

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Online Local News Articles on COVID - 19

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ABSTRACT

This study used Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine online local news articles on COVID-19. Specifically, this study discussed the linguistic features used in news headlines with respect to omission of subjects and auxiliaries, nominalizations, passivization, formation of word order, use of short words, and widespread use of puns and wordplay. This investigation revealed new terminologies as well as the ideologies present in the news articles. The COVID-19 news articles were selected from a major local online news portal and put through a rigorous review process (CDA). The findings revealed that linguistic features such as the omission of subjects and auxiliary verbs, word order formation, the use of short words, and puns and wordplay contribute to more engaging and concise new headlines. While the lack of Nominalization and Passivization characteristics is intended to lead the subject to more direct and objective treatment. The terms "Community Lockdowns," "RT-PCR test," "LSIs," and "Quarantine" were commonly used to describe the COVID-19 pandemic. The news articles revealed that the government maintains the ideologies of both power and security. Power was maintained with the use of force and security through confidentiality. Overall, the authors used precise language to convey their personal perspectives on the subject. It is suggested that a more in-depth discussion of ideologies be conducted from a global perspective.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Linguistic Features

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 has been the subject of various media reports and news articles. Without a doubt, news keeps people informed about current events and all of the most recent happenings across the world (CDAAdmin, 2019). Tan (2016) contends that critical discourse analysis (CDA) of news can make reading news articles and reports easier by encouraging readers or English language learners to think about how the message is created. Newspapers have developed into useful tools for enhancing media literacy in the foreign language classroom, so the researchers—English language majors and future educators—will gain a better understanding of how the English language functions by incorporating

newspapers into the task-based learning activities. Research on COVID-19 news language and discourse within a suitable paradigm is required to address these issues.

Related Studies on Critical Discourse Analysis

The discourses in news headlines and articles have been the subject of several studies. Koosha and Shams (2005) used several analytical methods from Van Dijk (1998) and Halliday's transitivity model to examine how a political topic, as well as its major participants and their actions, are presented in newspaper headlines. The outcomes of the study backed up the claim

that news companies don't merely cover social issues. When it comes to depicting political events, they also explain current ideas. Herrera-Soler (2006) claims that metaphors can embody ideological imperatives. Many headlines including the keyword "globalization" discovered that they tended to describe globalization through conceptual metaphors, particularly using the concept of "war" to persuade individuals of various political viewpoints (Herrera-Soler, 2006).

According to the study Discourse Representation of COVID-19 in Selected Newspaper Editorials (2020), reporters and newspapers set the agenda by negatively impacting their readers' impressions of coronavirus based on implicit and explicit facts (COVID-19). As a result, according to Wihbey, Coleman, Joseph, and Lazer, the negative portrayal of COVID-19, which includes maligning and criminalizing the disease, as well as other discourse tools-identified constructions, goes a long way toward instilling cognitive awareness in citizens, educating readers about the disease's negative capabilities and destructive power (2017). Following are the objectives of this discourse analysis.

Using critical discourse analysis, this study investigates online local news articles on COVID-19. Specifically, this intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the linguistic features of the news article headlines in terms of:
 - a. omission of subjects and auxiliaries,
 - b. nominalizations,
 - c. passivization,
 - d. formation of word order,
 - e. use of short words, and
 - f. widespread use of puns, wordplay?
2. What are the different news terminologies that are utilized in news stories?
3. What ideologies do the news articles contain?

This study applies Fairclough's (1993, 2013) discourse analysis framework. It has three layers: text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. Text analysis entails examining the language structures that emerge throughout a discursive event. Discourse practice, which includes text creation, consumption, and reproduction. Lastly, social practice analysis focuses on the relationship between discourse, power, and ideology (Rogers et al., 2005).

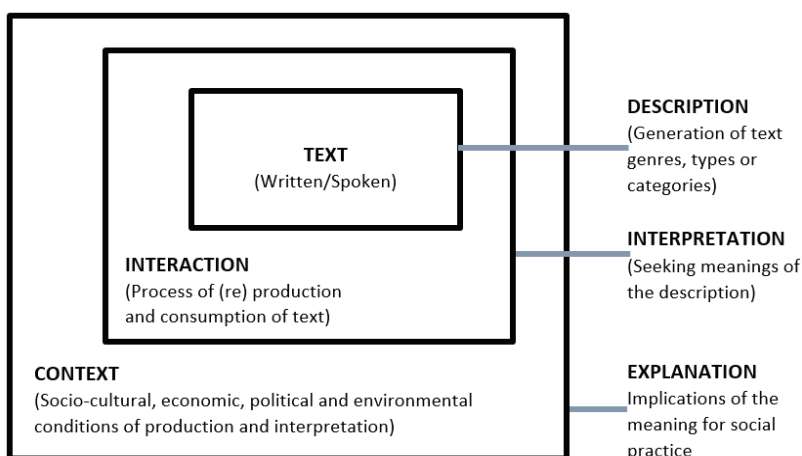


Figure 1. A Schematic Presentation of the Theoretical Background

This analysis was based on COVID-19 news stories from the Daily Guardian website, a local news agency in Iloilo. English is used in the newspaper articles. The data collection comprised five (5) news articles from June 2020 (ncovtracker.doh.gov.ph/), when COVID cases in Iloilo City began to rise.

Furthermore, according to ISO 8601, Monday is the first day of the week, and it is also the day on which people frequently congregate because it is the start of the working week in the Philippines, increasing the risk of getting the virus as people go to work.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this qualitative research study, the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was applied as both a theory and a study design.

Procedure

The Daily Guardian website, a local news source in Iloilo, Philippines, served as the source for the news stories for COVID-19. For the whole month of June 2020, one (1) news article per Monday—a total of five (5) newspaper articles—was evaluated. The conditions for the news article selection were as follows: news items must be in English, and each piece must adhere to the normal length, which is usually between 600 and 800 words (Digital Journalism, 2018).

A manual search was done for journal articles from COVID-19. Then, for each news article, the headlines and specific paragraphs were isolated in order to meet the objectives of the study. The Fairclough CDA model, which has three stages, was used. To begin with, the researchers conducted a Linguistic Features Structure Analysis, looking for linguistic characteristics in the headlines (such as the omission of subjects and auxiliaries, nominalizations, passivization, formation of word order, use of short words, and widespread use of puns

and wordplay). It was utilized to define certain key terminology and show how concepts and their labels relate in the text and interaction step that followed this. The final phase was extraction, which involved writing down or mentally elaborating on terms that had been collected from online publications and were indicative of an ideology.

The researchers visited the website and manually searched COVID-19 news articles. The headlines and paragraphs of the news texts were isolated for each news article in order to meet the study's objectives. Each article conformed to the standard length as stated by Nicholson (2018), and the article length, which has typically averaged between 600-800 (Digital Journalism, 2018).

Linguistic Features Structure was applied to the headlines in order to find linguistic qualities that would define the text's formal and structural characteristics. The headlines and their linguistic qualities were evaluated first, followed by their interpretation and connection in the text to clarify several crucial terms. Finally, new terms were discovered in Covid- 19 Online News Articles by extracting expressions suggestive of an ideology found in the articles.

RESULTS

Linguistic Features of News Article Headlines

Table 1 shows the linguistic characteristics of the headlines of news articles. These features are: (a) omission of verbs and of auxiliaries (the verb 'to be' for

example); (b) nominalizations; (c) passivization; (d) Formation of Word Order; (e) Use of short Words ('bid' instead of 'attempt'); and (f) Widespread Use of Puns and Wordplay.

Table 1
Linguistic Features of News Article Headlines

Headlines	Omission of Subjects and of Auxiliaries	Nominalization	Passivization	Formation of Word Order	Use of Short Words	Widespread Use of Puns, Wordplay
No 'face-to-face' enrollment— DepEd-6	A briefer form of the statement "DepEd Memorandum Order No. 008 s.2020 prohibited 'face-to-face' transactions from June 1 to June 15, 2020, due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic". The subject "DepEd Memorandum Order No. 008 s.2020" was omitted to emphasize the importance of the prohibition of 'face-to-face' transactions.	None	None	This shows the importance of prohibiting over-the-counter enrollment as the headline begins first with No 'face-to-face' enrollment. The punctuation of a dash was used to introduce that announcement from DepEd-6.	Used the word 'No' instead of 'prohibition'.	None
"COVID patient's sudden death remains a puzzle"	None	None	None	The headline emphasizes that the patient's death was caused by COVID-19 by stating the subject as "COVID patient. Followed by stating that the sudden death remains unresolved.	Used the word "puzzle" instead of "unresolved" which means the sudden death remains questionable	The word "Puzzle" could mean a game, problem, or toy that tests a person's ingenuity or knowledge.
WVMC Assures Accurate COVID Test Results	None	None	None	The headline emphasizes that the Covid-Test results tested by Western Visayas Medical Center are assured accurate that is not manipulated by the operator.	Used the word "assures" instead of "making sure" which means to dispel any doubts they have.	None
Hidden Victims of the Pandemic: The Old Man, the Jail Aide, and the Convict	With the presence of a colon, the auxiliary verb 'are' is omitted in the headline. With the application of the auxiliary verb 'are' and the article 'the' for specifying or particularizing effect, the headline can be: The Hidden Victims of the Pandemic are the Old, the Jail Aide, and the Convict	None	None	Most of the words in the headline are nouns. The words before the colon are the general description of the words after the colon. Also, the headline was delivered in a way that, first it introduced the main topic, and then with the purpose of the colon it specified the subjects under the topic. The word-formation is also indicative of Philippine culture where the importance of old people is observed and convicts were overlooked. That's why the writer put the old man first in the word order and the convict last.	None	None
Hidden Victims of the Pandemic: The Old Man, the Jail Aide, and the Convict	With the presence of a colon, the auxiliary verb 'are' is omitted in the headline. With the application of the auxiliary verb 'are' and the article 'the' for specifying or particularizing effect, the headline can be: The Hidden Victims of the Pandemic are the Old, the Jail Aide, and the Convict	None	None	Most of the words in the headline are nouns. The words before the colon are the general description of the words after the colon. Also, the headline was delivered in a way that, first it introduced the main topic, and then with the purpose of the colon it specified the subjects under the topic. The word-formation is also indicative of Philippine culture where the importance of old people is observed and convicts were overlooked. That's why the writer put the old man first in the word order and the convict last.		
LSIs OFWs overwhelmed LGU isolation facilities	None	None	None	LSIs and OFWs are considered stranded individuals that will return to Western Visayas. LGUs are struggling to accommodate individuals who need quarantine in their limited isolation facilities.	None	None

New Terminologies Used in the News Stories

The new terminologies used in the news stories are listed in Table 2. The

researchers discovered a total of thirteen (13) new terminologies associated with COVID-19.

Table 2
New Terminologies Used in the News Stories

News Article	Language Structures (words, clauses) that represent Covid-19	Meaning
No 'face-to-face' enrollment-DepEd-6	COVID-19	COVID-19, a respiratory infection caused by a novel virus known as the coronavirus or SARS-CoV-2, is a pandemic. Source: Narayana Health
	Radio-Based Instruction (RBI)	The Radio-Based Instruction (RBI) Program is an alternate learning delivery mechanism that delivers ALS lessons via radio broadcast. It can broaden access to education by bringing it to the learners' location as a sort of distance learning. Its goal is to provide listeners with learning opportunities and help them to achieve basic education equivalence through the transmission of lessons. Source: https://www.deped.gov.ph/k-to-12/inclusive-education/als-programs/
"COVID patient's sudden death remains a puzzle"	Community lockdowns	The Philippine government, through its Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases, has issued a series of stay-at-home orders and cordon sanitaire measures (IATF-EID). Source: National Task Force Against Covid-19 from https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/explainer-locally-stranded-individuals-need-to-know-coronavirus-lockdown
	OFW Repatriates	This term refers to Overseas Filipino Workers who are in an emergency repatriation due to COVID-19. OFWs are provided with airport assistance, temporary accommodation at the OWWA Halfway Home, psychosocial counseling, stress debriefing, and transportation services or fares to their respective regions. Source: Overseas Workers Welfare Administration
	RT-PCR test	In comparison to viral culture, RT-PCR testing is the gold standard for identifying COVID-19 because of its sensitivity, specificity, and ease of use. Future RT-PCR advancements will primarily focus on themes of simplicity of processing, faster turnaround times, and reduced material usage. Source: https://www.idsociety.org/covid-19-real-time-learning-network/diagnostics/RT-pcr-testing/
	LSI's	This term refers to the "foreign nationals or Filipino citizens in a certain area of the Philippines who have expressed a desire to return to their place of residence/home origin." Source: <i>National Task Force Against Covid-19 from</i>
WVMC Assures Accurate COVID Test Results	"False positive" results	False positive findings occur when someone who is not infected with the coronavirus tests positive. Because no test is 100 percent accurate, some people will always test positive when they don't have the condition, or negative when they do. Source: https://www.bbc.com/news/54270373
	Isolated	When someone is infected with a virus and is contagious, they must remain at home. This helps to keep the infection from spreading to other people.
	RT- PCR machine	Determines whether the coronavirus is present and if a person is actively infected. Actual swabs from patients' noses or throats are used in the test kits. Results can take up to 24 hours to process. Source: <i>World Health Organization</i>
Hidden Victims of the Pandemic: The Old Man, the Jail Aide, and the Convict	Quarantine	Quarantine is used to isolate someone who has been exposed to COVID-19 from the rest of the population. Quarantine aids in the prevention of disease spread that might occur before a person realizes they are ill or if they are afflicted with a virus but have no symptoms. Source: <i>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</i>
	Frontliners	A frontliner is a worker who works on the front lines, often in healthcare and other vital, frequently public-facing positions. Source: https://www.dictionary.com/e/tech-science/frontliner/
LSIs OFWs overwhelmed LGU	Quarantine Protocols	It is defined as segregating and limiting the mobility of people who have been exposed to or may be exposed to an infectious disease A quarantine separates such people from the rest of the population so that they do not unintentionally infect others. Governments utilize it to prevent the spread of communicable illnesses. Source: <i>Narayana Health</i>
	Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ)	Residents of areas under an enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) are often ordered to stay at home, with travel to other cities or barangays prohibited.
	Temporary Treatment and Monitoring Facilities (TTMFs)	This Circular applies to all temporary treatment and monitoring facilities (TTMFs) for suspected, probable, and proven COVID-19 cases with moderate symptoms, as well as the LGUs and other authorities in charge of them.

Ideologies Obtained from News Articles

The underlying ideologies of the news articles discovered by the researchers are shown in Table 3. The ideologies were

diverse, but they were all linked to how the journalist views the government's response to COVID-19.

Table 3
Ideologies and their Meanings

News Article	Ideology	Meaning
No 'face-to-face' enrollment-DepEd-6	Supremacy of Government Agency (DepEd)	Supremacy means the state or condition of being superior to all others in authority, power, or status. This authority is shown by the DepEd when they released a memorandum order pertaining to the prohibition of face to face transactions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
"COVID patient's sudden death remains a puzzle"	Confidentiality of Patients Information	Confidentiality means containing information whose unauthorized disclosure could be prejudicial to the national interest. The information concerning the death of the COVID-19 patient was held by the hospital. According to Dr. Jessie Glenn Alonsabe, regional epidemiologist of DOH CHD 6, and the mayor of Anilao, they have not yet received the patients' death certificate.
WVMC Assures Accurate COVID Test Results	Assurance in Handling Covid-19 Testing	Assurance means the state of being assured such as being certain in the mind, confidence of mind or manner. The WVMC-SNL said that they are fully aware of its mandate and responsibility to release accurate, reliable and timely results since it has a serious impact to the patient, to the community, and to the entire region.
Hidden Victims of the Pandemic: The Old Man, the Jail Aide, and the Convict	Suppression of freedom of speech	Suppression means the conscious intentional exclusion from consciousness of a thought or feeling. The inmates were deprived of their liberty to express their opinion on how inhuman conditions in the country's and jails and prisons are placing them at a greater risk amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
	Negligence of Authority	Negligence means failure to exercise the care that a reasonably prudent person would exercise in like circumstances. The inmates are unaware because their right to be informed is being neglected. The people who assists the jail doctors and nurses are neglected by the authorities for they don't proper medical equipment which raises their probability of getting infected by COVID-19.
	Fear and Ignorance of COVID-19	Fear means an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger. Ignorance means lack of knowledge or information. The inmates are afraid of admitting that they are sick because of the fear caused by the ignorance of information about COVID-19. They also feared that by having any signs of sickness they will be labeled positive for COVID-19. This fear prompts inmates to lie about their real health condition.
	Power of Connections to Higher Authority	Power means the ability to act or have influence over others. Connections means a relationship in which a person, thing, or idea is linked or associated with something else. The provision of medicine depends upon if you have a connection with the staff or nurse in the clinic.
	Publicity for Good Image	Publicity means notice or attention given to someone or something by the media. The government is taking advantage of the current situation for their publicity as they take photographs while they are giving financial and healthcare assistance to the public.
	Discrimination and Inequality	Discrimination means the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex. Inequality means difference in size, degree, circumstances and etc. The inmates who have symptoms of COVID-19 were put together with people who have tuberculosis without really knowing if they are positive of COVID-19. If frontliners die they are called heroes, while if inmates die they are forgotten, nothing but ashes.
	Unpreparedness of the Government	Unpreparedness means not ready or able to deal with something. There is no proper health care system for the inmates. There's no massive testing among the inmates for the virus that has already killed one of them.
	Fear of Authorities and Inhuman Treatment	Fear means an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger. Inhuman means lacking human qualities of compassion and mercy. The inmates are afraid of complaining in fear of being locked up inside an isolation cell. The country's jails and prisons are in inhuman conditions which places the inmates at greater risk of contracting COVID-19.
LSIs OFWs overwhelmed LGU isolation facilities	Pressure of having limited Quarantine Facilities	Pressure refers to the use of persuasion or intimidation to make someone do something. LGU's are having a hard time coping with the increasing number of repatriates and stranded individuals. The facilities for isolation of these cases are only limited.

DISCUSSION

The results show that the absence of verbs and auxiliary verbs is one of the linguistic elements of news story headlines that is commonly utilized to shorten and make the statement more interesting.

Additionally, omitting auxiliaries can help make sentences stronger and more memorable for readers. Finally, deleting them from a headline improves its effectiveness and effect on readers. The

outcomes are in line with Pratibta's (2015) recommendation that auxiliary verbs (is/are/to be going) be eliminated from headlines in order to conserve space. It can constrict to conserve space, according to Saxena (2006:177), which is why this occurs.

In terms of word order, the authors wanted to emphasize the initial words in the headlines. Compact words were used to create the first, second, and third articles. By utilizing short words in the headlines, it is obvious that the author is seeking to save space. The most common word structures in news headlines from news articles begin with the subject and are followed by the verb in order to help readers understand the article's substance. This is in line with Cook's (2008) research that shown that using a specific word order may evoke strong emotions in readers.

Language is used to express content, and it is through this function that the speaker or writer imbues language with his or her experience of real-world phenomena. The COVID-19 news articles new terms are: "COVID-19," "Radio-Based Instruction (RBI)," "community lockdowns," "OFW repatriates," "RT-PCR test," "LSIs," "False positive," "isolated," "RT-PCR machine," "Quarantine," "Frontliners," "Quarantine Protocols," "Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ)," and "Temporary Treatment and Monitoring

Facilities (TTMFs)." This result was in line with Fairclough's (2013) conclusions that the best way to determine a text's ideology is by looking at its terminology or language. The speaker's or writer's awareness of their own inner world, which may include their feelings, thoughts, and perceptions as well as their linguistic acts of speaking and understanding, may also be a part of this experience.

The ideas uncovered in this study also provided insight into the writers' perspectives on higher authorities. The first words of the ideologies that the researchers found are "Supremacy," "Confidentiality," "Assurance," "Suppression," "Negligence," "Fear and Ignorance," "Power," "Publicity," "Discrimination and Inequality," "Unpreparedness," "Fear," and "Pressure," and they correspond to the ideologies of the Daily Guardian writers. The findings of Koosha and Shams (2005) support the assertion that news media's coverage of political events not only reflects social reality but also articulates prevalent ideology.

Despite news journalists' ostensibly unbiased posture, which is determined by their professional principles, this research has revealed that when news stories are critically analyzed, hidden ideologies and definitions emerge. News stories not only reflect reality, but also constructed an ideologically biased reality.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The linguistic features contributed to the headlines being more powerful and effective for readers. The absence of features such as nominalization and passivization indicates that they are not

frequently used in headlines to draw attention to headline subjects.

The introduction of new terms about COVID-19 demonstrated that news writers want to educate readers about the virus's

basic concepts, including its danger, transmission, and others.

The ideological findings show that the government keeps its power by using force, consent, or a combination of the two. Confidentiality can also help to maintain security or peace. Overall, the writers use precise language to convey their subjective viewpoint on the subject.

English classes can make use of the study's findings. The ideas of critical discourse analysis (CDA) can actually be used by teachers to teach their students how to

critically analyze the news that they are exposed to. It may act as a springboard for their work; they may decide to focus on a particular linguistic feature while examining any text, not only news stories.

A more in-depth examination of the linguistic features found in news headlines and articles would allow for a more comprehensive and in-depth examination of the ideologies discussed in the news. Future research could focus on objectivity, leading to a better understanding of how ideology is formed through language.

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