

# تحليل الخطاب النقدي للافتتاحيات الصحفية حول

كوفيد-١٩

## A Critical Discourse Analysis of Editorials on Covid-19

م.د. أحمد إبراهيم عبد

Inst. Dr. Ahmed Ibrahim Abed

وزارة التربية، المديرية العامة للتربية في صلاح الدين

Ministry of education, The General Directorate of Education  
in Salah al-Din

E-mail: [Ahibrahim60@gmail.com](mailto:Ahibrahim60@gmail.com)

07824428448

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي، الافتتاحيات الصحفية، كوفيد-١٩

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Newspaper Editorials,  
COVID-19.



## الملخص

يُعدّ تحليل الخطاب النقدي دراسة لغوية متعددة التخصصات، تُلقي الضوء على القضايا الاجتماعية، والتي تشمل مجالات متعددة، مثل الإنسانية، والتشريعية، والتواصل، ومنهجية التدريس. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إظهار عناصر تحليل الخطاب النقدي المستخدمة في بعض الافتتاحيات الصحفية المتعلقة بمرض فيروس كورونا (كوفيد-١٩). بناءً على ذلك، يُفترض أن كاتب الافتتاحيات الصحفية لا يستخدم بشكل كبير الأدوات اللغوية المتمثلة في التهويل والأسلوب. لذا، تتناول هذه الورقة جوانب التعدية، والأسلوب، والتهويل في الافتتاحيات الصحفية

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## Abstract

Critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach to language study that clarifies social issues, which includes numerous areas, as humanism, legislative issues, communication and instructional method. This study aims at showing CDA components employed in some editorials concerned coronavirus disease (Covid 19). In this regard, It is hypothesized that the writer of newspaper editorials does not largely use the linguistic tools of passivation and modality. Thus, this paper tackles the aspect of interdisciplinary approach which are ( transitivity, mood and modality and passivization) in the editorials on Covid-19.

## 1. Introduction

Critical discourse analysis became recently foremost focused branch in modern linguistic study mainly in the late 1970s. It is a multi-specialty language study that clarifies social issues, which includes numerous areas, as humanism, legislative issues, communication and instructional method. Basic semantics views language as a social practice. Language and social institution are not partitioned. In light of that, the language reflects society;



however it additionally takes part within the development of the social articles and the social relations.

Critical discourse analysis clarifies discourse from the attitude of social foundation and structure. It features that society impacts discourse. In the interim, it gives close consideration to speech's response on society. Since the appearance of critical discourse analysis, political field has been of a genuine vital significance.

Van Dijk pointed whether sentences or utterances embody discourse meaning in 1985. Text and discourse are two kinds of language organization forms. Text puts emphasis on structure, while discourse focuses on social, historical and cultural conditions. He analyzes discourse from the aspects of vocabulary, modality and mood, which reveal writer's or speaker's idea and intention. Van Dijk employs this theory in the study of news, academic and political discourse. Stubbs claims that discourse analysis can be applied in analyzing discourses presented in written or verbal forms. Van Dijk's *Prejudice in Discourse* and Wodak's *Language, Power and Ideology* mark the formation of critical discourse analysis.

This study aims at showing CDA components employed in some editorials concerned coronavirus disease (Covid 19). specifically, it tests the hypotheses that, firstly, the writer of newspaper editorials does not largely use the linguistic tools of passivation and modality. Secondly, they tend to use the material and mental process type of the verb regarding Halliady's transitivity theory. Thirdly, the editorials of Covid-19 have intensive use of modality that denotes the meaning of possibility. The study aims to provide theoretical and practical insights for students of CDA and researchers examining medical discourse in public texts like editorials



## 1. Critical Discourse Analysis: Basic Notions

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary method that exclusively deals with discourse. CDA stresses the notion that language is “a form of social practice” (Fairclough, 1992, 2010). Generally speaking, CDA shows that there is a mutual impact between social practice and linguistic practice. It also emphasizes how language use helps construct and reinforce societal power relations (Fairclough, 1992, 2010). Research on Critical Linguistics that was developed at the University of East Anglia gave rise to critical discourse analysis (Fowler et al, 1979). Using CDA, multiple modals for analyzing discourse were develop and published by Norman Fairclough, the prominent linguist at Lancaster School. Those efforts have been accompanied by the research that the two prominent linguists Tuen A. Van Dijk and Ruth Wodak have made in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis. This shows that Critical Discourse Analysis is a modern field of linguistics that aims to study how social institutions use language and discourse. The rise of Poststructuralist Discourse Theory and Critical Linguistics has helped CDA focus on written and spoken discourse in the society and in schools as they help construct social relations, identity, knowledge, and power (Luke A., 2000). CDA is the analysis of texts within their social context. It is possible, of course, to examine a text from a purely structural point of view: the vocabulary and constructions it employs, the linguistic devices it uses to relate one part to another, and so on. But the approach called critical discourse analysis is rather different. This approach is primarily interested in the social context in which a text is written. (Critical discourse analysis is particularly associated with the work of the British sociolinguist Norman Fairclough, and it has become particularly influential in Europe and Australasia.) Why was this text constructed at all? To whom is it addressed, and why? Does the writer or speaker have concealed purposes, and, if so,



what are they? What hidden assumptions and biases underlie the text? These are the sorts of questions pursued in critical discourse analysis. The linguistic techniques involved in such analysis are often called critical linguistics, and the educational policy of teaching people to be alert to such matters is critical language awareness (Crystal, 2008:123).

A few of the common attitudes among different CDA approaches are expressed by Fairclough and Wodak (1997) in their outline. These are as follows:

1. Discourse and social relations are tightly related. They affect and shape one another.
2. Discursive practices are significant factors in establishing social practices, however they are by all account not the only ones.
3. The social setting ought to be thought about while examining language use.
4. All discourses reproduce ideologies. These belief systems can lead to a few issues such as making lopsided social control, hence straggle on control and uneven relations between various groups.
5. It is significant to CDA to (i)
6. It is crucial to CDA to (i) uncover the concealed plan, (ii) reveal the manipulative control in society, and (iii) denaturalize what is defined as a presence of mind. CDA is "morally basic."

## 2. Van Dijk's Approach to CDA

Van Dijk's framework ignores text analysis. Instead, it focuses on discourse analysis to figure out issues like racism, dominance, and power as being more appealing to readers. This will be the main objective of this research. In his modal, Van Dijk focused on the analysis of the structure, production, comprehension of the news and its overall relationship with



social practices. Van Dijk also stated the differences between macro and microstructures of news discourse. The thematic structure of the text which includes the overall content, the topic, and the theme of the text represent the macro structure. The overall form of the text or the schematic structure helps clarify the thematic structure. According to Van Dijk, the organization of the thematic structures of the text is hierarchical: the main topic or theme of the whole text usually comes first. It is then followed by few specific themes. In turn, those themes are divided to more specific themes... etc. The schematic and thematic structures of the text are always in agreement. The text or news report is usually structured schematically into a headline and a main body that covers the central event. The text usually begins with general information that is followed by more detailed information. On the other hand, the microstructures of the news texts are analyzed by looking at linguistic features such as coherence relationships (cause and effect...etc.), grammar, words and phrases, and rhetoric. The basis of writing and understanding a text (the cognitive modal) is usually formed through the overall structure of macro structure and schematic structure. To Van Dijk, the following expression fully describes power: those who hold social power have access to valuable social resources like financial resources, jobs, status, education and knowledge, access to literature, language, and communication. In this context, power means strategic tools of discourse that are used to control people's activities and mentalities by persuading, dissimulating, and manipulating them. Powerful people can easily dominate over people's mentality, ideology, belief systems and activities by controlling both written and spoken discourse. This gives discourse an important role in the society especially when the powerful have great control over the media.



Van Dijk (1995) cited in (Bukhari and Xiaoyang, 2013:12) states that in order to "make transparent such as ideological dichotomy in discourse" , the analysis must be in the following way:

- a. "Assessing the context of the discourse: the historical, political, and social aspects of the conflict and the major players"
- b. "Analyzing the involved parties in the conflict, and the power relations"
- c. "Determining positive and negative views about "my group" versus "the other group."
- d. "Explicitly stating the hidden and assumed meaning"
- e. "Monitor and assess all conventional forms"

### **3. Ideology and Power (Norman Fairclough's Approach)**

The British sociolinguist, Norman Fairclough is one of the key figures in the realm of CDA. In his vantage-point CDA is a method for examining social and cultural modifications that could be employed in protesting against the power and control of an elite group on other people. Fairclough believes that our language, which shapes our social identities and interactions, knowledge systems, and beliefs, is also shaped by them in turn. Like Kress and Van Leeuwen, he bases his analyses on Halliday's systemic-functional grammar. In *Language and Power* (1989), he calls his approach Critical Language Study, and considers the first aim of his approach as helping to correct the vast negligence in relation to the significance of language in creating, maintaining and changing the social relations of power. (Leeuwen, 2004: 9)

This approach is given a sub-section to give more details about it as it will be the main approach for this study. When it comes to the leading figures in CDA, Norman Fairclough is the most important one. He is the most influential researcher of CDA. His approach impacted the study of



CDA more than any other approach. The first time Fairclough presented his approach was in 1989. He first called it Critical Language Study (CLS) (Fairclough, 1989:5). In his introduction (ibid:1), Fairclough stated that his research is based on two major objectives. The first objective is theoretical, while the other one is practical. The theoretical objective aims to shed light on how language and power are closely related and how people can achieve power by using language. The practical objective, on the other hand, is to "help increase consciousness" of the role language plays in constructing social relationships because he believes that consciousness is the way to "emancipation". However, ". However, Fairclough's work has been later further developed (Fairclough, 1992, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2003; Chuliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2010).

According to Fairclough (2010: 3), there are three properties for CDA. The first property is rational. This means that social life consists of a number of relations which are complex. Therefore, the main concern must be directed towards social relations without ignoring objects and entities. The second property is "dialectical"; as he described it, the relationship between discourse and power is "separate but not discrete". The third property is interdisciplinary in the sense that it is affected by the works of other fields.

Fairclough (1992:p. 7), CDA is a field that aims to bring prescriptive element into analysis. The main focus of CDA is what wrongdoings the society makes and how those wrongdoings can be corrected and changed from a specific normative point of view. In this context, the society represents an institution or an organization. CDA emphasizes the gap between what is just, democratic, and kind according to the society and what these society are. As explained in Fariclougih (1989: 25), Fairclough's Framework is based on the idea that language can impact how people



produce it and understand the language that the powerful produce. In this respect, discourse helps constitute and construct social structures.

When analyzing any communicative event, Fairclough (2010:94) states that there are three analytical focuses:

- "It is a spoken or written language text".
- "It is an example of discourse practice involving the production and interpretation of text; and"
- "It is a piece of social practice"

### **1. Textual Analysis (Description):**

The first analytical focus in Fairclough's approach is text analysis that consists of three dimensions. Fairclough (1992: 75) states that when a person analyzes a text, there are four major headings that will take all the focus which are based on a scale. These four headings are: morphology which is about single words, syntax which is about clauses and sentences formed by combining words together, cohesion which is about the link between the clauses and sentences, and text structure which focuses on the "large scale organizational properties of texts"

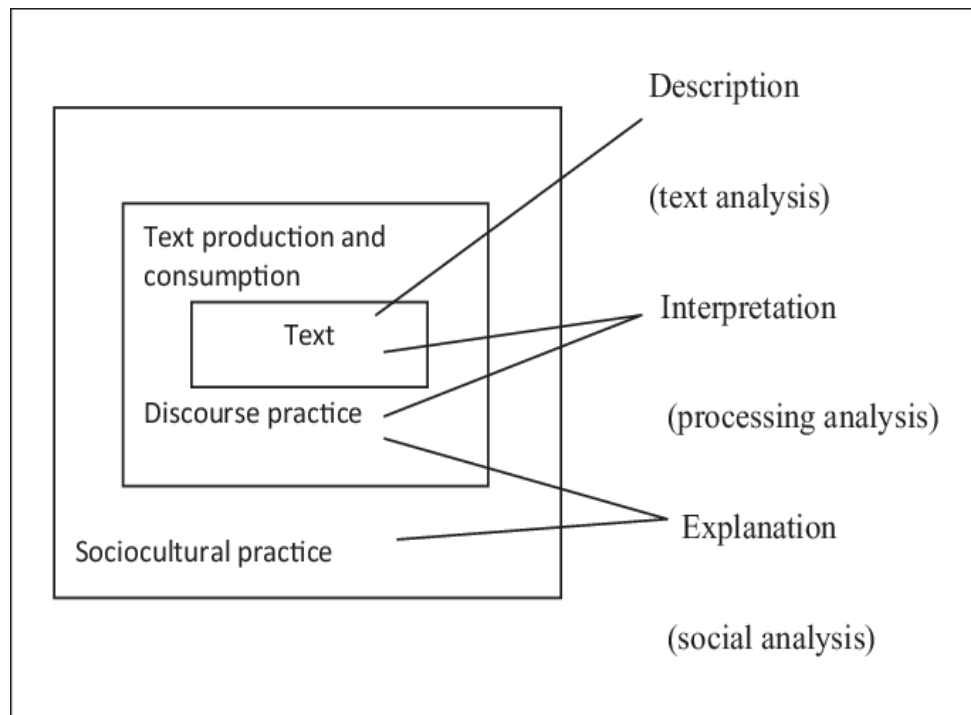
### **2. Discursive practice (Interpretation):**

The second dimension in Fairclough's approach is discursive practice. This dimension makes this approach unique from other approaches. This dimension consists of three processes which are "production, distribution, and consumption".

### **3. Social practice (Explanation):**

This dimension is the third one in Fairclough's approach. It deals with issues that are beyond discourse and language. In this dimension, discourse is analyzed in relation with power and beliefs. It deals with power as way to achieve hegemony (Fairclough, 1992: 86). In Fairclough (1995: 62) there are differences between this dimension and other dimensions in the

sense that the more direct circumstantial context, the wider embedded context of institutional practices of the event, or the yet wider frame of the society and culture may be involved in it. However, the following figure shows the three dimensions Model of Discourse by Fairclough:



#### 4. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics SFL

Halliday (1994:15) defines 'Systemic functional grammar' (SFG) as a system of grammatical description originated by Michael Halliday. It is part of a social semiotic approach to language called systemic functional linguistics. In these two terms, systemic refers to the view of language as "a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning"; functional refers to Halliday's view that language is as it is because of what it has evolved to do .

Halliday (1994) cited in Suzan, 2004:2) states that 'Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL)' is a theory of language centered on the notion of language function. SFL accounts for the syntactic structure of



language, it places the function of language as central (what language does, and how it does it), in preference to more structural approaches, which place the elements of language and their combinations as central.

Malmkjær (2002: 167) indicates that functionalism in linguistics arises from the concerns of Mathesius, a teacher at the Caroline University in Prague, who in 1911 published an article on the potentially of the phenomena of language in which he calls for a non – historical approach to the study of language. Mathesius and his followers like Jakobson became known as the Prague School Linguists. Recently, functionalism has come to be associated with the British linguist M. A. K. Halliday and his followers.

Lyons (1981: 224) states that it was the belief of the Prague School Linguists that the phonological, grammatical and semantic structures of a language are determined by the functions they have to perform in the societies in which they operate. The notions of theme, rheme, and functional sentence perspective, which are still much in evidence in Halliday's work, originate in Mathesius's work.

Malmkjær (2002: 167) argues that language is not a self – contained system (the structuralist view), but is entirely dependent on the society in which it is used. He maintains that language is thus dependent on its society in two senses:

- 1- A language evolves in response to the specific demands of the society in which it is used.
- 2-Its use is entirely context – dependent: 'utterance and situation' are bound up with each other and the context of situation is for the understanding of the words.

He argues that one must study meaning with reference to an analysis of the functions of language in any given culture.

## 5. Halliady's meta-functions of Language

According to Halliady (1994) , the meta-functions of the language are best explained in the following sub-sections:

### 5.1 Interpersonal Function

Interpersonal function helps establish and sustain social relations. It reveals identity and position which in turn shows authority and dominance. Modality, personal pronouns, and mood help achieve this function. This function is used to express people's intentions, beliefs, and persistence (Huang, 1988).

One of the important components of interpersonal function is modality as it can show how people think and feel. As stated by Halliday's modal operators, there are three levels of modality: low modal verbs like can, may, could, might; middle modal verb like will, would, should; high modal verb like must, ought, need. There are also three basic values that classify modality. These values show how probable, usual, obligatory, and possible things are.

Participant's position, power, and role in the discourse are usually explained by personal pronouns. The relationship between the speaker and the listener is often determined by which pronoun is used. A pronoun like "we" which is the first-person plural pronoun is used to mean both inclusive and exclusive pronouns. The subject and the finite are the two components of mood which has two types: indicative and imperative. The first type consists of affirmative and negative sentences. This type shows confidence and determination. Active voice generally shows responsibility. The present tense always shows truth (ibid).

### 5.2 Textual Function



In textual function, the way information is organized is usually unified and coherent. Textual functions include components like Theme structure, information structure and cohesion.

The clause component that gives information is called Rheme which is developed from the theme and is originally part of the message. Theme represents the given information while rheme represents the new information. According to Halliday, theme consists of three categories which are: simple theme, multiple themes, and clausal theme (Halliday, 2000:37).

Another classification of themes is whether the theme is marked or unmarked. The most frequently used type is marked theme. In marked theme, the beginning of the sentence is reserved for the important information since people's opinions and attitudes are expressed through the subject. New information is usually put in the remainder of the sentence. In certain situations, the object can take the subject position. The theme is usually marked when it differs from the subject. Two main forms of marked themes are adverbial group and prepositional phrase.

### **5.3 The ideational (or experiential) function**

It is the conveying of semantic content representing information about our experience of the external world (including our own minds) (ibid).

## **6. Halliday's Transitivity Framework**

Halliday recognizes the process of fabric, mental and social as the three main handle sorts within the English transitivity framework and then finds the other three forms, which are found at the borderlines of the primary three (Halliday: 2004:179).

1. Material process clause



a. It is the method of doing and happening. According to Halliday (ibid), a "‘material’ clause understands a quantum of alter within the stream of occasions as taking put through a few input of energy". He includes "Fabric clauses understand figures of ‘doing-&-happening’(ibid). They express, according to Halliday (1985:103), "the idea that some substance ‘does’ something which may be ‘to’ some other substance" . Halliday (ibid) sees that ‘material’ clauses are concerned with our experience of the material world. Material clauses don't represent concrete, physical occasions only. They may represent unique doings and happenings.

## 2. Mental process clause

This process includes the method of sensing. According to Halliday (2004:197)," mental clauses are concerned with our encounter of the world of our possess consciousness". He (ibid) claims that these forms may speak to unique doings and happenings. Verbs like (feel, want, like, hate, know, think, fear, see, etc.) recognize these forms.

## 3. Relational process clauses

These are processes of being and having. The relational clause is the third type of process. Halliday (2004:210) states that "Relational clauses serve to characterize and to identify". The relational clause is realized by the verb 'Be' in the simple present or past. There are three main types of relational clauses which are intensive’, ‘possessive’ and ‘circumstantial. These types come in two modes: of being, attributive and



identifying. The attributive clauses construe class-membership by ascribing an attribute to some entity. The identifying clauses convey some attribute to an identity.

#### 4. Behavioural process clauses

According to Halliday (1994:139), behavioral clauses are "forms of (typically human) physiological and mental conduct, like breathing, hacking, grinning, dreaming and staring" . He (2004:250) includes "they are partly just like the material and mostly like the mental". These clauses have two member roles. They are 'Behaver' and the 'Behaviour'.

#### 5. Verbal processes

Verbal process covers the forms of saying. Such process clauses are vital resources in different sorts of discourse. They contribute to the creation of account by making it possible to set up dialogic entries. Halliday (2004:252) states that "Verbal clauses, in news announcing, permit reporter to ascribe or assign data to sources, including authorities, specialists and eye witnesses".

### 7. Passivation

The term 'voice' can be defined as "the means by which a writer indicates how an action is , was , or will be taken" (Damerst, 1972 : 50) . Voice is "a grammatical category which makes it possible to view the action of a sentence in two ways, without change in the facts reported" (Quirk et al 1972 : 801). Voice is "the way where-by the action expressed by the clause can be viewed in either of two ways: active or passive" (Crystal, 1988: 72).



Verbs are said to be either active or passive in voice. Consider the following pair of sentences :

- The executive committee approved the new policy. [ACTIVE]
- The new policy was approved by the executive committee.  
[PASSIVE]

In the active voice, the subject and the verb relationship is straightforward: the subject is a be-er or a do-er and the verb moves the sentence along; that is the subject performs the action expressed in the verb ; the subject acts . In the passive voice, the subject of the sentence is neither a do-er nor a be-er , but is acted upon by some other agent or by something unnamed (ibid). Fairclough (1992:27) says that passivization is associated with ideology . It holds ideological features as it is the outcome of the writer's preference , and as it has functions .

## 8. Mood and Modality

Mood is an important tool used for achieving the interpersonal function; both mood and modality provide some functions about the role of a particular speech like sending and receiving information (Halliday, 1994:68).

Modality can be defined as the intermediate degrees between the positive and negative poles (Colin, 1961: 88). It is a cognitive notion that represents the speaker's attitude towards the world around . In addition Hartman and Stork,(1972: 142) add that "The way in which the speaker can express his attitude towards a situation in interpersonal communication usually realized in English by modal auxiliaries ...and/or adverbials such as possibility, or constructions like: it is certain that"

The choice of modality above is basically semantic since it reflects the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses



being true (Quirk et al, 1985:219). This semantic definition together with the formal description of the modal auxiliary verbs indicate that modal verbs are used to express futurity in addition to modality.

Modality in news reports is usually indicated via the use of modal verbs (such as may, could, should, will, and must), their negations (may not, couldn't, shouldn't, will not, and must not) or through adverbs (certainly). Modality, then, can informally be regarded as 'comment' or 'attitude', obviously by definition ascribable to the source of the text, and explicit or implicit in the linguistic stance taken by the speaker/writer (Fowler, 1991: 85). Modality can be expressed in two principal forms truth modality, obligation, permission and desirability (Fowler, 1991: 85).

## 9. Covid 19: Notion and Existence

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an irresistible illness caused by serious intense respiratory disorder coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was to begin with identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and has come about in an continuous widespread. The primary case may be followed back to 17 November 2019.[12] As of 7 June 2020, more than 6.89 million cases have been detailed over 188 countries and domains, coming about in more than 399,000 deaths. More than 3.08 million people have recouped. (Hui, 2020:264).

## 10. Editorials

An editorial is a piece of writing in a newspaper that gives the editor's opinion about something rather than reporting facts (LD: 1995). In editorials, the editor comments on the news not to report the news. S/he can usually assume that readers have at least some familiarity with the topic he has chosen to discuss. His purpose is to provide his own assessment and

skilled opinions of topics of current importance, giving whatever basis or evidence he feels necessary to convince the readers to accept his point of view (Jordan, 1984:98).

In most newspapers the purpose of editorial is to influence the opinion of readers on some controversial issue (Connor, 1996:144). Good editorials are considered some of the best examples of persuasive writing in all countries; they set standards for written persuasion.

## 11. Methodology of the Analysis

Practically, the current section presents the data analysis and its application of the theoretical background in the light of the selected data concerning the selected editorial about Covid 19. However, this work analyzes the data in terms of the text analysis. This issue is put under Fairclough's the first dimension), Halliday's Systemic Functional linguistics (1994) is adopted.

## 12. Data Analysis

### 12.1 Transitivity

Transitivity is a remarkable sign of ideational function that shows people's view, attitude and stance. The choice of process can reflect speaker's intention.

PARTICIPANTS	ACTIVITY	PROCESS TYPE
coronavirus deaths	Are	Material
The evidence	Is	Material
Americans	have	Behavioral
Local officials	push	Material
States with high number of infections	saw	Mental



Unexpected deaths	were	Verbal
Belguim	has reordered	Material
Additional deaths	may	Verbal
cases	are	Behavioral
Infections	may	Material
Unknown infections	Have	Mental
The virus	is	Material
They	could	Behavioral
We	know	Mental

However, the above table clarifies that there are four process types which have been recognized as the most dominated process types of Halliaday's classification of transitivity in the selected Covid 19 editorial. These types are material , verbal , behavioral and mental. The writer of the editorial seems to use categories of verbs like verbs of doing , happening ,and creating, having ( has) , attributing , identifying , sensing , seeing , feeling , thinking rather than other process types. The reason behind this is that writers of the political issues usually intent to use action verbs and sensational verbs since they can properly deliver their messages by these categories.

## 12.2 Mood and Modality

Modality can be used to express people's desire, which reflects their faith and inclination. It appears frequently in the newspaper editorials. High modality shows the writer's firm attitude and stance, while middle modality indicates easy mood.

However, in this editorial, there are three modal verbs that have been identified. For twice, 'could' is used to indicate the modality meaning of

possibility of the risk and bad consequences that may come as a result of the Covid 19 as it is accurately shown in the following two statements:

***A. It's the grimmest of many unknowns about the pandemic whose spread could accelerate again as the president and some state and local officials push to resume business as usual.***

***B. They mean the virus is less deadly as a proportion of those infected, and they could put the population closer to the level of immunity that can slow a virus' spread.***

The following statement also indicates the use of modality which carries the meaning of 'possibility' via using of the modal 'may' in present tense to refer to the increased number of corona virus additional deaths:

***c. The additional U.S. deaths may not be entirely or directly attributable to the coronavirus.***

However, this modality shows the writer's own reports which also identifies the possible incidents that come across in the current times of Covid 19. Using “may and could” incites the public that all the studies about Covid 19 are not fixed yet because it is a novel and new for the experts in the microbiology.

### **12.3 Passivation**

Passivation is another way of conveying messages via use of syntactic changes in the sentence structure within the sentence to achieve a particular purpose, the writer here, has used passivation in many of his ideas to make some of his ideas more focused and to make it look promenade for his



readers, that is , those elements that the writer thinks might be vital that need much attention from the readers. It is not much employed in the editorials concerning the Covid 19 , yet it still exists as in the following two occasions:

*A. the gap between known and actual infections is thought to be even greater than the discrepancy in deaths. Preliminary studies have estimated that the number of U.S.*

*B. Four of the states had at least twice as many unexpected deaths as were attributed to the coronavirus at the time, suggesting a total of 9,000 uncounted fatalities at that point*

In this editorial, one can note that there two occasions in which passive constructions have been identified, in these two passive constructions, the writer highlights the number of death in U.S proclaiming that the number is not accurate it is thought to be greater and more people are carrying the infection of covid 19 , but the health facilities are not nominating this issue.

### 13. Conclusion and findings

This study has reached the following conclusions:

1. The first hypothesis has been verified. The writers of newspaper editorials heavily employ specific linguistic tools of analysis including modality and passivation, and transitivity in different ranges of uses, for



2. The second hypothesis has been verified. The writing style of editorials is characterized by many uses of the material and mental process type of the verb in terms of Halliady's transitivity. This is because they want to deliver particular meanings to their readers so they use verbs of material, mental etc process type of the verb.
3. The third hypothesis has been verified. the editorials are also characterized by using modals verbs which denote the meanings of possibility or uncertainty

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## **INDEX**



**Editorial: How the coronavirus pandemic is even worse than we thought**  
**Chronicle Editorial Board May 4, 2020**

Having passed 60,000, eclipsing every other country's losses as well as our casualties in Vietnam, the known count of U.S. coronavirus deaths is high by any measure except perhaps one: the actual toll.

The evidence is mounting that many more Americans have died of coronavirus complications than we know. It's the grimmest of many unknowns about the pandemic whose spread could accelerate again as the president and some state and local officials push to resume business as usual.

California's deaths have exceeded projections by 9% this year, according to a Los Angeles Times analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data released last week. That amounts to about 4,500 so-called excess deaths in the state, more than four times the CDC's count of coronavirus deaths and more than twice the total from local reports reflected in The Chronicle's tracker as of last week.

Seven other states with high numbers of infections saw deaths exceed expectations by still more in the early weeks of the pandemic, with 15% to 72% more fatalities than projected in March and early April. Four of the states had at least twice as many unexpected deaths as were attributed to the coronavirus at the time, suggesting a total of 9,000 uncounted fatalities at that point. Federal statistics also show a recent surge in pneumonia deaths not attributed to COVID-19, though the disease is likely to be a cause of many such cases.

Such questions were at the heart of a recent back-and-forth between the United States and Belgium, of all places, after President Trump displayed a chart showing that a few European countries have suffered more coronavirus deaths per capita than the United States. Even for Europe, Belgium has recorded an extraordinary number of deaths partly because it counts suspected but unconfirmed coronavirus deaths, particularly at nursing homes.

The additional U.S. deaths may not be entirely or directly attributable to the coronavirus. The pandemic's tendency to overwhelm hospitals and other health care providers — while discouraging people from seeking care for other illnesses — could lead to more deaths from other causes. But while excess deaths are an



inexact measure, they are often considered a more accurate gauge of the true toll of a natural disaster, especially in the presence of significant doubt about official reporting.

That is certainly the case here. Santa Clara County officials recently found that the coronavirus was responsible for a San Jose woman's death in early February, weeks before any previously known U.S. fatality from the epidemic. That indicated the contagion was spreading undetected in the Bay Area soon after the year began. That's not surprising given that California and the country are still struggling to mount the testing capacity that has allowed countries such as South Korea to detect and contain new cases. Given the paucity of testing and prevalence of asymptomatic cases, the gap between known and actual infections is thought to be even greater than the discrepancy in deaths. Preliminary studies have estimated that the number of U.S. infections may be 10 or more times the number reported. Unlike the uncounted deaths, the unknown infections have encouraging aspects. They mean the virus is less deadly as a proportion of those infected, and they could put the population closer to the level of immunity that can slow a virus' spread. Unfortunately, even the highest estimates of the extent of the contagion suggest it's significantly more deadly than seasonal flu and that most of us remain vulnerable. We know enough, that is, to proceed cautiously.

This commentary is from The Chronicle's editorial board. We invite you to express your views in a letter to the editor. Please submit your letter via our online form: [SFChronicle.com/letters](https://www.sfchronicle.com/letters).

