

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Protesters in the Debates of Al Jazeera Channel of the Yemeni Revolution

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Abstract : Critical discourse analysis investigates how discourse is used to abuse power relationships. Political debates constitute discourses which mirror aspects of ideologies. The Arab world has been one of the most unsettled zones in the world and has dominated global politics due to the Arab revolutions which started in 2010. This study aimed at uncovering the ideological intentions in the formulation and circulation of hegemonic political ideology in the TV political debates of the 2011 to 2012 Yemen revolution, how ideology was used as a tool of hegemony. The study specifically examined the ideologies associated with the use of protesters as a social actor. Data of the study consisted of four debates (17350 words) from four live debate programs: The Opposite Direction, In Depth, Behind the News and the Revolution Talk that were staged at Al Jazeera TV channel between 2011 and 2012. Data was readily transcribed by Al Jazeera online. Al Jazeera was selected for the study because it is the most popular TV network in the Arab world and has a strong presence, especially during the Arab revolutions. Al Jazeera has also been accused of inciting protests across the Arab region. Two debate sites were identified in the data: government and anti-government. The government side represented the president Ali Abdullah Saleh and his regime while the anti-government side represented the gathering squares who demanded the president to 'step down'. The study analysed verbal discourse aspects of the debates using critical discourse analysis: aspects from the Social Actor Network model of van Leeuwen. This framework provides a step-by-step analysis model, and analyses discourse from specific grammatical processes into broader semantic issues. It also provides representative findings since it considers discourse as representative and reconstructed in social practice. Study findings indicated that Al Jazeera and the anti-government had similarities in terms of the ideological intentions related to the protesters. Al Jazeera victimized and incited the protesters which were similar to the anti-government. Al Jazeera used assimilation, nominalization, and active role allocation as the linguistic aspects in order to reach its ideological intentions related to the protesters. Government speakers did not share the same ideological intentions with Al Jazeera. Study findings indicated that Al Jazeera had excluded the government from its debates causing a violation to its slogan, the opinion, and the other opinion. This study implies the powerful role of discourse in shaping ideological media intentions and influencing the media audience.

Keywords : Al Jazeera network, critical discourse analysis, ideology, Yemeni revolution

Conference Title : ICGHOST 2016 : International Conference on Ghost Conference

Conference Location : ghost city, Other

Conference Dates : December 12-13, 2020