Abstract

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Media Bias: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of the Egyptian Army in The New York Times

1. Abstract Over the past three years, the Middle East has undergone seismic changes that grabbed the attention of western media. Egypt, being the most central country in the Middle East, was at the heart of such attention. Having been a key player in the events, the Egyptian army was praised as a savior lambasted as a dictator. This study compares The New York Times' media representation of the Egyptian army during the January 25th events and that of June 30th events. The analysis will cover the news reports released within one month period of each of the two events (more specifically, from January 25th till February 25th, 2011 and from June 30 till July 30, 2013). The corpus is chosen from print media which have been found to be an effective ideology carrier and a very powerful tool for the dissemination of its discourse. Some scholars have argued that the recurrence of a certain representation transforms over time to become a cultural model that is rarely disputed. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, this paper investigates the patterns that are used and reused to frame the events in a particular way. It gives a detailed description of the various textual analytic techniques such as Idealized Reader framework, transitivity and modality, lexical choices, sourcing and presupposition. An attempt will also be made to explore the discursive practices that reflect certain ideologies and power relations that would control the minds of readers and make them accept them as such through persuasion, not coercion. News reports are chosen as they are widely considered to be the most informative and supposedly impartial journalistic genre. Using a qualitative and quantitative approach, the paper examines whether the Selected news reports have been objective in addressing the two separate controversial events, whether subjective, evaluative stances have been infused by writers in the texts. Media manipulation of events – if exists – will be exhibited using the linguistic tools of foregrounding, backgrounding, the (re-)ordering of events from a certain angle to maintain hegemony, as well as the emphasis/de-emphasis, and legitimation/illigitimation of the positive, negative, actions involved. The paper will also address reporters' positive/neutral/negative attitudes via the Semantic Orientation mining tool Semantria. Key words: Media bias, Critical Discourse Analysis, Egyptian army, transitivity, lexical choices, presupposition.