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Coverage of the Egyptian Revolution in Aljazeera English and the BBC Online

Websites (2011): An Appraisal Theory Approach

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Abstract

The idea of this thesis began with a close watching of political events and their transfer to the public through the media. During the 25th of January revolution, there was a great discrepancy among news networks, papers and journals, local or international. This discrepancy is attributed to the background of the reporting source. The news discourse can change completely the reader's views or opinions through some certain persuasive features. It has a number of standard strategies to promote the persuasive process for assertions.

Although political coverage in journalistic discourse is supposed to be marked by pure objectivity, it is difficult to find the same event or incident presented with the same attitudes. Recognizing that the ideological impact is a basic component of any process among transferring news and that absolute neutrality is impossible even within a news report, the aim of the research is to examine this subjectivity along with the background impact of the news source, in the coverage of the Egyptian revolution (2011), on two websites, Aljazeera English and the BBC online website.

In this thesis the appraisal system as presented by Martin and White (2005) is proposed as a guide for proper techniques of analyzing news

reporting. The first half of the research is dedicated to exploring this model and the appraisal theory in general. The second half is dedicated to the application of the model of appraisal to twenty news reports selected from Aljazeera English and the BBC online websites. The researcher was assisted by some additional information about the nature and the historical background for every website through some evaluative sites and from the historical pages uploaded on the two sites themselves.

This thesis tries to explore the appraisal system via examining the evaluative tools and attitudinal stances, in order to provide a linguistic analysis for the news reports on these two websites in particular and to reach a general overview of the nature of the reporting news and the ideological impact on the reporting process itself.

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Part One: Theoretical framework

Chapter One

1. Introduction

The majority of the people all over the world were puzzled especially in the first 18 days of the revolution, as there was a great discrepancy among the news networks, papers and journals , whether the local or the international in reporting what was going on in Egypt during that time. Although political coverage in journalistic discourse is supposed to be marked by objectivity, it is very difficult to find the same event or incident presented with the same degree of attitude or evaluation among different sources of news reports.

This thesis is an attempt to examine and analyze the written news discourse with particular reference to the news coverage of the 25th of January revolution (2011) on two websites; the BBC online and Aljazeera English websites. The theoretical framework adopted is the appraisal model. This model mainly deals with the values and attitudes presented in a text. It is a further development of the Hallidayan functional grammar to express and react to views, values and emotions. The appraisal theory is elaborated in many works such as *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause* by Martin and Rose (2003) and *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English* by Martin and White (2005).

The study explores the register and genre theory R>. This theory deals with language in a socio-semiotic system which has developed in a systemic functional system. It represents a model in which the appraisal framework could be explicitly applied. R> is a model which deals with comparing two texts linguistically to detect points of similarities and differences. It is a general model which encompasses many frameworks. Eggins and Martin (1997) applied the register and genre theory R> on a range of linguistic approaches to discourse, aiming at discovering how discourses or texts are like or unlike each other.

1.1. The Appraisal theory in a nutshell

The appraisal theory depends on the analysis of stances as positioning with respect to values and voices in the text. The model of appraisal depends on the exploration of attitudes and values encoded in the discourse. It also includes a system of grading for meanings. Finally, it enables for a dynamic management of other voices whether by expansion which attributes the communicated text to external voices, or contraction which expresses the writer's own stances and evaluations. This system is known by engagement (Hood, 2004).