

opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,
Linguística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 35, 2019, Especial N°

23

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1537/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



Universidad del Zulia
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Representation of social actors in news discourse of countries affected by disasters

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Abstract

This paper explores the process of conceptualizing the framework for the representation of social actors in news discourse of countries affected by MH370 and MH17 disasters. This study built its conceptual framework based on a series of systematic methodology. As a result, a conceptual framework is established based on the construction of self and other representations in critical discourse analysis, attitude sub-system from appraisal theory and corpus linguistics. In conclusion, this paper argues that a wholesome approach is required because previous research lack discussions on the representation of social actors in news discourse of countries affected by aviation disasters.

Keywords: Conceptual, Framework, Media, Representation, Social.

Representación de actores sociales en el discurso de noticias de países afectados por desastres

Resumen

Este artículo explora el proceso de conceptualización del marco para la representación de actores sociales en el discurso de noticias de los países afectados por los desastres MH370 y MH17. Este estudio construyó su marco conceptual basado en una serie de metodología sistemática. Como resultado, se establece un marco conceptual basado en la construcción de representaciones propias y de otro tipo en el análisis crítico del discurso, el subsistema de actitud desde la teoría de la evaluación y la lingüística del corpus. En conclusión, este artículo argumenta que se requiere un enfoque saludable porque la investigación previa carece de debates sobre la representación de los actores sociales en el discurso de noticias de los países afectados por los desastres de la aviación.

Palabras clave: Conceptual, Marco, Medios, Representación, Social.

1. INTRODUCTION

On March 8, 2014, a Malaysian Airlines passenger flight MH370 went missing while flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. Nearly four months after the tragic ending of MH370, another scheduled Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur International was shot down near the Ukraine-Russia border on July 17, 2014. Both MH370 and MH17 disasters had wide coverage from the news all over the world that Malaysia had easily become the centre of media attention after both incidents.

When discussing MH370 and MH17 aviation disasters news coverage, previous research found that international media and local media perceived news values differently, thus reporting disasters in the news were highly influenced by the local culture and ideologies. Local news reporting was also found to be heavily contextualized based on locality of the subjects, thus bringing home the fact that there are hints of emotions and attitudes in the disaster news discourse reporting.

Hence, this leads us to the curiosity to know whether these contextualized ideologies in news discourse would be similar when it comes to analyzing disaster news discourse from countries affected by the disasters. In the case of MH370 and MH17 aviation disasters, the involvement of three countries namely Malaysia, China, and the Netherlands was chosen based on the fact that these were the countries that were most affected by the disasters. Malaysia suffered the most when it comes to physical and emotional losses, as both the planes were from Malaysia Airlines, and China and the Netherlands were the countries with the highest number of casualties in MH370 and MH17 disasters. Hence, with this in mind, we wanted to look into the news reporting contexts from these affected countries and whether there are similarities or distinctive differences in the representation of social actors of the disasters when they are reporting the same events.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study built its conceptual framework based on a series of systematic methodology. Firstly, we conducted a systematic literature review in which we identified and reviewed important empirical and theoretical studies on our topic. The purpose of having a systematic review is to systematically identify and review important literature on related topics and methodologies used by previous studies. We mainly used the electronic database to search the selected keywords that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the literature search. The articles were sorted and the relevant articles were then retrieved and reviewed.

Once the systematic literature review was conducted, we then isolated important variables and identify the research gaps. For example, definitions of certain concepts and variables in the study were identified. Based on these variables, further themes were developed and expanded and more literature was collected so that we would be able to identify important theoretical background of the present study. At this stage, reflective analysis and critical thinking were required in order to identify new themes that were not found in previously collected literature. The themes were then integrated into a conceptual framework that is deemed appropriate for the present study. Figure 1 shows a summary of the methodology process used to develop the conceptual framework (ARSLAN & YÜKSEL, 2018).

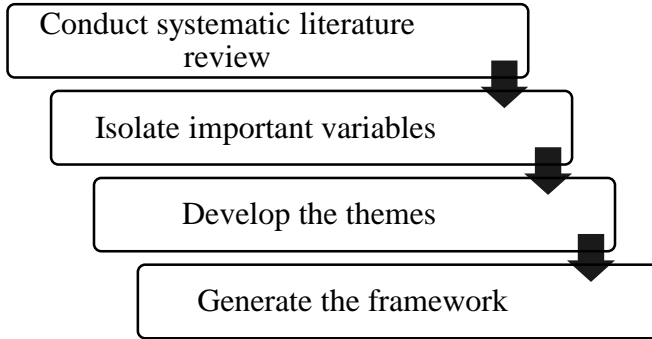


Figure 1: The methodology used to Develop Conceptual Framework

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before discussing the results, it is important that we first clarify the meaning of representation and social actors used in this study. Representation here refers to the language used in texts that give meanings to certain groups and their social practices (FAIRCLOUGH, 2005). Any part of either spoken or written discourse can constitute representation that gives the ideologies and identities to the groups of social practices (FAIRCLOUGH, 2005). Ideologies here are treated as representations of our identity, our principles and our relationships with other social groups (CORDEIRO & SOGN-GRUNDVÅG, 2019).

The present study adopts van Dijk’s ideological square on self-other representations in Socio-Cognitive Approach. This is

further enhanced by the fact that the micro-level of structure in van Dijk's framework highlights the importance of linguistic analysis to complement the discursive analysis in CDA. The proposed idea by KHOSRAVINIK (2010) on the extension of systematic social actor analysis is also being adopted as its simplified methodology in analyzing social actors is in line with those of CDA established researchers.

Table 1: Discursive Analysis of Social Actors

Common Grounds	Differences
CDA approaches are widely used to analyze the representation of social actors and collective identity.	An in-depth study on the representation of social actors would best be used to identify the ideologies behind the media representations.
Many findings indicated the significant positive and negative media representations of social actors, and use different CDA framework to identify discursivity.	The construction of collective identity and social attitudes in van Dijk's Social Cognitive Approach deemed fit to answer the posed research questions
Present study: van Dijk's self-other representation in the Socio-Cognitive Approach is used for this study.	

This sub-topic describes previous studies done on attitude evaluations of social actors, especially in discussing disaster news discourse and how the present study could address the literature gap. Therefore, further exploration of social actors in both disaster

events would be able to provide significant inputs to the already established research.

In the context of attitude evaluation of social actors in general, BAKER, GABRIELATOS & MCENERY (2012) examined the representation of Muslims in British newspaper articles published between 1998 and 2009. The result showed that the representation of the word Muslim and Muslim world emphasized the similarities to each other. Meanwhile, Soo-Guam conducted sentiment analysis and emotion processing using articles on Iraq and economic policies of Bush and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from New York Times, The Times of London and Sydney Morning Herald. Sentiment analysis of news articles is mainly a popular analysis adapted to analyze politicians' public image. Nevertheless, Soo-Guam Khoo also highlighted resources of appraisal can be ambiguous and it can overlap each other.

Thus, this shows us that disregarding the less important components of the Appraisal Theory can help in readjusting the focus of attitude and emotion analysis. A further study by BEDNAREK (2008) extended news value evaluation analysis called Emotional Framing, which derived itself based on effectual positioning in Appraisal Framework. While the study mainly focused on the emotive discourse in the media, it has not specifically discussed the relationship between the social actors involved in the news discourse. BEDNAREK (2008) even

suggested that more in-depth studies need to be done in exploring different perspectives and approaches to emotions in linguistics (RAHIMPOUR ET AL, 2018).

It is also interesting to highlight that most of these studies identify closely to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach. Previous literature found that most analyses on MH370 and MH17 were widely focused on the news values of the discourse, conversation analysis, and transitivity analysis. While Appraisal Framework is also a popular choice for linguistics analysis of disaster discourse, the lack of its usage when analyzing aviation disaster news discourse for MH370 and MH17 shows the gap in the literature, in which the present study wants to address. Table-2 shows the summary of the literature on attitude evaluation of social actors in aviation disasters.

Table 2: Attitude Evaluation of Social Actors in Aviation Disasters

Common Grounds	Differences
Most studies focused on news values and news framing in the news discourse.	Not many recent studies gave attention to how emotion is inscribed in news discourse.
Representation studies show SFL analysis like transitivity analysis, metaphor theory, appraisal framework, sentiment analysis, and news value analysis are popular choices of analysis.	Attitude analysis uses MARTIN & WHITE's (2005) Appraisal Theory, but being multi-dimensional framework, it can be quite difficult to analyze.
Present study: Attitude Evaluation from Appraisal Theory from MARTIN & WHITE (2005) would best be used for the present study.	

In short, previous studies indicated that one of the most recurring linguistic theories in use when analyzing the language of attitude and emotions is appraisal framework in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Therefore, the present study believes that adapting an established linguistics framework on evaluative language and emotions would be most appropriate in helping to answer the research questions for this study. Hence, we strongly propose that Attitude Evaluation from Appraisal Theory from MARTIN & WHITE (2005) would best be used for the present study.

In terms of methodology, one of the similarities that can be found from the reviewed literature is that the use of corpus linguistics has been very crucial in supporting the representation of a social actor's analysis. The use of large corpus is also popular among researchers (BAKER ET AL., 2012). For the linguistic analysis of the study, it was found that the analysis of the representation of social actors can be done using different approaches. The adaptation of Systemic Functional Linguistic is also a popular choice among researchers. This is due to the fact that SFL is an established linguistic system that could provide an in-depth analysis of discourse. It is also complementary to CDA analysis. SFL approaches like transitivity, metaphor theory and appraisal framework BOTELLA, STUART & GADEA. (2015) can be seen throughout the literature.

We also found that the corpus approach is compatible with critical discourse analysis as it can analyze language in context systematically BAKER (2006), MAUTNER (2015) hence, adapting it for this research would provide a comprehensive exploration of the study. Corpus linguistics can also analyze different linguistics contexts like analyzing the lexical items of the texts, the semantics and even the grammatical structures of the discourse. Corpus approach can also be used flexibly on lower number of articles to larger data. While newspaper is one of the more popular choices of data (BAKER ET AL., 2012; BOTELLA ET AL., 2015), other data sources like social networks and government documents BIER, PARK & PALENCHAR (2018) can also be used to be analyzed using corpus approach. Table-3 shows the summary of the common grounds and differences for the methodology framework.

In short, the present study proposes the use of a corpus study in Critical Discourse Analysis as it offers a more objective analysis of the qualitative study. Frequency analysis, concordance analysis, and collocation analysis can be used to support the lexical and semantic analysis of any text.

Table 3: Methodological Framework

Common Grounds	Differences
The popular use of corpus linguistics. The corpus-based approach supports large number of data that would also allow wider exploration than when using other techniques.	The corpus for the news articles varies from analysing only two newspapers (BOTELLA ET AL., 2015), news articles of two years or using larger data of 143-million-word corpus from 18 British newspapers (BAKER ET AL., 2012).
Present study: Using a corpus study as it offers both quantitative and qualitative analyses on texts. This study also adapts KHOSRAVINIK's (2010) simplified methodology on analysing social actors.	

Based on the discussion in previous sections, we propose below research questions and conceptual framework for the present study. The main research questions that guide this conceptual framework are:

- a) How are the key social actors discursively represented in MH370 and MH17 news discourse of countries affected by the disasters?

- b) How are the attitudes and emotions of the key social actors represented in the news discourse of countries affected by the disasters?

We have identified and formed the theoretical and methodological framework based on Self-Other Representations in Critical Discourse Analysis (HALIM, 2014), Attitude sub-system from Appraisal Theory MARTIN & WHITE (2005) and we also propose the use of Corpus Linguistics as a methodology to analyze the data. Figure 2 shows the conceptual framework proposed for this study.

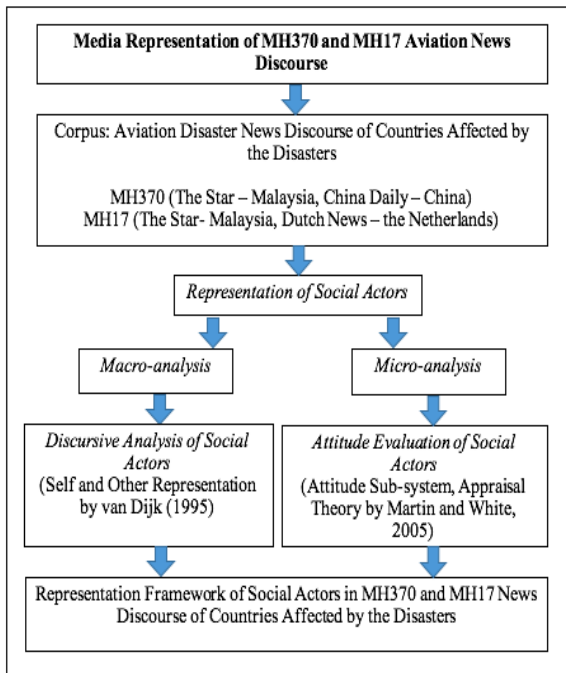


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework on Representation of Social Actors in News Discourse of Countries Affected by Aviation Disasters

The macro-level analysis refers to identifying the social actors in MH370 and MH17 disasters news discourse and how the social actors are discursively represented. The main framework used for the macro analysis of the study is the construction of Self and Other representations by van Dijk. For the macro analysis, the present study enlisted seven stages of analysis, as shown in Table-4. This systematic analysis was also adopted from (HALLIDAY & MATHIESSEN, 2004).

Table 4: Macro Analysis of the Present Study

Stage 1	Collect and organise the corpus for the study
Stage 2	Generate word lists (newspaper/section)
Stage 3	Design comparative tables of most frequent words
Stage 4	Identify the key social actors of the disasters: collocates and concordance lines.
Stage 5	Draw semantic categories of social actors (answer question of what social actors are in the texts)
Stage 6	Extract abstract nouns (answer question of how the actors are referred to in the text)
Stage 7	Identify positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation
Stage 8	Identify legitimization strategies

Stage 1 starts with collecting and organizing the corpus of the study. In this case, we decided that the corpus of the study would be taken from The Star from Malaysia and China Daily from China to represent MH370 news discourse and The Star from

Malaysia and Dutch News from the Netherlands to represent MH17 news discourse. The corpus is selected based on the fact that Malaysia, China, and the Netherlands were the most affected countries involved in the disasters as they were the ones who suffered the highest number of losses. Stage 2 refers to generating the word lists from the newspaper in order to design and identify the most frequent words using WordSmith 7.0 corpus tool and in Stage 3, the most frequent words are put into comparative tables. From this, we would be able to identify the key social actors of the aviation disaster news discourse through the use of collocation and concordance analysis (Stage 4). Once the social actors in the news discourse were identified, semantic categories of those social actors could be formed (Stage 5).

Subsequently, the abstract nouns from the texts were extracted to answer the question of how the actors are referred to in the texts (Stage 6). From then on, we would be able to identify the positive self-representation and negative other-representation (Stage 7) and the legitimation strategies behind those representations (Stage 8). This process is in line with van Dijk's macro-structural strategies which include: 1) topics; 2) positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation; and 3) legitimation strategies.

The second part of the analysis refers to the microanalysis, in which the analysis would explore the use of linguistics features in

the language of attitude of the social actors. In evaluating the language of attitude of the social actors in the disaster news discourse of MH370 and MH17, we use the Attitude sub-system in the Appraisal Theory by (MARTIN & WHITE, 2005). Table-5 shows the stages of the microanalysis used for the present study.

Table 5: Micro Analysis of Present Study

Stage 1	Select the adjectives which collocate with each social actor
Stage 2	Establish semantic categories for the adjectives (based on Martin and White's 2005 Attitude sub-system in Appraisal Theory)
Stage 3	Analyse concordance lines and assign labels to occurrences of evaluative language
Stage 4	Analyse whole texts for micro analysis

In Stage 1, we would first select the adjectives that collocate with each social actor identified in the news discourse. The semantic categories of the adjectives would then be established and grouped under the main categories of the Attitude sub-system namely Affect, Judgement and Appreciation MARTIN & WHITE (2005) as stated in Stage 2. Then, the adjectives that collocate with the social actors would be analyzed and labeled according to the occurrences of the evaluative language in order to propose a categorization of involvement of feelings (Stage 3). Last but not least, manual qualitative interpretation is still required as corpus linguistics is used as a tool to support the analysis, and the richness

of words and expressions used in the texts can go beyond the selection of the lexical items (Stage 4).

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper argues that a wholesome approach in understanding the representation of social actors is required because based on the discussion on previous research, it is clear that previous research lack discussions on the representation of social actors in news discourse of countries affected by disasters. We found that discursivity and the language of attitudes are important aspects to look at in terms of representation of social actors in disaster news especially from the perspectives of localized news discourse. The use of corpus linguistics is also seen as widespread approach of methodology hence the adaptation of this type of approach would contribute to a better conceptual framework. With the integration of the critical discourse approach, corpus linguistics and media studies, it is hoped that this study would open new doors in the multidisciplinary research approach and encourage more researchers to work on the interesting field of aviation disasters news discourse.

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**UNIVERSIDAD
DEL ZULIA**

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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales
Año 35, Especial No. 23 (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la
Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de
Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.
Maracaibo - Venezuela

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