how CDA can reveal the relationship between the linguistic structures and the socio ideological contexts in the news reports/texts of Al-Jazeera English. Focus is laid on some linguistic features, namely choice of vocabulary items and their relationship to the socio-ideological contexts.

1- Critical Discourse Analysis:

CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to discourse analysis that goes beyond linguistic analysis, to include the broader social, political, historical, cultural and ideological contexts of language use; it draws on both social theory and linguistics[1]. Linguistically speaking, it is based on the systemic-functional approach developed by Halliday[2][3], and critical linguistics[4][5].

Discourse is usually analysed in linguistic terms, either as forms larger than the single sentence i.e. text or as language-in use, i.e. real language used by people[6]. CDA on the other hand considers discourse – language use in speech and writing - as a form of social practice as it highlights the social context in which this discourse occurs[7].

CDA is critical in terms of making transparent social practices and discourse practices and the relationship between them in an effort to raise social responsibility and awareness. As Wodak states:

CDA studies real, and often extended, instances of social interaction, which take (partially) linguistic form. The critical approach is distinctive in its view of (a) the relationship between language and society, and(b) the relationship between analysis and the practices analysed[8].

The distinction between CDA and discourse analysis lies in the critical analyst main concern with the unveiling of some social situations that are related to power misuse, inequalities, hegemony, crisis and are understood as ideological effects. From a CDA viewpoint, these situations are legitimated through discourse. Moreover, what is important for the critical analyst is how discourse is analysed in relation to the wide social, ideological and historical contexts in which it takes place. Accordingly, discourse is social practice as the way we produce and consume or interpret it is shaped by society.

A CDA vital principle is that speakers make choices concerning vocabulary and grammar, which are most of the time principled and systematic[9]. This notion of language choice is drawn from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Thus, if language choice is systematic it means it is ideologically driven. The main pioneering CDA scholars and their approaches are van Dijk' Socio-cognitive Model[10][11], Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach[12] [13], and Fairclough's Critical Language Study Approach[14] [15] [16] [17][18].

Media texts are a common subject of analysis in CDA as media and more specifically news, are ideologically driven and have a great influence on readers' or audiences' view of the world. Readers/audiences interpret texts against their background knowledge and the information they already have about events. More significantly, one of the main sources of information and beliefs used to form such interpretations are the news. Therefore, there is a dialectical relationship between news discourse and ideology, in other words, news discourse shapes and is shaped by people's beliefs and ideologies. One method to analyse such relationship is CDA.

2-The Study:

This study adopted the three stages of Fairclough's theoretical framework[19] in the version of CDA to analyse the news reports: description, interpretation, and explanation.

2-1 Description*:*

The stage of description is concerned with "formal properties of the text"[20]. The analyst tries to identify and label formal features of a text like lexicalisations, nominalisations, transitivity, the use of the passive and active voice, choice of mood and modality and many other vocabulary and grammatical features.

Analysis at this level involves the use of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), a lexico-grammatical theory framed on the notion of choice that sees language as "networks of interlocking options"[21]. Fairclough adopts Halliday's SFG in news discourse analysis, specifically in the descriptive stage of the framework. The choice of SFG is purposeful as it provides a multifunctional representation of social reality, and as it is the ideological functioning of the discursive strategies that is of interest to CDA.

Language is seen as multidimensional: texts concurrently represent experience, social relations and identities, and they reflect textual processes (Table 1). In this connection, Fairclough[22] states that formal features of a text have experiential, relational and expressive or connective values. A formal feature with experiential value explains how the text producer's experience of the social world is represented in the text; it is related to contents, knowledge and beliefs. A formal feature with relational value is concerned with how relations and social relationships are denoted in the discourse between the producer and recipient or participants in general. The expressive value accounts for how the text producer evaluates reality, by positioning subjects and social identities. These features have structural or long-term effects on participants' knowledge, social relations and social identities (Table 1). Fairclough identifies another formal feature with connective value i.e. how parts of a text are connected together. He also claims that any formal feature may simultaneously have some mixture of these values, as is the case for our study. Eventually, analysis of the textual features is the basis for the two stages of interpretation and explanation that will justify the choice of certain formal features and not others.

Table 1. Formal features of a text

Dimensions of meaning	Values of features	Structural effects
Contents	Experiential	Knowledge
Relations	Relational	Social relations
Subjects	Expressive	Social identities

Source: Fairclough 2001:94

Lexicalization is the most obvious way in which the particular experiential, relational and expressive values of words and their meanings, of a discourse are signalled. Pertinent to the relationship between lexical items and ideology, ideological differences between texts can easily be spotted via their encoding in vocabulary choices[23]. This is possible because words do not carry unitary and consistent meanings: they have an etymology, a history, connotations, personal associations, metaphorical uses and meaning derived from the surrounding context. Similarly, they may constitute sites of struggle for meaning and value. It is significant to mention that words may carry different meanings simultaneously. They may have experiential as well as relational and expressive meanings. For example the word fighter has an experiential value as it represents a conflict or war and it can have a relational value with other words like soldier or rebel; or it can express a negative aspect as opposed to soldier. In this respect, the choice of using freedom fighter instead of militant or rebel undoubtedly is ideologically driven and has an ideological effect on readers as well.

2-2 Interpretation:

   This dimension is concerned with how people interpret and reproduce or transform texts. It mediates between the dimensions of discourse as text (description) and social context (explanation). Interpretation is concerned with the interaction between text production and interpretation processes. In other words, the text is seen as a product of a production process, and as a resource in the interpretation process.

   Interpretations are made through a combination of what is in the text and what is in the interpreter's head, or what Fairclough named "members' resources (MR)". So the producers and interpreters use MR when they produce and interpret texts as their knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds they live in, values, beliefs, assumptions, and so on[24]. In making interpretations, MR are considered as interpretative procedures, which are cognitive processes of participants. Formal features of the text are cues, which trigger interrelated elements of the interpreters' MR. For that reason we cannot describe textual features of texts without making interpretations at the same time.

   The present analysis focuses on the interpretation processes, i.e. interpretation of the situational and intertextual contexts. The intertextual context is a matter of deciding which historical series a text belongs to, as discourses and the texts that occur within them have histories.

2-3 Explanation:

   The aim of the stage of explanation is to describe such properties of the interaction process by referring to its social context regarding discourse as social practice. The MR, which people use to produce and interpret texts are not only cognitive, but they are social and ideological as well, as they have social origins. Therefore, discourse includes social conditions that are related to three contexts of the communicative event: the situational, the institutional and the societal.

2-4 Data Collection:

   As media usually claim to be neutral in their representation of events, they are good research data for research in CDA, in order to analyse the underlying meaning and ideology of their language. Our study was based on the analysis of data collected from Al-Jazeera English website[25] using Fairclough's CDA framework. The data consisted of internet news dealing with the 2003 Iraq war issue. We concentrated on events highlighting the fifth anniversary of the war i.e. March 19, 2008. The selection covered the period from March 18 to March 24, 2008, to attain maximum representativeness of the data. All relevant news texts in the website during this period were downloaded and collected regardless of their length. We used the computer program AntConc 3.5.7 w 2018[26] to extract relevant word frequency lists and concordances in a Keyword-in-Context format wherever appropriate. This software involves several tools for generating concordances, word collocates and text analysis.

   Concordance tool gives a list of all occurrences of a selected item (node) in a corpus, displayed in sequence of words in a sentence or clause, that is, in KWIC (Key Word in Context) format. At the very centre of the sequence lies the 'node' word, along with the words to its left and right positions. Concordance lines allow for the investigation of collocates and lexico-grammatical patterns in that the lines are displayed horizontally, which facilitates the observation of word combinations.

3- Results and Discussion:

3-1 Description and Interpretation of Lexical Terms:

   Our study laid emphasis on the analysis of experiential, relational and expressive meanings of lexical items. The analysis of how lexical items are employed in Al Jazeera News Reports corpus (ANR) shows the main concerns of the news producers, and the encrypted ideologies. At this level, the focus is on rewording, overwording, and lexical reiteration[27]. Reiteration is the repetition of some lexical items used for the confirmation of certain idea or because they belong to the same lexical set of the topic under consideration. It can be carried out explicitly

using the identical item in many sentences or implicitly using synonymy, near-synonymy or antonymy of the original items.

3-1-1 Nouns and Adjectives in ANR

This section deals with the top ten nouns and adjectives in ANR. A close look at Table 2 brings forth a handful of meaningful information.

Table 2.Top nouns and adjectives in ANR

Rank	Nouns	N•	Adjectives	N°
1	Iraq	96	Iraqi	38
2	US	96	Shia	16
3	soldiers	30	Sunni	16
4	attacks	28	armed	14
5	Iraqis	28	sectarian	13
6	war	26	military	12
7	country	25	American	11
8	Baghdad	22	main	10
9	Bush	22	political	09
10	surge	21	southern	08

Remarkably, the top nouns are Iraq and US with a high equal number of occurrences compared with the other nouns. Ranking equally with Iraq, the word US shows the emphasis on the US major role in the Iraq war even after five years of the invasion. In this way, the writer puts US in the same position as Iraq and this positioning is significantly ideological. The word US collocates mostly with Iraq, military, said, soldiers, forces and president.

Figure 1: A partial screenshot of *US* concordance list

The noun Iraq in its turn collocates typically with US, soldiers, said, military, war and invasion. Again, there is a strong relational meaning between the two terms Iraq and US in ANR that expresses the dominating role of US, and the dependence of Iraq status quo on US power. Additionally, the presence of the term Bush, the US president, in the top nouns list and the absence of the Iraqi president, reinforces this argument.

Figure 2: A partial screenshot of Iraq concordance list

The third main noun in the list is soldier(s) with 30 occurrences. A close analysis of this word using the clusters and collocates tools, showed that it collocates mostly with US, killed, American and allied and less with Iraqi. More importantly, Al Jazeera English henceforth AE assigns them a victim role in the war, by focusing on the death toll of soldiers. This representation raises doubts about the role of US and its success in general. In ANR, the frequent use of such words as attack(s), death(s), Iraqis and troops signifies the deep concern of AE over such concepts or matters as attack (s) on soldier(s), Iraqis and troops and the consequence of these attacks, which is the death(s). Generally, it reflects the scene of war in Iraq after five years of US invasion, an image that is not positive.

Figure 3: A partial Screenshot of *soldiers* and *Iraqi* collocates

For adjectives, Iraqi takes the first position in ANR, and collocates with civilians, US, forces, toll, thousands and security. The presence of Shia, Sunni, and sectarian, provides evidence for Iraqi internal division among religious groups during the war. The adjective American is present in the top list of adjectives, and collocates more with soldiers, Iraq, wounded, surge, people and forces; highlighting again AE concern of showing the role of US. The high frequency of the terms armed and military compared to political, stresses that there is more focus on military instead of political resorts.

3-1-2 Lexical Items Pertaining to Violence and Security

Many important issues appear in ANR; but the key ones are undoubtedly those related to violence in general and more specifically to sectarian violence and terrorist attacks.

Table 3. Lexical items related to violence and security

Lexical items related to		No
Violence	Dead, deadly, death(s),died, attack(s), Killed, killing(s), Soldier(s), Troop(s), Military, War, Armed, army, Forces Violence, Bomb(s), bombing, Fight, fighters, fighting, Invasion, Wounded, wounding, Blast(s), Explosion, explosives, Fire, fired, Militia, Combat, Rocket(s), Battle(s), Gun, dangerous, Injured, Mortar, weapons, raided	404
Security	security, peace, safer	28

Table 3 shows two groups of wordings. The first group is associated with words of war and violence, whereas the second is related to words of security and peace. The difference in frequency between lexical items of the first group and the second one is so drastic, reflecting a dominating atmosphere of war, conflict and violence in Iraq under the US leadership in the fifth anniversary of the war.

3-1-3 Lexical Items Related to Sectarian Division

One of the major issues in Iraq war that raises doubts about the US role is the internal conflict between Iraqis, more precisely between the two major groups of Sunni and Shia.

Table 4. Lexical items related to sectarian division

Lexical items related to		No.
Sectarian division	Sectarian	13
	Sunni(s)	18
	Shia	16
Total		**47**
Unity	Unity, unite	**2**

From Table 4, we can say that the gap of frequency between the terms is not balanced. The rate of words related to sectarian division is greater than the one related to unity. The use of the two terms of Sunni and Shia in itself is a sign of difference and division among Muslims. The word sectarian collocates with communities, interests, divide, killings, fighting, Shia, end and violence, which reinforce the reality of the internal division and conflict among the Iraqis.

Figure 4: Distribution of Shia and Sunni(s) terms in ANR
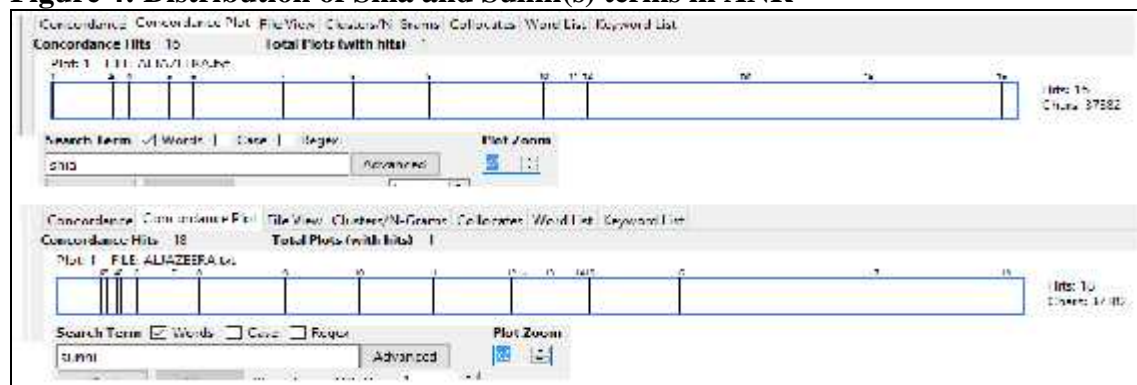
Using the tool of concordance plot, we tried to see how the terms Shia and Sunni(s) are distributed throughout the news reports. As Figure 4 shows, AE used these two terms in almost all the news reports, the hits appear from the beginning until the end of the corpus. So, AE employed the lexical items Shia, Sunni to reveal the internal conflict in Iraq in the fifth war anniversary.

3-1-4 Lexical Items Related to Terrorism

   Another key issue related to the Iraq war is Al Qaeda, which is considered by the US as a terrorist network.

Table 5. Lexical items related to terrorism

Lexical items	No.
Al Qaeda	12
Bin laden	02
Extremists	03
Terrorist(s), terror, terrorism	07
Fighters	07
Total	**31**

   Table 5 shows a complex depiction of the distribution of lexical items related to Al Qaeda and other anti-US presence groups in Iraq. Al Qaeda comes at the top of the list (12 occurrences), followed by terrorist and fighters. The term Al Qaeda is usually associated with US in ANR, as it was the main motive for the invasion. AE used the term fighters to refer to Iraqi fighting groups and to Al Qaeda and anti- Al Qaeda groups, as illustrated in the following examples:

• The peace talks are the second attempt by Maliki to end sectarian fighting that has gripped the country since suspected Sunni **fighters** blew up a Shia shrine in February 2006.

• He said the Awakening Council fighters were wearing reflective vests which distinguished them as **anti-al-Qaeda fighters**.

• The airstrikes came about two hours after US soldiers stopped at the two checkpoints to meet with the **fighters**, according to a local leader.

• More than 80 per cent of **soldiers** killed have died in attacks by **al-Qaeda** in Iraq, Sunni and Shia **fighters**, icasualties.org said.

Surprisingly AE did not employ the term terrorists directly but used the indirect speech by US president or military. AE did not refer to Al Qaeda fighters as terrorists in a direct way; this choice of fighters instead of terrorists is undoubtedly ideological and part of the channel's policy, examples:

• **Bush** further says: "We have learned through hard experience what happens when we pull our forces back too fast - the **terrorists** and extremists step in, fill the vacuum, establish safe havens and use them to spread chaos and carnage.

• However, the **US military** said that the aerial attack had been launched after five people "were spotted conducting suspicious **terrorist** activity," in an area known for roadside bomb attacks.

These terms show a complex image of the different conflicting groups, Al Qaeda, pro-US fighters and other groups.

3-2 Explanation:

   The purpose of this dimension of analysis was to search for the socio-ideological trigger of the choice of the linguistic elements used in ANR and hence, justification of the interpretation articulated on them, by analysing two contexts: the situational and institutional.

3-2-1The Situational Contexts:

   The situational contexts pertinent to the analysis are the events preceding or following the construction of the corpus of news discourse. More specifically, events linked to the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war and the role and status of the US after five years of presence in Iraq are the focal points.

   The United States-led invasion of Iraq began in March 20, 2003 by a multinational coalition of U.S. and U.K. troops supported by smaller legations from Australia, Denmark, Poland, and other nations. The conflict has been called the Iraq War, "Gulf War II", or the "Second Persian Gulf War". It has been also referred to as "Operation Iraqi Liberation" or "Operation

Iraqi Freedom"**(28)**. US officials stated that the main reason for the invasion was Iraq's possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), which posed a threat and danger to the security and interests of the United States, Europe and other Middle East countries. In addition, the Bush administration accused Iraqi president Saddam Hussein of supporting Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups, but no proof of such relationship was found.

Coalition forces were able to defeat Saddam regime and took control of Iraq's major cities in just three weeks. They captured him in December 2003 and an Iraqi court executed him in December 2006. Despite the defeat of Iraqi former military forces, and the announcement of victory by US led coalition, another form of war began. An intense guerrilla war of insurgents of different sects (Sunni, Shia, Kurds and Turkmen) against coalition forces, a conflict between Sunni and Shia groups, and Al-Qaeda operations, resulted in thousands of civilian, insurgent and coalition military deaths. After the Americans overthrew Hussein, they searched for evidence in Iraq to reinforce both reasons of the invasion but have so far found nothing.

US led coalition forces occupied Iraq as an attempt to establish a new democratic government. In 2005, they put Shia to rule the country, which further inflamed sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia and continuous destabilization of the Iraqi government. As Iraqi forces began to take responsibility for security, and as public opinion for troop withdrawals increased, the coalition began to withdraw their forces. Estimates of the number of people killed in the war range from over 150, 000 to more than one million.

At the fifth anniversary of the war, George Bush made a speech declaring that the military surge strategy had been a success and that America's policy was victorious in Iraq. However, images on the ground were totally the opposite, the death toll of American forces reached 4000, and war critics were less optimistic. The images of a country at war as roadside bombs, suicide attacks and sectarian violence, were as vivid as ever even five years after the US-led invasion of Iraq.

News coverage of the war played a major role in transmitting the fighting and the suffering in Iraq. Reporters from different news networks, as CNN, BBC, and especially the Arab network Al-Jazeera, revealed civilian casualty scenes, which were rarely seen in the other media. President Bush consistently referred to the Iraq war as "the central front in the War on Terror", and argued that if the U.S. pulls out of Iraq, "terrorists will follow us here."**(29)**.

All these situational events had a link to the production of the news discourse on the Iraq war fifth anniversary, as we found lexical items related to all these events.

3-2-2 The Institutional Context of Al-Jazeera:

Discourse as social practice has a close relationship with its underlying institutional contexts, in order to explain more the interpretations of the news discourse. Pertinent to the present analysis is the institution of Al-Jazeera.

Al-Jazeera English is a 24-hour English-language news and TV channel headquartered in Doha, Qatar, launched in 2006. It is one of the most important English-language news channels worldwide, and the sister channel of the Arab-language Al-Jazeera, which was established in 1996. Instead of being run under central command, news management rotates around broadcasting centres in Kuala Lumpur, Doha, London and Washington, DC. It is one of the great achievements of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa AlThaniin a process to make it an independent satellite TV network free from government control and influence**(30)**.

Al-Jazeera English is the world's first English-language news channel headquartered in the Middle East. It aims to provide English speakers and the world a perspective that is different from the Western worldview. The main principles of the channel are to give voice to untold issues and events, bridge cultures and challenge established visions and ideas The Arab language channel Al-Jazeera is largely behind changing the news policy in the Middle East and the Arab world in general as it gives more freedom to the production of news**(31)**. With the launch of Al-Jazeera English, the world is receiving news in English but with different perceptions from those of the famous English speaking channels like CNN or BBC. The online news network, launched in 2003, like the television network, covers events across the

world. The idea was to offer viewers an alternative to CNN, the BBC and other Western news outlets.

Many media experts considered Al-Jazeera coverage of the war on Iraq as marking an end to the hegemony of Western especially US media. In fact, its coverage of the war was unique and unprecedented. It was so not only in reporting the images of horror and victims, but also proceeded to view the war as illegal and should not have occurred as stated by Faisal Bodi, senior editor for Al-Jazeera's Web site[32].

Reporting the war was different for Arab networks and Western ones. Arab networks rejected the war from the start and considered it as unjust and illegal. Al- Jazeera highlighted the same view, focused on the victims, and showed the violent images of the war, while Western news media reported more on the military missions of the troops. This is what the analysis revealed about lexical items use in Al Jazeera corpus, anti–war views, that reflect the network ideology. Therefore, there is a strong relationship between discourse and ideology, which is reciprocal and one of the main tenets of CDA.

Conclusion:

This paper demonstrated how CDA as a research tool is used to analyse news reports. Adopting Fairclough's CDA framework, the study analysed news reports of Al Jazeera English coverage of the Iraq war. The analysis focused on the issue of the Iraq war to reveal the ideological underpinnings of Al Jazeera as an institution. The first stage of analysis was based on linguistic features mainly lexicalisation, followed by the interpretation of the use of such items. The findings revealed that the news reports highlight an anti-war air and a total focus on the negative side of the war. There was emphasis on anti-US and anti-coalition atmosphere and a hint to a failure of the war in Iraq after five years of the invasion. The subsequent explanation reinforced these interpretations by analysing the situational and institutional contexts of the Iraq war issue and Al Jazeera English respectively. Describing the Iraq war issue from other sources than Al-Jazeera showed that the war was a real failure, which turned a whole country to turmoil. The main aim of Al-Jazeera as an institution was to broadcast news in a way different from its western counterparts. CDA as a research tool is effective for analysing the news reports and demonstrating the hidden power of language. It shows how, through language, certain institutions position themselves and hold their ideologies and agendas. More importantly, CDA can be more effective to raise awareness among readers and listeners about the hidden meanings of news. This paper, however, is limited and can be further exploited to widen the scope of the findings with the same CDA framework, for other issues or other news agencies. Other analytical features as transitivity, rhetorical devices, cultural and political contexts, can also be investigated.

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