



Critical Discourse Analysis of The Alignment of Anonymity in political interviews: The Agent Exclusion by Nominalization

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Article Information

Article History:

Received September 12, 2024

Revised November 2, 2024

Accepted December 8, 2024

Available Online March 1, 2025

Keywords:

Exclusion;
Nominalization;
political discourse

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Abstract

This study investigates the alignment of anonymity of the third party which is being talked about, for ideological purposes, by both the interviewer and the interviewee in British political interviews. After doing a deep review of the studies of the exclusion function of nominalization (turning verbs and adjectives into nouns) and interviews, this study attempts to fill a gap in the literature. The study employs an eclectic model that integrates van Dijk's cognitive approach with his ideological nominalization criteria. The results show that there is a linguistic systematic method of collaboration used by both the IRs and IEs to keep specific agents out of the interviews, mentioning their activities only, and this can be noticed by their employing nominalization in their speech.

DOI: [10.33899/radab.2024.153530.2229](https://doi.org/10.33899/radab.2024.153530.2229), ©Authors, 2023, College of Arts, University of Mosul.

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تحليل خطاب نقدي عن محاذاة عدم الكشف عن الهوية في المقابلات السياسية: استبعاد الفاعل عن طريق التأسيس

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المستخلص:

تحقق هذه الدراسة في المحاذاة الناجمة عن اغراض ايولوجية في عدم كشف هوية الطرف الثالث الذي يتم التكلم عنه من قبل المحاور والمُحاور في المقابلات السياسية البريطانية. تأتي هذه الدراسة بعد مراجعة عميقة للدراسات التي تخص وظيفة الاستبعاد عن طريق التأسيس (تحويل الفعل أو الصفة إلى أسم) والدراسات التي جرت على المقابلات التلفزيونية، لملء فراغ في هذا الجانب العلمي. تتبنى الدراسة نهجاً انتقائياً يجمع بين عمليتين من أعمال فان دايك وهما النهج الإدراكي للتحليل النقدي للخطاب ومعايير المحددة للتأسيس الأيدولوجي. تنص نتائج الدراسة على أنه هناك أسلوب تعاون لغوي نظامي مستخدم من قبل المحاورين وضيوفهم لإبقاء هويات جماعات معينة خارج المقابلة مع الإشارة لنشاطاتهم فقط وهذا يمكن ملاحظته بتوظيفهم لعملية التأسيس في خطابهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستبعاد ، التأسيس ، الخطاب السياسي

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Introduction

Political interviews are frequently intense events in which every statement made could have a significant impact. Interviewers and interviewees frequently use a variety of linguistic techniques to minimize or exclude the influence of agents in order to maintain the focus on the politician's opinions and policies. The use of nominalization is one such tactic. The process of turning verbs or adjectives into nouns is known as nominalization. Interviewers are able to change the focus from the agents' actions to the abstract concepts themselves by doing this. In political interviews, where agents may be perceived as having undue influence over a politician's choices, this can be especially useful. Political interviews can be beneficial for public officials to communicate their plans and strategies directly to the public, but they can also be used to manipulate the interview format. Politicians can use clear, concise language and avoid excessive NOMINALIZATION to complicate their positions. This can make it difficult for viewers to understand the details of their plans or hold them accountable for any possible outcomes. Therefore, it's essential to balance the benefits and drawbacks of political interviews. In CDA, the concept of agent exclusion is central to understanding. Discourse analysts can use it to investigate how the agents of actions are hidden in a text. There are specific reasons for this obfuscation that have to do with the political setting of the speech.

Problem statement

In political interviews, the use of exclusionary language has several purposes: it deflects criticism and potential repercussions by not specifically naming certain actors in specific situations; it exposes opposing groups as threats and prevents them from receiving benefits; and it reverses the direction of blame in relation to the context by absolving some groups of accountability for issues. Even though they can guide the conversation without being exclusive, the IRs may still use exclusion. Sometimes, this usage is done for ideological reasons in accordance with the IEs.

Aims:

This study aims:

1. To look into how public opinion is manipulated and influenced through nominalization in political interviews.
2. To examine the ways in which nominalization can be used to obscure agency, present issues in a specific way, and foster a feeling of disassociation from problems.
3. To investigate how well nominalization works as a political manipulation tactic and how it affects public opinion.

Research Questions:

1. In political interviews, under what circumstances does nominalization occur?
2. Why do the interviewer and interviewee exclude the same agents in political interviews?

Hypotheses:

1. In political interviews, nominalization is commonly employed to hide the agency of those in charge of unpopular policies.

2. By framing issues in a way that is more or less negative for the politician or political party, nominalization can be used to influence public opinion.

Literature Review

Interview is defined by Clayman and Heritage (2002, p. 13), the news interview is, first and foremost, a course of interaction to which the participants contribute on a turn-by-turn basis, for the most part by asking and answering questions. As a consequence, they restrict it to scenarios in which there is only interaction between the IR and the IE and no active involvement from indirect addressees. Politicians use a variety of platforms to voice their opinions, and this fact alone justifies the significance of this investigation. One such platform is political interviews. According to Beattie (1982, p. 7), political interview is an important technique of political communication in the era of television, so politicians' conversational abilities are scrutinized. Bull (2008, p. 239) in his study of political discourse shows that politicians are equivocators, people who never give a straight answer to a straight question. In doing so, the politicians' discourse becomes essential data for CDA. According to Fowler et al. (1979, p. 10), language use and social behavior are related because language users' linguistic behavior is influenced by social structure, which in turn affects cognitive behavior. Fairclough (1985, p. 7) points out the main focus of CDA and its aims as well as the differences with other approaches to discourse analysis. In Fairclough's perspective, every social institution has what he calls —ideological-discursive Formations (henceforth IDF) that are related to the members of this institution, and usually one of these formations is the dominant one. Teun A. van Dijk is a linguist who has contributed significantly to the development of CDA, along with Fairclough and Fowler. His contributions (1980, 1984, 1987, 1997, 2017) have, to a great extent, formed the field. Concerning the studies of nominalization within CDA, there are many studies which investigate this grammatical structure in different fields. Behnam and Rezaeian (2014) compared print media writers in the UK and Europe using discourse tools, finding that European media portrays the crisis more optimistically, while UK media exaggerates it. Khalifa (2016) used the SFL theory and CDA approach to analyze the linguistic and logical structure of UN resolutions regarding the Syrian civil war, referencing Fairclough (2008). Mohammadi and Javadi (2017) study examines the ideological and discourse structures of Donald Trump's 2016 acceptance speech, using the Fairclough (1995) model to reveal his use of power and covert tactics through language use during the campaign. Alhusseini (2020) investigates how the media covered the recent wave of attacks in Sri Lanka and New Zealand in 2019, using a critical qualitative data analysis based on Fairclough's linguistic model and Van Dijk's ideological square model. Alkhafaji (2022) analyzes George W. Bush's political speeches during the 2003 Iraq War using Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics. The study focuses on Bush's use of linguistic strategies, including NOMINALIZATION, to his advantage and against the Iraqi people and Saddam Hussein. The analysis reveals that Bush used rhetorical strategies to protect his nation's hegemony and superiority, highlighting his use of linguistic strategies. Walaa (2023) explores the portrayal of Muslims in Hollywood films by Republicans and RightWing using linguistic elements, using the Fairclough (1995) model to analyze the audience's perception of Muslims.

Model

This study employs an eclectic analytical model combining Van Dijk's schema (1984) and his ideological standards of ideological nominalizations (2008a). Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks, emphasize the importance of nominalized constructions in conveying essential information about a

politician's viewpoint and underlying ideological positions in discourse. Van Dijk (2008b, p. 141) defines NOMINALIZATION as a tool for scholars to criticize powerful language users, aiming to extract specific details in specific contexts, such as hiding agency in political discourse, and undermining people's right to be fully informed. Furthermore, Van Dijk (2008a) asserts that the context in which specific syntactic structures like nominalization are used by the politician influences their choice from a cognitive standpoint. This means that NOMINALIZATION is not created during the speech process; rather, it is selected because it is the quickest and easiest way to explain a certain process in a particular context. This selection is largely automated. Van Dijk (2008a) elaborates on the significance of non-negative judgment (NOMINALIZATION) in CDA and offers a set of guidelines for identifying when NOMINALIZATION is being used for ideological reasons. He outlines several "preference points" of nominalization and suggests that data that can be demonstrated to use nominalization only in accordance with these neutral functions may not necessarily carry ideological weight. Van Dijk emphasizes that the first step is to make sure the nominalization under investigation doesn't meet any of these preference points. It is always or even mostly preferred to use nominalizations if:

- 1- Generally speaking, nominalization is the preferred or more widely used description of an action. Such as *elections, revolution*.
- 2 - When the language user is unaware of the identity of the agent like: *car theft, pollution*.
- 3 - When recognizing agency is unnecessary given the situation such as: *the weather forecast*.
- 4 - The agent has already been identified in the (con)text, or as part of the implications or implicatures of the text like: *demonstrators . . . the demonstration*.
- 5 - Generic knowledge about the action can be used to deduce the agent as in: *elections: voters*.
- 6 - For a short time, the Language user (henceforth LU) prefers to highlight acts or victims rather than agents as in: *the assassination of the president*.
- 7 - The LU seeks to minimize or conceal the ingroup agents' personally responsible negative agency as in: *discrimination against immigrants is increasing*.

Unquestionably, nominalization is not exclusively ideological. The ideological function of nominalization is activated in certain texts and contexts, therefore, Van Dijk (2008a) emphasizes on the necessity of studying nominalization in relation to co-text and context. In doing so, the researcher avoids what he calls "over-interpretations".

Data Analysis

Anonymity alignment is a recurrent pattern in the data that demonstrates the IRs and IEs' methodical approach to working together. This cooperation is demonstrated by the mutual decision to exclude certain agents from the interview's content. Notably, as the sample from datum 3 indicates, this exclusion includes the related queries and responses regarding the excluded agent's behaviors.

IR: *You were savagely attacked as leader. A lot of the attacks were against you personally. Were you prepared when you entered this job for that level of personal hostility, aimed at you? It's an irony that, in fact, a lot of the attacks were personal. Were you a tough enough leader? Did you have enough teeth as a leader? Did you tolerate attacks?*

IE: *Three hundred thousand people voted for me to remain as party leader, despite all the attacks of that year - well it was less than a year since I'd been first elected. And I was told in terms that "no stone would be left unturned" in sorting out who had actually made these foul allegations against me.*

IR: Do you feel though, that you, again in retrospect, these very serious and strongly put allegations were made against you. You might have dealt with the allegations?

The presented data suggests two-side patterns consisting of an agreement between the IR and IE concerning the exclusion of a third party. The data lacks any questions or references, directly or indirectly, about their identities, neither by the IR nor by the IE. The focus on the actions and the outcomes of these actions here becomes a shared interest by both sides. Depending on standards of groupness-making developed by Edwards (2009, p. 114), they constitute a temporally group of “us” with different motivations of joining this group. The third party in such situation becomes an opposite group that can be labeled as “them”. Strikingly, “us” is not merely group with shared interests, but also with strong means of solidarity which is indicated by the lack of questions and references to the third-party identities, especially within the agnation of nominalizations by the IE. The IR enhances his existence in the group by repeatedly excluding the agents as an act of rituals which, in turn, paves the way to the IE for exploring their negative actions. Here, the use of exclusionary language serves multiple functions. It exposes opposing groups as threats and keeps them from benefiting; it deflects criticism and potential consequences by not specifically naming certain actors in particular situations; and it reverses the direction of blame in relation to the context by absolving some groups of accountability for issues. The IRs may use exclusion even though they can steer the conversation without doing so. According to the IEs, this usage is occasionally carried out for ideological purposes. Careful wording is required due to the interaction of the IRs in the political environments and institutional restraints. These are the reasons behind the use of nominalizations, as the following samples illustrate:

1- Now you have also this week had to deal with allegations about your own behaviour in the past.

2- I want to ask you, though, about migration as well, you were quoted in the New York Times in August as saying "immigration is arguably this administration's weakest issue." What did you mean?

3- Well, Roe had viability, the presumption being that was roughly around 24 weeks. That is moving closer and closer to conception. So you're saying even though you had this win in Michigan, it's not a closed matter, it's a continued fight?

There are numerous reasons why agency is excluded from (allegations, migration, and the assumption). First and foremost, it results from the IRs' careful crafting of their impartial persona in front of the public. Owing to the delicate nature of this situation, agent anonymity is given priority in IE discourse. The IRs attempt to maintain their neutrality by employing nominalizations. In actuality, self-isolation techniques are common in journalism; a study by Tuchman (1972, p. 198) demonstrates this. These procedures shield journalists from the risks associated with their jobs, including criticism. Similarly, Hughes (1964, p. 237) notes that actions done for this reason could be considered "rituals," which he defines as any actions meant to avert possible criticism. Another sample make this clear:

IE: But would you advise, for example, the attackers to avoid attacking infrastructure to provide water and electricity as they have done?

IR: I don't think they're under an obligation to be providing water and these utilities while those hostages are being held. Hamas should return those hostages before any discussions are had, and it's a disgrace what they're doing.

In the 2023 interview about the Gaza War, Ron DeSantis uses a narrative technique that emphasizes the idea of duty by presenting Israel's military campaign in Gaza as a legitimate reaction to persistent threats. By presenting Israel as a country forced to act in defense of its safety and sovereignty rather than just as an aggressor, this rhetorical device helps to create a more comprehensive picture. DeSantis skillfully synchronizes the audience's feelings with Israel's right to self-defense by bringing up the concept of an obligation, which normalizes military action in the public's perception. The intentional omission of particular agents accountable for the conflict is among the most remarkable features of DeSantis's argument. Rather than assigning blame to specific actors, such as political organizations, or militant groups. Because the conflict is framed through the lens of obligation, the audience is forced to generalize, possibly projecting their moral and just beliefs onto the circumstance. DeSantis implies that any criticism of Israel's actions would amount to undermining a justifiable cause by framing them as a necessary obligation. This tactic paints dissent as both misguided and a betrayal of the moral obligation to stand by an ally who is in danger. Furthermore, this strategy contributes to larger themes in American politics, where backing Israel is frequently presented as a moral requirement. To sum up, DeSantis's interview demonstrates a strategic use of language and narrative structure to present the Gaza War as one in which Israel's actions are both required and justified. He influences public opinion in a way that encourages a broad support of Israel's military strategy by using the idea of obligation and absolving particular agents of responsibility. This analysis emphasizes how rhetoric can shape public opinion and political discourse, especially in situations involving difficult moral and ethical decisions.

Conclusion

IRs and IEs are adept at swaying public opinion through language. The information demonstrates the range of ways in which nominalization is employed as a tool for manipulation and influence. It first provides them with a means of disguising agency. Eliminating an actor from a statement may absolve them of moral responsibility for unpopular policies and diffuse accountability. Second, nominalization is used to portray a problem in a particular light. A specific idea gains credibility and significance when it is emphasized as a noun, which can affect public opinion. Lastly, a sense of detachment from the issue could result from nominalization. Because they are less concrete than verbs, abstract nouns may appear to the audience to be less immediate or effective

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