

An Analysis of Iranian /Non-Iranian Press Articles on Nuclear Negotiations between Iran and 5+1 Countries

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Abstract

One of the most significant and controversial issues in the contemporary world of politics is the nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran. During the last twelve years, the Iranian nuclear program has turned into an international issue. The world and the Iranian media, especially newspapers and magazines systematically covered the proceedings of the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the group of 5+1, and offered a full converge of the negotiations. Therefore, there is a huge corpus of editorials in newspapers that can tell us about biases and hidden ideologies affiliated to the owner of media and those in power in relation to Iran's nuclear program. In order to have a better picture of the newspaper texts used for reporting the Iranian nuclear program with regard to language and contextual factors, the present study was conducted adopting a critical discourse analysis approach. Twenty five newspaper editorials published immediately after the negotiations within the time frame of April and July 2015 were extracted from The New York Times, China Daily, Moscow Times and Tehran Times. These editorials were analyzed adopting Fairclough's (2001) critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework as well as Huckin's (2002) and Long et al.'s (2005) linguistic sub-categories. The frequency of each category was calculated and the data were analyzed through Kruskal Wallis test and the Mann-Whitney U post-hoc test. The findings pointed to differences among the political discourse of newspapers with respect to attitude and lexical, syntactic and propositional choices. Analysis of newspaper selections from the official expert reports also shows a strong journalistic preference for selecting and emphasizing information relevant to contemporary political discourses.

Keywords: political discourse, nuclear negotiations, critical discourse analysis, linguistic choices

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1. Introduction

A good piece of writing requires familiarity with generic and rhetorical conventions in writing as well as the use of appropriate discourse features. Writers do not simply produce identical meaning; rather, they encode textual as well as interpersonal meaning (Halliday, 1973). The knowledge of the way these meanings can be developed through the employment of specific written discourse features is, therefore, a significant component of the writer's competence. As a result, it is clear that discourse includes not only general features such as genre and rhetoric, but also text-level features such as language choice. A discourse-based view of language, therefore, involves examining how components of language contribute to the making of complete texts in a synthetic approach to writing as text, taking proper account of the genre-specific perspective of writing and general text features (Dahl, 2004).

Discourse analysis is concerned with the study of social life, in terms of the analysis of language regarding its broadest sense that is the face-to-face conversation, non-verbal interaction, pictures, and documents (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). According to Traynor (2006), it presents ways of exploring meaning either in interaction or in culture. The study of discourse and language in social and cultural institutions is called critical discourse analysis, emphasizing the importance of social relations, identity, knowledge and power and their development through written or spoken texts (Corson, 1995). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is concerned with the investigation of how language and discourse are used to achieve social goals and in the part this use plays in social maintenance and change (Bloor & Bloor, p. 2007). Critical discourse analysts Fairclough, van Dijk, and Wodak, support that in order to recognize the suitability of revision and adjustment of content to receive new readership, media text analysis would profit from a purposeful examination of discursive properties bended by power and ideology (Wodak, 1996).

One of the genres that has received notable attention in the CDA history is the political discourse. Over the past decades, newspaper editorials have become a crucial site of political discourse where public figures report and defend events and actions. The different ways of presenting and discussing the events cause different realizations which are worth investigating with regard to discourse features. These different realizations are due to the fact that discourse shapes national, political and social characters and as a result presents ideologies which according to Wodak (1996) are specific methods of showing and developing society which reproduces unequal relations of force, relations of domination and exploitation; accordingly power relations are shaped by discourse. The power relations can be communicated, thus bringing about negative stereotyping to either depict or conceal overwhelming ideologies.

In a comparative study, Ansary and Babaii (2005) contrasted editorials composed by native and non-native writers of English in Washington Post. The study intended to figure out the type of rhetorical organizations employed in the language of English-language newspapers by analyzing the macro-rhetorical structure of editorial texts from a Systemic Functional (SF) point of

view. The results of this study revealed that an unmarked English newspaper editorial normally began with an argumentation of the issue accompanied by a series of arguments and terminated with the establishment of a position. This process could be reiterated to the point that the intended and planned conclusion would be arrived at. This confirmed Bhatia's (2004) study where he associates genre with language use in a conventionalized communicative context underlying a specific set of communicative objectives. As a matter of fact, genre follows some generic characteristics which are observed on a universal basis. Regardless of this universality, however, the subjective realizations of the elements of the text might be different and the strategies for writing each could be different for every single writer.

In another study Katajamaki and Koskela (2006) employed van Dijk's rhetorical structure to analyze editorials in three business newspapers in English, Finnish, and Swedish. They observed that there are three common rhetorical moves in the genre of editorials in the three languages, the introduction section, the intermediate section and the coda. Furthermore, their findings demonstrated that the stages involved in each section could be different and drafted in different manners. Connor (1996) analyzed editorials in Finnish, English and German newspapers to find out the strength and the location of the main claim in the editorial news. Connor's observation showed that the Finnish editorial writers did not provide a perspective but instead offered information. He also observed that, the German writers most of the time placed the key argument at the start more often than the English newspaper did, while Finnish newspapers' editorials had no argument statement.

With the exception of a few past studies such as Teo (2001) and Brookes (1995), there has been very little attempt so far to critically examine the newspaper discourse from a CDA perspective not to mention Iran's nuclear negotiations. Teo (2001) adopted a CDA approach to explore the construction of racism in newspaper reports. Two Australian newspapers of The Sydney Morning Herald and The Daily Telegraph were the subject of analysis with regard to a Vietnamese gang event in Australia. The results of CDA revealed that there was an evident stereotyping of the community and a partial power discourse between the ethnic (i.e., law-breaches) and white (i.e., law-enforcers). Ted criticizes newspaper reporting which has become a political critique of authorities for the exertion of domination and therefore social partiality.

Interestingly, the results obtained in Teo's study are reflected in Brookes' study as well. Brookes (1995) examined the ideological development of Africa by adopting a critical discourse analysis of news on Africa in the British press. This study compared two British articles with contrasting ideological stances and revealed a stereotypical, inherently natural and dominant discourse on Africa. The analysis illustrates the ways that the aspects of this discourse entangle to arrive at specific meanings promoting a neo-colonial racist representation of Africa and Africans. The study highlighted the

place of this discourse in recreating the racist attitudes towards Africa and Africans in Western community and in sustaining Western hegemony. This finding has raised the issue of the connection of this discourse to other racist discourses in European community. This research concludes that the well-established steadiness of this discourse bears little probability for challenge or change.

Although previous research explored political discourse from different angles and in different contexts, there has been no study so far to examine the newspaper texts with regard to different discourse features in the Iranian context. Moreover, the topic of Iranian nuclear deal has not been investigated with respect to the discourse used in media reporting it. Therefore, the current study was conducted to explore how different discourse features shape the differences between different news reports. The present study attempted to establish the importance of political newspaper texts with regard to sentence level features (namely lexis and syntax) and beyond sentence level aspects (namely propositional content and attitude). Adopting a CDA approach, the present study attempts to examine the way nuclear negotiations between Iran and 5+1 group was reflected in the selected editorials. In the following sections, we first provide an overview of CDA followed by an analysis of how CDA is used in editorials as a particular discourse genre.

2. Literature Review

CDA functions within a three dimensional structure of text, discursive practice and socio-cultural practice (Fairclough, 2003). Analysis of discourse, according to this model, needs to be viewed as language in use and as a form of social practice; in fact analysis of discourse deals with the analysis of how content and message works within the larger socio-cultural context (Fairclough, 1995). This three level function of CDA reflects the features of a news report. Bell (1998) portrays a common news report as covering these three vital aspects with respect to a) foundation to the event being accounted for to aid in the provision of context, b) critique by the writer in the form not like a narrative but rather in evaluation of events and third-person response to them, and c) follow-up which may incorporate verbal response from different people on future outcomes emerging from the story. His event analysis of a story reveals what the story says with regard to indicating events, what it says in regards to the news experts themselves, and the place and time of events.

This three level analysis of discourse as justified by Jackson (2005) postulates that discourses both add to the creation of social structures and are reciprocally formed by them. Of even more prominent importance, basic discourse examination expects that discursive practices are never unbiased, but instead they add to the creation and generation of unequal power relations between social groups; discourses are the practice of power relations. In this manner a focal point of critical discourse analysis lies in uncovering the methods by which language is conveyed to look after power; what makes CDA critical is its normative promise to bring about positive social change.

The development of ideologies and complicated power relations are manifested in the context of newspaper editorials. VanDijk (1992) argued that the editorials and the “op-ed” articles in the mass media are opinions and ideologies inundated by mental representations. He, then, suggested a model, blending the production with the interpretation of discourse. His theoretical framework comprises three main elements that include social functions, discursive expressions and cognitive structures. Contrary to Fowler's emphasis on semantic procedures of convictions and qualities, van Dijk stressed the creation and comprehension of writings. In his theory, belief system is given a more critical position and has the potential of polarizing in and out gatherings (Lihua, 2009).

The ideological and social functions of discourse in editorials have attracted considerable attention in the literature. In a comparative study, Ansary and Babaii (2005) contrasted editorials by native and non-native writers of English in three different cultural settings. In terms of methodology, they applied the Systemic Functional (SF) theory of language to genre analysis. The distinctive rhetorical features of English newspaper editorials were investigated and a generic prototypical pattern of text development was proposed. The results pinpointed that although the writers had employed various strategies to produce the editorials and the sections they consisted of, the rhetorical structuring of all followed the same pattern.

In a different study, Bonyadi (2010) conducted a contrastive study of the editorials in Tehran Times and New York Times newspapers to find out their schematic structures. Three rhetorical moves were identified in the editorials, namely: the introduction, the body and the ending. The results of his study showed that the editorials from both newspapers contained the same sections, but their editorial authors used their own distinctive strategies to obtain the communicative purpose of the genre.

Media studies have indicated that newspapers incorporate solid political affiliations that can be uncovered in biased discourse. Distinctive procedures and moves can be discovered through the examination of news discourse, and the information about the stance and perspectives of the news writers as well. It is the responsibility of analysis to find out the degree to which discourse is properly rendered in reports of globally interceded political news events, where interpretation is included. For this reason, the present study is conducted to examine the ways different nations' editorials mirror the nuclear negotiation when considered from a critical discourse analysis perspective.

In the present study Fairclough's (1989) CDA model was adopted for the identification of specific instances of structural classes: ‘lexical choice’, ‘syntactic structure’, and ‘propositional structure’; then, sub-categories in lexical choice’, ‘syntactic structure’, and ‘propositional structure’ were analyzed based on Huckin's (2002) and Long et al.'s (2005) suggestions to address the following research questions:

1. How are Iranian and non-Iranian participants of the events (Iran Nuclear program) referred to in Chinese, Russian, and American newspaper editorials?
2. Are there any significant differences in the use of lexical choices, syntactic structures, and propositional structures in the Iranian, Chinese, Russian, and American newspaper editorials?

3. Method

3.1. Materials

A collection of newspaper editorials from The New York Times, China Daily, Moscow Times and Tehran Times were analyzed in the present study as they are the largest media outlets in terms of circulation frequency and popularity.

Tehran Times, New York Times, China Daily and Moscow Times Websites were visited and articles were selected from the archives. In order to ensure the homogeneity of texts with respect to quantity, the texts with up to 1000 words and 100 lines were analyzed. For the purpose of consistency, 25 editorials from each newspaper published immediately after 2 April 2015 and 14 July 2015 representing the result of the negotiations were analyzed in terms of the attitude to key participants, lexical choices, syntactic structures, and propositional structure.

Fairclough's CDA model was adopted for the identification of specific instances of structural classes: 'lexical choice', 'syntactic structure', and 'propositional structure'; Huckin's (2002) and Long et al.'s (2005) guidelines were used in the analysis of these general categories.

The investigation of lexical choices was accomplished by considering the following elements (Huckin, 2002):

1. Classification which refers to the naming and labeling of things. E.g., "To allow for the additional time to negotiate, we are taking the necessary technical steps for the measures of the *Joint Plan of Action* to remain in place through July 13," a State Department official said in a statement.
2. Connotation which refers to the connections of meaning that are far beyond a word's dictionary definition (example below).
3. Metaphor which is a commonly used way of indicating opinions in political discourse. E.g., Galletti, for his part, commented on *Italy's extensive activities in the area of environment* (metaphor), saying that biodiversity (connotation) is one of the country's priorities and *the issue can be an area of cooperation between Tehran and Rome* (modality).
4. Presuppositions which are also used at word level and assume the truth of the sentence in which they are used. E.g., "Iran and six major powers recently adopted the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to put an end to more than a decade of differences over Tehran's nuclear program."

5. Modality which refers to the use of modal verbs to articulate a specific authorial voice or attitude (see number 3 above for example).
6. Register which is the linguistic style of a discourse that links it to a particular activity or group. E.g., “Rouhani also called on all parties involved to make efforts to implement the nuclear accord.”

The following criteria proposed by Huckin (2002) were used for the examination syntactic structure of the discourse:

1. Transitivity which is the agent-patient relations in a sentence or how the main action of the sentence is encoded. E.g., “Ebtekar expressed hope that Tehran and Rome would set up a joint workshop to study environmental issues and *take the required steps to address environmental issues in the near future.*”
2. Deletion which alludes to the intentional elimination of information in a sentence. E.g., “The illegal anti-Iran sanctions” have had damaging impacts on the environment in Iran as the country *has been prevented* to acquire the required technology to reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution, the head of Iran’s Department of the Environment says.
3. Topicalization which is the placing of a sentence element at the beginning part of the sentence to make it more prominent. E.g., “*The illegal anti-Iran sanctions*” have had damaging impacts on the environment in Iran as the country has been prevented to acquire the required technology to reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution, the head of Iran’s Department of the Environment says.”
4. Register which is identified as not only a word level factor but also a syntactic element. The commonly used register shift in advertisements, for instance, is because of the syntactic differences than lexical ones. E.g., “She said that the European Union is *determined* to open a new chapter in its ties with Iran.”
5. Presupposition: e.g., “The European Union has always considered Iran an “important and powerful partner” and seeks to *revive relations with the Islamic Republic in various areas.*”
6. Insinuation which is used for manipulative purposes. E.g., “*Given the commitment of the administration,* she said, the country would be able to take more measures in reducing and controlling greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution once the “illegal anti-Iran sanctions” are lifted.”
7. Intertextuality which is the borrowing of terms. E.g., “The European Union has always considered Iran an “*important and powerful partner*” and seeks to revive relations with the Islamic Republic in various areas, she stated in a separate meeting with Iran’s parliament Speaker Ali Larijani.”

The propositional structure of the discourse was analyzed with respect to Long, Baynes, and Prat’s (2005) suggestions. They define the propositional structure of the discourse as the relation between a verb or modifier, and its

arguments. Sentences in the present study were analyzed with respect to the propositional structure that included at least two propositions with a noun-verb-noun structure. The propositional structures were categorized as follows based on Long et al. (2005, p. 9):

1. *Same-proposition pairs* consist of a target noun preceded by another noun from the same proposition. E.g., “There is only *one big problem* in terms of sanctions — it is *the problem of a weapons embargo*,” he told journalists, according to the news agency Interfax.”
2. *Divergent-proposition pairs* consist of a target noun preceded by another noun from a divergent proposition in the same sentence. E.g., “New York Times: The overall *increase in Iran’s stockpile* poses a major diplomatic and political challenge for *President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry*.”

As discussed earlier, critical discourse analysis deals with the integrated analysis of text, discursive practice and larger scale social issues. The broader concepts such as the power status have been one of the focal points in the present study and were analyzed based on the following sub-categories adopted from Huckin (2002) to examine the way participants of the nuclear negotiations were reflected in the news discourse:

1. Hegemonic form of discourse which has the goal of defusing political resistance and sustaining existing power structures. E.g., “Masoumeh Ebtekar made the remarks in a meeting with Italian Environment Minister Gian Luca Galletti during a ceremony signing a joint plan of action agreement between the two countries’ environmental *bodies*.”
2. Ideology which is a significant factor in the construction of power status. E.g., “Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has said that a recent agreement reached between Iran and world powers proved the power of diplomacy in resolving international issues, *expressing hope that it would serve as a model for the settlement of other regional and international disputes*.”
3. Interest which is a clear motivation for the text producers. E.g., “She also stated that *there are many common environmental grounds for Iran and Italy* to cooperate as the two countries have been impacted by environmental calamities.”
4. Argumentation which attempts to persuade the readers. E.g., “*Cooperation between Iran and the European Union on the regional issues will lead to “positive results”*”, she added.”

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

To find out how Iranian and non-Iranian participants of the events (Iran Nuclear program) are referred to in Chinese, Russian, and American newspaper

editorials, frequencies were calculated. For the second research question, the Kruskal Wallis test was run.

Table 1.
Frequency Values for Lexical Choices across Nations

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Lexical (US)	classification	102	9.6	20.5	20.5
	connotation	123	11.5	24.7	45.2
	metaphor	77	7.2	15.5	60.6
	presupposition	87	8.2	17.5	78.1
	modality	51	4.8	10.2	88.4
	register	58	5.4	11.6	100.0
	Total	498	46.7	100.0	
Lexical (Iran)	classification	136	12.8	20.9	20.9
	connotation	106	9.9	16.3	37.1
	metaphor	128	12.0	19.6	56.7
	presupposition	206	19.3	31.6	88.3
	modality	44	4.1	6.7	95.1
	register	32	3.0	4.9	100.0
	Total	652	61.2	100.0	
Lexical (China)	classification	130	12.2	17.9	17.9
	connotation	116	10.9	16.0	33.8
	metaphor	96	9.0	13.2	47.0
	presupposition	195	18.3	26.8	73.9
	modality	122	11.4	16.8	90.6
	register	68	6.4	9.4	100.0
	Total	727	68.2	100.0	
Lexical (Russia)	classification	132	12.4	20.5	20.5
	connotation	85	8.0	13.2	33.7
	metaphor	86	8.1	13.4	47.1
	presupposition	103	9.7	16.0	63.1
	modality	150	14.1	23.3	86.5
	register	87	8.2	13.5	100.0
	Total	643	60.3	100.0	

As Table 1 indicates, American editorials made use of ‘connotation’ (11.5%) and ‘classification’ (9.6%) lexical choice more often than the other points. However, the Iranian and Chinese editorials had a higher choice of ‘presupposition’ (19.3% and 18.3% respectively) with the Russian journalists preferring a high ‘modality’ (150%) and ‘classification’ (12.4%) employment.

Table 2
Frequency Values for Syntactic Choices across Nations

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Syntax (US)	transitivity	56	5.3	10.8	10.8
	deletion	77	7.2	14.9	25.7
	topicalization	43	4.0	8.3	34.0
	register	31	2.9	6.0	40.0
	presupposition	97	9.1	18.7	58.7
	insinuation	87	8.2	16.8	75.5
	intertextuality	127	11.9	24.5	100.0
	Total	518	48.6	100.0	
Syntax (Iran)	transitivity	52	4.9	10.0	10.0
	deletion	103	9.7	19.9	29.9
	topicalization	22	2.1	4.2	34.2
	register	47	4.4	9.1	43.2
	presupposition	116	10.9	22.4	65.6
	insinuation	92	8.6	17.8	83.4
	intertextuality	86	8.1	16.6	100.0
	Total	518	48.6	100.0	
Syntax (China)	transitivity	81	7.6	12.9	12.9
	deletion	113	10.6	18.0	30.8
	topicalization	91	8.5	14.5	45.3
	register	69	6.5	11.0	56.3
	presupposition	79	7.4	12.6	68.8
	insinuation	79	7.4	12.6	81.4
	intertextuality	117	11.0	18.6	100.0
	Total	629	59.0	100.0	
Syntax (Russia)	transitivity	131	12.3	18.4	18.4
	deletion	100	9.4	14.0	32.4
	topicalization	114	10.7	16.0	48.5
	register	85	8.0	11.9	60.4
	presupposition	112	10.5	15.7	76.1
	insinuation	56	5.3	7.9	84.0
	intertextuality	114	10.7	16.0	100.0
	Total	712	66.8	100.0	

Regarding the syntactic properties, the American editorials were more inclined towards the application of ‘intertextuality’ (11.9%) while the Iranian texts applied ‘presupposition’ (10.9%) and ‘deletion’ (9.7%) more than other classes. ‘Deletion’ (10.6%) was a highly used choice in Chinese editorials, with the Russian texts obviously opting for a higher use of ‘transitivity’ (12.3%) among other components.

Table 3
Propositional Choices in Different Editorials

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Proposition (US)	same pair	401	37.6	47.7	47.7
	divergent pair	440	41.3	52.3	100.0
	Total	841	78.9	100.0	
Proposition (Iran)	same pair	506	47.5	63.1	63.1
	divergent pair	296	27.8	36.9	100.0
	Total	802	75.2	100.0	
Proposition (China)	same pair	606	56.8	75.6	75.6
	divergent pair	196	18.4	24.4	100.0
	Total	802	75.2	100.0	
Proposition (Russia)	same pair	801	75.1	75.1	75.1
	divergent pair	265	24.9	24.9	100.0
	Total	1066	100.0	100.0	

For the propositional category, Table 3 demonstrates a higher use of ‘same-pair’ in Iranian (47.5%), Chinese (56.8%) and Russian (75.1%) newspapers, but a higher use of ‘divergent-pairs’ (41.3%) in American editorials.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Kruskal-Wallis Results

<i>Lexical Choices</i>	Nationality	N	Mean Rank		
<i>Lexical Choices</i>	American	25	32.52	Chi-Square	15.667
	Iranian	25	50.24	df	3
	Chinese	25	63.90	Asymp. Sig.	.001
	Russian	25	55.34		
<i>Syntactic Choices</i>	American	25	38.16	Chi-Square	17.268
	Iranian	25	38.90	df	3
	Chinese	25	60.70	Asymp. Sig.	.001
	Russian	25	64.24		
<i>Propositional Choices</i>	American	25	39.80	Chi-Square	34.091
	Iranian	25	38.82	df	3
	Chinese	25	43.76	Asymp. Sig.	.000
	Russian	25	79.62		

Table 5

Mann Whitney U Post-hoc Test

	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>Mann-Whitney U</i>	
<i>Lexical Choices</i>	American	25	21.10	Wilcoxon W	202.500
					527.500
	Iranian	25	29.90	Z	-2.140
	Total	50		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.032
				Mann-Whitney U	122.500
	American	25	17.90	Wilcoxon W	447.500
	Chinese	25	33.10	Z	-3.693
	Total	50		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
				Mann-Whitney U	163.000
	American	25	19.52	Wilcoxon W	488.000
	Russian	25	31.48	Z	-2.906
	Total	50		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>Mann-Whitney U</i>	167.000
<i>Syntactic Choices</i>	American	25	19.68	Wilcoxon W	492.000
	Chinese	25	31.32	Z	-2.830
	Total	50		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
				Mann-Whitney U	169.500
	American	25	19.78	Wilcoxon W	494.500
	Russian	25	31.22	Z	-2.779
	Total	50		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
				Mann-Whitney U	160.500
	Iranian	25	19.42	Wilcoxon W	485.500
	Russian	25	31.58	Z	-2.954
	Total	50		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	<i>Propositional Choices</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>Mann-Whitney U</i>
American		25	16.18	Wilcoxon W	404.500
Russian		25	34.82	Z	-4.530
Total		50		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
				Mann-Whitney U	40.500
Iranian		25	14.62	Wilcoxon W	365.500
Russian		25	36.38	Z	-5.292
Total		50		Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

In order to compare the role of lexical, syntactic and propositional choices in different editorials, a Kruskal-Wallis test followed by the Mann-Whitney U test was performed. The descriptive statistics (Table 4) and

inferential statistics (Table 5) results are reported in the order of lexical choices, syntactic choices and propositional choices.

The results of Kruskal-Wallis test pinpoint significant differences among the nations with respect to their lexical choice preferences, $\chi^2(3) = 15.66$, $p < .05$. Furthermore, significant differences were found out among the nations with respect to their syntactic choice preferences, $\chi^2(3) < 17.26$, $p < .05$. Lastly, the results of Kruskal-Wallis test posited significant difference among the nations with respect to their propositional choice preferences, $\chi^2(3) = 34.09$, $p < .05$.

To find out the points of departure among nations, a post-hoc Mann Whitney U test was carried out, the results of which are presented in Table 5.

As the results of Table 5 show, the American-Iranian, $U(3) = 202.50$, $p < 0.05$, American-Chinese, $U(3) = 122.50$, $p < 0.05$, and American-Russian, $U(3) = 163.00$, $p < 0.05$, groups significantly differed in terms of their lexical choice in their editorials. Moreover, the American-Chinese, $U(3) = 167.000$, $p < 0.05$, American-Russian, $U(3) = 169.500$, $p < 0.05$, and Iranian-Russian, $U(3) = 160.500$, $p < 0.05$, groups significantly differed in terms of their syntactic choice in their editorials. Finally for propositional choices, the American-Russian, $U(3) = 79.500$, $p < 0.05$, and Iranian-Russian, $U(3) = 40.500$, $p < 0.05$, groups significantly differed in their editorials.

4.2 Discussion

This study applied a critical approach to the analysis of the newspaper discourse to establish how different nations including Iran, China, Russia and United States reacted on nuclear negotiations. The study traced the information flow from experts by examining the scholarly literature, and then closely comparing the selected written discourse of *Tehran Times*, *Moscow Today*, *China Daily*, and *New York Times*. The statistical analysis revealed that *The New York Times* represented the nuclear negotiations as a sensational problem for nations which was at the same time controversial politically, but was not actually consistent with the realistic matters. The disparity between political and real world framings of the issue arose in part from a conflict between realistic scrutiny of political processes and journalistic values of selecting information which preferably relates to the political and the conflictual matters and themes. All these differences point to the role of language, ideology, and power in shaping the presentation of information in different newspapers. This contrast is clearly in line with Fairclough's (2001) CDA model claiming a greater role for the belief system in the development of discourse. In other words, it is the ideology that sets the basis for the comprehension of other discourse components such as social issues and cognitive elements.

The results of the analysis for the first research question clearly indicated the differences between different newspapers in capturing the way nuclear characters were envisioned. The results pinpointed the 'ideology' and

'argumentation' differences where for the first one Russia and China reflected a powerful image of Iranian parties in the negotiations and for the latter Iran and Russia had a more persuasive tone for the positivity of the negotiations. It should be mentioned that the other categories of character reflection were found non-significance among the different nation's writings.

This ideological contrast along with the linguistic distinctions (as shown in the statistical analysis of the second research question) shows a strong journalistic preference for selecting and emphasizing information relevant to contemporary political discourses. *The New York Times* journalists seem to give little attention to well-founded evidence about the peacefulness and scale of the nuclear activities of Iran regarding the adoption of a negative viewpoint, while the other newspapers, that is *Moscow Today* and *China Daily*, paid due attention to the realities and put the topic in the spotlight for the attention of all readers. Journalists and experts in *Tehran Times* are the individuals who sense the real activities and flow of things and try to reflect these in their writing, which in turn mirrors a more realistic image of endeavors. Additionally, the news media, and particularly those that perceive themselves to be opinion-leaders in political and economic discourses undertake a responsibility to inform about discursive developments in these areas.

The results of this study support those of the past research by highlighting the stance of newspaper reporting in becoming a political agenda for authorities to exert domination and therefore social partiality (Brookes, 1995; Joye, 2010; Stamou, 2001; Teo, 2001). In the case of nuclear deal, this perception skewed journalistic selections of expert information about the processes of the real world. Examination of the information flow shows that commentators, journalists and policy makers all demonstrate different views towards their discourse production: commentators are reluctant to engage with non-experts' primary sources of information; policy makers focus on international treaty negotiations to the exclusion of the real world needs and perceptions of their own populations; and journalists neglect risks to their audiences. Kitzinger's (1999) finding that news selectors preferred information immediately relevant to local situations or contexts, combined with the preference for immediacy, is supported by this research. Such information is seen by news selectors to represent 'sensational' information.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The results of the present study illuminated the fact that when information may directly affect the social world, journalists attempt to establish its relevance to their audiences by establishing connections between developments in the real world and the lived world of their non-expert audiences. Information is selected according to its news values, which detail reasons why audiences might pay attention to that information in the first place.

Due to the time constraints of this study, the number of editorials was limited. Future studies can compare the discourse features of national media. The inclusion of different national newspapers would provide a better picture

of the situation at national level. In addition, since this study examined two time frames (i.e., April and July 2015), further research can examine texts across a wider range of time extending from the ab initio of negotiations until the nuclear agreement. Therefore, a more comprehensive study would track the evolution in the discourses further back in history to see if there were changes or similarities in the discourses throughout time. This would provide a greater picture of how the linguistic features and voice have evolved over time as well as how it was constructed at various points in history.

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