



## Research Article

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# Critical discourse analysis of BBC and CNN political news' headlines on the Christchurch Mosque Massacre in New Zealand

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**Abstract:** This study aims at investigating the language of politics in news headlines regarding the Christchurch massacre in New Zealand from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective to examine how power and ideology reside in texts. The data of this study consist of 39 headlines extracted from the BBC and CNN online news agencies. The data were analyzed utilizing the socio-cultural approach of Fairclough (2013). Representative examples were discussed in terms of the three stages of Fairclough's approach. The results of the study revealed that the reporters tended to use the passive voice structure in headlines that describe the attacker in conformance with the New Zealand policy, which states that his identity should not be revealed. However, they used the active voice structure while referring to the victims, their families, and the New Zealanders at large in order to emphasize their way of dealing with the attack. In addition, the role of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in her legal capacity was highlighted by shedding light on her pronouncements to fight against terrorism. It was also found that the use of the metaphor as a figurative device entails that terrorism is a rare phenomenon in New Zealand.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, political discourse, news headlines, Christchurch mosque massacre

## 1 Introduction<sup>#</sup>

Language is seen as a vehicle that people utilize in order to promote themselves. Therefore, language has a key influence in the shaping of our realities. One of these actualities is our political reality. Chilton and Schaffner (1997) sustained this claim by stating that politics is unattainable without language. According to them, the way certain social entities use language would create their politics in its broadest sense. The view of how a text manifests itself in social practice comes under the scrutiny of discourse analysis, which has a wide range of activities and is used to reflect a wide range of meanings. Thus, what we can do with discourse analysis is elucidated in Van Dijk's (1993) clarification that discourse does more than providing adequate descriptions of text and context. According to him, discourse analysis provides us with more

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information about the language in use by real speakers, in real situations, more than the information we gain from the study of the abstract syntax or formal semantics.

Van Dijk (1993, 249) viewed the term “Critical Discourse Analysis” (CDA) as “a type of discourse analytical approach that studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in a given social and political context.” Thus, language analysis is seen as an essential instrument to the understanding of political realities and perceptions. This view is supported by Dunmire (2012), whose studies on political discourse heavily rely on CDA methodology.

Within the same scope, Fairclough (1992) supported CDA as an approach that describes discursive strategies and shows how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies. He looks at language as a crucial element in constituting and maintaining social relations of power. His interest is in how a discourse may construct social identities and portray ideologies. This is seen as the notion of discourse as a social practice that is determined and conditioned by the society.

On the other hand, Van Dijk (1996) argued that the crucial task of CDA was to examine the relationships between discourse and social power. In other words, CDA aims to critically analyze social inequality as signaled in discourse, construed as the use of language with particular emphasis on political discourse, which is the main focus of this study.

This study mainly seeks to unravel the type of discourse representation regarding the Christchurch massacre in Western media that is viewed as a form of political discourse, which aims at making others believe certain things or act in certain ways. On Friday, 15 March 2019, one terrorist targeted two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. The first attack took place at the Al Noor Mosque, at 1:40 pm, and was followed by another attack at the Linwood Islamic Center, 15 min later. The terrorist live-streamed the first attack on Facebook. The attacks resulted in the killings of 51 people and the injuring of 49 others (as per the information available on the Radio New Zealand website in 2019, retrieved in 2020). Numerous politicians and world leaders condemned the attack, as the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, described the event as “one of New Zealand’s darkest days.” Official reactions to the event may have catalyzed a new way of looking at Muslims in New Zealand and in the West in general, unlike the negative image of Muslims, which had previously been prevalent in political contexts in Western countries. It is worth mentioning here that scholars from various fields of study have looked at the negative portrayal of Muslims in political contexts such as Shaheen (2003), Ibrahim (2010), and Patil (2014).

According to Poole (2002), the Muslims and the West could be defined as opposites that might be seen in a state of cultural confrontation. This idea has been reinforced by Said (2008), who claimed that the representation of Muslims in Western media had taken a negative turn following the Iranian revolution of 1979. Since then, the wars in Iraq in the nineties and the 9/11 attacks contributed to the inflation of this Islamophobic vision (Ahmed 2012, Ibrahim 2010). In addition, the media coverage and political discourse surrounding Muslims had carried anti-Islamic sentiments worldwide. Followers of the faith were portrayed as heartless, brutal, uncivilized, religious fanatics (Shaheen 2003), or extremists and fundamentalists (Patil 2014), partly through stereotyped depictions of Arabs. In other words, certain stereotypes concerning Muslims rapidly spread across the Western world, which continue to surface as the cultural “other,” and remained the perfect scapegoat for nationalists and xenophobes. What is most significant regarding the context of the Christchurch massacre is that Muslims began to be portrayed, for once, as victims, as opposed to offenders.

The main aim of this study is to investigate the use of discursive strategies in political discourse. More specifically, it focuses on the news headlines reporting on the Christchurch massacre in New Zealand in relation to the portrayal of Muslims in the concerned event. This goal can be achieved by gathering the headlines concerning the event from Western news agencies, namely, BBC and CNN, and processing them through the application of CDA and Fairclough’s (2013) method of analysis. In Section 2, the recent relevant works to this study are presented.

## 2 Literature review

News headlines are viewed as a form of political discourse and have an essential role in attracting readers’ attention and constructing certain ideologies. This is supported by Van Dijk’s view (2016) in which he

claims that news headlines have a summary function and express the topic of a news item where the readers first read the headline because it attracts their attention and then they read the rest of the news reporting. Mallette (1990), cited in Bedřichová and Urbanová (2006, 14), further claimed that there are four basic functions that headlines are required to perform: "(a) to summarize the news; (b) to grade the importance of stories; (c) to act as conspicuous elements in the design of a page; (d) to lure the looker into becoming a reader." Since this study is concerned with the language used in political news headlines, the researchers looked at different studies that investigated the issue from different perspectives.

Pasha (2011) employed CDA to examine how Islamists are represented in Egyptian news reports, specifically, *al-Ahram*, between 2000 and 2005. The researcher examined both discursive and social practices related to the Muslim Brotherhood. The news headlines were analyzed linguistically in terms of transitivity, sourcing, lexical choices, and presupposition. The results showed that the Egyptian authorities have been practicing a constant and systematic strategy of exclusion using sheer power and soft power towards the Muslim Brotherhood in order to cast them out of the political scene in Egypt.

In a different study, Ghazal (2015) utilized CDA to compare and contrast between TV channels' coverage of the uprising in Syria – specifically, the SANA and Al Jazeera English channels. The researcher investigated eight headlines and sub-headlines to examine how ideology resides in news headlines adopting Fairclough's theory that stresses the role of ideology in shaping discourse and to discuss the realization of power in political discourse through the use of language. The researcher tested the validity of Fairclough's theory providing that the ideology of each media deals with the news from its own perspective. Furthermore, the strategies of persuasion and manipulation used in the headlines confirm Fairclough's assumption regarding the reflection of ideology in texts. The study showed that there is a difference in the attitude and policy of each media analyzed. Therefore, the ideology of each media deals with the political discourse from its own perspective. Also, the strategies of persuasion and manipulation that are used in the headlines and subtitles confirmed Fairclough's basic assumption which is concerned with the reflection of ideology in the text. It was found that SANA news agency avows that the groups who carried arms against the Syrian state are terrorists. On the other hand, Aljazeera depicts them as the people who revolt against oppression, corruption, and unemployment. He also claimed that there are ideological dimensions. In addition, it was revealed that the news reporting of Al Jazeera tried to highlight an alliance between the Syrian army and Hezbollah and this is ideologically motivated because they wanted to reveal that the Syrian crisis is a conflict between two ethnic groups.

In a similar scope, Taiwo (2007) conducted a research on language, ideology, and power relations in Nigerian newspaper headlines. The researcher investigated how the use of language in headlines reflects certain ideologies and power relations in 300 newspaper headlines randomly selected from six Nigerian newspapers. To achieve this, the chosen headlines were classified according to two main typologies: the surface structure of the sentence level and the issues addressed. The results showed that the larger percentage of the headlines was on political matters (31%). The researcher argued that the use of directed speech as headlines is very significant. Furthermore, it was observed that headlines are used to represent certain ideologies in Nigerian society, and news reporters use these ideologies to reflect Nigerian people's feelings and opinions.

Other researchers have approached headlines from a different perspective, mainly pragmatic. For instance, Fetzer and Weizman (2006) presented a pragmatic exploration of the interface between media and political discourse. Particularly, the interrelationship between political discourse and the production and interpretation of text and talk. This is done by focusing on how the contextual constraints and requirements of media communication and its presuppositions manifest themselves in naturally occurring discourse, such as mode of transmission, type of audience, participants' roles and identities. Their data consisted of selected papers that originate from a panel on pragmatic aspects of political discourse in the media, held at the International Conference on Language, "The Media and International Communication, Oxford 2001." Then, they took the analysis a step further in order to investigate the symbolic relations maintained between political discourse and the media through which political information, beliefs, and opinions are shaped. They attempted to bridge the gap between a media-specific production and a media-specific reception of text and talk through a pragmatic perspective. They achieved this by shedding some light on the audience's calculation of the speakers' communicative intentions. One of their major findings

was that “voicing and ventriloquizing are employed strategically in order to personalize and dramatize political discourse” (Fetzer and Weizman 2006, 18).

Xie (2018) also studied intertextuality in English news headlines from a pragmatic perspective. The researcher claimed that news headlines are the most eye-catching part of the news article, just as punch lines are in jokes telling, and one of its characteristics is intertextuality. The study was based on descriptions of the main manifestation of intertextuality and the functions of headlines. The researcher classified four main manifestations of intertextuality: direct or indirect speech, paraphrasing or transforming the fixed phrases or proverbs, referring to the historical figures or events and inter-texting with films, songs, literary works, etc. The researcher concluded that intertextuality is the main feature of English news headlines and it increases and enriches the content of information of headlines as well, by making the way of expression lively and more readable and appealing.

Another approach was adopted by Khodabandeh (2007), who has conducted his study to compare and contrast English and Persian newspaper headlines to find major similarities and differences between the two. The researcher collected the data using a week’s corpus of headlines in English and Persian news agencies. The study was conducted over 725 headlines from the two sources chosen randomly. The researcher aimed at examining the syntactic and lexical features used. He adopted two main grammatical frameworks; Quirk et al. (1985) to analyze the English and the Persian headlines. The results of the study showed that the use of dynamic verbs, active voice, short words, declarative sentences, finite clauses, and simple sentences are shared between English and Persian headlines, while they differ in the use of tense forms, headline types, and the omission of words.

Van Dijk (1984) conducted a study on 252 newspapers from 100 countries covering the assassination of president-elect *Bechir Gemayel* of Lebanon on September 1982. He was comparing between the news reporting in developed nations and developing countries. The researcher approached the data both quantitatively and qualitatively. He offered a systematic discourse analysis providing explicit descriptions of thematic structures, conventional superstructures, local meanings and coherence, style, and rhetoric. The researcher concluded that there are major differences between first and third world news reporting in terms of their sources of information. Particularly, the third world press was almost dependent on transnational news agencies while the developed countries had many sources, such as their correspondents in Beirut. It was also found that there are two major factors that explain the homogeneity of news. First, the international shared policies of news discourse and production. Second, the dominant role of the transnational agencies.

It can be seen that the review has confirmed a comprehensive unanimity concerning the significance of ideology and power projection in news headlines reporting and political discourse. However, a gap exists in relation to the focus of this study, namely, the linguistic representations that suggest the ideological projections of Muslims in the eyes of western news agencies reporting and the importance of utilizing CDA as a research method in the analysis of data. As this research pursues to examine the use of language in Western news agencies and the impact of these choices on projection of Muslim minority in New Zealand after Christchurch attacks, the review in this study suggests there is currently a limited understanding with the use of ideology within this context. Therefore, in Section 3, an outline of the theoretical framework is provided and discussed in greater detail. This study has been cognizant by the literature to utilize Fairclough’s (2013) socio-cultural approach of CDA to achieve its aims.

### 3 Theoretical framework

The term CDA is used to refer more specifically to the critical linguistic approach of scholars such as Fairclough (1992), van Dijk (1993), Wodak and Meyer (2001) who find the larger discursive unit of text to be a basic unit of communication. It is seen as a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies how social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk. CDA is a rapidly developing domain of language studies. It considers the context of language use to be crucial to discourse (Wodak and Meyer 2001), giving particular attention to the relation between language and power.

It stems from a critical theory of language that sees the use of language as a form of social practice. All social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means through which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served. It also concerns questions pertaining to interests: How is the text positioned; what is its positioning? All these relate discourse to relations of power. Therefore, the present study would utilize CDA in order to reveal the manipulation of power and social relations in the Christchurch massacre reporting in news' headlines of BBC and CNN.

CDA studies may pay attention to all levels and dimensions of discourse, such as grammar, phonology, syntax, and semantics in addition to style, rhetoric, schematic organization, speech acts, pragmatic strategies, and those of interaction among others. According to Fairclough (1992), each of the existing approaches of linguistics has something to contribute to CDA. Under the umbrella of CDA, there are different approaches. Each approach has its own features that distinguish it from others, although there are common features among these approaches. Fairclough's approach is illustrated in Section 3.1 because it focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of the political discourse. It is identified in a separate section since it is the approach adopted to analyze the data of this study in order to focus on the political and social projections of power and ideologies in the context of New Zealand mosque massacre event.

### 3.1 Fairclough's model of CDA

Fairclough's model of CDA is used to critically analyze the relationship between text, processes, and their sociocultural aspects. Fairclough (2013, 18) describes the discourse view of language as "language as a form of social practice." His approach implies that language is not only a part of society and an external element to it, but also a "socially conditioned" process. More specifically, it is determined by other (non-linguistic) parts of society. Therefore, adopting the social approach in the analysis forces the interpreter not only to analyze texts or processes of production and interpretation, but also the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions. Fairclough (2013) proposed a procedure for CDA that comprises three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. First, the description stage is concerned with the formal properties of the text. Second, the interpretation stage is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction i.e. seeing the text as the product of a process of production and as a resource in the process of interpretation. Third, the explanation stage is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context and their social effects. Fairclough description stage is concerned with the system of options in the discourse types which actual features come from i.e. what is there in the text, and the discourse type(s) that the text is drawing upon. The analysis of data in this study at the level of the description stage is divided into two levels: vocabulary choices and grammatical features which represent the formal properties of the text.

Accordingly, Fairclough (2013) listed ten questions as follows: At the level of vocabulary, four questions are listed: "What experiential values do words have?," "What relational values do words have?" "What expressive values do words have?," and "What metaphors are used?" At the level of grammar, four questions are listed as well: "What experiential values do grammatical features have?," "What relational values do grammatical features have?," "What expressive values do grammatical features have?," and "How are simple sentences linked together?" At the level of textual structures, two questions are listed: "What interactional conventions are used?" and "What larger-scale structures does the text have?" In order to discuss the above-mentioned questions, a distinction should be made between three types of values that formal features may have: experiential, relational, and expressive.

Furthermore, Fairclough (2013) claimed that a feature with an experiential value traces the way in which the text producer's experience of the natural world is represented in the text. It is mainly concerned with contents, knowledge, and beliefs. At the level of vocabulary, the experiential value examines how lexical choices are used in the text in terms of identifying meaning relations between words, the ways words collocate i.e. tendency of a word to co-occur with other words, and classification schemes on different discourse types. At the level of grammar, the experiential values are concerned with the grammatical features of a text, such as nominalization, passivization, negation, and types of processes and participants.



In terms of relational values, he claimed that a relational value traces the social relationship that is enacted through texts. It is mainly concerned with social relations. At the level of vocabulary, relational values refer to how social relations among participants are reflected in the words, such as using formal or informal words and euphemistic expressions. According to Fairclough (2013, 97–8), “euphemism is a word which is substituted for a more conventional or familiar one as a way of avoiding negative values.” At the level of grammar, relational values refer to the grammatical features of the text which reflect social relations among participants as expressed in modality (i.e. necessity, obligation, or probability), pronouns, and the modes of sentences (declarative, interrogative, or imperative).

Finally, Fairclough (2013) argued that a feature with an expressive value traces the text producer’s evaluation of the bit of reality it relates to. It is concerned with subjects and social identities. At the level of vocabulary, relational values refer to the speakers’ and writers’ evaluation (whether it is positive or negative) as expressed in words. At the level of grammar, expressive values are concerned with the speakers’ and writers’ evaluation as reflected in the expressive modality. Table 1 summarizes the differences.

**Table 1:** Differences between experiential, relational, and expressive values of Fairclough (2013)

| Values       | Dimensions of meaning | Structural effect |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Experiential | Contents              | Knowledge/beliefs |
| Relational   | Relations             | Social relations  |
| Expressive   | Subjects              | Social identities |

Interpretation is the second stage of the social approach focusing on the relationship between the formal features of text and discourse. The term interpretation plays an important role in the analysis of data at this stage. It is mainly based on interpreting discourses (whether spoken or written) in terms of background knowledge. In addition, the interpreter focuses on identifying the discursive strategies that are used to reflect specific ideologies and disclose hidden meanings through the use of formal features of text as cues. Fairclough (2013) claimed that Schema is a part of the interpreter interpretive procedures. In addition, it constitutes different types of mental representations of aspects of the world and shares the property of mental representations in general of being ideologically variable. The final stage of the social approach of CDA is the explanation stage, which focuses on identifying the relationship between discourses, social aspects, and social effects. It is also concerned with identifying how sociocultural values are reflected in language. The researchers will make use of the interpretation and explanation stages in the analysis of their data in order to focus on the relationship between discourses, namely, social aspects and social effects. This will further be clarified in Section 4.

## 4 Methodology

This study follows a mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative analyses. It mainly employs Fairclough’s (2013) model of representing discursive strategies to shed light on the different interpretations and understandings of the news. The dataset of this study consists of online news headlines covering the event, which took place on 15 March 2019, in Christchurch, New Zealand from two English news agencies – the BBC and CNN. They were published between 15 and 25 March 2019. The researchers used the following two keywords to filter out the search results: *Christchurch mosque massacre* and *Christchurch shootings*, and accordingly the results were 39. The headlines were distributed as follows: 21 headlines were extracted from CNN (54% of the dataset) and 18 headlines from the BBC (46% of the dataset).

The news agencies were chosen because of their popularity and the higher number of readers according to *similarweb.com*, which monitors 80 million websites to empower users with the insights needed for marketing. The number of visits for each news agency is counted in millions. In 2019, *similarweb* reported that CNN has on average 532.4 million visitors per month, while the BBC averages 375.8 million visitors monthly, as illustrated in Table 2.

The dataset of this study was analyzed by discussing representative examples of the headlines that describe the Christchurch mosque massacre critically utilizing Fairclough’s model. The headlines were

**Table 2:** Monthly visits of the selected news agencies according to Similarweb.com (2019)

| Agency         | CNN           | BBC           |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Monthly visits | 532.4 million | 375.8 million |

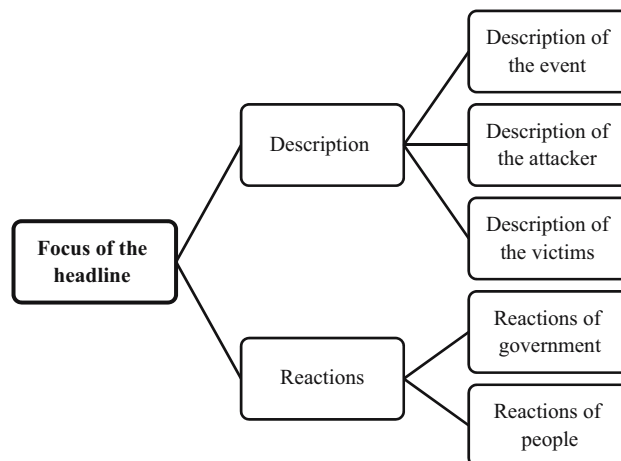
categorized into five groups – description of the event, victims, and the attacker, as well as reactions of government and people. All the headlines in each category were studied to determine the pattern they constitute in relation to the experiential, expressive, and relational values in them.

The proposed categorization of the news headlines was done on the basis of their focus as explained in Figure 1. The news headlines were classified in order to identify the situation of the Christchurch mosque massacre in terms of a set of activity types such as: first, “what happened?” which draws attention to the description of the event. Second, “what caused it” which brings focus to the description of the attacker. Third, “what immediate effects did it have?” which sheds light on the description of the victims. Fourth, “what was done to deal with it?” which brings the readers’ attention to the reactions of people. Fifth, “what longer-term outcomes or consequence does it have?” which would determine the reactions of the government. According to Fairclough (2013), these activity types would make it possible to judge how the headlines were arranged in a predictable social order and to reveal the schema of this arrangement (Table 3).

The data analysis was carried out in correspondence with Fairclough’s (2013) three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. The analysis of the headlines’ categories was presented in a form of summative analysis where the selected headlines were discussed in terms of their formal features, specifically, their experiential, expressive, and relational values, which correspond to Fairclough’s stage of description. The abovementioned formal features are discussed as cues to reflect certain ideologies as well as disclose hidden meanings in the headlines in order to interpret them in accordance with the second stage of Fairclough’s model. In addition, some light is shed on social aspects and social effects to identify how certain sociocultural values are reflected in language, which in turn resembles the explanation stage of Fairclough.

## 5 Discussion and results

The selected headlines were divided according to their focus into two main categories and five minor ones. This division aims at identifying the situation in terms of distinctive categories, which are recognized within a particular social order (schema). This is illustrated in Figure 1.



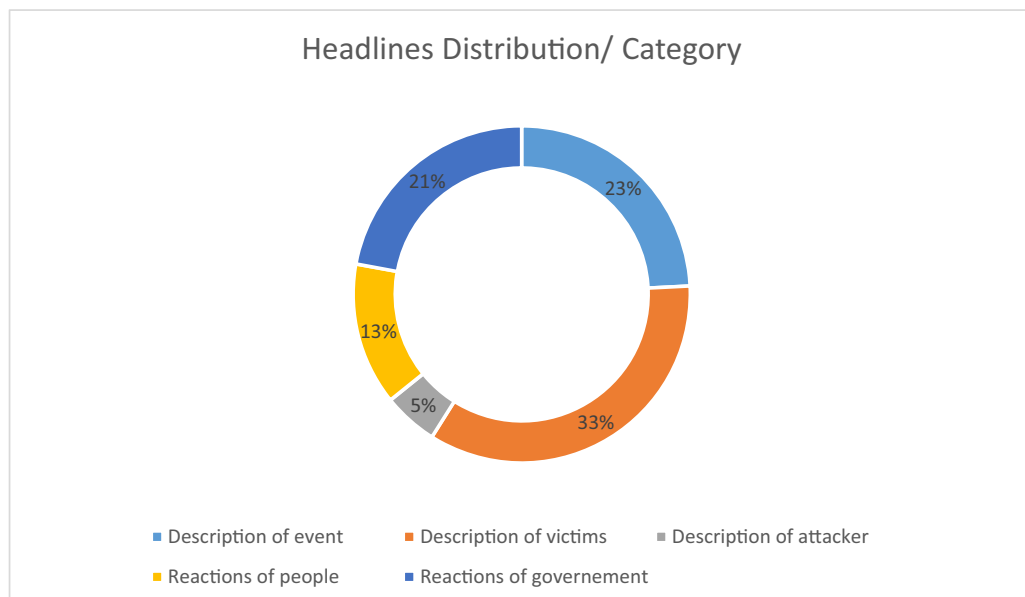
**Figure 1:** Headline categories according to their focus.

According to Fairclough (2013), a schema is a representation of a particular type of activity in accordance with predictable elements and a predictable sequence. This is illustrated in Fairclough's second stage in his three-dimensional model (see Section 3.1). For further illustration, see Table 3. In the right-hand column of the table, under the heading category, the researchers have listed five major domains of the headlines according to their focus, which relate to five predictable social orders located in the left-hand column of the table under the heading "social order." The headlines are presented in the central columns. It is noted that the social order in which the categories appear is overlapping, in the sense that a single category can appear in more than one place.

**Table 3:** Distinctive categories of the headlines in terms of social orders

| Social order (schema)                               | Headline   | Agency | Category                       |
|---|--|--------|--------------------------------|
| 1. What happened?                                   | <i>"Scenes from one of New Zealand's 'darkest days'"</i>   | CNN    | 1. Description of the event    |
|   | <i>"Mosque attacks leave New Zealand in shock"</i>   | BBC    |                                |
| 2. What caused it?                                  | <i>"Attacker was lone gunman"</i>  | BBC    | 2. Description of the attacker |
|   | <i>"Mosque attacker charged with terrorism"</i>  | CNN    |                                |
| 3. What immediate effects did it have?              | <i>"49 people were killed and more than 20 genuinely injured in a fear assault on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on Friday"</i> | CNN    | 3. Description of the victims  |
|   | <i>"My father took a bullet for me"</i>  | BBC    |                                |
| 4. What was done to deal with it?                   | <i>"Women show headscarf solidarity"</i>   | BBC    | 4. Reactions of people         |
|   | <i>"Jewish group reciprocates kindness to the Muslim community in New Zealand after massacre"</i>  | CNN    |                                |
| 5. What longer-term outcomes or consequence it had? | <i>"Ardern vows never to say gunman's name"</i>  | BBC    | 5. Reaction of politicians     |
|   | <i>"New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern confirms gun law reform after mosque massacre"</i>   | CNN    |                                |

In the context of this study, the data analysis proceeds according to the categorization proposed above. It starts with description of the victims, description of the event, reactions of the government, reactions of people, and description of the attacker, respectively. This arrangement was based on the frequency of headlines in each category as shown in Figure 2. The figure shows the most frequent category is the description of victims (at 33%) followed by the description of the event (23%). Then, the category on the reactions of the government is the third most frequent (21%) followed by the reactions of people with a percentage of (13%). Finally, the least frequent category was the description of the attacker with only 5%.



**Figure 2:** The headlines distribution in each category.



The analysis below tackles the category of headlines that deals with the description of the victims (which was the most frequent). There were a total of 14 headlines from the two news agencies. The selected headlines represent a summative analysis of the description of the victims category.

### 5.1 Description of the victims in the headlines

| No. | Headline  | Source |
|-----|---|--------|
| 1.  | <i>“49 people were killed and more than 20 genuinely injured in a fear assault on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on Friday”</i>                | CNN    |
| 2.  | <i>“Dozens of people were killed and many others were seriously injured Friday afternoon when two mosques were attacked in Christchurch, New Zealand”</i> | CNN    |
| 3.  | <i>“First victim named in New Zealand mosque attacks”</i>   | CNN    |
| 4.  | <i>“Forty-nine people have been killed and 48 wounded in shootings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand”</i>                                       | BBC    |
| 5.  | <i>“Fifty people died and dozens were injured in the attacks on two mosques in Christchurch on 15 March”</i>  | BBC    |
| 6.  | <i>“Fifty people died”</i>  | BBC    |
| 7.  | <i>“A father and son from Syria have been buried in New Zealand”</i>  | BBC    |

The grammatical features of these headlines have an experiential value in the sense that the objects in headlines (1–7) are turned into subjects of equivalent passive sentences through the process of passivization. This can be interpreted as a discursive strategy that leaves causality and agency unclear and present the actions of *“killing, injuring, wounding, naming, dying, and burying”* with no responsible agents. The absence of the agents in these cases explains that the news agencies have attempted to highlight the patients i.e. the victims. It was found that the reporters avoided mentioning the name of the attacker but focusing instead on those who were lost. This is evident in Jacinda Ardern’s speech *“But he will, when I speak, be nameless.”* This conforms to Nordlund (2003) where he states that in newspaper headlines the role of a participant may be emphasized, minimized, or omitted entirely. Thus, the strategy of passivization has been employed by CNN and BBC reporters ideologically to give importance to the victims in order to show the intensity of human damage. Furthermore, the number of casualties is seen as a high kill count for such an attack in the sense that most of the attacks in New Zealand’s modern history did not compare to this number of victims.

At the level of lexical choices, it can be seen that CNN’s headlines (1, 2) used the adverbs *“genuinely and seriously”* to modify the verb *“injured.”* This highlights more expressive value in the process of the news agency’s reporting than the headlines reported by the BBC (4, 5, 6, 7) in the sense that they better evaluate the gravity of the attack. The dramatization of the event through the choices made with the adverbs can explain the relationship between the style of CNN reporting and its social effects to focus on the victims. This comes again in response to Jacinda Ardern’s entreating the people of New Zealand to focus on the victims as she stated *“And to others I implore you: speak the names of those who were lost, rather than the name of the man who took them.”*

| No. | Headline  | Source |
|-----|---|--------|
| 8.  | <i>"A father of 4 confronted the New Zealand shooter"</i>         | CNN    |
| 9.  | <i>"Cricket journalist recounts harrowing day in New Zealand"</i> | CNN    |
| 10. | <i>"Man describes confronting New Zealand shooting suspect"</i>   | CNN    |
| 11. | <i>"My father took a bullet for me"</i>                           | BBC    |
| 12. | <i>"Victim's brother speaks of pain"</i>                          | BBC    |
| 13. | <i>"I lost a best friend in the New Zealand attack"</i>           | BBC    |
| 14. | <i>"Cricket journalist recounts harrowing day in New Zealand"</i> | BBC    |

Unlike the headlines above, the recurrent structural pattern here shows an experiential value in the sense that the actions are presented with responsible agents. The representation of the agents, in such cases, highlights the responsibility for their actions. Al-badawi and Al Najjar (2021) argued that activation as a discursive strategy is used in news headlines to present the agents with full control over and responsibility for their actions. In addition, relational values are established between the participants i.e. father to son (victim), brother to victim, and friend to his best friend (victim) through the use of a declarative mode of sentences. The relationship in headlines (8, 11) is interpreted as one that underlies the father's self-sacrifice because he risked his life and jumped in front of the bullets to save the life of his son. This can be explained in the sense that the father's image is portrayed explicitly as a protector and defender where their role is dramatized by referring to their patriarchal role. Moreover, in headlines (12, 13) the agents are represented by "*brother*" and the first person pronoun "I" as it refers to a person who one of the victims in that event was his best friend. These choices at the level of vocabulary express the struggles and sufferings that the victims, their friends as well as their families, have experienced. Also, in headlines (10, 12, 14), the use of the verbs "*describes, speak and recounts*" show the agents' expression of grief and panic. This idea is further emphasized by using the adverbial prepositional phrase "of pain" and the adjectival phrase "harrowing day." While the attacker is projected implicitly in headlines (8, 11) as the one who has been confronted in a brave and determined way which ideologically juxtaposes the roles of the "hero" versus the "villain."

The next section tackles the second category in terms of headlines' frequency. The total number of the headlines in this category is eight.

## 5.2 Description of the event in the headlines

| No. | Headline  | Source |
|-----|---|--------|
| 15. | <i>"Mosque attacks leave New Zealand in shock"</i>  | BBC    |
| 16. | <i>"New Zealand mourns victims"</i>   | BBC    |
| 17. | <i>"A quiet country reels after a horrific massacre and struggles to find its new normal"</i> | CNN    |
| 18. | <i>"New Zealand PM's office received shooter's 'manifesto' minutes before attack"</i>         | CNN    |

The experiential value of these headlines is reflected in their structural pattern of activation where the verbs of "*leaving, struggling, mourning, reeling and receiving*" are represented with responsible agents "*Mosque attacks, New Zealand, a quiet country and New Zealand PM's office*" by giving them animate roles. On the other hand, the expressive and relational values are established by using a metaphorical device of giving animacy to inanimate agents through a declarative mode of sentences; "*New Zealand,*" in headlines (15, 16) and "*a quiet country*" in headline (17) i.e. the ability of the country to "*get shocked, mourn and reel*" by means of personification. This metaphorical use explains the ideological goal of the news agencies' reporting to reflect on a positive relationship between the New Zealand community and all its denominations with the victims and dramatizing their sympathy regardless of race or creed.

| No. | Headline   | Source |
|-----|--|--------|
| 19. | <i>"Scenes from one of New Zealand's 'darkest days'"</i>                   | CNN    |
| 20. | <i>"Three terrorism trends converged in sickening New Zealand attacks"</i> | CNN    |
| 21. | <i>"Death toll rises to 50 in New Zealand mosque shootings"</i>            | CNN    |
| 22. | <i>"How the Christchurch terrorist attack was made for social media"</i>   | CNN    |

The grammatical feature in which headline (19) is cast is that of nominalization. A process is expressed as a noun, as if it were an entity and this has an experiential value in the sense that crucial aspects of the process are left unspecified. Particularly, it is not known who or what is causing loads to be shed i.e. causality is unspecified. Similarly, the processes in headlines (20, 21, 22) are represented without responsible agents by means of passivization, which again highlights issues related to the event itself: *"what happened?"* rather than *"who caused it?"* Additionally, the expressive value is related to the reporters' negative evaluation of using the superlative form *"darkest,"* the adjective *"sickening"* and the noun phrase *"death toll"* which are interpreted as a means to enhance and dramatize the seriousness of the attack. Lastly, attributing the day of the attack in headline (19) as *"one of New Zealand's darkest days"* has a relational value that is ideologically significant, and projects New Zealand as a peaceful country that does not have a long history with terrorism. In this political context, the use of the above-mentioned values are interpreted and explained in the government's attempt to establish a royal commission of inquiry into its security agencies in the wake of the attacks, which is seen as the deadliest mass massacre in the modern history of New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

Section 5.3 presents a summarized analysis of reactions of the government category; the third category in terms of headlines' frequency in which the total number is eight.

### 5.3 Reactions of the government in the headlines

| No. | Headline   | Source |
|-----|--|--------|
| 23. | <i>"Ardern vows never to say gunman's name"</i>  | BBC    |
| 24. | <i>"This is one of New Zealand's darkest days': Prime Minister responds to Christchurch mass shooting"</i> | BBC    |
| 25. | <i>New Zealand rushes to identify Christchurch terror attack victims</i>                                   | CNN    |

The recurrent grammatical features in these headlines have an experiential value that is manifested through the process of activation where the actions *"vows, responds and rushes"* are presented with responsible agents *"Ardern, Prime Minister and New Zealand."* This in turn projects the Prime Minister and the government of New Zealand as having will over her actions. The expressive value, at the level of grammar, is indicated by using the declarative mode of sentences whereby Ardern is speaking in her capacity as a Prime Minister that the identity of the attacker should never be mentioned but rather showing her sympathy towards the victims. At the level of vocabulary, the expressive value is also represented by the verbalization processes *"vows"* which interprets why Jacinda Ardern has made her vow not to mention the identity of the attacker and *"responds"* as she attributed the day of the attack as *"one of New Zealand's darkest days."* This explains the attempt of the reporters to put focus on the doer of the action. In addition to that, a relational value is entrenched in the use of the lexical choice of the superlative form of the adjective *"darkest"* to offer a negative

<sup>1</sup> See "Mosque attacks timeline: 18 min from first call to arrest," available at: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/387248/mosque-attacks-timeline-18-minutes-from-first-call-to-arrest> (accessed on 25 August 2020).

evaluation of the event as a reaction from the government's end. This metaphorical use explains the ideological motivation of the government to over dramatize their reaction towards the event.

| No. | Headline   | Source |
|-----|--|--------|
| 26. | <i>"New Zealand gun laws will change, PM says"</i>   | BBC    |
| 27. | <i>"How mass killings have changed gun laws"</i>   | BBC    |
| 28. | <i>"Seven arrested for hate crimes after New Zealand mosque shootings"</i>                       | BBC    |
| 29. | <i>"New Zealand PM: 'Our gun laws will change'"</i>  | CNN    |
| 30. | <i>"New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern confirms gun law reform after mosque massacre"</i> | CNN    |

At the level of grammatical features, the experiential value in headlines (26, 29, 30) is expressed through activation by depicting the actions of reforming the gun law in New Zealand with a responsible agent (the Prime Minister). In headline (26, 29), the modal auxiliary "will" has an expressive value of certainty towards changing gun laws because it projects the PM as the one who has the power and authority to take such a decision. The relational value is expressed in the Prime Minister's evaluation i.e. feeling sure about changing the gun laws in New Zealand. This is evident in the use of the modal "will" in headline (26, 29) and the verb "confirms" in headline (30).

This use identifies the relationship between the reporting of the headlines and their social effects which can be seen as a promise by Jacinda Ardern and the New Zealand government, based on their institutional capacity to carry out actions that would again include their use of political power to reform gun laws. In the socio-political context, this is also perceived as a longer-term preventive measure for the security of New Zealand's society. Thus, this explains why 6 days after the attack, the New Zealand government announced a ban on all military-grade semi-automatics and assault rifles in the country. This decision was based on the agreement of the Cabinet, following a meeting on Monday 18 March 2019; 72 h after the attack.<sup>2</sup>

Section 5.4 proceeds with the fourth category which analyses the headlines that tackle the reactions of people. The total number of the headlines was five.

#### 5.4 Reactions of people in the headlines

| No. | Headline  | Source |
|-----|---|--------|
| 31. | <i>"Women show headscarf solidarity"</i>  | BBC    |
| 32. | <i>"Jewish group reciprocates kindness to the Muslim community in New Zealand after massacre"</i>         | CNN    |
| 33. | <i>"Within hours of the Christchurch mosque attacks, people of various faiths rallied around Muslims"</i> | CNN    |
| 34. | <i>"American Muslims are horrified by the New Zealand attacks"</i>  | CNN    |
| 35. | <i>"The New Zealanders rallying to help victims"</i>  | CNN    |

The experiential value in these headlines is shown in their grammatical features through using the discursive strategy of activation as the processes "show, reciprocates, rallied, horrified and rallying" (which show behavior) are presented with responsible agents. Moreover, expressive and relational values in headlines

<sup>2</sup> See "New Zealand bans military style semi-automatics and assault rifles," available at: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-zealand-bans-military-style-semi-automatics-and-assault-rifles> (accessed on 25 August 2020).

(31, 23, 33) are expressed where the lexical choice of the term “*headscarf*” in headline (31) relates to Muslims’ doctrine, particularly; women which is a form of solidarity at the level of gender. Meanwhile, headlines (32, 33) present the reporters’ positive evaluation of the words “*reciprocates and rallied*” which show that the Jewish community in addition to different religious groups sympathize with the Muslim minority in New Zealand; and exemplifies the religious tolerance among them. This is intended to reflect on the solidarity of the people of New Zealand. This is explained in the social context where Christchurch residents offered food and flowers to the survivors, their families, and other members of the local Muslim community. Others went to the central library of Christchurch to write messages in a condolence book.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, headline (35) represents the reaction of nationals of New Zealand. The grammatical structure of this headline has an experiential value in the sense that it represents the action “*rallying*” with a responsible agent. The expressive value is shown through the use of the declarative sentence mode and it is expressed at the level of vocabulary by choosing “*the New Zealanders*” as an agent of the sentence. This ideologically explains the solidarity of the people of New Zealand regardless of their religion, race which is held as a policy by the country. This idea is further reinforced by the prepositional phrase “*to help victims*” which shows their good endeavors. The last category below represents analysis of the headlines that tackle “Description of the attacker.”

## 5.5 Description of the attacker in the headlines

| No. | Headline  | Source |
|-----|---|--------|
| 36. | “ <i>Attacker was lone gunman</i> ”   | BBC    |
| 37. | “ <i>Mass shooting suspect obtained his guns legally, New Zealand prime minister says</i> ” | CNN    |
| 38. | “ <i>Mosque attacker charged with terrorism</i> ”   | CNN    |
| 39. | “ <i>What to make of New Zealand killer’s ‘manifesto’</i> ”                                 | CNN    |

The experiential value in headlines (36, 37) is reflected in the grammatical process of activation, which sheds light on the attacker. In addition, the copular “*was*” in headline (36) establishes a relational process which attributes the phrase “*lone gunman*” to the identity of the attacker. On the other hand, in headline (38), CNN uses passivization as a discursive strategy to focus on the person “*mosque attacker*” who is being convicted with terrorism. The lexical choice in headline (36) that is used to designate the attacker “*gunman*” has the same semantic equivalence to an aggressor or a terrorist, which indicates an expressive value at the vocabulary level. Similarly, the relational value in headline (38) is established between the “*attacker*” and “*terrorism*” which demonstrates a negative evaluation of the news agency that the attacker is not a normal criminal but a terrorist. However, headline (39) is an exclamative sentence which reflects relational and expressive values as it indicates that the killer did not only kill Muslims in the mosque but also the spirit of New Zealand. This was done by means of overgeneralization through attributing the attacker as a “*New Zealand killer*” even though he is not a New Zealander. This is explained in his motivation to terrorism, which is evidenced by the attacker’s attempt to contact with far-right organizations such as *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* about 2 years before the attack. It is also evident in his manifesto where the attacker says that he took true inspiration from “*Anders Breivik*,” the Norwegian far-right terrorist who killed 77 people in a bomb-and-gun attack in Oslo in 2011.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See “New Zealand bans military style semi-automatics and assault rifles,” available at: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-zealand-bans-military-style-semi-automatics-and-assault-rifles> (accessed on 25 August 2020).

<sup>4</sup> See “Christchurch Attacks: Suspect Took Inspiration From Former Yugoslavia’s Ethnically Fueled Wars,” available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/christchurch-attacks-yugoslavia-tarrant-inspiration-suspect-new-zealand/29823655.html> (accessed on 25 August 2020).

## 6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to understand how the reporters' linguistic choices in their headlines regarding the Christchurch mosque massacre contribute to meaning-making. The researchers have sought to trace the different representations of the event in online media and the ideological values behind them. To this end, the CDA was adopted, more specifically the socio-cultural approach of Fairclough (2013), whereby discourse is understood as socially constitutive and socially conditioned by constituted subjects, objects, and processes. In accordance with the socio-cultural approach the headlines were first described in terms of the experiential, expressive, and relational values in them, then these values are interpreted to reveal ideologies and hidden meanings in the headlines. Finally, lights are shed on social aspects and effects to explain how certain socio-cultural values are reflected in language. As shown in the analysis, the most frequent category of the headlines was "Description of the victims" (33%). It was found that the use of passivization as a discursive strategy has a high frequency of (75%) of the analyzed headlines in this category. This use was ideologically motivated to omit the identity of the attacker and highlight the atrocity of the attack. On the other hand, it was also found that activation has a less frequency of (25%), and it is used as a technique of over-dramatization to the victims' heroic role by shedding light on their actions as defenders and protectors of themselves and their families. This confirms with Fetzer and Weizman (2006) claims that voicing is employed strategically in order to dramatize political discourse. The second frequent category of the headlines was "Description of the event" (23%). In the headlines of this category, metaphor and nominalization were ideologically used as discursive strategies. The metaphorical device of giving animacy to inanimate patients was used to show the New Zealanders sympathy and their positive relationship with the victims in the aftermath of the attack. Additionally, the strategy of nominalization was used to leave causality unspecified which in turn emphasize the attack rather than perpetrator. The third frequent category was "Reactions of the government" (21%) in which verbalization processes were used in order to emphasize their power and ability to control and maintain the situation. Also, the strategy of activation was used in the headlines highlighting the role of the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern as the main person to represent the government. The fourth frequent category was the one that highlights the "Reactions of the people" (13%). In the headlines of this category, activation was used as a discursive strategy to show the positive behavior of different groups of people of different genders, origins, and faiths which ideologically characterizes the New Zealand society at large in expression of solidarity with the victims. Furthermore, although the category that describes the victims was the most frequent, the fifth category "Description of the attacker" was the least one with the percentage of (5%) only. This can be seen as an adoption of the government's strategy of not discussing the identity of the attacker so as not to grant him public visibility. On the one hand, activation was ideologically used as a discursive strategy to attribute the attacker as a "lone gunman." On the other hand, passivization was used to highlight the attacker's motivations and to express his relationship with terrorism. Finally, through their representation of Muslims, these Western news agencies recognized the Muslim community as social partners, as they were described in the media content pertaining to the Christchurch mosque massacre positively and they came to be seen as more caring.

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