

تحليل الخطاب النقدي للافتتاحيات الصحفية حول كوفيد-19

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Editorials on Covid-19

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Covid-19.,Critical Discourse Analysis,Newspaper Editorials

ملخص

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-19). 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 حول كوفيد-19.

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. Accordingly, the present study examines the main CDA components that appear in selected newspaper editorials dealing with coronavirus disease (Covid-19). It particularly investigates the extent to which editorial writers employ passivation and modality as linguistic resources in presenting the pandemic. Further, the study adopts an interdisciplinary perspective on language including transitivity, mood, modality and passivization to address Covid-19 editorials.

1. Introduction

Critical discourse analysis has become one of the most important approaches in modern linguistic studies since its emergence in the late 1970s. It is a multidisciplinary area, since it examines language in relation to various aspects of social life, including human interaction, political ones, communication, education, and institutional practices. CDA is different from purely formal linguistic approach, it considers the language as a form of social practice. Thus, language and social institutions are not seen as distinct fields but

intricately intertwined aspects of social life. In this view, language is not just a mirror of society; it is also an active and integral element of society that helps to create and construct social realities and social relations. This implies that discourse is not only shaped by the society of which it is a product but also is capable of shaping the understanding of events, identities, and power relations in that society.

Critical discourse analysis is a method which aims to account for the way in which discourse works; it shows how language choices are related to the social structures and institutions that surrounding the production of the discourse. It demonstrates that discourse is influenced by society, but it also highlights the ability for discourse to shape society. For this reason, CDA has been extensively applied in the study of political language, where discourse is sometimes used to persuade, to assert authority, to institute ideology, and to affect the public.

Van Dijk has claimed that one cannot understand the meaning of a discourse by just analyzing the individual sentences or utterances. Text and discourse are two related aspects of language organization: text is primarily about inner organization, while discourse is about inner organization in relation to social, historical and cultural circumstances. His approach deals with factors like vocabulary, modality, mood, topic, and coherence as they may hint at the writer's or speaker's stance, purpose, and attitude. Van Dijk's research has had a significant impact on the study of news, academic prose and political discourse. In a similar way, Stubbs maintains that discourse analysis may be applied to both written and spoken forms of communication. Van Dijk's *Prejudice in Discourse*, Wodak's *Language, Power and Ideology* have thus made a significant contribution to the development of critical discourse analysis.

The present study aims to identify the CDA components used in selected newspaper editorials concerned with coronavirus disease Covid-19. Specifically,

it tests three hypotheses. First, it assumes that newspaper editorial writers do not make extensive use of passivation and modality. Second, it suggests that the material and the mental process types are the principal types of process used in the selected editorials, as per Halliday's transitivity framework. Thirdly, it indicates that Covid-19 editorials have an observable modality, particularly in the aspect of possibility, uncertainty, warning, and prediction. In this respect, the study seeks to offer theoretical and practical value for students of CDA as well as researchers interested in the analysis of medical discourse in public texts such as newspaper editorials.

1. Critical Discourse Analysis: Basic Notions

CDA is a multidisciplinary approach that studies discourse as a socially situated form of language use. It is based on Fairclough's view that language functions as "a form of social practice" (Fairclough, 1992, 2010). Generally, CDA highlights the relationship between the use of language and the use of society. It shows that language is shaped by social conditions, while at the same time contributing to the construction, maintenance, and reproduction of power relations in society (Fairclough, 1992, 2010). The emergence of CDA is closely connected with the earlier development of Critical Linguistics at the University of East Anglia (Fowler et al., 1979). Later, different models of discourse analysis were developed by major scholars, particularly Norman Fairclough of Lancaster University. Important contributions were also made by Teun A. Van Dijk and Ruth Wodak who extended the field, and made CDA a major method in contemporary linguistics. The developments demonstrate that CDA is interested in how social institutions create, structure and disseminate meanings through language and discourses. However, the impact of Poststructuralist Discourse Theory and Critical Linguistics has also turned the focus of CDA towards both written and spoken discourse in the social and educational sphere. These approaches show that discourse plays an important role in constructing

social relations, shaping identities, producing knowledge, and maintaining or challenging power relations (Luke A., 2000).

CDA focuses on texts by locating them in the social context in which they are created and read. A text may be analyzed structurally through its vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and sentence patterns; however, CDA goes beyond this level of description. It is not satisfied with identifying linguistic features only. It rather focuses on the way in which these features relate to the social, institutional and ideological conditions that constitute the text. Critical discourse analysis is closely linked to the work of the British sociolinguist, Norman Fairclough, who has had a significant influence in Europe and Australasia. Fairclough's approach prompts the researcher to examine the function, recipient and ideology of the text. As a way of asking "Why was this text created? For whom? What does it interest? What assumptions might lie behind and beneath the obvious meaning? These questions allow CDA to go beyond the textual description to an exploration of power, ideology and social meaning. The linguistic processes involved in this type of analysis are often associated with critical linguistics. In the educational sphere this care for the social and ideological role of language is called critical language awareness, aiming at sensitizing the reader to the possible effects that the text may have on thought, understanding, and social perception (Crystal, 2008:123).

Fairclough and Wodak (1997) identify a number of shared principles that connect different approaches within CDA. These are principles of the relationship between discourse, society, power, ideology and social change. They can be presented 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 Macrostructure of a text is the whole meaning of the text with the main topic, general content and dominant theme. This level provides the reader with an understanding of the main idea of the text. The schematic structure, on the other hand, is an indication of the general organization of the text and the sequence in which information is presented. Van Dijk suggests that, typically, a text is organized thematically in a hierarchical way, the general theme is mentioned first, and then more specific subthemes, which can, in turn, be subdivided into more details. Thus, the thematic and schematic structure complement each other in the organization of meaning and in directing the reader through the discourse. A news text typically features a recognisable structure, including a news headline, and a body presented as the main event. The information is frequently presented in a general manner and then explained in greater detail. However, on the microstructural level, linguistic choices are examined as means to the construction of meaning. These choices include coherence relations, such as cause and effect, grammatical patterns, lexical items, phrases, and rhetorical devices. Through these features, the writer can emphasize certain meanings, background others, and influence the reader's

interpretation of the event. For Van Dijk, the production and interpretation of discourse are connected to cognitive models that are shaped by macrostructures and schematic organization. His view of power is closely related to access: groups with social power usually have greater access to important resources such as wealth, employment, status, education, knowledge, language, communication, and public platforms. In discourse analysis, power is thus defined as influencing the thinking and behavior of others and influencing their interpretation of social events. This influence can be by persuasion, concealment, emphasis or manipulation. Strong groups can influence public opinion, ideologies and social attitudes if they have the power to control written and spoken utterances, particularly the media. For Van Dijk, the production and interpretation of discourse are connected to cognitive models that are shaped by macrostructures and schematic organization. His view of power is closely related to access: groups with social power usually have greater access to important resources such as wealth, employment, status, education, knowledge, language, communication, and public platforms. In discourse analysis, power is thus defined as influencing the thinking and behavior of others and influencing their interpretation of social events. This influence can be by persuasion, concealment, emphasis or manipulation. Strong groups can influence public opinion, ideologies and social attitudes if they have the power to control written and spoken utterances, particularly the media.

As stated in Bukhari and Xiaoyang (2013:12), van Dijk (1995) implies that the ideological differences in discourse can be seen through systematically analyzing context, participants, group relations, implicit meaning and conventional modes of expression:

- a) The first step is to examine the context of the discourse by considering the historical, political, and social conditions surrounding the issue, as well as the main actors involved in it.

- b) The second step is to identify the parties represented in the discourse and to analyze the power relations that organize their positions, roles, and interests.
- c) The third step is to notice how the discourse creates positive images of the in-group and negative images of the out-group.
- d) The fourth step is to uncover meanings that are implied, presupposed, or left unstated in the text.
- e) The final step is to examine the conventional linguistic and rhetorical forms through which the discourse presents its ideological position.

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

Norman Fairclough is a British sociolinguist who plays one of the key roles in critical discourse analysis. From his perspective, CDA is a method for examining the relationship between discourse and social change. It can also be used to expose the ways in which language can help to reinforce, interrogate or challenge the power of dominant group over others. Language and society are mutually influential, according to Fairclough. Language contributes to the formation of identities, social relations, knowledge, and beliefs, but it is also shaped by these same social elements. Fairclough, like Kress and Van Leeuwen, bases his theoretical framework on Halliday's systemic-functional grammar, which offers the means to link the form and function of language. Fairclough's approach is known as Critical Language Study in Language and Power (1989). One of its main aims is to address the neglect of language as a major factor in producing, sustaining, and transforming 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. Fairclough is one of the key scholars in the field of CDA. His work has been a very powerful influence on the development of CDA because it brings together linguistic analysis with issues of ideology, power, institutions and social change. Fairclough first introduced this approach

in 1989 under the name Critical Language Study (CLS) (Fairclough, 1989:5). In the introduction to that work, he explains that his project has two main objectives: one theoretical and the other practical. The theoretical goal is to account for the close association between language and power, in particular how power can be exerted, sustained and validated by discourse. The practical objective is to increase people's awareness of the role language plays in shaping social relations. This awareness matters to Fairclough because it can make people aware of the unequal power and help them to contest it. However, Fairclough later expanded this framework in a number of important works, where he developed his views on discourse, power, ideology, social practice, and critical social analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2003; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2010).

Fairclough (2010:3) identifies three main properties of CDA. The first is relational, where social life is comprehended as intricate relationships between persons, institutions, things, and practices. The second one is dialectical, because discourse and power are related to each other, but they are not the same. The third is interdisciplinary, for it is evident that the explanation of how language functions in social life is based on various fields.

Fairclough (1992:7) presents CDA as an approach that does not only describe discourse but also evaluates it from a critical perspective. It deals with issues of social problems, inequalities, and injustice, and with the potential to transform them through critical awareness and social action. Society may be viewed as its institutions and its organisations. CDA looks at the gap between the values societies proclaim and the social practices in which power and inequalities can persist, such as justice, democracy and equality. Fairclough's framework revolves around the notion that language has the ability both to produce effect on the speaker and to affect the listener, particularly in the case of language produced by powerful individuals or institutions (Fairclough,

1989:25). In this way discourse is not just a reflection of social structures but also helps to build and sustain them.

According to Fairclough (2010:94), any communicative event can be analyzed in three levels that are interconnected. First it is a speech or written text that can be studied. Second, it can be analyzed as a discourse practice in which the text is produced, circulated and interpreted. Thirdly, it may be interpreted as a component of a larger social practice.

1. Textual Analysis (Description):

The first strand of Fairclough's model is textual analysis/description. On this plane, the analyst analyzes the characteristics of the language used in the text itself. Fairclough (1992:75) explains that textual analysis can be organized around four main categories. These categories are morphology, syntax, cohesion, and text structure. Morphology is the study of the structure and formation of words. Syntax is related to the construction of clauses and sentences. Cohesion is the way language binds clauses, sentences and parts of the text together. Text structure, lastly, relates to the overall structure of a text and how it is designed to create meaning.

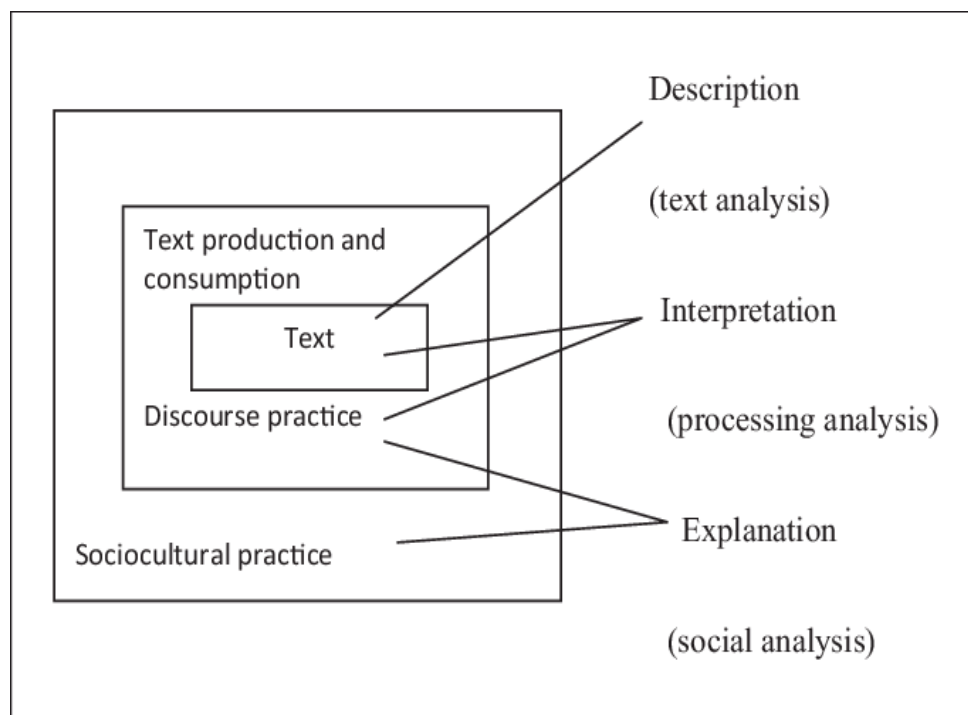
2. Discursive practice (Interpretation):

The second level in Fairclough's approach is discursive practice, or interpretation. This level is significant as it relates the text to the processes of its production and reception. It deals with three key processes: production, distribution and consumption.

3. Social practice (Explanation):

The third one is social practice/explanation. At this stage, the discourse is analyzed within broader social, institutional, ideological and cultural contexts. The analysis thus escapes from language itself to explain the relation of discourse to power, belief system and social relations. Fairclough makes a connection between this level and the analysis of power and hegemony because

the discourse may contribute to the legitimatisation of the dominant meaning as the normal or natural one (Fairclough, 1992:86). He also explains that social practice differs from the other levels because it may involve several layers of context: the immediate situation of the event, the institutional practices surrounding it, and the broader social and cultural framework within which it takes place (Fairclough, 1995:62). However, the following figure shows the three dimensions Model of Discourse by Fairclough:



4. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics SFL

Halliday's systemic functional grammar is a model of grammatical description that forms part of his broader theory of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994:15). This theory sees language as a social semiotic system, that is, it is the study of language in relation to the meanings that are produced through language in social contexts. The term "systemic" refers to the idea that language consists of networks of choices available to language users,

while the term “functional” emphasizes that language develops and operates according to the purposes it serves in communication.

Halliday’s systemic-functional linguistics, as cited in Suzan (2004:2), is built around the central idea that language should be understood through its functions. Within SFL, while grammatical and syntactic structure is considered, it is not the primary focus of study on its own. Rather, it raises questions about the role language plays in social interaction, and how these grammatical options contribute to achieving certain meanings.

Malmkjær (2002:167) traces the development of functionalism in linguistics to the work of Mathesius, a scholar associated with Charles University in Prague. Mathesius in 1911 urged a linguistic treatment which was not just historical but also focused on the use of language. His work and that of the scholars including Jakobson, later became associated with the Prague School of linguistics. In more recent linguistic investigations, functionalism has been associated with the British linguist, M. A. K. Halliday, and the scholars who developed and used his approach.

Lyons (1981:224) explains that the Prague School linguists viewed linguistic structure as functionally motivated. That is, the communicative function that they serve in a given society determines the phonological, grammatical and semantic patterns of a language. Concepts such as theme, rheme, and functional sentence perspective, which remain important in Halliday’s linguistic theory, can be traced back to Mathesius’s contribution to the Prague School tradition.

Malmkjær (2002:167) argues against viewing language as a completely independent or self-contained system. From a functional perspective, language is inseparable from the society in which it is used. He explains that the dependence of language on society can be understood in two main ways:

1- In the first, a language arises in terms of the specific needs, activities and communication of the society that employs it.

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. Secondly, the use of language is closely related to situation. As an expression cannot be understood if the situation in which it is uttered is not known, meaning is created in the relation between the words and the situation in which they are used, as well as in the relation between the words and the person who speaks them and the person who hears them.

For this reason, Malmkjær argues that the study of meaning should be based on the functions that language has in a particular culture.

5. Halliday's meta-functions of Language

Halliday (1994) states that language serves a number of overarching functions, known as the meta-functions. These meta-functions can be explained through the following sub-sections:

5.1 Interpersonal Function

The interpersonal function refers to the use of language in relation to the construction, maintenance and negotiation of social relations. It is a function in which speakers and writers could signify identity, social status, authority, attitude and level of commitment. Features of the language, including modality, personal pronouns and mood are significant as they contribute to the identification of intentions, beliefs and judgements, and relationships of power among participants (Huang, 1988).

Modality is one of the important resources that enables the speaker or the writer to express attitudes, degrees of certainty, obligation, possibility, and evaluation; it is one of the important resources of the interpersonal function. Halliday classifies modal operators according to different degrees of modality. Verbs that indicate low modality include can, may, could, and might. Modality

can be expressed by the use of the median (forms like will, would and should). Usually, high modality is indicated by the use of strong forms like must, ought to, need. Modal forms also convey other meanings such as probability, usuality, obligation and possibility. It is through them that a writer can indicate that something is likely, necessary, expected, doubtful, or merely possible.

Personal pronouns are also a highly significant interpersonal resource which can signal the position, role, inclusion or exclusion, and relationship to another person or persons in discourse. The use of pronouns may shape the relationship (between speaker and listener) in terms of proximity, distance, solidarity, authority, or opposition. For example, the first-person plural pronoun we may function inclusively, referring to both speaker and audience, or exclusively, referring only to the speaker's group and excluding others. Mood is generally realized through the subject and the finite element. It may be expressed in various ways, particularly in the indicative mood (statements, questions) and imperative mood (commands, requests). The indicative mood can be used with an affirmative or negative clause depending on whether the speaker is making a positive or negative statement. This type shows confidence and determination. Active voice tends to be more evident in making the responsibility apparent and it puts the actor or agent in a clear subject position. The present tense is often used to present information as general, current, or factual, although its meaning depends on the context in which it is used. (ibid).

5.2 Textual Function

Textual function has to do with how language structures information to create a unified and cohesive message. It provides an explanation of the organization of the text parts for the purpose of following the meaning(s) of the

text by the reader. This function includes elements such as thematic structure, information structure, and cohesion.

In this function, the clause is the normal one and is often split into Theme and Rheme. The Theme is the starting point of the message and typically reveals what is known or set up in the context. The Rheme develops the Theme by adding new information and completing the message. Halliday classifies Theme into different types, including simple Theme, multiple Theme, and clausal Theme. The categories indicate ways in which the clause can start: one part, several parts, or a bigger clause (Halliday, 2000:37).

Theme may also be classified as marked or unmarked. An unmarked Theme usually occurs when the subject appears in the normal initial position of the clause. A marked Theme, however, occurs when, for emphasis or textual effect, another element is put at the start of the clause. This option can highlight a specific situation, attitude, or information. In many clauses, new information is placed after the Theme, within the Rheme. However, writers may sometimes move other elements, such as objects, adverbial groups, or prepositional phrases, to the beginning of the clause. When the initial element is not the usual subject, the Theme becomes marked. This is an important spot for the author to highlight a detail or present the message in a certain manner.

5.3 The ideational (or experiential) function

Ideational (Experiential) Function: This is the function of language that represents experience. Through this function, language expresses events, actions, states, thoughts, feelings, and relations in both the external world and the inner world of consciousness (ibid).

6. Halliday's Transitivity Framework

According to Halliday, the English transitivity system has three main process types: material processes, mental processes, relational processes. He

also recognizes three additional process types that stand at the boundaries of these major categories: behavioral, verbal, and existential processes (Halliday, 2004:179).

1. Material process clause

- a. Material processes involve actions, events and physical changes. They are expressions of what is done, what happens, and how the persons involved are engaged in processes of action. Halliday explains that a material clause represents a change in the flow of events through some form of energy or action. In this sense, material clauses express meanings of “doing” and “happening,” where one participant performs an action that may affect another participant (Halliday, 1985:103). Material clauses are primarily associated with human experience of the material world for Halliday. They are not, however, limited to physical, visible or concrete actions. They can also be abstract, ways of doing or happening when actions, changes, or events are metaphorically or conceptually expressed.

2. Mental process clause

Mental processes are processes of sensing. They are used for experiences that happen within consciousness, including perception, emotion, desire and cognition. Halliday (2004:197) explains that mental clauses represent how people experience the world internally. Usually, these processes are expressed by verbs like feel, want, like, hate, know, think, fear and see.

3. Relational process clauses

Relational processes express meanings of being, having, and relating. Halliday (2004:210) states that relational clauses function

to characterize or identify participants. These are typically realized by forms of the verb be, but other verbs can also have relational meanings. There are generally three types of relational clauses: intensive, possessive and circumstantial. The latter can be used in two different modes: attributive and identifying. Attributive clauses determine the quality, class or description of the entity and identifying clauses determine or specify the identity of the participant.

4. Behavioral process clauses

Behavioral processes refer to forms of human physiological and psychological behavior. They include actions such as breathing, coughing, smiling, dreaming, looking, and staring. They are processes that occur between material and mental processes, as they are observable outward behaviors but often related to inner experience (Halliday, 1994:139; 2004:250).

5. Verbal processes

Verbal processes are concerned with acts of saying and communicating. They play an important part in various kinds of discourse as they enable writers to incorporate voices, statements, reports, and dialogic relationships into a text. Halliday (2004:252) explains that verbal clauses are especially important in news reporting because they enable journalists to attribute information to particular sources, such as officials, experts, specialists, and eyewitnesses.

7. Passivation

Voice is a grammatical category through which the writer presents the relation between the action and the participants involved in it. This relationship

is expressed in English primarily with the active and passive voice. The difference between the two forms is generally not one of what event is being reported, but rather one of viewpoint. In this way, voice can be used to make either the actor (the doer) or the participant (the affected person) the center of the action (Damen, 1972:50; Quirk et al., 1972:801; Crystal, 1988:72).

English clauses may therefore be organized in either active or passive voice. This can be done by the following examples:

- The committee made the announcement. [ACTIVE]
- The decision was announced by the committee. [PASSIVE]

Normally, in the active voice the subject is the agent or performer of the action. The construction results in a clear responsibility or agency, since the subject is in direct contact with the process (the verb). Passive voice: The grammatical subject does not perform the action. Rather, it is the participant that the action has affected, and the agent can be introduced in a by-phrase later, or dropped altogether (ibid). Fairclough (1992:27) links passivization with ideology as the option between an active and a passive sentence is not always ideologically neutral. The use of passive constructions can serve to obscure the agent, minimize responsibility or to focus on the affected participant or event. Passivization for this reason can fulfill certain discourse functions, and may be a reflection of the writer's ideology.

8. Mood and Modality

The interpersonal function is manifested in the language through one of its main resources – mood. Mood is how speakers and writers arrange clauses into statements, questions, commands, or offers and thus create special relationships with their audience. Modality works with mood by showing the speaker's degree of certainty, obligation, possibility, or commitment toward what is being said (Halliday, 1994:68).

Modality is the space between the extremes of affirming and denying. Modality can be used to indicate that the speaker/writer is not only saying something is true or false, but that they also permit the listener/reader to infer whether something is possible, probable, necessary, obligatory, or doubtful. Therefore, it is related with cognition and attitude as it reflects the perspective of the speaker from which the situation discussed is seen (Colin, 1961:88). Hartman and Stork (1972:142) also describe how in English modality is frequently expressed through modal auxiliaries, modal adverbs and related expressions. Forms such as may, must, possibly, certainly, or constructions like it is certain that enable speakers to communicate their attitude toward a situation in interpersonal communication.

The use of modality is mainly semantic because it reflects the speaker's judgment about the truth, likelihood, or necessity of a proposition (Quirk et al., 1985:219). Thus, modal verbs have more functions than just indicating grammatical form. They are used to convey possibility, prediction, obligation, permission and futurity under specific circumstances of their occurrence.

Modality is frequently expressed in the news through modal verbs like may, could, should, will and must. It can also occur in negative modal forms like may not, could not, should not, will not and must not, or modal adverbs like certainly, probably or possibly Fowler (1991:85) treats modality as a form of comment or attitude because it reveals the stance adopted by the speaker or writer. This position can be made explicit by the use of clear modal language or can be implicit by the general language and structure of the text. Fowler (1991:85) explains that modality may be expressed through different forms, especially those related to truth, obligation, permission, and desirability. These forms enable the writer to show if something is certain, possible, necessary, allowed or wanted.

9. Covid 19: Notion and Existence

Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. It was first detected in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and has since quickly spread across countries and has turned into a global pandemic. The earliest known case has been reported as having occurred on 17 November 2019. As of 7 June 2020, the pandemic has spread on a global scale with over 6.89 million cases reported in 188 countries and territories. In the same period of time, over 399,000 people died and over 3.08 million people were reported to have recovered (Hu, 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 familiarities 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
Belgium	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 deaths 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 employee 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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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).