



**International
Journal of Society, Culture & Language
IJSCL**

Journal homepage: www.ijscl.net
ISSN 2329-2210 (online)

The Representation of Iran's Nuclear Program in British Newspaper Editorials: A Critical Discourse Analytic Perspective

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ARTICLE HISTORY:

Received March 2013
Received in revised form June 2013
Accepted June 2013
Available online June 2013

KEYWORDS:

Editorials
Discourse analysis
Critical discourse analysis (CDA)
Ideology
Hegemony

Abstract

In this study, Van Dijk's (1998) model of CDA was utilized in order to examine the representation of Iran's nuclear program in editorials published by British news casting companies. The analysis of the editorials was carried out at two levels of headlines and full text stories with regard to the linguistic features of lexical choices, nominalization, passivization, overcompleteness, and voice. The results support biased representation in media discourse, in this case Iran's nuclear program. Likewise, the findings approve Bloor and Bloor (2007) ideological circles of Self (i.e., the West) and Other (i.e., Iran) or US and THEM in the media. The findings may be utilized to increase Critical Language Awareness (CLA) among EFL teachers / students and can promise implications for ESP materials development and EAP courses for the students of journalism.

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1. Introduction

The mass media play an important role in connecting people all around the world. Reports of recent events are pictured in the media particularly in newspaper editorials. However, not many people are aware of different ideological stances which are embedded in these editorials. Exploring these ideological stances in the media discourse is currently a very common topic for many research studies in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). As Fairclough (1995a, p. 2) states, "the media is an important element within research on contemporary processes of social and cultural change". Similarly, Van Dijk (1998) argues that news reports signify an established category of media discourse which requires a distinct method of structural analysis.

The major claim of many news writers is to be as objective as possible in the process of news writing, but this neutrality has always remained a question to discourse analysts. When editors choose a topic, a story, or even a photo, they consider many factors which are technically called biases. In other words, we have a process of selection and transformation in news writing and a simple event can be seen through different perspectives.

Regarding the process of selection and transformation in media discourse, Wilkins (1997, p. 60), following extensive research on Western media discourses, argues that "the images used in the western press compose a selective portrait of reality that resonates with the dominant western ideological perspectives". Moreover, Ferguson (1998, p. 155) illustrates how events which we may hear or read are indeed 'mediated accounts of what has happened'. Furthermore, Herman and Chomsky (1988, p. 2) maintain that "elite domination of the media and the marginalization of information is done naturally because of the filters that news is subjected to". Accordingly, the media shapes our minds and

they can make us to either accept or reject something. The developing field of critical discourse analysis can help us to raise readers' awareness of how news are manipulated in the newspapers and media discourse. Also, as Van Dijk (2005) argues, since manipulation is by nature a discursive process which is associated with power abuse, critical discourse analysts should examine it very closely. The literature on media discourse and CDA indicates some studies about media discourse ranging from ethnicity and racism in the media (e.g., Van Dijk, 1988, 1991, 1993) to power relations and hegemony in the media (e.g., Chomsky, 1989; Fairclough 1995a, 1995b; Fowler, 1991; Van Dijk, 1998). Still, another line of studies addresses the relationship between political media discourse and different patterns of hegemony (e.g., Bhatia, 2006; Butler et al., 2000; Fairclough, 1992; Jing, 2007; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mundadan & Gaitano, 2005; Richardson, 2009; Steuter & Wills, 2008; Yiping, 2007).

This study explores the representation of Iran's nuclear program in British mass media from August 2007 (the Bush's administration) to August 2010 (the Obama's administration). It is important to note that following the U.S. presidential election in November 2008, Barack Obama's administration stressed a new voice of change about Iran's nuclear program. The Iran's nuclear program has been featured as one of the most important topics in newspapers and the media since the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. The Iranians nuclear officials tried to convince the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as well as the U.S. and the allies including Britain, France and Germany of peacefulness of the nuclear agenda. However, Iran has faced economic sanctions, military boycotts, resolutions, etc. The process of uranium enrichment has been an issue of hot debates since it started and there are always a number of claims and counter claims in the media on Iran's issue. Hence, probing the reality of these claims and counter claims in the media is

critical for understanding the truth of the issue. In what follows, a quick historical background of Iran's nuclear program is presented.

2. Theoretical Framework

The idea of an atomic Iran can be traced back to 1950s, when the U.S. Atomic Agency tried to establish nuclear plants in Iran. After Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 and the War with Iraq, the U.S. officials cancelled Iran's nuclear contract. Accordingly, Iranians' officials tried to sign new contracts with China, Pakistan, and Russia, in order to continue their nuclear activities and constructions. In late 2001, the two nuclear power plants in Arak and Natanz caused tensions on Iran's nuclear activities and an opposition camp including a group of countries in the UN and the EU countries was shaped. These countries want Iranians to halt their nuclear activities. In order to achieve this aim, since 2002, there were a number of negotiations between Iranians' officials and the Western sides of the conflict. In 2010, the Iranians' effort for establishing ten new nuclear power plants for medical purposes which was based on IAEA's regulation caused the U.S. to threaten Iran with attacks (World Nuclear Association, 2010).

A number of CDA studies have recently addressed the representation of Iran's nuclear issues in the Western media (e.g., Atai & Rezaie, 2009; Behnam & Moshtaghi Zenous, 2008; Shams, 2006). Shams (2006) dealt with the Iranian nuclear program as displayed in 160 news articles published by a host of British newspapers, from 2003 to 2006. He concluded that Iran is given a theme of threat throughout the British newspapers and Iran's nuclear program is granted a negative representation throughout the British editorials. Behnam and Moshtaghi Zenous (2008) conducted a comparative study in which the Iranian and the British press publishing stories of Iran's nuclear program were analyzed. Their study showed a negative picture of Iran's nuclear program dominating the British

newspapers while the Iranian newspapers mostly promoted a positive view of the program. Atai and Rezaie (2009) studied the representation of Iranian nuclear issue in the American newspapers and broadcast editorials, mainly after the post-resolution period, from July 2006 to July 2007. Their study showed a negative picture of Iran's nuclear program dominating the American newspapers.

In 2008, the new U.S. administration expressed a voice of change about Iran's nuclear program. Finding the reality behind this voice of change is a new line of research which is not addressed in the previous studies. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the representation of Iran's nuclear program in the British newspapers' editorials during 2007-2010. More specifically, the following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. Are there any explicit ideological stances behind linguistic patterns in reports of the British newspapers and news agencies about Iran's nuclear program from August 2007 (the Bush's administration) to August 2010 (the Obama's administration)?
2. Are the actors engaged in the clash on Iran's nuclear program portrayed positively or negatively in the British editorials?
3. Is there any voice of change in the U.S. policies about Iran's nuclear program in the British newspapers and broadcast editorials, after the US presidential election in November 4, 2008?

3. Methodology

A descriptive-analytic method of research was utilized in this study and the corpus was analyzed in order to see whether the discourse of the editorials promote any ideological orientations towards the content of the news on Iran's nuclear program.

3. 1. Corpus and Scheme of Analysis

In order to examine the representation of Iran's nuclear program in the Western media, 40 editorials (approximately 70000 words) published from August 2007 to August 2010 by five British news agencies (*the Guardian, the Daily Telegraph, the Times, the Independent, and BBC*) were examined at two levels of headlines and full text stories. It is worth mentioning that 25% of the corpus was related to 2007 (Bush's administration) and 75% of the corpus was related to 2008, 2009, and 2010 (Obama's administration). The main rationale behind selecting these British news agencies was, firstly, their popularity in releasing news in the UK and at the international scale and, secondly, their widespread use in ESL/EFL/EAP learning and instruction as sources of authentic materials by learners, materials writers, and instructors. All the editorials were downloaded from the official sites of these news casting companies.

Van Dijk's (1998) model of CDA was chosen for analyzing linguistic features of the corpus. The description of the analyzed linguistic features can depict the dominant ways of demonstrating the social actors engaged in Iran's nuclear issue. Therefore, the headlines were analyzed at two levels of topics and lexical choice. Also, the body of the editorials was investigated with regard to *lexical choice, nominalization, passivization, overcompleteness, and voice*.

In order to avoid probable biases in our analysis, a third researcher as an inter-coder was asked to analyze the corpus. Finally, frequency counts for each discursive feature in the sample of editorials were completed.

4. Results

Based on Van Dijk's (1998) model, the editorials were analyzed at two levels of headlines (i.e., topics and lexical choices) and the full text stories (i.e., nominalization, passivization, overcompleteness and voice). The purpose behind these analyses was to investigate the demonstration of Iran's nuclear program in the aforementioned British news casting agencies. More specifically, we meant to examine the discourse which was formed by the participants and to disclose how the involved actors and participants of the conflict are manifested throughout the corpus.

4. 1. Analysis of Headlines: Topics and Lexical Choices

Headlines play a crucial role in media discourse. Regarding the significance of headlines in media discourse, Van Dijk (1991) posits that "since they [headlines] express the most frequent information about a new event, they may bias the understanding process, they summarize what, according to the journalist, is the most important aspect, and such a summary necessarily implies an opinion or a specific perspective on the events [...]" (p. 51). In addition, concerning the importance of lexical choices and vocabularies in the media, Richardson (2007, p. 47) stresses that "words transmit the mental images of society; they convey two sorts of meanings, connoted as well as denoted meanings. [...] nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs carry connoted in addition to denoted meanings".

To begin with, the frequent topics published by the British editorials are presented in Table 1. The headlines are then investigated in terms of lexical choices and discursive patterns.

Table 1
The Frequent Topics in the British Editorials

Headlines	Frequency
Barack Obama: Iran faces fresh nuclear sanctions within weeks	4
UN votes for trade sanctions on Iran over nuclear fears	4
US wants tougher Iran sanctions	4
Iran tested advanced nuclear warhead design – secret report	3
Iran could make an atom bomb, according to UN report's 'secret annexe'	3
Iran defiant on nuclear deadline	3
Iran misses nuclear deal deadline in defiance of West	3
Bush tried to sabotage Iran's nuclear plans	2
Israel launches covert war against Iran	2
US expands Iran Guards sanctions	2
Don't discount Israel pre-emptive strike, Hillary Clinton warns Iran	2
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad plays game of cat-and-mouse with West over nuclear deal	2
Iran will not bow to sanctions	2
Iran: Rich, armed and angry, how dangerous is it to the world?	2
Anne Penketh: Iranians don't believe that military strikes are coming	2

The headlines seem to have discrepancies in terms of the type of propositions they promote. A closer look at the headlines indicates some shared viewpoints as the underlying thematic patterns which are compatible with Van Dijk's (1998) ideological dichotomy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. That is, the image conveyed to the reader is an emphasis on the good deeds of the insiders and the bad deeds of the outsiders. Hence, a negative picture is painted of Iran while a positive impression is portrayed for the U.S. and its allies. Additionally, the dominant themes incorporate a state of violence for Iran concerning its nuclear power.

The headlines imply that Iranian authorities go their own way in nuclear activities without paying any attention to international concerns; hence, a negative picture is painted of Iran while a positive impression is portrayed for the U.S. and its allies. The headlines attempt to carry the message that Iran is trying to develop nuclear bombs and the U.S. or Israel military action is the consequence of Iran's

brinkmanship. This theme of rebelliousness is reiterated in the following editorial headlines:

- 1) *UN inspectors to investigate 'new Iranian nuclear plants' (The Independent)*
- 2) *Iranian leader's Christmas message prompts outcry (The Independent)*
- 3) *Iran is enriching uranium 'on an industrial scale' (The Daily Telegraph)*
- 4) *Iranian leader accuses US of plotting against Iran (BBC)*
- 5) *Bush urges Tehran to come clean (BBC)*
- 6) *Iran's evasive blame game (The Guardian)*

The term 'investigate' (# 1) connotes a close examination in order to find something which is hidden by a person or a group of people. It is usually used to refer to something which has typically created a sense of doubt; in this case, new Iranian power plants. The use of the term 'outcry' (# 2) by Iran's Supreme Leader

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei alludes to a sense of animosity. The inclusion of the phrase 'industrial-scale' (# 3) for uranium enrichment implies that Iran's nuclear program is not conducted for civilian purposes and it can threaten every country and, in turn, jeopardize the security of Iranians themselves only due to the government's nuclear ambitions. The use of the term 'accuses' (# 4) about the U.S. implies that the 'plot of the U.S.' (# 4) against Iran is not true. Capitalizing on the phrase 'come clean' (# 5) by Bush shows a sense of dictatorship and connotes bad consequences for Iran. The word 'evasive' (# 6) demonstrates the irresponsibility of Iranians about their duties.

Following a meticulous analysis of the supposed violence about Iran and Iranian officials, there are a number of other news frames in which anonymous negative presentation of Iran is paramount. These news frames attempt to demonstrate Iran's nuclear program as a threat for the world peace, concealment, defiance, and a particular source of threat for Israel.

The headlines which cover the threat theme are as follows:

7) *Germany warns Iran against building nuclear weapons (The Independent)*

8) *Iran rejects proposal to freeze its atomic programme (The Independent)*

9) *Iran may be closer than we think to having nuclear missiles, says UN (The Independent)*

10) *The report changes nothing: Iran is still a threat, says defiant George W. Bush (The Times)*

11) *Hillary Clinton vows to protect Gulf states from Iran (The Daily Telegraph)*

12) *Iran a threat, say Europe allies (BBC)*

13) *Iran nuclear missile fear raised by UN report (BBC)*

The prevalent use of the term 'warn' (# 7) intensifies a dangerous situation for Iranians because of reaching an atomic bomb or weapon. In other words, Iranians will face a military attack if they do not freeze their nuclear program including establishing new power plants. This sense of disobedient Iran is further emphasized by using the term 'reject' (# 8) which intimates that Iran is headstrong in its decision and act as an outlaw. Demonstrating Iran as a country which is a 'threat' (# 10, 12) for the UN, the U.S., and the European allies implies the announcement of a probable military action against Iran. More importantly, even though in the 10th headline CIA provided evidence for Iran's peaceful nature of nuclear program, Bush strictly rejected the report and called Iran a threat. A sense of threat is spread through these headlines in order to show Iran as an adamant country whose aim is to make nuclear weapons. For instance, the UN inspectors are doubtful about Iran's nuclear missiles (# 13). Moreover, the U.S. is depicted as the insider who is trying to 'protect' (# 11) countries around the Persian Gulf including Qatar and UAE against Iran which is an outsider. The 13th headline delicately implies that Iran is a source of fear for the world because of the nuclear missiles detected and reported by the U.N inspectors. All in all, these headlines link Iran to bad deeds such as making an atomic bomb or frightening the world peace while the good deeds are all attributed to the U.S. and its allies.

Still another set of headlines stress the boastful nature of Iran's claims. This sense of boastfulness can be seen through the following headlines:

14) *Israeli general Brigadier-General Uzi Eilam denies Iran is nuclear threat (The Times)*

15) *Iran claims it has 5,000 machines to produce enriched uranium (The Daily Telegraph)*

16) *Iran claims uranium 20% milestone (BBC)*

The word 'deny' (# 14) conveys a sense of disbelief about Iran's nuclear program. Furthermore, the term 'claim' (# 15, 16) reinforces that Iranians are not trustful while speaking about their nuclear program.

Charging the Iranians for their secret activities on nuclear program can best be seen through these examples.

17) *How secrecy over Iran's Qom nuclear facility was finally blown away (The Times)*

18) *Iran could have more secret nuclear sites, warns UN nuclear watchdog (The Guardian)*

19) *Iran rebuked over secret nuclear plant by IAEA council (The Daily Telegraph)*

The term 'secret' (# 18, 19) implies that something is concealed illegally. Iran is depicted as criminal because of building Fordo nuclear facility, but based on the IAEA's regulation, Iran reported the existence of these facilities in time, i.e. six months sooner than the deadline considered in international rules. More importantly, in these headlines (#18, 19) Iran is placed as the left most element. This process is technically called thematization (Van Dijk, 2009) which is used in the media to present a country, in this case Iran, with a negative agency whose act is secret and the world should be notified for its threat. Regarding the above headlines, this case of thematization can be recounted as another instance of Van Dijk's ideological dichotomy of insiders and outsiders.

Among the other themes which are noticeable in the headlines is calling the Iranians a defiant nation. The following headlines are related to this point.

20) *Deadline defiance 'puts world in dangerous situation' (The Times)*

21) *If Iran continues to defy the West, Barack Obama will be forced to launch military action. (The Daily Telegraph)*

22) *Iran defiant on nuclear deadline (BBC)*

23) *Iran - more sanctions after new defiance? (BBC)*

The notion of a defiant Iran is promoted through these headlines by using such phrases as 'deadline defiance' (# 20), 'new defiance' (# 23). By doing so, Iran is depicted as a disobedient country. The use of the word 'force' (# 21) legitimizes the U.S. military action against Iran. Capitalizing on the term 'dangerous' (# 20), the headlines imply that Iran is a danger for all nations and it can jeopardize the world peace.

The next theme, embedded in the headlines, is the argument that Iran is a potential source of threat for the existence of Israel. The following headlines illustrate this point:

24) *Iran, not Palestine, tops Israel's agenda (The Times)*

25) *Israel pledges to protect itself from 'new Holocaust' threat posed by Iran's nuclear programme (The Daily Telegraph)*

26) *Nuclear row: Tehran threatens to target Israel (The Guardian)*

As shown in Table 2, the headlines try to make a threatening picture of Iran while speaking about Israel; for instance, Iran is the main enemy of Israel, not the Palestinians (# 24). Further, Iran is accused of making another Holocaust and the major concern of Israelis is to protect themselves (# 25). Also, Iran is considered to have nuclear bomb which is a threat for Israel. The use of the term 'pledge' (# 25) implies that the security and safety of Israel is endangered by Iran and they have to take preventive measures in order to 'protect' (# 25) themselves from Iran's attack. Iran is shown as a major source of threat for the world peace.

The dominant lexico-thematic features of the headlines and their frequencies are shown in Table 2. Moreover, as Figure 1 illustrates, all

lexical items carry a negative load in depicting Iran's nuclear program.

Table 2
The Lexico-Thematic Analysis of the Headlines

Discursive Pattern	The Guardian	The Times	The Independent	The Daily Telegraph	BBC	Total	
						Frequency	Percentage
Rebelliousness	3	2	2	2	3	12	30
Threat	1	2	3	2	3	11	27.5
Boastfulness	-----	2	-----	1	2	5	12.5
Secrecy	1	2	-----	1	1	5	12.5
Defiance	-----	1	-----	1	2	4	10
Jeopardy to Israel	1	1	-----	1	-----	3	7.5

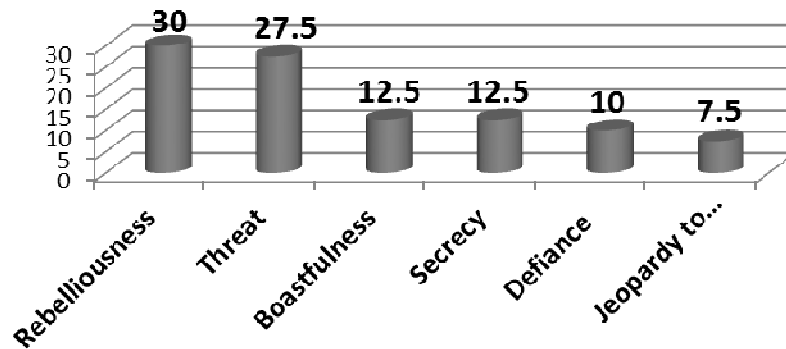


Figure 1
The Lexico-Thematic Analysis of the Headlines

A closer look at the 40 analyzed headlines can demonstrate that nine of them are direct statements proposed by Bush or Obama against Iran's nuclear program. As illustrated in Table 3, 22.5% of the headlines promote a negative policy against Iranians. These nine headlines are chronologically ordered below.

1) *Iran begins to test first atomic reactor (The Daily Telegraph, 2007)*

2) *Bush urges Tehran to come clean (BBC, 2007)*

3) *The report ... : Iran is still a threat, ... Bush (The Times, 2007)*

4) *Hillary Clinton vows to protect Gulf states from Iran (The Daily Telegraph, 2008)*

5) *Clinton: Russia sees Iran threat (BBC, 2008)*

6) *Defiant Iran ... in face of US warnings (The Guardian, 2008)*

7) *Your nuclear pursuit is futile, Hillary Clinton tells Iran (The Times, 2009)*

8) *Iran 'concealed nuclear facility' ... Obama says. (BBC, 2010)*

9) *If Iran continues to defy the West, ... Obama will be forced to launch military action. (The Daily Telegraph, 2010)*

The first three headlines are related to the final months of Bush's administration (from August 2007 to November 2008). As the headlines illustrate, an atomic Iran would pose a complex and dangerous puzzle for the U.S. In other words, Iran is a threat for Western countries (# 1), and Bush threatens Iran and calls them a threat (# 3). Furthermore, by using words such as 'come clean' (# 2), Bush accuses Iran of evading their responsibility with regard to international community. The

next four headlines are related to Obama's administration and his foreign minister, Hillary Clinton. Here, Iran is pictured as a threat for the Persian Gulf states (# 4), and also for Russia (# 5), and U.S. warns (# 6) Iran over its nuclear program. Moreover, Iran's efforts in nuclear program seems to be absurd or futile (# 7) and Iran is accused of 'concealing nuclear facility' (# 8); thus, a military action may be the consequence of their defiance (# 9). As it was delineated, three of these statements were related to Bush's administration and six of them were related to Obama's administration. Based on Table 3 and the prevalent themes of these headlines, i.e. threat and defiance, Iran is a big danger and its nuclear program should be stopped by imposing more sanctions or military actions.

Table 3

Representation of the U.S. Policy about Iran in the Headlines

	The Guardian	The Times	The Independent	The Daily Telegraph	BBC	Total	
						Frequency	Percentage
Positive U.S. policy Regarding Iran	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	----	----
Negative U.S. policy Against Iran	1	2	-----	3	3	9	22.5

4. 2. The Analysis of Full-Text Stories

In order to gain a better understanding of representation of Iran's nuclear program in the British editorials, we analyzed the full text stories of the editorials for *lexical choices, nominalization, passivization, overcompleteness, and voice*. In what follows, the results of full text stories are presented.

4. 2. 1. Lexical Choices and Thematic Patterns

As mentioned earlier, the choice of words in the news stories is a strategic tool for shaping the audience's mental image. That is, the writer can manipulate the reader's reaction to

the content of the news. In the following section, the lexical choices extracted from the full texts of the British editorials in our corpus are examined for the choice of propositions and thematic patterns.

'Threat' is the most salient term which is associated with Iran in the full text stories as shown in Table 4. Iran's nuclear program is portrayed as the major source of threat for the West and the neighboring countries. This sense of threat is increased when certain lexical items are utilized: 'warning', 'fears', 'dangerous', 'concern', 'threatening', 'worried', 'attack', and 'nuclear weapons'. Furthermore, the U.S. is always concerned with Iran's

danger for the world and the countries around the Persian Gulf. The U.S. also warns Iran’s politicians that Washington will extend a "defense umbrella" across the Persian Gulf if it develops nuclear weapons. A careful analysis of the full text stories indicates that Iran is the major source of threat for Israel and the “defense umbrella” is mainly constructed for increasing the security and comfort of Israel. It is worth mentioning that Iran as an outgroup has negative deeds and Israel, U.S. and its European allies as ingroups have positive deeds. Israel pledges to protect itself from 'new Holocaust' threat posed by Iran's nuclear program and they are ready to choose any kinds of measures for this threat. Considering the above-mentioned topics associated with Iran’s nuclear program, these newspapers and news agencies reprimand Iran for doing secret works with regard to their nuclear program.

Accordingly, the lexical choices that are utilized by these newspapers foreshadow a sense of illegitimate action, i.e. making an atomic bomb. The widespread use of terms such as ‘secret’, ‘covert’, ‘suspect’, ‘underground plant’, ‘clandestine’, ‘unclear’, ‘fresh international scrutiny’, ‘Iran's evasive blame game’, ‘suspicion’, ‘secret nuclear trigger’ connotes a suspicious picture of Iran’s nuclear program. As it is illustrated in Figure 2, these newspapers are trying to promote that Iran's nuclear program is established for non-civilian purposes.

Another important issue is the use of the term ‘defiant’ about Iran and Iran is considered to be a defiant country that does not cooperate with the UN watchdog. These choices of words are illustrated clearly in Table 4 and Figure 2.

Table 4
The Lexico-Thematic Analysis of Full Text Stories

Discursive Pattern	The Guardian	The Times	The Independent	The Daily Telegraph	BBC	Total	
						Frequency	Percentage
Secrecy	10	25	2	19	8	64	26.89
Defiance	2	7	-----	3	4	16	6.72
Jeopardy to Israel	11	23	17	8	18	77	32.5
Threat	9	34	11	14	13	81	34

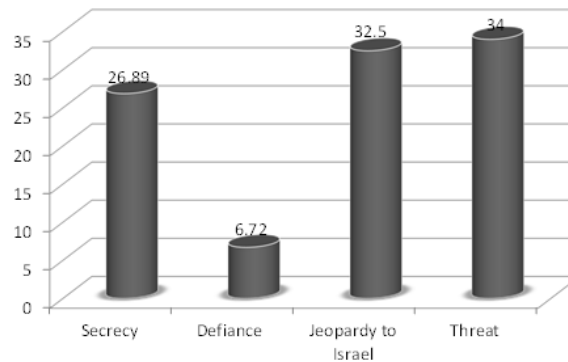


Figure 2
The Lexico-Thematic Analysis of Full Text Stories

4. 3. Nominalization

Fowler et al. (1979) demonstrated that the tendency to prefer noun phrases over verbs in editorials is often ideologically charged. This syntactic strategy is technically called nominalization. Nominalization can lead the readers toward a preferred mode of thinking about an event. Here, the agency of the ingroups can be marginalized and their bad deeds are blurred due to use of nominalized structures.

Nominal cases were frequently used in order to enlarge the accomplishments of the ingroups (i.e., the U.S. and its allies) and down play the outgroups (i.e., Iran). The following excerpts are extracted from the five news casting agencies. It is important to note that as Table 5 indicates, the total number of the nominalized forms was 60 and we assume that the following examples would illustrate the case of nominalization. As the instances of nominal structures indicate, they try to make a sense of 'fear' and 'threat' about Iran's nuclear program.

The Daily Telegraph

1. *Iran has called on the West to stop "threatening" Tehran...*
2. *Western intelligence agencies ... giving renewed impetus for a US-led push to tighten sanctions on Iran.*
3. *The equipment ... Iran's main uranium enrichment plant,*
4. *The revelation shocked even Iran's traditional allies...*
5. *Iran ... test its first atomic reactor, bringing ... raising the prospect of confrontation with the West.*
6. *Stopping Iran's nuclear programme is ... policy challenges for Obama,*

7. *Barack Obama ... Iran of pursuing a "nuclear weapon" and sponsoring "terrorist organisations".*

A close look at the above extracts reveals that Iran's accomplishments are downplayed by backgrounding its agency from them and using the nominals, e.g. 'revelation' (# 4), and 'bringing/raising' (# 5), in order to obscure the modality and to give a threatening picture of Iran's progress in the nuclear program. On the other side, the ingroups' negative deeds are marginalized by using the same structures such as 'threatening' (# 1), 'giving' (# 2), 'stopping' (# 6), 'pursuing and sponsoring' (# 7), in most of which their agency is blurred.

The Guardian

8. *The US ... calling on Iran to stop its uranium reprocessing,*
9. *Defiant Iran tests missiles to show strength in face of US warnings*
10. *Kouchner said ... support new sanctions targeting members of Ahmadinejad's government ...*
11. *Though the draft resolution ... fresh sanctions against Tehran, ... council resolutions are legally binding and must be met.*
12. *Speaking at the end of a summit of 57 Islamic countries, Ahmadinejad was less conciliatory on the US....*
13. *..., Ahmadinejad went further, warning that the Iranian military would "break the hand" of...*

The use of nominals such as 'calling on' (# 8), 'defiant Iran' (# 9), 'targeting and Ahmadinejad's government' (# 10), and 'binding' (# 11), most of which are agentless, legitimize the ingroups' behaviors with regard to the outgroups (i.e., Iran). On the other hand, Iran's president 'warning' (# 13), and 'speaking'

(#12) are all highlighted by using the same structural transformation.

The Independent

14. *The condemnations from ... described Mr Ahmadinejad's remarks as "deeply disturbing and sickening",*

15. *Obama discussed the push to curb Iran's nuclear plans...*

16. *The United Nations Security Council ... a first round of technical and trade sanctions*

It is important to note that, sanction is a common term to be nominalized about Iran in order to show that Iran overlooks the international regulations in its nuclear program, for instance, 'The condemnations' and Ahmadinejad's remarks (# 14), 'Iran's nuclear plans' (# 15), and 'sanctions' (# 16).

BBC

17. *... Obama said the US ... imposing additional fresh sanctions on Iran.*

18. *... raises concerns about the possible existence in Iran ... "*

19. *Iran - more sanctions after new defiance*

20. *However, Iran cannot produce the fuel rods from such materials..., beyond defiance.*

21. *Iran's attitude and the latest criticism of Iran by the (IAEA)*

22. *The IAEA resolution, censuring Iran's secret construction of a uranium enrichment plant ...*

23. *The concerns ... Iran remains largely unresponsive.*

Again BBC meticulously used nominalized structures in order to show a destructive picture of Iran, e.g. 'more fresh sanctions' (# 17, 19), 'concern' (# 18, 23), and 'defiance' (# 19, 20). On the other hand, 'Iran's attitude' (# 21), and 'Iran's secret construction' (# 22) are capitalized in order to show Iran as a deviant nation.

The Times

24. *Iran's scientists ... method of detonating a bomb known as—*

25. *If Iran's leader does decide to build a bomb,*

26. *Secret document exposes Iran's nuclear trigger*

'Iran's scientists' (# 24), 'Iran's leader' (# 25), and 'Iran's nuclear trigger' (# 26) are all trying to stress that Iranians are trying to do illegal actions with regard to their nuclear program, while the agents of these sentences were obscured by using nominalized structures. Table 5 summarizes the frequency of the nominalized forms in the corpus.

Table 5
Nominalization across Full-Text Stories

News Outlets	The Guardian	The Times	The Independent	The Daily Telegraph	BBC	Total
Frequency	17	4	6	23	10	60
Percentage	28.33	6.66	10	38.33	16.66	100

4. 4. Passivization

Passivization is:

a process through which the two positions of the left hand and the right hand of noun phrases are switched in a way that the existing patient of the sentence replaces the syntactic subjects, which is usually reserved for the agent of the sentence, in this way, the real agency would be obscured (Fowler, 1991, p. 33).

Here, the news writer can obscure the agency through hiding its responsibility. The following section presents the passivized forms utilized in the aforementioned editorials.

The Daily Telegraph

1. *Iran ... "built inside mountains". But a European official was quoted as saying that there was "some evidence" to suggest that building was*

2. *Since then, however, there have been signs that the international community's united stand has begun to fray.*

3. *Cameras have been installed to cover the plant's work, ...*

4. *Beijing is believed to have decided to assist the inspectors*

5. *The enrichment plant was uncovered by British, French, and American intelligence agencies.*

6. *Iran has previously been caught with designs ... build nuclear warheads*

7. *Iran is thought not to have the technical ability to convert fuel ...*

Based on Table 6, the *Daily Telegraph* used seven passivized forms through which the real agents were obscured, e.g. 'a European official was quoted' (# 1), 'there have been signs' (#

2), 'Cameras have been installed' (# 3), 'The enrichment plant was uncovered' (# 5). In another example we see that 'Iran has previously been caught' (# 6), who has caught Iran?

The Guardian

8. *Iran is said to be close to ... more than 1,300 tons of uranium ore from Kazakhstan, ...*

9. *Ahmadinejad is understood to have indicated support when he met the council's senior*

A sense of doubt is reinforced through these excerpts by using passivized structures, for instance, 'Iran is said' (# 8), it is important to understand who says these lines, or 'Ahmadinejad is understood' (# 9), what is the source of this news?

The Independent

10. *It is presumed that the targets the Iranians have in mind*

'It is presumed' (# 10) is a good example of a passivized form in which the real agent is being deleted or blurred, in order to show that the outgroup i.e., Iran is planning to commit bad behaviors.

The Times

11. *The documents have been seen by intelligence agencies ... Western countries,*

12. *... , Iran was forced ... a secret uranium enrichment near the holy city of Qom.*

13. *... Iran will also be seized on by hawks in Israel and the US, who support a pre-emptive strike against Iran...*

14. *... Tehran could be seeking fresh supplies to support ...—... enough enriched material for a bomb.*

15. *Suspicion that Iran's newly revealed nuclear site was meant for military purposes ...*

16. *Iran is determined to acquire the nuclear bomb, Tony Blair said yesterday, ...*

The source of 'The documents' (# 11) was meticulously ignored by a passivized form. Furthermore, 'Iran was forced' (# 12), who forced Iran? This is a critical question. In the next excerpt, 'Iran will also be seized' (# 13). However, a sense of threat about Iran is still paramount among the next three quotations which are all agentless and the sources of these concerns were all deleted, i.e. 'could be seeking' (# 14), 'was meant' (# 15), and 'is determined' (# 16).

BBC

17. *The IAEA resolution rebuking Iran was passed with rare Russian and Chinese backing. ...*

18. *Iran has been given until September to end its uranium enrichment programme. Otherwise it faces tougher sanctions.*

As shown in Table 6, the use of passivization in BBC foreshadows Iranians nuclear officials' deviations from international regulations and rules. As 'The IAEA resolution rebuking Iran was passed with rare Russian and Chinese' (# 17), is a good instance of the mentioned point where the supporters of this resolution were deleted. In addition, the language of threat is obvious in 'Iran has been given until September (# 18), while readers do not see any information about the actual countries which are behind these sanctions.

Table 6
Passivization across Full-Text Stories

News outlets	The Guardian	The Times	The Independent	The Daily Telegraph	BBC	Total
Frequency	2	6	1	7	2	18
Percentage	11.11	33.33	5.55	38.88	11.11	100

4. 5. Overcompleteness

One of the most common strategies of news writers for promoting ideology is overcompleteness, in which "the ingroups or US can be given a positive stance and the outgroups or THEM can be given a negative one" (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 78). In the following section, this linguistic feature is investigated in the corpus of the study. In these reports, some points which are fully irrelevant to Iran's nuclear program are included.

Rents in Tehran have rocketed, ... the imposition of financial sanctions limits the use that Iran can make of its oil windfall ... (*The Daily Telegraph*)

'Rents in Tehran', and 'painful development' are totally unrelated to Iran's nuclear program. Using such overcomplete forms are aimed at deemphasizing the realities behind sanctions and more importantly they are planned to downgrade Iranians and show Iran as a poor country.

The capture of 15 sailors and Marines operating from the ship (*The Daily Telegraph*)

Another overcomplete form which was very common in 2007 among the British news writers, when writing about Iran's nuclear program, was 'The capture of 15 sailors and Marines'. Those soldiers were depicted as innocent soldiers not those who were spying or

at least some people who obviously flouted international rules.

Last night Obama said an unsettled political situation in Iran ... nuclear fuel... (The Guardian). Hillary Clinton, meanwhile condemned ... unrest after the elections. (The Guardian). The confiscation ... Shirin Ebadi ... a sign of the decadence of a regime that fears even a symbolic medal in defence of human rights... hundreds of arrests, ... (The Guardian). Tehran has sentenced the former MP Mohsen Safai Farahani to six years in jail, ... disputed presidential election in June. (The Times). Experts believe that the unrest of the summer will make Iran particularly vulnerable to sanctions. ... (The Times)

‘Unsettled political situation’, ‘Iran over unrest after the elections’, ‘the hundreds of arrests, and ‘the unrest of the summer’, are all overcomplete forms which are not related to Iran’s nuclear program; they are some irrelevant information which were intentionally included in the editorials in order to show the Iran’s situation in crises.

The analysis of the aforementioned headlines with regard to their embedded overcomplete forms represents Iran and its nuclear program in a negative manner. Iran is also depicted as an outlaw who does not care the international community and regulations. It is also worth mentioning that more than 75 percent of the alleged headlines were chosen after U.S. presidential election in 2008, and 25 percent of them were related to 2007. The analysis of the headlines promote that the U.S. policies before (as it was found out in the previous CDA-driven studies on Iran’s nuclear issue) and after the election (as it was shown in the present study) are the same. Accordingly, the investigation of headlines and full-text stories with regard to their discursive features of thematic, nominalized, passivized, and overcomplete forms, showed that certain

ideological patterns are established behind the editorials.

In order to examine any voice of change from the new U.S. government in the British news agencies, the discursive pattern of voice in full text stories is presented and discussed in the following section.

4. 6. Voice

The proportion of voice for both Iran and U.S. and its allies were examined in the full text stories of the corpus. Our analysis of full-text stories depicted that the voice of the U.S. and its allies such as Obama, Clinton, IAEA, Blair, John Bolton, Bush, France, Germany, Sarkozy, Washington, London, the White House, Rice, the UN, the UN Security Council, the UN Watchdog, the U.S. intelligence service, Israel, Britain, is more heard than that of the Iranians like ‘the Supreme Leader of Iran, President Ahmadinejad, Ali Asghar Soltanie, Iran’s IAEA chief’. Based on Table 7, out of 199 instances of voice in the sample, the voice of the U.S. and its allies was heard in 152 cases while the voice of Iran is only heard in 47 cases. In other words, about 76% of the quotations were assigned to the U.S. and its allies and only 24% was allocated to Iranian officials for promoting their viewpoints, as it was pictured in Figure 3. More importantly, the voice of the West is always accompanied with a sense of threat for Iranians due to their supposed ignorance of the international laws. Further, the U.S. and president Barack Obama are always depicted in a positive tone in their quotations while Iran is portrayed as an outlaw who is planning to make nuclear bomb and to develop its nuclear program in an illegitimate way. The distribution of voice in the corpus is shown in Table 7 and Figure 3.

Table 7
Voice Distribution in Full-Text Stories

	Iran		The U.S. and its allies		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
The Daily Telegraph	9	19.14	30	19.73	39	19.59
The Independent	8	17.02	30	19.73	38	19.09
BBC	11	23.4	35	23.02	46	23.11
The Guardian	16	34.04	41	26.97	57	28.64
The Times	3	6.38	16	10.52	19	9.54
Total	47	100	152	100	199	100
Percentages	23.61		76.38		100	

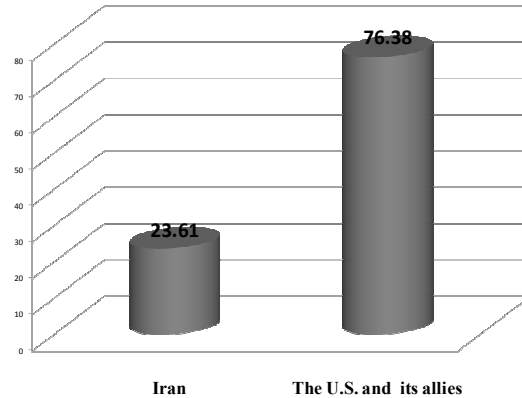


Figure 3
Voice Distribution in the Full-Text Stories

5. Discussion

The findings of the present study on the representation of Iran's nuclear program in the British newspapers editorials, are in line with Van Dijk's (2009) dichotomy of US and THEM or 'outgroup derogation and ingroup celebration' (p. 78). In the present study, 'US' can be linked to the United States and its allies and 'THEM' can be related to Iran.

The examination of headlines showed that Iran's nuclear program is associated with a sense of threat, which is not only a danger for

all nations, but also a big peril for the Middle East and the Persian Gulf states. Another theme which is associated with Iran is the rebellious nature of Iran's nuclear program with which Iran is depicted as an inattentive country that does not observe international regulations. The other themes presented in the headlines about Iran's nuclear program are secrecy, boastfulness, defiance, and jeopardy to Israel. As Table 3 indicates, in 22.5% of the headlines, the negative U.S. policy against Iran is directly presented while there is no single headline in support of Iran's nuclear program by the U.S. Likewise, the content analysis of

the headlines in Table 1 attests to the negative policy of the U.S. allies against Iran. All in all, according to Table 2, Iran is painted a negative picture in the headlines and Iranians are pictured as defiant. The findings then support Van Dijk's (1998) viewpoints of directing and shaping readers' perceptions, in this case Iran's nuclear program.

The analysis of the full text stories of the editorials pictured Iran in a negative manner as the major source of threat for the world, because of developing an N-bomb. Also, the U.S. and its allies including the EU and the U.N. Security Council did their best to halt Iran's nuclear program holding that Iran would like to produce an N-bomb.

The examination of the nominalized forms showed that Iran is given a destructive picture for enriching uranium and also for establishing new nuclear sites, which are basically established for medical purposes not for making an N-bomb. The U.S. and its allies are presented as agents who want to save the world from Iran's nuclear program; they do positive deeds while Iranians are always associated with evil and negative deeds. Meanwhile, these nominalized forms are used in order to highlight the accomplishments of the ingroups (in this case the U.S. and its allies) and to downplay the outgroups (who are Iranian nuclear officials). The findings are in line with Bloor and Bloor's (2007) dichotomy of Self and Others about the ideological orientations behind media discourse and also the prejudice which accompanies the Self.

The analysis of the passivized forms reveals that almost all of these forms try to promote negative ideas with regard to Iran's nuclear program. Additionally, in all of these forms the real agency of enmity against Iran is covered in order to satisfy readers for ratcheting up the pressure on Iran.

The analysis of overcomplete forms used by the British editorials consisted of irrelevant

information about Iranians, e.g. 'the price of rents in Iran', 'Iran's post-election unrest', 'unsettled political situation in Iran'. These overcomplete forms are concerned with internal conditions of Iran rather than the international status. Moreover, these forms are utilized in order to depict a sense of anarchy or chaos about Iran.

The analysis of the British editorials on Iran's nuclear program also support Fairclough's (1995a) viewpoint about finding different layers and interfaces within media discourse by using textual analysis, discursive analysis as well as social analysis which will result in examining power relations and ideologies. The findings are also in line with Van Dijk's (1995) viewpoints about discourse analysis as ideology analysis. The findings of this study support the previous studies, i.e. Atai and Rezaie (2009), Behnam and Moshtaghi Zenous (2008) and Shams (2006). Based on the analysis of the headlines and full text stories, the new U.S. voice of change for Iran urged by the U.S. administration is not materialized.

Accordingly, after analyzing the different voices used in editorials, it was found that the two sides of the debate do not have equal chances for presenting their viewpoints. Based on Table 7, the Iranians' voice was heard in 23.61% of cases, while the U.S. and its allies were heard in 76.38% of cases. Another important point is that in most of the cases, Iranians are associated with negatively quoted verbs which result in their illegitimacy, while the positively quoted verbs were used by the U.S. and its allies who are claimed to provide the world with peace.

On the whole, the present study investigated the representation of Iran's nuclear program in a corpus of 40 British editorials analyzed at the two levels of headlines and full text stories. The headlines of the editorials were analyzed for their lexico-thematic patterns. The full text stories were examined at two levels of lexico-

thematic patterns and features of nominalization, passivization, overcompleteness and voice. All in all, the findings show that the U.S. and its allies were demonstrated as positive doers, while Iran was attributed a negative image. This negative reflection can be seen in the passivized and nominalized forms as well as the lexical items and the overcomplete forms used by the British editorials. Moreover, the voice of the U.S. and its allies was heard in most of the cases while Iranians were limited in space for expressing themselves. The findings confirm the seminal underlying premises of critical discourse analysis as an approach to language description and explanation (Fairclough, 1995a; Van Dijk, 1995) and confirm the significance of the CDA investigations in political genres. Further, our findings are in line with the previous studies, i.e. Atai and Rezaie (2009), Behnam and Moshtaghi Zenous (2008) and Shams (2006), and unveil some other corners of bias in the political discourse of the media.

It should be noted that the corpus of the present study was taken from four British newspapers and one British news agency. Follow up research may include a more representative corpus from all the British media. Finally, this study may increase Critical Language Awareness among EFL teachers/students and can promise implications to ESP materials development and EAP courses for the students of journalism.

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