

Mystification Rate in Persian and English News Articles: A Case Study of the US Presidential Election in 2016¹

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Abstract

Critical discourse analysis is a new branch of discourse analysis that discusses the whyness of events and deals with information representation. In recent years critical discourse analysis influences some other majors such as philosophy, sociology and so forth. One of the majors which is affected by critical discourse analysis is news articles. Discourse analysis, in fact, views language as a form of social practice. The present study was undertaken within the realm of critical discourse analysis and based on its framework. Socio-semantic discursive features, according to critical discourse analysis, are those features which their usage or lack of their usage change the meaning of a sentence. To this aim it is said that speech is like action. Discursive

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features create explicitness or implicitness in speech or writing. For example, one might consider the three following sentences, “Ali killed Mehdi and I got sad”, “Mehdi was killed by Ali and I got sad”, and “killing Mehdi made me sad” have different mystification rates. The first sentence is explicit while it will be more mystifying in the second and third sentences. Therefore, the present study intended to shed light on the use of discursive features and its effect on news articles. In other words, the study intended to compare Persian and English news articles (based on their application of socio-semantic discursive features) so as to determine the rate of mystification in them. To undertake the study, Van Leeuwen’s (1996) model adopted by Yarmohammadi (2012) was used. This model explicitly consists of 6 subparts while implicitly consists of 5 subparts. Based on this model not all subparts are available in all genres. The data of the study comprised of a corpus of 6 Persian and 5 English news articles – all related to the US presidential election in 2016 – extracted using purposive sampling from *Nasim Online* (<http://www.nasimonline.ir/>) and *The Guardian* (<https://www.theguardian.com/>) newspapers. The gathered data from the two mentioned newspapers were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. In quantitative analysis the sentences consisting of discursive features were extracted, analyzed, and grouped together. In quantitative analysis the mystification formula was used. Also mean, standard deviation and chi-square were calculated. Chi-square was used

to find if there was any significant difference between the two newspapers regarding explicitness or implicitness of the texts. The frequency of the use of each discursive feature was also found one by one both Persian and English newspapers. The results of the Chi-square tests revealed that the two newspapers were significantly different in the use of explicit and implicit discursive features. In other words, explicitness was more prominent in *The Guardian* newspaper whereas the rate of mystification was higher in *Nasim Online*. The general conclusion drawn from the study was that Persian news articles were less explicit than the English ones. Based on the findings, the mystification rate for the Persian newspaper was 49/18 while it was 21/05 for the English one. This means that *The Guardian* newspaper stated the content more clearly. The results can be justified based on different reasons. The first reason can be due to the style of writing in the two newspapers. As their different they write differently. Another reason can be due to the cultural differences. Yarmohammadi (1395) stated that Iranian culture uses more mystifications than foreign cultures and this can also be seen through the architecture of the two cultures. For example in Iran previously kitchens were built separately and apart from the other parts of the house while it was not the case in European countries. The results were also supported and were in line with the findings reported by Kaplan (1972). Kaplan also proposed some graphs for different languages such as Arabic, Russian and

English. Based on these graphs, Persian speakers tend to be more implicit in their speech while English speakers are more direct and straight forward. Although it was shown that the two newspapers were significantly different in their use of the explicit and implicit discursive features, the results cannot be generalized. It is suggested that other researchers use different corpus and more data with the same procedure to compare and contrast the results. Finally it can be said that no written or spoken text is without its influence on the reader or hearer, though the writer or speaker tries or intends to be fair.

Keywords: Mystification, Critical discourse analysis, Van Leeuwen's model