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Marginalization and Naturalization in Western Press Discourse on Artificial IntelligenceA Critical Study

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التهميش والتطبيع في خطاب الصحافة الغربية حول الذكاء الاصطناعي: دراسة نقدية

المدرس الدكتور: عمر علي والي عطاطفه

قسم اللغة الإنكليزية كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية جامعة واسط

Abstract

This research aims to reveal the orientation of news discourse on recent AI advancements. It raises the question of whether there has been bias towards marginalizing labor loss and naturalizing AI's takeover. To conduct its analysis, the research relies on van Dijk's (2015) Socio-Cognitive Approach to examine the dominant discursive strategies in the selected press, namely New York Times (from the U.S.) and The Guardian (from the U.K.). The analysis combines framing, lexical choice, and voice attribution with a quantitative examination of selected discursive moves (Negative Lexicalization, Hyperbole, Compassion Move, Warning, and Norm/Value Violation). The study concludes that the selected outlets structure their narrative to prioritize techno-solutionist ideologies and suppress those that call attention to the neglected aftermath which human laborers are suffering from. This demonstrates how media discourse not only frames AI but also shapes the ideological space within which public perception evolves.**Key words:** Critical discourse analysis, marginalization, naturalization, AI, News outlets.

الملخص

هدف هذا البحث إلى الكشف عن توجّه الخطاب الإعلامي إزاء التطورات الأخيرة في مجال الذكاء الاصطناعي، ويطرح تساؤلاً حول ما إذا كان هناك انحياز نحو تهميش قضية فقدان العمالة وتطبيع هيمنة الذكاء الاصطناعي. يعتمد البحث على النظرية الاجتماعية–المعرفية لفان دايك (٢٠١٥) لاختبار الاستراتيجيات الخطابية المهيمنة في الصحيفتين المختارتين، وهما :**نيويورك تايمز (من الولايات المتحدة) والغارديان (من المملكة المتحدة). يستخدم** التحليل التأطير والاختيار المعجمي **وإسناد الصوت،** بالإضافة إلى فحص كمي لأدوات **خطابية محددة ومختارة،** وهي: التوصيف السلبي، والمبالغة، والتعاطف، والتحذير، وانتهاك القيم/المعايير. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الصحيفتين المختارتين تنظّمان خطابهما بحيث تعطي الأولوية لأيديولوجيات الحلول التقنية (التكنو–سولوشينست)، وفي المقابل تُهمّش الأصوات التي تلفت الانتباه إلى العواقب المُهمَلة التي يعاني منها العمّال. ولذا يتبين أنّ الخطاب الإعلامي لا يكتفي بتأطير الذكاء الاصطناعي، بل يسهم أيضاً في تشكيل الفضاء الأيديولوجي الذي يتطوّر داخله الوعي العام.**الكلمات المفتاحية** :التحليل النقدي للخطاب، التهميش، التطبيع، الذكاء الاصطناعي، وسائل الإعلام.

1. Introduction In an era where technological innovation is rapidly reshaping industries, media coverage plays a crucial role in shaping public perception, influencing policymaking, and framing the ethical dilemmas surrounding automation. The discursive practices embedded in news reporting do not merely describe reality but also construct it, often reinforcing ideologies, legitimizing particular perspectives, and marginalizing others. Hence, the recent advancement in Artificial Intelligence has raised questions as to whether ethical regulations will be adhered to, especially when it comes to job loss and layoffs. One such factor that can support or defy such question on morality is news discourse.Given this context, this paper uses the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate how renowned press- in the United States and the United Kingdom- build and distribute their narrative on AI, loss of labor and turning to an automated lifestyle. The question that this paper poses is:

How do leading news outlets in the United States and the United Kingdom construct and frame narratives around Artificial Intelligence, labor loss, and automation through discourse?

From this question the following sub-questions arise:

1. What lexical and syntactic choices do the selected news outlets employ to portray AI as either a threat or an opportunity for the labor market?
2. What underlying ideologies (e.g., neoliberalism, techno-optimism, skepticism) are reinforced or challenged through media discourse?

To answer these questions, the research utilizes three levels of qualitative analysis, i.e., framing analysis (which analyzes the headlines of the selected articles), a lexical analysis which analyzes the leads, and voicing attribution. Quantitatively, Van Dijk's (1995) selected discursive strategies (*Negative Lexicalization, Hyperbole, Compassion Move, Warning and Norm and Value Violation*) are investigated.

2. CDA Although the name suggests some relevance to Discourse Analysis, CDA differs in terms of its means and aims. For it is a 'constitutive problem-oriented, interdisciplinary' method that, via linguistic analysis, investigate the complicated social phenomena. These social phenomena can only be scrutinized by multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approaches such as CDA (Wodak and Meyer, 2008, p. 2).Fairclough (1995) aligns CDA along a continuum of interests with mild significance, such as the relation between language and society to major political power relations. Therefore, its goal is to make clear the vague relations of 'causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes' as mediated by associations of power and the struggles it consequents (Fairclough, 1995, p. 134-5). Following in his footsteps, Wodak (1995: 204) deems CDA as an analytical tool that targets the matters like power, control, discrimination, and dominance. She also adds that this same focus on what happens between language and the society wherein it is used is the essence of its importance (1997). Specifically, van Dijk (1998) seeks- through CDA- to reveal the mechanisms of the elite groups that enable them to exploit and take advantage of the public. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), there are some principles that CDA scholars should bear in mind throughout their analysis, as follows:

1.CDA focuses on societal problems.

2.Discourse analysis investigates issues under consideration.

3.Ideological implications are embedded in discourse.

4.Discourse is one type of social behavior.

5.Discourse is connected to history.

6.Discourse organizes communities and opinions.

7.Relations of power relate to discourse.

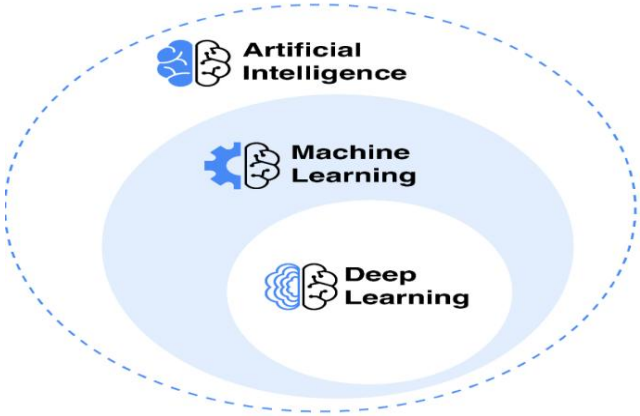
In conclusion, two main elements are found in CDA, and these are the mechanisms of ideology and power in society, coupled with the role of language in revealing, contributing to and maintaining those mechanisms (Breeze, 2011). Two of the tenets on which this field is designed are *critique* and *ideology*. To Fairclough (2001), CDA is critical because it critiques the relation between discourse and society through investigating the former. Whereas ideology is not merely a system of ideas, but specified frameworks of the public cognitive processes that relate to social structures (van Dijk, 1995)

3. Media Discourse and Ideology According to van Dijk (1988), news could mean anything from information about certain people or events to knowledge presented about recent events. He asserts that for this fact the term 'news' is ambiguous by itself, however, the one used for analysis when 'text' or 'discourse' (e.g., on a radio, TV or a newspaper) is at question (p. 13). Therefore, it is not ideologically-empty. For, he (1995) refers to that kind of ideological discourse as one which tries to fill the void between the discursive structure and the societal structure.Similarly, Fowler (1991) underlines the regulations that confine the production of discourse. The scope of such restrictions may include society, economy, a stance, etc.The presentation of the news reflects this fact. Hence, van Dijk's (2008, p. 139) division of the news articles' 'summary' into '*headline'* and *lead'*. The significance of such categorization stems from the fact that this particular 'schema' contains the macro-level topics of the news report. Therefore, analyzing them proves of benefit in terms of eliciting the main macroproposition of the selected news articles.

4. Artificial Intelligence

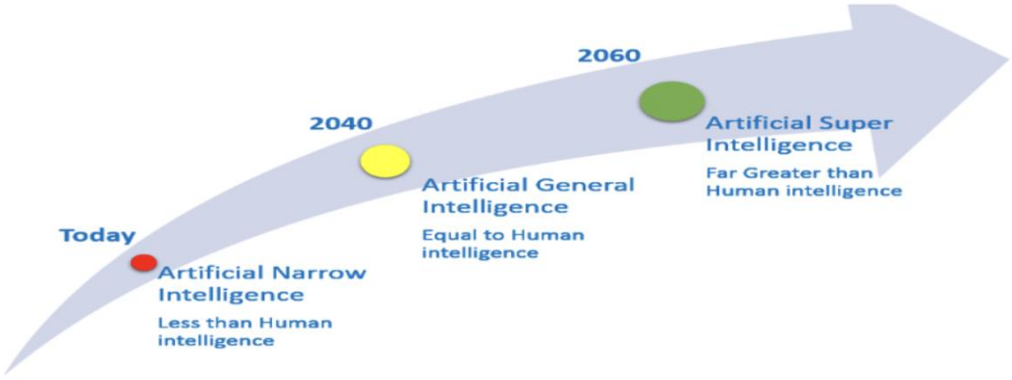
According to Britannica, artificial intelligence (AI) can be defined as "the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings". These include reasoning, solving problems, meaning-making, generalization, and learning from prior experience It is often used in tandem with terms such as machine learning and deep learning. Based on IBM (2021), "Machine learning (ML) is a branch of focused on enabling computers and machines to imitate the way that humans learn" in order to conduct autonomous tasks, developing their performance by exploring data and experience. Deep learning- as defined by Holdsworth & Scapicchio (2024)- is a subset of machine learning that uses 'neural networks" which comprise "multi-layered neural networks".

Fig. 1 *How Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Deep Learning Fit Together (NASA, 2024)*



More importantly, Saleh (2019) in tracking the advancement in this topic, states that artificial general intelligence (or AGI) will "outperform humans at nearly every cognitive task" in the near future.

Fig. 2



Future of AI (Saleh, 2019)

Hence, the significance of tackling this topic and the way it is portrayed in the press to highlight the mental framework within which it is envisioned- marginalized or naturalized.

5. Previous Studies

Abdulhameed and Al-Sieedy (2024) conducted a research, titled "*A Critical Discourse Analysis of Artificial Intelligence in Gates' Social Media Content*". Their aim was to analyze the "representation of AI in Bill Gates' social media content to uncover the hidden ideology", via investigating the use of lexical items and the role of intertextuality utilization. Following Fairclough's (2001) and Van Dijk's (1995) models, they found out that the "self" represents his AI technology and its benefits to the world. On the other hand, the representation of "other" is illustrated in the environment that surrounds AI technology". In their "*Critical Discourse Analysis of Media Discourse Related to the Impact of AI on Jobs: Corpus-Assisted*", Al Ahmed et al. published a recent study which employed Fairclough's *Three-Dimensional* model through a corpus-based analysis to examine media discourse on the relationship between AI and employment. The data collected from BBC YouTube interviews was analyzed and its findings uncovered how epistemic and deontic modality was strategically employed to construct a balanced narrative of optimism and caution regarding AI. Exposing the importance of media discourse in shaping public understanding, imposing ideologies and power dynamics, they recommended that future research extend such inquiries to other linguistic features and media platforms to uncover broader ideological implications.

6. Methodology

The dataset comprises six reports (three from NYT and three from The Guardian) published between January and December 2024, which was a significant time in the flourishing AI industry. These publications were chosen due to their global readership and reputational influence in shaping public opinion and policy discourse. The selection of the corpus is based on the first three consecutive articles that contained the keywords "AI" or "Artificial intelligence" within the said period. These are selected according to van Dijk's (2008) macroproposition- which mainly refers to the initial paragraphs in an article. That is, expanding it would extend to further paragraphs and miss the point. The following table represents the data selected for analysis.

Table 1

Corpus of analysis of NYT.

Article Title	Author(s)	Publication Date
"How Tech Giants Cut Corners to Harvest Data for A.I."	Cade Metz, Cecilia Kang, Sheera Frenkel, Stuart A. Thompson, Nico Grant	April 6, 2024 (Updated April 8, 2024)
"Meet My A.I. Friends"	Kevin Roose	May 9, 2024
"A.I. Will Transform the Global Economy — if Humans Let It"	The New York Times (Turning Points feature; Reid Hoffman, Marc Benioff, Richard Baldwin, Xiaolan Fu)	December 7, 2024

Table 2*Corpus of analysis of The Guardian.*

Article Title	Author(s)	Publication Date
"Big tech firms recklessly pursuing profits from AI, says UN head"	Larry Elliott (in Davos)	January 17, 2024
"UK signs first international treaty to implement AI safeguards"	Dan Milmo	September 5, 2024
"AI isn't about unleashing our imaginations, it's about outsourcing them. The real purpose is profit"	James Bradley	November 15, 2024

The analysis of the data is conducted qualitatively through the following three levels to pinpoint whether AI is suppressed or highlighted.**Framing**. This is done solely on the basis of headlines and leads analysis so as to uncover the general macroproposition of the entire report. This entails lexical and structural analysis- the existence or absence of any negative-connotation words and active/passive structures. **Lexical choices**. Within the content of the report, analysis seeks words associated with the main actor of this topic- AI- and the context with which they are associated, i.e., mitigating or neutralizing. From each article, the first five sentences- where "AI," "artificial intelligence" or "the technology" is the main actor- are analyzed.**Voice attribution.** Who is cited and whose perspectives are prioritized.Afterwards, a quantitative analysis is conducted using selected discursive moves within van Dijk's (2015) socio-cognitive framework to support the validity of the qualitative findings. The selected moves are Negative Lexicalization, Hyperbole, Compassion Move, Warning, and Norm/Value Violation. These were chosen because they align with the central aim of the research: to reveal how each outlet frames the marginalization or naturalization of AI.

7. Data Analysis and Discussion

7.1 Analysis of the NYT Reports

Framing analysis of the first headline ("How Tech Giants Cut Corners to Harvest Data for AI") gives the impression that AI is solely driven by capitalist corporate opportunists, breaching ethical and legal standards. The active structure supports this by putting -AI- as the main beneficiary from these breaches. More, the negative-connotations carried by the phrase "cut corners" puts the main actor in this context ("big Tech Giants") in a not so much favorable image. The headline of the second report, however, is not so much harsh ("Meet My AI Friends"), for it not only refers to AI as a "friend" (positive connotation), it is also an invitation for other to meet – or use- them. Hence, it is framed in human-like state that is involved in social life with warmth and intimacy. While this seems somewhat neutral, the third headline seems to frame AI as more powerful and an unstoppable force that humans need to cope with ("AI Will Transform the Global Economy — if Humans Let It"). The future oriented active structure combined with the inevitable optimistic lexical item "transform" while

tailing that with agency permission "if humans let", are all a message to all the people to- in fact- give it permission.

Lexical Analysis

The sentences extracted from the NYT for the purpose of this type of analysis from each article.

Article 1

1."The race to lead AI has become a desperate hunt for the digital data needed to advance the technology."

2."To obtain that data, tech companies including **OpenAI**, Google and Meta have cut corners, ignored corporate policies and debated bending the law, according to an examination by The New York Times."

3."The companies' actions illustrate how online information --- news stories, fictional works, message board posts, Wikipedia articles, computer programs, photos, podcasts and movie clips --- has increasingly become the lifeblood of the booming AI industry."

Article 2

4."What if the tech companies are all wrong, and the way **artificial intelligence** is poised to transform society is not by curing cancer, solving climate change or taking over boring office work, but just by being nice to us, listening to our problems and occasionally sending us racy photos?"

5."You see, I've spent the past month making AI friends --- that is, I've used apps to create a group of AI personas, which I can talk to whenever I want."

6."But none of the big, reputable AI labs wanted to touch AI companionship."

Article 3

7."In 2024, fear of **artificial intelligence** has turned into fear of missing out on **artificial intelligence."**

8."AI will disrupt every aspect of the global economy, including investment banking, consumer goods, heavy industry and professional freelance work."

9."AI promises a digital step change on par with past physical advancements in transport, logistics and manufacturing."

As far as the lexical analysis is concerned, NYT reports' contents go through a similar process. In the first report, the topic of AI is presented as exploitive and negative in general where it aims for 'a desperate hunt'. Not only that, it is also seen as an illegal entity that "cuts corners" in order to "bend the law". It goes on further to describe artificial intelligence as a parasite that relies entirely on the "lifeblood" of the others' works. Nevertheless, this tone seems to calm down in the second report. The topic is dealt with via a humorous perspective which seems to show AI as "friend-like" subject. Here, AI is humanized and presented as a life saver that "listens" to our problems and one which has a "reputable" moral authority. In its third report, the matter is completely different- AI is glorified. It is seen as the inescapable progress which rather than being "feared" should be taken as an opportunity. Therefore, it will "disrupt"- in a good way- the "global economy", promising a "a digital step change".

When it comes to voice attribution, NYT highlights experts and academics to give a measured analysis and tech industry leaders to project authority relating to the potential of AI. However labor and workers' voice is largely absent and their concerns are not present

7.2 Analysis of The Guardian Reports

The framing analysis of the Guardian reports reveals a more explicit resistance. In its first report, the headline "Big tech firms recklessly pursuing profits from AI, says UN head" frames the need for AI as a result to corporate greed to acquire governance of the world. Though their pursuit- as prescribed in the headline- is one which is "reckless" and is exploitive. The use of a passive agency ("says UN head") shows authority as well as external legitimacy. By quoting from the UN the author shows the readers that it is not merely their own subjective opinion, rather that of experts. The outlet supports its idea in the second report's headline, yet with caution. Here, AI is seen as a proactive subject which should not be tackled without precautionary "safeguards". The active structure adds to the factual and straightforward nature of this precaution. In the third report, The Guardian seem to be more open to frame AI as a tool of commodification that is used by "profit", hence capitalism. The contrastive structure ("isn't about […] it's about") supports this negative framework in terms of undermining any utopian discourse about artificial intelligence. Hence, the active structure asserts this as a fact rather than a skeptical idea.

Lexical Analysis

The following sentences are extracted from The Guardian for the purpose of this type of analysis from each article.

Article 1

1."Big technology companies are recklessly pursuing profits from **artificial intelligence** and urgent action is needed to mitigate the risks from the rapidly growing sector, the head of the United Nations has warned."

2."In a fierce attack on the technology multinationals, the UN secretary general, António Guterres, told the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos that every breakthrough in generative **AI** increased the threat of unintended consequences."

3."Guterres linked the risks from **AI** to that posed by the climate crisis and said the international community had no strategy to deal with either."

Article 2

4."The UK government has signed the first international treaty on **artificial intelligence** in a move that aims to prevent misuses of the technology, such as spreading misinformation or using biased data to make decisions."

5."Under the legally binding agreement, states must implement safeguards against any threats posed by **AI** to human rights, democracy and the rule of law."

6."This convention is a major step to ensuring that **these new technologies** can be harnessed without eroding our oldest values, like human rights and the rule of law."

Article 3

7."**Artificial intelligence** doesn't just incrementally erode the rights of authors and other creators."

8."Over coming years and decades, **AI** will transform every aspect of our lives."

9."Whether you're a writer, an actor, a singer, a film-maker, a painter or a photographer**, a machine** can now do what you do, instantly and for a fraction of the cost."

In terms of lexical analysis, the following sentences are extracted, the Guardian's reports seem to be reluctant to take AI as easily. In its first report the topic is portrayed as highly negative and "recklessly pursuing profit", sending an alarm to the readers. It is so to the extent where it is seen as "threat" which may increase "unintended consequences". On the existential level, The Guardian links AI to the "climate crisis" which-in itself-threatening the lives of the human beings. In the second report, The Guardian turns its compass towards the risk embedded with AI use, referring to "treaty" signed by the UK to "prevent misuses of the technology". Then, the report jumps to view one of the acts of this treaty to emphasize its concern, indicating that "states must implement safeguards against any threats posed by AI to human rights, democracy and the rule of law"; hence, presupposing AI as a violator of such values. Therefore, It approaches AI in the frame of "a major step" which should be tackled cautiously without infringing "our oldest values, like human rights and the rule of law.". The third report by The Guardian highlights another aspect- replacement of human laborers. In addition to eroding rights of creators and authors, it is also presented in the context of transforming "our lives Hence, it calls for an urgent action to stop the replacement of the jobs of those creators by machines which are able to do the same "for a fraction of the cost." The Guardian's voice attribution is given mostly to the UN officials as critical voices, journalists and commentators whose evaluative stances are adopted overtly, and corporate voices who are framed as driven by profit rather than ethics. Although the workers' voice is not explicitly presented, compassion towards them is somewhat shown in this outlet's articles. In the following table, The frequencies and occurrences of the selected discursive strategies from van Dijk's (1995) discursive moves.

Table 3

Frequency of Selected Discursive Moves in NYT and The Guardian Articles.

Discursive Move	NYT Freq.	Sentence No.	Key Words/Phrases	Guardian Freq.	Sentence No.	Key Words/Phrases
Negative Lexicalization	4	1, 2, 3	"desperate hunt"; "cut corners"; "bending the law"; "lifeblood"	5	1, 2, 4, 7, 9	"recklessly pursuing profits"; "threat"; "misuses"; "erode the rights"; fraction of the cost
Hyperbole	2	2, 6	"bending the law"; "big,	2	2, 8	"threat"; "transform every aspect"

			reputable A.I. labs"			
Compassion Move	0	–	–	1	5	"safeguards against any threats posed to human rights"
Warning	1	7	"fear of artificial intelligence"	3	1, 6, 9	"recklessly pursuing profits"; "major step"; "fraction of the cost"
Norm/Value Violation	1	2	"bending the law"	3	2, 4, 7	"threat"; "misuses"; "erode the rights"

The frequency analysis of selected highlights clear differences in how NYT and The Guardian frame AI-related issues. Negative lexicalization appears in both outlets, with The Guardian using it slightly more than NYT, indicating a critical but measured portrayal of AI risks. Hyperbole, Although not dominant, is used equally in both outlets to convey occasional dramatization. The compassion move appears only in The Guardian to shed light on the struggles of those affected by AI, while NYT articles neglect this move, maintaining a more analytical and detached stance. Warning is used more by The Guardian to warn against the danger of AI advancement and its effect on life as we know it, whereas it is used only once in NYT- which aligns with its overall goal. This is supported by Norm/Value Violation which The Guardian exploits more to underline ethical concerns and breaches of values.

Conclusion

This study compared how the American New York Times and British The Guardian press discursively represented AI in 2024. The findings suggest that both outlets, with different emphasis, acknowledge the existence of risk when it comes to AI advancements. While The Guardian posits the danger and ethical violations of AI in the front, NYT presents this danger as manageable. Through following the the reports of both outlets over the said period of time, it was found that concerns related to labor are marginalized, and most recently, AI advancement is naturalized. Consequently, the analysis of the selcted reports of the both outlets reveals NYT's framing of AI as an inevitable change that must be adapted to, while The Guardian addresses the need for safeguards and the preservation of values. However, the perspective of the workers remains sidelined in both channels, which suggests a systematic gap. This gap, in turn, contributes to the dominant techno-solutionist ideologies at the expense of labor-centred experiences. Future research may extend the corpus across more outlets, having a scope of a broader timeline to pinpoint the evolving discursive strategies in the comparative discourse between innovation and labor. Hence, media naturalization of technological changes and labor marginalisation can be exposed through CDA.

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