



Critical Discourse Analysis of the Iraq War: Linguistic and Cultural Transformations

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Abstract

The research adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the Iraq War by examining political discourse transformations and changes in media communication language and culture. Using the CDA framework developed by Fairclough and van Dijk, together with Wodak, allows researchers to study how language usage and ideological control, combined with power, manipulate societal views to legitimize military operations while directing societal culture. The examination of 17 scholarly materials that included political addresses, war accounts, and news articles enabled researchers to detect essential discursive patterns that showed manipulative maneuvers, partisan ideological expression, and linguistic treatment of both insurgency and terrorism.

Western political leaders George W. Bush and Tony Blair achieved war legitimation through their positive self-portrayals and negative depictions of others during the conflict. Media outlets in European countries and America used their reporting to intensify religious conflicts in Iraq, which resulted in heightened war tensions. Media translations about war events modified public perceptions of the conflict. This study contributes to a new understanding of academic literature about propaganda in war, media influences, and discourse effects in global conflicts.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Iraq War, Media Discourse, Political Rhetoric, Ideology, Linguistic Manipulation*

1 Introduction

1.1 Background on the Iraq War and Its Discourse

The Iraq War between 2003 and 2011 remains one of the most significant global political events that sparked heated arguments about its justification as well as its effects and media coverage. Western political leaders presented this conflict as essential to fight terrorism and destroy WMDs in the world. According to Dirks (2006), some people saw the action as imperialistic colonial behavior. The war received intense political treatment and ideological influence, which guided public reactions and directed foreign policy actions. Political leaders, media representatives, and other important stakeholders used language techniques to both support and challenge the war through discourse establishing authority for military actions (van Dijk 2010).

The linguistic and cultural changes during the Iraq War created notable impacts in Western and Iraqi societies. The Western political discourse used terms about democracy alongside security and terrorism resistance, while Iraqi political speech highlighted resistance movements alongside occupation narratives and cultural elements (Al-Saedi, 2020). The public perception of Iraqi society developed through three key factors: sectarianism framing, persuasive political statements, and media portrayals (Abdullah, 2015). This research evaluates how political statements and media coverage created war narratives about Iraq that altered public understanding of war legitimacy, identities, and conflicts.

1.2 Research Problem and Justification

Several researchers have extensively studied the cultural and linguistic consequences of the Iraq War. The bulk of existing academic research investigates Western political discourse through the speeches delivered by George W. Bush and Tony Blair, according to Zheng (2015). The research literature shows limited investigation into how discourse formed Iraqi cultural identity and sectarian breakups, although it has studied media impacts on warfare legitimacy justifications (Kalsi, 2017; Abdullah, 2015). The study addresses this knowledge gap by investigating the impact of political speeches, media storytelling, and linguistic changes in Iraq War reporting.

Public understanding of the war changed based on media coverage because the media shaped Western and Middle Eastern perspectives (Dirks, 2006). Media outlets from the West presented invasion justifications by focusing on national security, freedom, and democracy (Dirks, 2006). The media outlets in Iraq and the Middle East presented their content by focusing on military occupation, local resistance groups and religious conflicts (Al-Saedi, 2020). The analysis explores the fundamental role of linguistic construction in reality formation because it investigates how different participants used discourse to control war stories (van Dijk, 2010).

The analysis uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) techniques to study the role of language in creating political, social, and cultural realities during the Iraq War. CDA researchers obtain a structured method to examine power structures in discourse because they track how language choices create and perpetuate ideological perspectives (Sabir, 2023; van Dijk, 2010).

1.3 Research Questions

This investigation follows three research questions to explore Bush and Blair's justification of the Iraq War through discourse.

1. Through which methods did Bush and Blair employ discourse to support the Iraq War?
2. How did Western vs. Middle Eastern media frame the Iraq War differently, and what ideological positions were embedded in their narratives?
3. What linguistic patterns and cultural transformations emerged in Iraq War discourse, particularly concerning identity and sectarianism?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways. First, it expands the existing CDA research on war discourse, moving beyond an exclusive focus on Western political rhetoric to include media and cultural transformations within Iraq (Abdullah, 2015; Al-Saedi, 2020). Second, by comparing Western and Middle Eastern narratives, this study highlights how language constructs opposing realities in global conflicts (Dirks, 2006). While Western leaders portrayed the war as a fight for democracy, Iraqi media framed it as a foreign occupation (Al-Saedi, 2020). Examining these contrasting discourses helps uncover the power dynamics underlying war narratives.

The study enhances understanding of how media outlets construct religious identities across Iraq after the United States invasion. The dominant role in escalating sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiites came from Western and Iraqi media sources, according to Abdullah (2015). U.S. media repeatedly used reports about sectarian violence to intensify ethnic tensions, while Iraqi news media delivered their versions that merged nationalistic and resistance perspectives (Kalsi, 2017). Studying media discourse mechanisms becomes possible when analyzing political and social segmentation based on language analysis.

Research activities concerning policy development and media content creation must pay attention to this study because it demonstrates language tools that facilitate war propaganda statements while sustaining ideological partitions. The analysis reveals the existence of rhetorical devices and framing techniques in war discourse so readers can improve their ability to analyze contemporary war-related media narratives (van Dijk, 2010). The research delivers critical information that scholars, journalists, and policymakers can use for present-day geopolitical conflicts.

1.5 Structure of the Paper

This paper is structured as follows:

- Section 1 (Introduction) introduces this paper by presenting the study background and importance, followed by research questions and objectives.
- The Literature Review section of this paper examines CDA theoretical bases through Fairclough van Dijk and Wodak while reviewing previous studies regarding war discourse and media framing.

- Section 3 (Methodology) outlines the CDA approach used in this study, describing the data sources (political speeches, media reports, and translated texts) and the analytical techniques employed.
- Section 4 (Findings & Discussion) presents the key discourse patterns identified, including political rhetoric, media representation of war, and cultural transformations.
- Section 5 (Conclusion) summarizes the findings, discusses the implications for discourse analysis and media studies, and suggests directions for future research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

2.1.1 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

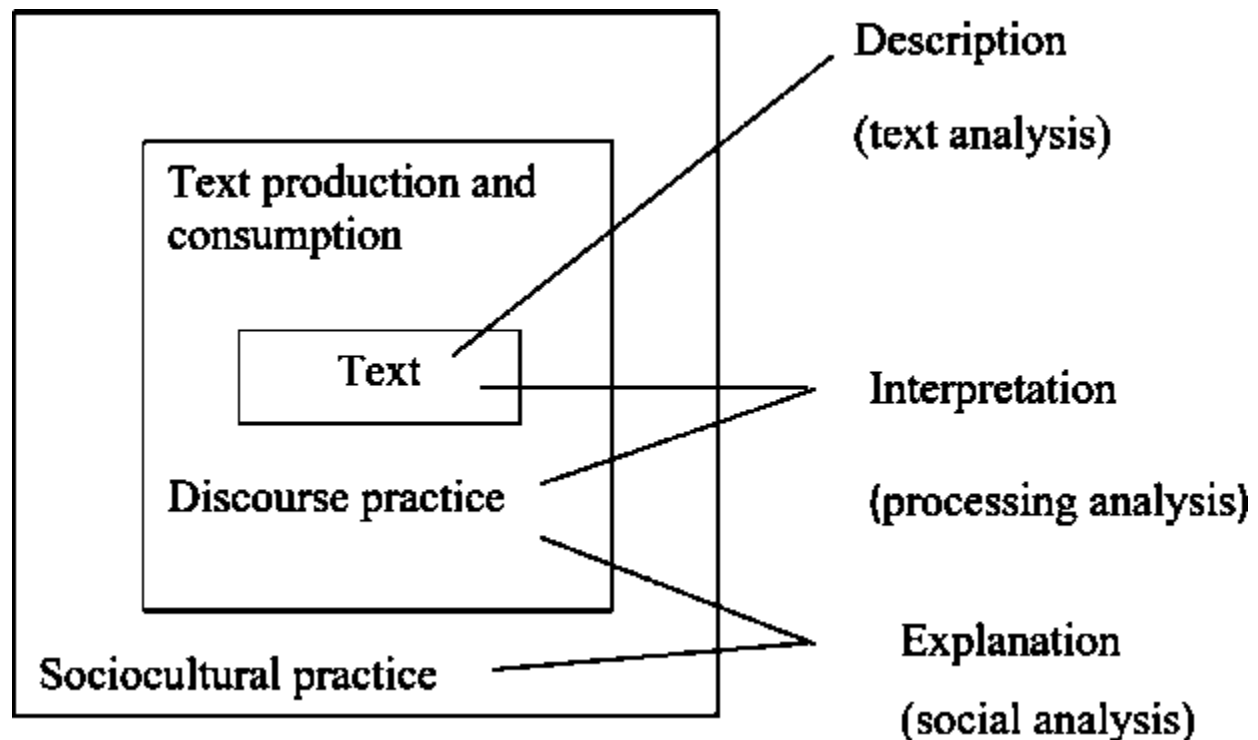


Figure 1: The Three-Dimensional Model (Sabir, 2023)

The Three-Dimensional Model by Fairclough represents a dominant structure in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) because it describes discourse interactions between a text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice as demonstrated in Figure 1 (Sabir, 2023). The model proves that discourse operates beyond linguistic study because it represents a social practice that interacts with societal power structures. Textual analysis examines vocabulary grammar and coherence as part of its focus, discourse practice examines production and consumption processes, and sociocultural practice examines ideological factors and political context (Sabir, 2023). Through his model, Fairclough presents researchers with a structured method for examining political

rhetoric and media representations during the Iraq War. Researchers study power asymmetry reinforcement through discourse analysis and explore speeches for George W. Bush and Tony Blair with news media content from Western and Iraqi perspectives (Dirks, 2006). During Iraq's media discourse, the focus centered on resistance against foreign occupation, yet Bush made his speeches by presenting the war as a moral responsibility for democracy and security (Al-Saedi 2020). The Fairclough framework enables deep research of language selection, which influences public understanding of events.

2.1.2 van Dijk's Ideological Square

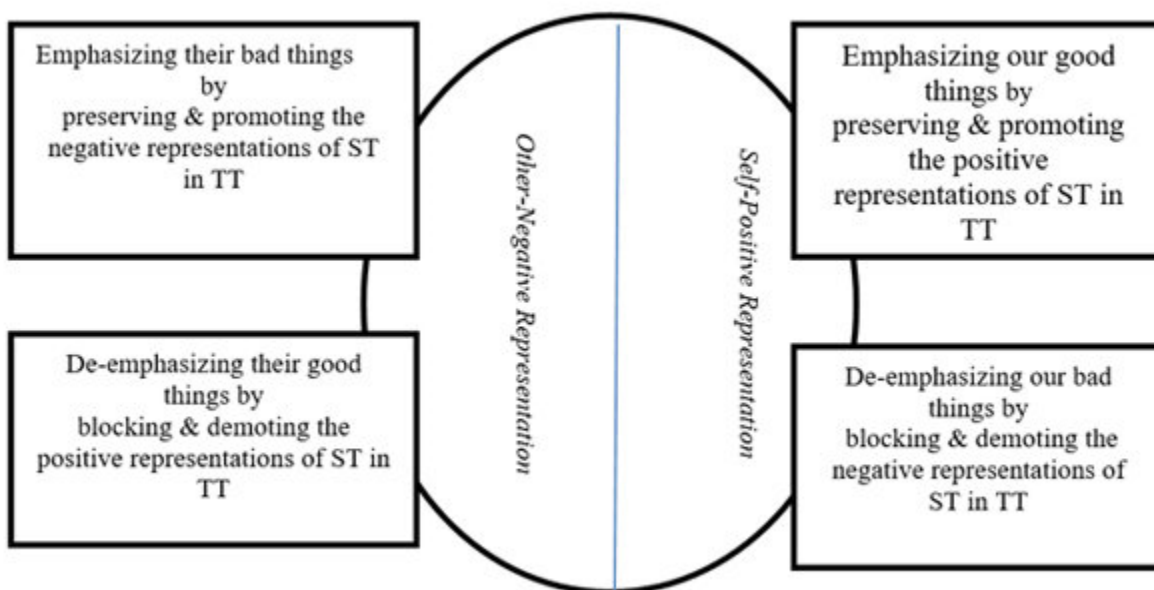


Figure 2: Teun van Dijk's Ideological Square (2010)

Teun van Dijk's Ideological Square (2010) provides another vital theoretical basis for this investigation because it demonstrates how discourse strengthens ideological prejudice (van Dijk, 2010). According to this model, speakers and writers create a positive image of their groups by minimizing negative aspects while simultaneously presenting unfavorable views of opposing groups by eliminating positive information.

The Iraq War received ideological treatment in U.S. political discourse and media, which built Iraq as an international security danger but presented the military action as a humanitarian intervention, according to Zheng (2015). Western news organizations repeatedly reported Iraq's supposed stockpile of WMDs, which created a pressing need for military action (Dirks 2006). The media in Iraq developed opposing narratives against the U.S. by showing how America imposed a hegemonic rule (Abdullah, 2015). The framework Van Dijk proposed supports this research's analysis since it allows investigators to explore power dynamics and ideological structures in war-related texts.

2.1.3 Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach

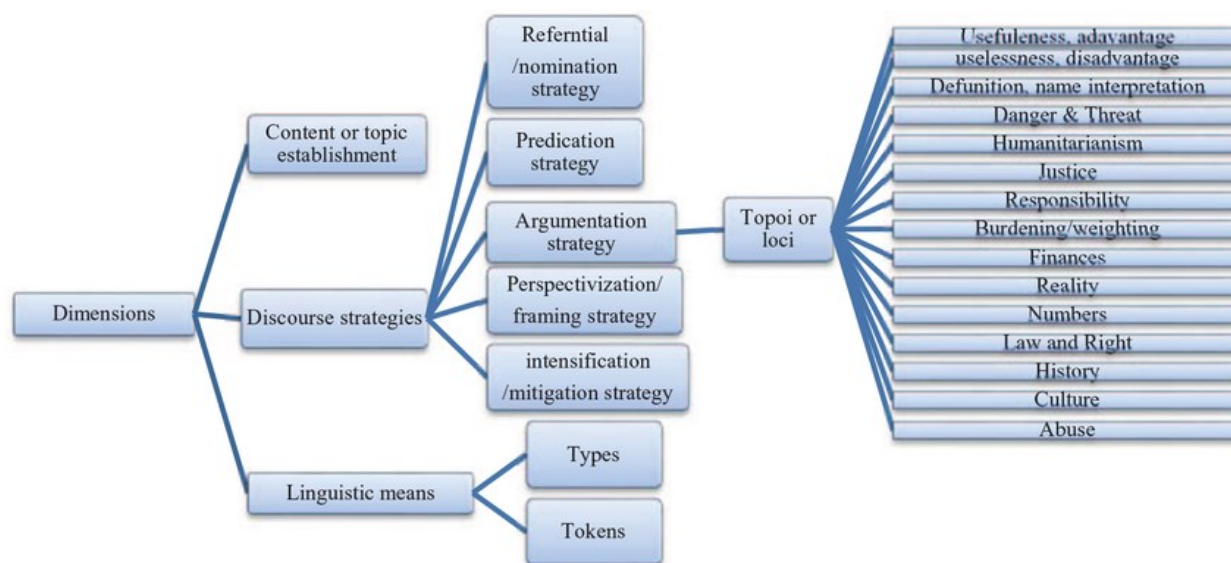


Figure 3: Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

The study benefits from Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) since it serves as a vital framework under critical discourse analysis for evaluating the Iraq War. As demonstrated in Figure 3, the methodology places discourse within existing political and historical factors to track narrative development (Rheindorf, 2021). DHA distinguishes itself from Fairclough's model since it analyzes historical transformations in discourse structures that appear in political and media rhetoric.

The United States modified its Iraq War rationale from a WMD focus to democracy propaganda after discovering no such weapons existed (Kalsi, 2017). The Western media transformed their coverage of Iraq during the conflict by presenting it as a Sunni-Shiite civil war instead of a resistance movement against occupation (Abdullah, 2015). Researchers need DHA to establish discourse pattern connections with societal and cultural transformations in their analysis; therefore, DHA is an essential research tool for this project.

2.2 Previous Research on War Discourse

2.2.1 Political Rhetoric and War Justification

Public perception of military involvement depends heavily on how political actors express themselves during discussions about intervention. Political leaders employ war-justifying methods that combine persuasive speech with metaphorical structures and moral appeals, as per Zheng (2015). Political rhetoric through these strategies establishes military legitimacy while silencing opponents and establishes clear good and evil divisions between both sides (van Dijk, 2010).

George W. Bush's post-9/11 address featured strongly as one of the defining announcements of the Iraq War because he presented the "War on Terror" as a global fight between good and evil elements (Zheng, 2015). During his speech, George W. Bush established two groups which positioned the United States to defend

democracy and Iraq to belong to the "axis of evil" (Dirks, 2006). In support of military intervention, Bush relied heavily on phrases that invoked freedom alongside justice and security to stress the moral justification of war (Zheng, 2015). Through this discourse, Saddam Hussein received a tyrant label, which justified regime change as a humanitarian necessity (van Dijk, 2010).

British Prime Minister Tony Blair declared the Iraq War to be a moral obligation by stressing both Iraqi human security and WMDs as global threats (van Dijk, 2010). Through his speeches, Blair repeatedly highlighted international responsibility using democratic and humanitarian concepts (Dirks, 2006). The absence of WMD discoveries during the war led Blair to change his public message from preventive war arguments into messages about nation-building and post-war reconstruction (Kalsi, 2017).

Saddam Hussein delivered a counter-discourse which opposed Western liberation claims by characterizing the United States and the United Kingdom as imperialist forces that enforced their will upon Iraq (Mozaheb et al., 2023). Hussein delivered speeches which emphasized Arab nationalist sentiment by portraying the war as a violation of Iraqi independence while attacking Islamic principles (Abdullah, 2015). CDA provides a crucial approach to uncovering political manipulation of discourse that creates war justifications because power structures hide within war rhetoric. When research focuses on language selection combined with framing approaches alongside ideological placements, it becomes possible to reveal how discourse creates war as mandatory instead of voluntary (Sabir, 2023).

2.2.2 Media Framing of the Iraq War

War perception among the public largely depends on media framing since news organizations function as ideological tools that develop specific war narratives in support of political agendas, according to van Dijk (2010). The Iraq War received almost unanimous support from Western media because reporters depicted it as essential to defend worldwide security and promote democratic values (Dirks, 2006). Media organizations in the U.S. and U.K. repeatedly reported about weapons of mass destruction threats before experts later proved their nonexistence (Kalsi, 2017). The war received support through the use of military terms like "preemptive strike", "liberation", and "regime change", which built a war justification by showing the United States and its allies as defenders of freedom (Al-Saedi, 2020).

How Western media covered Iraqi resistance differed substantially from how local Iraqi media portrayed it. Insurgent groups received polar opposite descriptions from the Western media because they portrayed them as "terrorists" or "radicals", yet Iraqi and Middle Eastern media called them "freedom fighters" or "resistance movements" (Abdullah, 2015). Media organizations implemented different labeling methods to create public understanding about war participants because these approaches either supported military action or promoted sympathy for insurgents.

Media sources presented different perspectives about civilian casualty numbers during the Iraq War. Western media outlets recorded a lower number of Iraqi civilian casualties by describing them as "collateral damage"

instead of war victims (Kalsi, 2017). The Iraqi media outlets presented extensive coverage of destroyed infrastructure, civilian casualties and human suffering, which strengthened the narrative of aggressive foreign occupation (Abdullah, 2015).

After the invasion, sectarian framing emerged as the main focus of media discussions in Iraq. News agencies from the United States focused on Sunni-Shiite religious conflicts to present the Iraq War as domestic civil strife instead of foreign military occupation, according to Al-Saedi (2020). Sectarian tensions in Iraq worsened due to this media discourse, which transformed the invasion conflict into a battle between religious groups (Abdullah, 2015). The analysis shows that media communication does more than transmit facts because it produces actual realities both socially and politically.

2.2.3 Translation Bias in War Reporting

Translation processes modify war narratives through ideological changes because translators use specific linguistic choices to alter public understanding (Mozaheb et al., 2023). The analysis conducted by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) demonstrates translators maintain no professional neutrality due to their ideological choices that transform meaning through textual content exclusion, lexical selection and structural rearrangements (Mhamdi, 2019).

Western media used translation to convert Arabic content into English during the Iraq War but distorted Iraqi stories through their translation practices, as Mozaheb et al. (2023) explain. Western media translated the Iraqi resistance group term "muqawama" (resistance) into "terrorism", which altered the Western public perception of Iraqi opposition from a nationalist to an extremist movement (Abdullah, 2015). The semantic manipulation reached Western audiences who viewed all Iraqi resistance as illegitimate, according to Mhamdi (2019).

Reporter translation bias appears when media professionals exclude key information about wartime events from their reports. English-language reports transformed specific Iraqi media coverage about civilian damages caused by U.S. military operations into less direct or forceful statements (Al-Saedi, 2020). The reporting of Saddam Hussein's speeches about Iraqi sovereignty involved selective quotations to depict defiance instead of genuine complaints, according to Mozaheb et al. (2023). The translation techniques used by Western media helped create their depiction of Iraq as a nation that needed international management.

World news coverage of sectarian violence depended on how media organizations translated their content. The Iraqi Arabic-language newspapers depicted the conflict as a domestic defense against foreign invasion, while English translations focused on religious community conflicts (Abdullah 2015). Iraqi domestic unrest received new reporting that shifted the cause from Western military presence to ethnic and religious elements (Al-Saedi 2020). How conflicts appear to the world becomes visible through CDA analysis of translation practices during war reporting (Sabir, 2023).

2.3 Research Gap

Existing research on political rhetoric and media framing proves insufficient because few studies examine or explain the cultural and linguistic changes that originated from the Iraq War. According to existing literature reviews by Al-Saedi (2020) and Abdullah (2015), research on Iraqi media and cultural stories remains limited. Studies examining the relationship between language, sectarian divisions, and national identity remain limited because they lack comparisons between Western and Iraqi discourse (Abdullah, 2015).

This study aims to fill these gaps by providing a comparative discourse analysis that examines:

- The research examines the transformation of war discourse within Western and Iraqi communication platforms.
- How language shaped sectarian and national identity in Iraq
- How translation influenced global perceptions of the war

This research contributes to the broader field of CDA, media studies, and political communication by addressing these issues, offering new insights into how language constructs and reinforces power in war contexts.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research utilizes critical discourse analysis (CDA) as its main analytical method in a qualitative design. The research benefits from CDA analysis since it demonstrates how language produces power dynamics alongside social ideologies and realities, according to Sabir (2023). CDA enables systematic study of political rhetoric, media narratives, and cultural transformations because discourse was central to shaping perceptions of the Iraq War (van Dijk, 2010).

A comparative discourse analysis technique helps researchers study the linguistic methods Western political leaders, Western media, and Iraqi media utilize. Through this method, researchers can study how actors presented the Iraq War, supported military operations, and altered public reception (Rheindorf, 2021). The research analyzes speeches, news reports, and translated texts to recognize patterns in discourse that have led to ideological changes and cultural transformations (Kalsi, 2017).

The thematic method organizes discourse strategies into groups that evaluate language choices, framing structures, metaphoric uses, and ideological composition patterns (Al-Saedi, 2020). The research uses historical context analysis to examine discourse within its complete political framework, social structure, and cultural background (Rheindorf, 2021).

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Political Speeches

Official statements presented through political speeches provide essential knowledge about war motivations and influence how people discuss and understand wars. The research examines decisive speeches by U.S.

President George W. Bush and U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Through rhetorical and discursive methods, these leaders developed particular war narratives that modified domestic and international public understanding (Zheng, 2015).

Table 1: Speeches used

Speaker	Date	Speech Context
George W. Bush	September 20, 2001	Post-9/11 speech defining "War on Terror"
George W. Bush	March 19, 2003	Address announcing the invasion of Iraq
Tony Blair	March 18, 2003	British Parliament speech on war justification
Saddam Hussein	April 2003	Speech condemning the U.S. invasion

3.2.2 Media Reports

The research analyzes media content from Western and Iraqi media to explore how each side shaped their coverage of the Iraq War. The research analyzes the information presented by:

- Western media: CNN, The New York Times, The Guardian
- Iraqi/Middle Eastern media: Al-Jazeera, Al-Quds Al-Arabi, Al-Sabah

A corpus of 17 articles was selected from 2003–2024, a period crucial for shaping war perceptions (Kalsi, 2017). The articles explore the pre-invasion rationale for early war progress and post-invasion outcomes.

The selection criteria included:

- Relevance to war discourse (focus on justification, resistance, occupation)
- Prominent headlines or editorial pieces
- Balanced representation from both Western and Iraqi sources

The study employs CDA to examine how media outlets framed key themes, such as democracy, security, terrorism, occupation, and sectarianism (Al-Saedi, 2020).

3.2.3 Translated Texts

The research investigates Persian-to-English translations of war narratives, as Mozaheb et al. (2023) explained. Key texts include:

- Official Arabic-to-English translations of Saddam Hussein's speeches
- War reports translated from Al-Jazeera Arabic to English

- Selected translations from Iraqi war literature

The analysis of these texts focuses on semantic changes, omissions, and ideological transformations (Mhamdi, 2019). The study analyses translation changes in Iraqi narratives because they shaped Western understanding of the war (Al-Saedi, 2020).

3.3 Analytical Approach

3.3.1 Textual Analysis

The initial stage consists of linguistic and structural analysis of political speeches, media articles, and translated texts. Key elements examined include:

- Lexical choices: Use of "liberation" vs. "occupation," "terrorists" vs. "resistance fighters" (Al-Saedi, 2020).
- Metaphors and framing: Western leaders use "good vs. evil" narratives (Zheng, 2015).
- Pronoun usage: Strategic use of "we" (inclusive) vs. "they" (exclusive) to build alliances or demonize opponents (van Dijk, 2010).

3.3.2 Discourse Structures

The second level examines ideological and narrative structures in media and political texts. This includes:

- Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model (text, discourse practice, sociocultural practice) (Sabir, 2023).
- van Dijk's Ideological Square (positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation) (van Dijk, 2010).
- Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (contextual shifts over time) (Rheindorf, 2021).

3.3.3 Comparative Analysis

A comparative discourse analysis highlighted the differences and similarities in how Western political leaders, Western media, and Iraqi media framed the Iraq War. The research analyzed political leader rhetoric by comparing Bush and Blair's speeches and Saddam Hussein's statements to understand their strategies for justifying and resisting the war (Zheng, 2015). The research compared Western media outlets CNN, The New York Times, and The Guardian against Middle Eastern media Al-Jazeera, Al-Quds Al-Arabi, and Al-Sabah to show how the war was presented as either a democratic mission or foreign occupation (Al-Saedi, 2020). The research evaluated translation bias while analyzing original Arabic war reports in English translation to quantify semantic changes regarding resistance activities, civilian casualty rates, and religious factional tensions (Mozaheb et al., 2023).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The research placed ethical principles at its core, emphasizing achieving precise, unbiased and impartial discourse measurements. The study used diverse political speeches, media reports and translations as part of balanced sampling to reduce potential ideological bias (Sabir, 2023). The research used native speaker

verification and secondary research to cross-reference Arabic texts for linguistic accuracy, thus protecting key ideological elements from being omitted or distorted (Mozaheb et al., 2023). The discourse interpretations followed CDA frameworks, which protected the analysis from subjectivity (van Dijk, 2010). The research team recognized their ethical duty to handle war discourse analysis because misinterpretations could spread false historical information. The study maintained academic integrity through moral guidelines, which produced a transparent, methodologically sound analysis of the Iraq War discourse.

4 Findings and Discussion

The research reveals essential findings from analyzing political speeches, media reports, and translated texts about the Iraq War through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The paper uncovers three main categories of findings: political discourse strategies, media representations, and cultural transformations. This part identifies how discourse created war narratives while validating military action and debating prevailing viewpoints.

4.1 Political Discourse Strategies

4.1.1 Justifications for the Iraq War in Political Rhetoric

Western leaders presented the Iraq War in their political speeches as essential for global security, democratic progress and terrorist attack prevention (Zheng, 2015). George W. Bush, together with Tony Blair, used security-based language and moral arguments, while Saddam Hussein presented his war narrative as an imperial assault on Iraqi sovereignty (van Dijk, 2010).

Bush's speeches consistently employed binary oppositions, such as "good vs. evil" and "freedom vs. tyranny", which positioned the United States as the Guardian of global stability (Zheng, 2015). In his March 19, 2003 address, Bush stated, "The people of Iraq will soon be free," reinforcing a liberation narrative (Dirks, 2006). He also used collective pronouns ("we") to create a sense of unity and shared responsibility while demonizing the enemy ("they"), particularly Saddam Hussein's regime (Kalsi, 2017).

Similarly, Blair's March 18, 2003 speech to the British Parliament emphasized international responsibility. He framed the invasion as a moral obligation, stating, "History will judge us harshly if we fail to act" (van Dijk, 2010). Blair adopted a similar rhetoric to Bush while strengthening the Western control and humanitarian justifications of the war. The failure to find the WMDs caused Blair to transition his discourse from pre-war preventive warfare to post-war nation-building strategies (Kalsi, 2017).

Saddam Hussein presented an opposing perspective, which described the conflict as a neo-colonial invasion targeting Iraq alongside the entire Arab world. Through his public statements, Saddam Hussein condemned the invasion as a violation of independence while targeting Western double standards (Mozaheb et al., 2023). Through religious appeals, Hussein sought to unite Muslims against the American-led coalition forces (Abdullah, 2015). The counter-narrative spread across the Arab world because it showed Iraq was battling foreign control instead of being a global danger.

4.1.2 Rhetorical Strategies in Political Discourse

Political leaders from Western nations and Iraq employed specific rhetorical techniques throughout their speeches to influence public understanding of the Iraq War. The justification for military action received support through metaphorical framing of messages, pronoun usage and repetitive statements incorporating emotional elements (Zheng, 2015).

The Iraq War story underwent defining changes through widespread metaphorical framing, which became a primary rhetorical tool. President George W. Bush often described Iraq as a sick patient requiring military intervention for purification through medical metaphors (Dirks, 2006). The United States adopted a global medical role through this metaphorical approach to protect international security (van Dijk, 2010). Through his "swamp-draining" metaphor, Bush linked military action to terrorism elimination, thus demonstrating that violence would lead to enduring stability (Zheng, 2015).

Saddam Hussein employed martyrdom and resistance metaphors during his discourse to portray the Iraq War as an imperialistic Western conflict (Mozaheb et al., 2023). According to Abdullah (2015), Saddam Hussein explained the conflict as a battle for Arab soul sovereignty, and he called Iraqi fighters "martyrs defending their homeland." The metaphors aimed to create domestic and regional support against U.S. forces using nationalist sentiment and Islamic solidarity. Hussein presented Iraqis as targets of aggression to challenge Western propaganda that depicted Iraq as a worldwide danger (Al-Saedi, 2020).

The speakers Bush and Blair used pronouns as a rhetorical tool throughout their discourse. Through the use of inclusive pronouns ("we" and "us"), both leaders created a bond among citizens to share national responsibility and team spirit. During his speech, Bush declared, "We will not wait for the danger to come to us; we will take the fight to them", while presenting the war as an American national objective (Kalsi, 2017). The enemy received demonization through the use of exclusive pronouns ("they," "them") to build an opposing "us vs. them" distinction (van Dijk, 2010). Blair declared in his March 18, 2003 speech, "They have defied international law for too long. The time for action is now." Through this language, the speaker established two opposing moral categories, establishing military intervention as necessary for combating lawlessness (Dirks, 2006).

The repetition of key phrases proved to be Bush's dominant rhetorical technique throughout his addresses. The phrases "terrorist threat", "axis of evil", and "fight for freedom" repeatedly appeared in his speeches to establish a sense of urgency and moral sense (Zheng, 2015). Through repetition, Bush strengthened essential points in his speeches so that specific ideas would stay prominent in public thought (Kalsi, 2017). The repeated WMD references by Blair created a lasting perception of war legitimacy, which persisted even after intelligence showed their absence (van Dijk, 2010).

At the final stage, political rhetoric depends on emotional triggers to create fear alongside nationalistic pride and responsibility responsibilities. Bush used the September 11 attacks as a foundation to support his preemptive war strategy by stating that Iraq presented comparable dangers (Dirks, 2006). Through his use of

national trauma, Bush established a connection between the Iraq War and America's anti-terrorism efforts, which made military action seem both essential and unpreventable (Zheng, 2015). The British Prime Minister Blair relied on humanitarian appeals to demonstrate Iraqi citizens' suffering at the hands of Saddam Hussein as a reason to change the Iraqi government (Kalsi, 2017).

4.2 Media Representations of the Iraq War

4.2.1 Western Media Framing

The Iraq War received media coverage as a proper intervention emphasizing security requirements, democratic objectives, and support (Kalsi, 2017). In partnership with CNN, the New York Times and The Guardian portrayed the war as essential to remove Saddam Hussein while achieving regional stability (Dirks, 2006).

The war became less harsh through the application of euphemistic terminology. Unofficial military terms like "precision airstrikes" took the place of "bombing" to describe warfare as the military reduced the impact of "collateral damage" while referring to "civilian casualties" (Al-Saedi, 2020). Western media relied on official statements from government authorities to report news by repeating official statements while avoiding alternative perspectives and anti-war opinions (Kalsi, 2017).

Media outlets presented Iraqi civilian casualties in a diminished manner through their emphasis on military accomplishments and political development work (Abdullah, 2015). The war received favorable public reception through strategic framing, although its long-term effects remained invisible (Sabir, 2023).

4.2.2 Iraqi and Middle Eastern Media Counter-Narratives

The Iraq War obtained different coverage between Western media and Iraqi and Middle Eastern outlets because Western media portrayed it as a democratic security mission. In contrast, Iraqi and Middle Eastern outlets depicted it as an imperialistic occupation that resulted in many civilian casualties (Abdullah, 2015). News outlets Al-Jazeera Al-Quds Al-Arabi and Al-Sabah used resistance-based discourse to present their content by focusing on civilian losses, infrastructure damage, and foreign military presence (Al-Saedi 2020).

Iraqi media chose to portray the conflict as an occupying war rather than a liberating mission through "occupation" and "imperial aggression" terminology (Mozaheb et al., 2023). Iraqi media challenged American public opinion by referring to resistance fighters as freedom fighters and martyrs rather than terrorists (Abdullah, 2015).

Through the display of war casualty images, the Iraqi media generated public resistance against American intervention while emphasizing showing human suffering (Mozaheb et al., 2023). Iraqi and Middle Eastern media outlets developed their war narrative through which they portrayed Iraqis as targets of aggression rather than recipients of liberation (Sabir, 2023).

4.2.3 Sectarian Framing and the Shift in Media Narratives

Media organizations in Western nations modified their Iraq War news reporting from focusing on democracy to portraying Iraq as an internally divided nation undergoing sectarian conflict. CNN and The New York Times modified their news coverage to emphasize Sunni-Shiite conflicts as internal Iraqi matters rather than direct results of foreign intervention, as Kalsi (2017) explains. The transformation of media discourse shifted blame for ongoing Iraqi violence from coalition forces so it would become clear that religious and ethnic divisions were the core issues facing Iraq (Dirks, 2006).

News media in Iraq and the Middle East rejected sectarian explanations but focused on foreign occupation as the leading cause of instability (Abdullah, 2015). During the time of escalating violence, several Iraqi news outlets with political factional ties began using Western-style sectarian reporting methods (Al-Saedi, 2020). Media discourse changes led to increased domestic strife in Iraq before its institutions established sectarian-based foundations to rule, showing the role news coverage played in maintaining Iraq's prolonged division (Mozaheb et al., 2023). The study demonstrates how sect-based party alignment strategically transformed war-related discussions and influenced news media coverage and political choices (Sabir, 2023).

4.3 Cultural Transformations in War Discourse

The Iraq War brought extensive political and security changes to the country while simultaneously triggering fundamental cultural and linguistic changes in Iraqi discourse patterns. Research shows that the conflict transformed the Iraqi national identity and changed how society discussed democratic governance alongside it, leading to prolonged sectarian trends inside the Iraqi social structure (Abdullah 2015).

The cultural transformation included the decline of Iraqi nationalism, which allowed sectarian identity to become the leading discourse in the country. The Ba'athist ideology established by Saddam Hussein functioned to create national unity because it suppressed inter-sectarian division until the outbreak of war (Al-Saedi, 2020). Western political discourse, along with media reports, started to focus more heavily on Shiites versus Sunnis during the U.S. invasion, which strengthened religious and ethnic ties instead of Iraqi national identity (Kalsi, 2017). Different Iraqi media factions, including Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish groups, started using sectarian language to establish their political authority (Mozaheb et al., 2023).

Western democratic principles became integral components of Iraqi political dialogue due to cultural changes. The Western media, alongside policymakers, portrayed the Iraq war as an opportunity to build democracy and human rights, while these terms later appeared in post-war Iraqi leadership discourse (Dirks, 2006). The Iraqi population rejected these foreign-imposed democratic concepts because they did not accept the imposition of Western political systems (Al-Saedi, 2020). Some Iraqi political leaders adopted democratic language to receive Western backing, yet their administration did not establish democratic principles in governance, according to Abdullah (2015).

Public dialogue and media communication displayed noticeable language shifts as an additional effect of these changes. The expression of "resistance" together with "martyrdom" and "occupation" grew throughout Iraqi discourse while external views of the conflict used Western language such as "counterinsurgency" and "liberation" (Mozaheb et al., 2023). Translating from Arabic to English resulted in omitting politically sensitive terms, subtly changing the original ideological stance (Mhamdi, 2019).

These cultural changes show how conflicts permanently affect national identity expressions and public dialogue alongside linguistic developments because ideology tightly binds to narrative languages (Sabir 2023).

5 Conclusion

The research demonstrates how discourse establishes public comprehension of the Iraq War through linguistic expressions and political discourse that formed domestic and international viewpoints. Western leaders, through political speeches and media reports, depicted the war as necessary for security and humanitarian purposes, while Iraqi and Middle Eastern media outlets portrayed it as an imperialistic occupation (Zheng, 2015; Al-Saedi, 2020). The public response to war rhetoric emerged at the start of conflict and produced cultural transformations that merged Iraqi national identity with political and religious relationships (Abdullah 2015; Mozaheb et al. 2023).

The key finding from the research demonstrated politicians' deliberate use of rhetorical instruments during their political communication. George W. Bush and Tony Blair developed their war arguments using moral appeals to frame metaphors between good and evil and democracy and tyranny (Zheng, 2015). According to Dirks (2006), Western leaders relied on rhetorical tools to show that military intervention was essential for moral purposes. Saddam Hussein established his counter-discourse to present the war as an external invasion that he used to unite Arabs against foreign occupation (Abdullah, 2015). Different interpretations emerged between Western and Middle Eastern audiences about liberation versus occupation in the war because language operates as a weapon during global conflicts (Sabir, 2023).

The research findings contrasted Western and Iraqi media coverage regarding the war because these opposing views shaped the understandings of the global and domestic audiences. The Guardian, CNN and The New York Times obtained information from government sources to support the war and minimize civilian casualties (Kalsi, 2017). Military operations received less hostile reception because war terminology used euphemisms to replace civilian casualty terms with "collateral damage" to build public support for the war (Al-Saedi 2020). The media in Iraq and the Middle East described the conflict as an occupation and highlighted war atrocities, according to Abdullah (2015). The Western media shifted its focus from promoting democracy to reporting ethnic-religious conflicts, which led to the breakdown of Iraqi national identity (Mozaheb et al., 2023).

The Iraq War received different international interpretations because of translation errors throughout the military conflict. The English translation of Arabic political speeches and media reports changed the ideological meaning and caused Westerners to misunderstand Iraqi resistance (Mhamdi, 2019). During Arabic-to-English

translation processes, the word "muqawama" was translated as "terrorism", which generated unfavorable stereotypes about Iraqi fighters (Mozaheb et al., 2023). The translation methods employed political objectives and ideological goals to demonstrate how language allows manipulation between different cultures and languages (Al-Saedi, 2020).

War-induced cultural and linguistic changes established permanent effects that reshaped the Iraqi social structure. Before the invasion, Iraqi nationalism showed a secular orientation, yet the post-war period brought forth deep sectarian divisions that elevated Sunni-Shiite-Kurdish identity politics (Kalsi, 2017). The Iraqi population refused to accept Western-introduced democratic principles because they saw these concepts as artificial foreign impositions rather than natural political progress (Abdullah 2015). Through war discourse, active forces change both political structures and cultural norms (Sabir, 2023).

5.1 Implications for Discourse Studies, Media, and Politics

The analysis extends comprehension of military discourse, news presentation methods, and discourse practice analysis. Critical media literacy teaches audiences to identify political leaders' war justifications through their narrative constructions because this knowledge enables audiences to recognize propaganda ideological bias and euphemisms (van Dijk, 2010). Knowledge of translation methods used in international conflict news reporting demands increased academic attention due to their direct effects on public information reception and national foreign policy outcomes (Mhamdi, 2019).

5.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The research extensively studied the Iraq War discourse but faced certain boundaries in its scope. The research analyzed media content from English and Arabic sources, yet it did not provide full regional perspectives from non-Arab communities residing in Iraq (Al-Saedi, 2020). Future research should analyze social media communication and district-level language dynamics among Iraqis regarding wartime terminology in addition to the current focus on political statements and journalistic accounts (Mozaheb et al., 2023).

The application of Artificial Intelligence for discourse analysis demands future research because computer methods can extract vital connections from large datasets of political speeches and media news reports (Kalsi 2017). The analysis of the transformation of war discourse throughout time, alongside its impact on Iraqi national reconstruction, will be revealed through extended research (Abdullah, 2015).

Research demonstrates that language serves more than communication because it functions as a power system that establishes how wars gain comprehension and acquire authorization and opposition. The military intervention gained legitimacy through media content analysis and enemy narratives formed alongside changes in Iraqi national identity through translation processes. The analysis of war discourse is essential for academics, policymakers, and media professionals because conflicts continue to employ political discourse and worldwide media platforms for mediation (Sabir, 2023).

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