

# Language Manipulation in CNN's Presentation of the Syrian Crisis: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Omar Ali Wally Atatfa - Salih Mahdi Adai  
College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon

## Abstract

This research is about the critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA) of the news which tackles the Syrian crisis in the American Cable News Network (henceforth, CNN). It aims to show how language is manipulated in the reports that focus on the Syrian crisis on CNN, as well as find out the effect of Russia's intervention in Syria on the Syrian News in the channel. To achieve its aim, the study hypothesizes that 1) CNN utilises discursive strategies in order to manipulate language for ideological purposes that serve the channels orientation, and 2) Russia's military involvement in Syria affect the way CNN reports its news. In order to test its hypothesis, the study adopts the following procedures: 1) present a theoretical background about the field of CDA. 2) Analyze (6) report from CNN that tackle the Syrian crisis, (3) reports before and (3) after the Russian involvement. 3) Rely on van Dijk's In-group and Out-group presentation, as well as the Discursive Strategies found in his model Ideological Discourse Analysis (1995) and in analyzing the data.

**Keywords:** CDA, Manipulation, Syrian Crisis

## 1. Introduction

Regarding the Syrian crisis, it started in 2011 as protests which called for the removal of the Syrian government which is led by Bashar Al-Assad. Then, those protests escalated to a conflict between the protestors and the government's official forces. Consequently, it turned into a war between those who want the removal of the regime and the regime itself (Web source 1). On September 30 2015, the Russian military was sent to Syria in order to participate in the war on 'terrorism' (Web Source: 2).

However, the modern concept of war is not only that in which guns and fighter jets are used. Rather, it is necessary that there is a supportive media. The role of media is to fuel the public with the biased knowledge about what is going on convince the audience. That is to say, plant the desired thoughts into their minds and let them think that this is the reality. This is the case in the Syrian crisis which has been dealt with excessively in the media. For, in covering this crisis, CNN spares no effort to present news which benefits its ideological affiliation, i.e., follow the back then policy of the U.S. which was against the regime and its Russian ally.

Therefore, the current study focuses on analysing the language of the Syrian crisis news reports CNN. In other words how it conveys, implicitly and/or explicitly, its ideologies and manipulate the truth in order to make it suitable for their orientations.

## 2. CDA

This section introduces the field of CDA in terms of its definitions, principles, aims, and the major concepts exploited within this field.

### 2.1 Definitions of CDA

The definitions of CDA range between the greatly political which 'explain existing conventions as the outcome of power relations and power struggle' (Fairclough 1989: 2) to the mild which merely provide answers to questions about the relationships between language and society (Rogers 2005: 36).

According to Fairclough (1995:134-135), CDA is a type of discourse analysis which seeks to systematically discover the frequently opaque relations of '*causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes*' which are molded by associations of power and struggles over power.

However Wodak (1995: 204) sees that CDA is a way of analyzing not only opaque relations, but '*opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control*' which may be found in language. She also sees that what makes CDA different is its emphasis on '*(a) the relationship between language and society, and (b) the relationship between analysis and practices analysed*' (Wodak, 1997: 173).

Van Dijk (1998:1) considers CDA to be a type of research that analyzes discourse which mainly focuses on how social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in sociopolitical contexts. Therefore, its aim is to discover and, ultimately, resist social inequality.

Luke (2002: 100) adds that that CDA is not limited to the linguistic analysis. Rather, it linguistic, semiotic and other tools in the microanalysis of texts and the macroanalysis of social formations, institutions and power relations that the texts "index and construct".

Accordingly, most definitions of CDA concentrate on the relationship that connects discourse and power (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258).

## 2.2 Principles of CDA

CDA as a school of thought (or 'paradigm') has a number of principle, on which CD analysts depend in their endeavor. Van Dijk (1995:1) puts a detailed list of those principles that 'characterize' CDA. The following are some of them:

1. CDA does not represent a school, a field or a subdiscipline of discourse analysis, but rather an explicitly critical approach, position or stance of studying text and talk.
2. Historically and systematically, CDA is part of a broad spectrum (of usually rather marginal or marginalized) critical studies in the humanities and the social sciences, e.g., in sociology, psychology, etc.
3. CDA pays attention to all levels and dimensions of discourse, like grammar, style, rhetoric, etc.
4. CDA is not only concerned with verbal discourse, but also to other semiotic dimensions of communicative events.
5. When CDA studies discourse in society, then its interest is to emphasize the relations of power, dominance and inequality and how these are reproduced or resisted by social group members through text and talk.

In a similar line, Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 80-271) mention a number of tenets that CDA scholars should take into account:

1. CDA is concerned with social problems.
2. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
3. Discourse has ideological implications.
4. Discourse is a type of social practices.
5. Discourse is related history.
6. Discourse organizes beliefs and society.
7. Power associations are discursive.

Wodak and Meyer (2008: 3) indicate that CDA is driven by problems; therefore, it should be *eclectic* and *interdisciplinary*. Moreover, they (ibid.) add that CDA has a common interest in decoding the mystification of ideologies and power by investigating, systematically, the semiotic data, whether it is written, spoken or visual data.

## 2.3 Aims of CDA

The aim of CDA is to '*offer a different perspective of theorizing analysis and application throughout the whole field*' (van Dijk, 1998: 2). In this respect, Wodak and Meyer (2001: 2) state that the aim of CDA is to critically investigate social inequality '*as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse)*'. Therefore, the majority of scholars in CDA follow Habermas's claim that 'language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power' (ibid.).

However, van Dijk (1998: 2) realizes that in order to fulfill its aims, CDA needs a number of requirements, such as the following:

- 1- It has to be better than other research in order to be accepted.
- 2- It should concentrate on social problems and political issues, rather than other issues.
- 3- It should be multidisciplinary in order to be adequate.
- 4- It should explain, not describe, the discourse structures according to the features of social interaction, particularly, social structure.
- 5- It should emphasize how discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of power and dominance in society.

Similarly, Wodak and Meyer (2009:7) add that CDA should observe and lead the human language and behavior, since the critical theories provide people with essential knowledge that liberates them from any kind of mastery whatsoever.

## 2.4 Major Concepts of CDA

CDA manifests a number of essential concepts. Those include concepts such as *discourse*, *power* and *ideology*, *racism*, *bias*, etc. Those concepts are dealt with in a large number of researches. For instance, Fairclough (1995 a: 95) argues that CDA has within its aims the goal of revealing the hidden connections between texts and social processes, such as *power* and *ideologies* which average people may not easily detect.

The term 'discourse' has various meanings, according to who is doing the research and the different academic cultures. For instance, 'text' and 'discourse' are recognized as different in the Central European context and in Germany, relating to the tradition in text linguistics and rhetoric. However, 'discourse' refers to both

written and spoken texts in the 'English speaking world' (Wodak and Meyer, 2008: 5-7). Fairclough, (1992:3) argues that the term discourse has many overlapping definition which makes it hard to pinpoint a specific definition for it. Yet he (ibid.) indicates that each social situation has its own type of discourse, like 'newspaper discourse, advertising discourse, medical discourse', and the like. After all, the three main aspects that discourse is concerned with are: "(1) anything beyond the sentence, (2) language use, and (3) a broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language" (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999: 1-3; sited in Schiffirin et al., 2001:1).

Regarding power, it is 'a systemic characteristic, a transformative and non-static feature of interaction that is both enacted and contested in every interaction' (Holmes, 2005: 32)'. Accordingly, there is a consistent relation between language and power (ibid.). Similarly, Thomas (2004: 10) states that language is a fundamental tool which may turn power into virtue and conformity to obligation. However, CDA does not look at language as powerful in its own right. Rather, critical discourse analysts argue that those who use the language are powerful (Wodak, 2000: 10). That is why CDA sides with those who are oppressed by such use of power, and analyzes the language of the people who aim to impose their power, ideologies and inequality (ibid.).

As far as Ideology is concerned, a number of academics tackled this concept, each focusing on a certain perspective(s). For example, Thompson (1990, sited in Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 10) talks about the concepts of ideology and culture and the associations between them and particular facets of mass communication. He claims that the concept of ideology first appeared in France in the late eighteenth century (ibid.). As for van Dijk, ideology is not a system of ideas as much as it is 'specific basic frameworks of social cognition with specific social structures and specific cognitive and social functions' (van Dijk, 1995: 21). Moreover, he argues that ideologies are mainly conveyed in discourse and communication, and that also includes non-verbal interaction such as semiotic messages (images, movies, etc.). That is to say, Ideologies take the role of the line between the cognitive representations and the fundamental procedures of discourse and action, on the one hand, and the societal situation and benefits of social groups, on the other hand (ibid.).

### 3. Model of Analysis

This section presents the model adopted in the analysis of the data. The analysis is both qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative analysis relies on van Dijk's Ideological Discourse Analysis (1995b), which tackles the concept of the in-group and out-group p[resentation, and provides a number of discursive strategies which aim to reveal where language is manipulated to serve certain ideas. The quantitative analysis is made by mailing a word count for the two main characters, namely, the refugees and Russia, to find out the variation between the two periods in terms of CNN's presentation of the Syrian crisis.

### 4. Data Analysis

This section is concerned with the analysis of (2) reports taken from the website of CNN. The first report was published on September 10<sup>th</sup> 2015 (before the Russian involvement in Syria), while the second was published on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 (after Russia's involvement).

#### 4.1 Ideological Discourse Analysis

Van Dijk (1995b: 154-57) indicates that discourse is often full of ideological orientations that are embedded and may not be recognized by ordinary people. Therefore, he (ibid.) proposes a number of strategies that could help in revealing the ideological repercussions in those discourses.

1. **Negative lexicalization:** choosing lexical items which have strong negative meaning in describing the others.
2. **Hyperbole:** using exaggerated terms to describe an action or an event.
3. **Compassion move:** sympathizing the helpless victims of the others in order to show that they are brutal.
4. **Apparent Altruism move:** *'Related to the compassion move, this move is used to emphasize understanding for the position or interests of (some of) the Others'* (ibid.).
5. **Apparent Honesty move:** disclaiming any negative statements of the self. This is a well-known move used with phrases such as 'frankly,...' or 'We should not hide the truth, and.. ' and the like.
6. **Negative comparison:** to compare the out-group with a recognized negative person or group so as to emphasize the negative features of the others.
7. **Generalization:** using one person or a small group to be the point of generalization that describes a whole group or category
8. **Concretization:** to use terms that may be visualized in order to talk about the actions of the others in detail.
9. **Alliteration:** *'Phonologically based rhetoric is well-known in tabloid headlines and op-articles, and generally serves to emphasize the importance or relevance of the words thus being marked'* (ibid.).
10. **Warning:** to use fearful terms to frighten the in-group from the out-group. Such as the case of using Doomsday scenarios to demonize the others and waken those who do not take things seriously.

11. **Norm and value violation:** one way in which to show that the Other group is bad is by presenting them as breaking the beliefs and values that human beings hold dear. For example, freedom of expression, human rights, freedom of education, etc.
12. **Presupposition:** presupposition means 'a condition which must be satisfied if a particular state of affairs is to obtain, or (in relation to language) what a speaker assumes in saying a particular sentence, as opposed to what is actually asserted' (Crystal, 2008: 384). This semantic device is used as a tool in the process of positive and negative presentation. That is, in asserting that the presented information is known or part of the common sense, thus does not need to be stated (van Dijk, 1995b: 157).

In this section, the researcher uses those strategies in analyzing (6) news reports taken from CNN:

#### Report 1

The first report by CNN is titled 'Syria's simmering crisis'. It emphasizes the issue of the effect of the Syrian crisis on the Syrian refugee's children and their education.

As far as the strategy of Negative Lexicalisation is concerned, the headline of the report contains the word 'simmering' which means 'to be in a state of incipient development'. Thus, the report refers to the situation as a process of slow cooking. Other words include 'war zone', 'Sadly', 'suffering' and 'unimaginable' ('*They may just have fled a war zone, but Syrian children on recess at the Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan aren't so different from kids elsewhere; Sadly, there's no end in sight for Syria's civil war; The suffering that has taken place in Syria since the civil war started in 2011 has been almost unimaginable*) which aim to shed light on the hardships that the refugees go through, and provoke the West to take action in Syria.

Regarding Hyperbole, the report is uses exaggerated words the like 'lost generation' to refer to the refugee's children education and their unpredictable future ('*Syrian refugees were a country, they would have the lowest rate of educational enrollment in the war; All this means that Syria is facing a lost generation*'). The use of such exaggerated terms aims to raise the public opinion against the Syrian regime and its supporters, by focusing on a very critical issue, i.e., children's education.

According to the Compassion move, CNN's report is about how CNN (hence, the U.S.) feels about the situation in Syria. Cares and sympathy about the education and the future of those children are emphasised. Taking advantage of this strategy, CNN calls the International Community (henceforth, I.C.) to take a step forward and help them.

In terms of the Apparent Altruism move, the report presents the in-group as the selfless side that cares about interests of those refugees and the interests of Syria in general ('*the international community can help ensure education isn't another casualty of the war. And perhaps help lay the foundations for a brighter future*'). In other words, CNN presents its in-group in a positive way.

As for the strategy of Negative Comparison, the report makes use of this move when it compares the situation in Syria to other previous similar events ('*And even when peace is re-established it will take years before many Syrians can return to their homes, given the destroyed infrastructure and residual tensions within society. This isn't unique to the current situation: In protracted refugee crises around the world, the average time until refugees can return home is 17 years*'). This comparison is made to make an image of the future consequences of crisis in Syria which CNN blames the regime for.

As far as Generalization is concerned, the report talks about a specific refugee camp 'Zaatari camp' in Jordan in which CNN focuses on the children's education issue. However, CNN generalizes the issue from that particular camp to other camps not only in Jordan but also other countries ('*Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt*'; '*All this is leaving education in crisis across the host countries*'). Moreover, CNN blames this on the 'civil war'.

In terms of the strategy of Concretization, the report begins with an imaginable description of the daily lives at the Syrian refugees' camps ('*They may just have fled a war zone, but Syrian children on recess at the Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan aren't so different from kids elsewhere. Boys run around, wrestle and laugh outside a school comprised of tidy portable buildings on flat, rocky desert*'). Such visual description has the goal of arousing the emotions in the viewers in order to serve a certain ideology, that is, seek for the cause of this whole mess and hate it.

Regarding the strategy of Warning, CNN warns the I.C. of the Syrian refugees' children crisis. The most powerful expression used to express warning is 'lost generation' ('*All this means that Syria is facing a lost generation*') which aims at a sensitive issue. It tackles the emotion of the world in order to make a consensus of negative feelings against that who CNN blames for this 'lost generation', i.e., the regime.

The Norm and Value Violation strategy is also used in this report, as the entire report talks about an issue that is serious and critical, i.e., children education. The human rights bestow all children in the world to have education and there is a global effort to provide education to as many children as possible. Thus, when CNN tackles this issue in a specific camp and generalize it, it conveys a message that the cause of this mess is the one who was the reason behind the immigration crisis. In CNN's view, that is the Syrian regime. Thus, Assad and his government infringed the norms and values that the world holds and appreciates.

## Report 2

The report's headline is '*Four years of hell: Aid groups say world is failing Syria's civilians*' which gives a glimpse to the overall topic of the report, i.e., the sufferings of the Syrian people.

As far as Negative Lexicalisation is concerned, the report includes words that carry negative connotations, like 'hell' 'killed', 'torture', etc., (*'Four years of hell: At least 220,000 people are estimated to have been killed in four years of war; a halt to attacks on civilians, an end to kidnapping and torture and the lifting of sieges of populated areas*, among others) which aim to project the situation in Syria in a negative way.

Regarding Hyperbole, CNN uses hyperbolic terms to refer to the crisis in Syria, particularly, the difficulties that the refugees and civilians encounter in Syria and in the refugee camps. For example, the report refers to the situation as a 'human calamity' (*'The Syrian civil war is a human calamity and it's getting worse'*). Moreover, the report hyperbolically uses statistics and numbers to represent the Syrian situation and the issue of refugees (*'At least 220,000 people killed -- more than one every 10 minutes. Millions displaced; More than 76,000 people were killed in the violence in Syria last year, nearly 18,000 of them civilians, according to the observatory'*) which do not make sense.

According to the Compassion Move, the report generally aims to show sympathy towards the victims of the other. In one of its paragraphs, the report shows that those victims are the victims of the Syrian regime (*'The conflict has brought allegations of atrocities carried out by al-Assad's forces and enabled ISIS' savage rule over parts of the country'*), therefore, CNN tries to show that it sympathises the victims of the out-group.

Concerning the Concretization strategy, the Syrian situation is presented as 'a catalog of misery'. This 'catalog' contains numbers and statistics in a that reflect a pessimistic picture (*'The number of people in need of humanitarian aid in Syria increased by nearly a third during 2014, rising to 12.2 million from 9.3 million at the end of 2013; That includes a jump of more than a million children in need, up from 4.3 million in December 2013 to 5.6 million in December 2014; Aid convoys are finding it harder to get to the people who need their help, reaching 63% fewer beneficiaries in 2014 than in 2013'*). Hence, the situation is put into a detailed visualised image.

As for the strategy of Warning, the report utilises certain numbers and statistics to say that this could be the general case in that part of the world (*'We're worried that, as we approach the fourth anniversary, this could turn into a situation of acceptance -- 'Oh, that's just the way it is over there' -- and that mustn't be,'*).

Norm and Value Violation strategy is also present in the report. For, the report shows that what happens in Syria is a revolution against the norms and values that all humans appreciate and respect. Displacement, deaths, starvation, etc. are issues that humans should not tolerate; however, they are happening in Syria because of the Syrian regime, as CNN sees it.

In terms of Presupposition, the sentence '*As the war threatens to sow further chaos in the region, the United States and its allies are bombing ISIS targets in Syria and working to arm and train rebel groups'* presupposes that America's role in Syria is the only one which is positive, and it is to help. The aim is to show the in-group's positive side.

## Report 3

The report's headline is '*U.S. to take at least 10,000 more Syrian refugees*'. Thus, its overall meaning is a controversy about the number of refugees to be taken inside the U.S. Hence, the report talks about a 'proposal' to admit 10,000 Syrian and more refugees due to 'pressure' on the U.S.

In terms of Negative Lexicalisation, the report addresses the Syrian crisis with a quoted word which carries negative connotations (*'James Clapper said Wednesday that the current migration is a "disaster of biblical proportions" that poses an opportunity for terrorist groups such as ISIS to "infiltrate operatives among these refugees."'*).

According to the Compassion move, CNN represented the its in-group as a compassionate, sympathiser whose aim is to help those who have fled the war (*'In all, about 1,500 Syrian refugees have been admitted to the United States since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, the vast majority of them this fiscal year'*). This compassion contributes to the positive presentation of the self and the negative presentation of the other.

In terms of Apparent Altruism move, the report shows the Obama in a positive image, allowing more numbers of Syrian refugees to enter the U.S. (*'President Barack Obama has ordered his administration to "scale up" the number of Syrian refugees admitted to the United States in the coming year, directing his team to prepare for at least 10,000 in the next fiscal year'*).

As for the strategy of Negative Comparison, the report refers to the Syrian refugee crisis as a 'disaster of biblical proportions' (*'Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said Wednesday that the current migration is a "disaster of biblical proportions'*). As such, the Syrian regime should be held accountable for it.

The Strategy of Concretisation is utilised in this report to refer to the negative consequences the Syrian government ended up dealing with (*'More than half the population of Syria has been displaced by the ongoing civil war, and the flow of refugees in the Middle East and Europe has put a strain on countries' resources and divided local populations'*).

The strategy of Warning is used in this report differently, as it is not aimed to warn against the out-group (Syrian regime); rather, it warns that terrorists might be within the people the U.S. shall consider refugees ("the Obama administration must prove to the American people that it will take the necessary precautions to ensure that national security is a top priority, especially at a time when ruthless terrorist groups like ISIS are committed to finding ways to enter the United States and harm Americans." ).

In terms of the Norm and Value Violation strategy, the Syrian crisis is represented as against all the human beliefs and break all the precious values that humans appreciate. However, CNN's in-group is shown as the preserver of those norms and values ("I believe that the President has made it clear he wants the United States -- which has always taken a leadership role with respect to humanitarian issues and particularly refugees -- to be able to do what we can" ). Hence, polarisation is created to differentiate between Us and Them.

#### Report 4

The headline of this report is 'Russia launches first airstrikes in Syria' which obviously aims to invoke instantaneous thoughts in the minds of the readers about this critical event. The headline is presented in a simple sentence in which Russia is the doer of the action (launching a missile). The word 'launches' means 'to shoot something in a forceful way' and the word 'airstrike' means 'to aim and deliver a blow'. CNN uses these words to attribute more violent meaning to the action done by the actor, Russia. The sentence is active, which means to directly show the relation between the action (the launching of the airstrikes) and the doer (Russia).

In terms of Negative Lexicalisation, the report contains negative words ('Russian strikes "will inflame" Syrian war'). The word 'inflame' means 'to set something or someone on fire' indicating that the Russian role is so negative that it 'will' cause the situation and people to burn. The sentence 'Russia says it conducted airstrikes on eight ISIS targets, including communication and control positions' contains the word 'says' which means to 'express something' without proving it, hence, CNN wants to convey to the readers that it is doubtful. Other negative words are quoted. As such, CNN activates a negative mental model in the minds of the readers (cf. mental models).

Regarding Hyperbole, CNN exaggerates to a great extent in resembling Russia as the force of evil throughout this report. For instance, it started with the headline, the lead and throughout the different categories of the body of the report, reference to 'inflaming civil war', 'killing civilians', 'breaking promises' and 'hidden intentions' are seen as referring to the Russians.

The use of the Compassion move is also present. For, It could be vividly seen in the body of the report, in which CNN claims, based on sources which are already against Russia, that the CNN and the U.S. are concerned about the 'civilian' death tolls of '36 people' who were killed and who were 'all civilians'. It states that the U.S. has 'grave concerns' about the Russian 'intentions' behind deploying military in Syria. This is used to show sympathy towards what CNN claims to be the victims of the Russian airstrikes.

In terms of the Altruism move, the report talks about America's concern of the Russian airstrikes (A senior U.S. administration official told CNN's Elise Labott that a Russian airstrike near the Syrian city of Homs "has no strategic purpose" in terms of combating ISIS, which "shows they are not there to go after ISIL."), however, when it talks about the U.S. airstrikes, CNN seems to be more positive (Kerry said the U.S.-led coalition had conducted 3,000 airstrikes against ISIS and that efforts would dramatically increase). CNN aims to show that the U.S. is the helping hand in Syria, not the Russians, i.e., positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation.

Regarding Generalization, the report quotes Kerry's statement which generalises the Russian behaviour in Syria as having 'no strategic purpose'. Such generalization aims to suspect the Russian role in Syria, and to present them in a bad image. Hence, the report talks about the casualties right after it mentions the Russian airstrikes in Syria (see appendix: report 6).

As for the strategy of Concretisation, CNN's report also concretises the Russians actions in Syria by referring to the details of the airstrikes that Russia said targeted terrorists. (According to the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 28 people were killed in the strikes, including women and children. The Syrian National Coalition reported that 36 people were killed, all civilians). The report raises doubts about the Russian intentions and their sincerity in fighting terrorism, implying that their airstrikes target civilians.

In terms of the Warning strategy, a presupposed warning is used in this report to refer to Russian intentions that are different from what they say ("I'm looking at the capabilities and the capacities that are being created and I determine from that what might be their intent. These very sophisticated air defense capabilities are not about ISIL. They're about something else" ). That is to say, the U.S. should worry about the real intention behind Russia's actions in Syria.

The Norm and Value Violation strategy is utilised in the report, as CNN refer to Russia as an entity that broke the norms and values that the U.S. and all peaceful mankind hold dear. As such it resembles Russia as a war monger that kills civilians, sides with the dictator and has bad intentions in Syria. On the other hand, the U.S. is represented as the side which seeks peace for Syria and who 'asked' kindly and peacefully Bashar al-Assad to 'go' in order to end the war ('Russia is a close ally of al-Assad and may want to bolster him, while the United States

has repeatedly called for him to go in order to resolve the five-year civil war").

Concerning Presupposition, the report presupposes a number of things all of which emphasise the American fear of Russia's intentions in Syria (*He warned that the fight against ISIS should not be confused with support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.; We see some very sophisticated air defenses going into those airfields. We see some very sophisticated air-to-air aircraft going into these airfields. I have not seen ISIL flying any airplanes that require SA-15s or SA-22s (Russian missiles)*). Those presuppose one simple idea, i.e., Russia's role in Syria is not to fight terrorism as it claims; rather, it prepares itself for a proxy war against those who think of taking down Assad by force.

Report 5

The headline is *'Syrian regime says it has taken full control of Aleppo*. The overall meaning of the report implies a sense of catastrophic consequences due to the regime's taking of Aleppo. This is clearly and explicitly stated in the lead: *Situation a "race against the clock" to provide evacuees shelter, warmth; Last civilian evacuees have left eastern Aleppo; Syrian regime now has control of the country's four major cities*. The lead sentences mark that since the Syrian regime has now controlled Aleppo, the residents need to run away as fast as they can to avoid the 'beast', and that the Syrian regime is in control of the major cities of Syria which requires 'some action' from outside helpers.

In terms of Negative Lexicalisation, the use of the word 'decimated' (*The regime and Russia -- its most powerful ally -- decimated neighborhoods with airstrikes, leaving scorched earth where a bustling metropolis once stood*) has an aim to represent Them in a form of destroyers who intend to sabotage everything in Aleppo. The word 'setback' (*It's a major setback for those who have long sought an end to four decades of Assad family rule*) is also used to represent the out-group as an impediment in the path of success and prosperity of the city and its residents, which could have been accomplished under the ruling of the alternatives of Assad's regime.

Regarding Hyperbole, the report presents the event in such a hyperbolic manner that the regime is represented as a curse that has befallen the residents of Aleppo. CNN mentions, in an exaggerated way, the number of civilian casualties (*No one was impervious to the attacks. In many cases, civilians and children were among the thousands killed*), and the importance of Aleppo (*Nowhere was the devastation more rampant than Aleppo, once the beating heart of the country*). The regime's control of the largest cities in Aleppo ends with calls and pleas from 'Syrian people' for help, as alleged by CNN (*"Dear world, why are you silent?"*).

As for the Compassion move, CNN uses this move to a great extent in this report. The overall meaning of the whole report is to get the world's attention to what the report tries to show as a disaster in Aleppo. It emphasises the civilian casualties, the regime's severity and the calls for help, in an attempt to show that they care about those victims who are oppressed, killed, etc. by the Other group (*Throughout the siege, rebels, aid workers and civilians issued one desperate plea after another through videos and social media. They directed them at foreign governments and leaders, the UN Security Council, the public, asking for humanitarian aid and safe passage*).

In terms of Apparent Altruism, CNN's report presents its in-group as the potential saviour of the Syrian people, so it emphasises the call for the 'world' to interfere (*Toward the end, they simply asked for signs that anyone was listening*).

The report also makes use of the Negative Comparison strategy in its endeavor to deleteriously present the image of the out-group. The report mentions that the regime's taking back of Aleppo leaves CNN's in-group in a 'race against the clock' (*Situation a "race against the clock" to provide evacuees shelter, warmth*). As such, CNN sends a message that the regime will start killing everyone in Aleppo.

Regarding Generalisation, CNN generalises the negative actions of the out-group, as it refers to the whole Syrian as well as Russian army as the beast that has come from outside Aleppo to terminate the people indiscriminately (*As shelling and bombardments intensified, people stayed home from school and work to avoid becoming a casualty. Eventually, there was no escape as the airstrikes came to them*).

As far as the strategy of Concretization concerned, CNN negatively emphasises the acts of the Out-group. Hence, the report describes negative events in imaginable terms so as to gain the emotional consensus of its viewers and raise hate towards out-group and its supporters (*As shelling and bombardments intensified, people stayed home from school and work to avoid becoming a casualty. Eventually, there was no escape as the airstrikes came to them; Entire blocks of buildings were reduced to rubble, often with people trapped inside. Homes, hospitals, schools, bakeries; The world saw images of children dying of starvation. Children in hospitals, shell-shocked and covered in blood and debris. People heating plastic from broken chairs and pipes and turning it into fuel*).

In terms of the strategy of Warning, the whole report resembles a warning for the world in order to make a move and 'help' the Syrians in Aleppo (*"Don't look back years from now and wish that you can do something; you can still."*; *Throughout the siege, rebels, aid workers and civilians issued one desperate plea after another through videos and social media. They directed them at foreign governments and leaders, the UN Security Council, the public, asking for humanitarian aid and safe passage*).

As for the strategy of Norm and Value Violation, CNN makes a clear distinction between the in-group and out-

group with benevolent terms, by showing that what the regime and Russia do violates the norms and humane values. That is, they destroy the lives, neighbourhoods and all sources of life, like 'choking off' food, water, fuel and other sources 'essential' for life (*As the government choked off the supply of food, fuel and other daily necessities, no one was spared: men, women, children, civilians, rebels*). CNN claims that the regime used the 'tactic' of 'starve or surrender, hence, telling the world that They are breaking the human values and something needs to be done.

Regarding the strategy of Presupposition, the report presupposes a number of things within its structure in presenting the Syrian crisis. Describing the situation as a 'race against the clock to provide evacuees shelter, warmth' presupposes one clear fact, i.e., the regime, which has recently taken 'full control' of Aleppo will start eliminating the civilians of the city of Aleppo. This presupposition is validated by the paragraphs that follow it (*Those who remained suffered from a lack of the most basic needs -- food, water, and health care. It was a common tactic of the regime, "Starve or Surrender," one that was used in Homs and then Aleppo.*), as they also presuppose the regime's responsibility for depriving the civilians from the most basic needs of life and 'starving' them to death.

#### Report 6

The headline of this report is 'Russia is using Syria to run circles around U.S.'. The phrase 'to run circle around' means 'to be much faster or more effective than someone or something' which explicitly refers to the gist or macro meaning of the whole report, i.e., Russia is making more progress than the U.S in Syria.

In terms of the Negative Lexicalisation strategy, CNN's report exploits words which carry deep negative meanings to represent the out-group, i.e., Russia mostly (*Russia courts Syrian Kurds, threatening U.S. ties to allies in ISIS fight; Vladimir Putin is outplaying U.S. and allies in Syria, with disastrous consequences; Russia's actions are contributing to a growing wave of Syrian refugees*). In this endeavor, CNN attempts to create a negative mental model of Them in the minds of the viewers of such news reports. On the other hand, no such negative lexical items are used when Us is the subject (doer) of an act (which is, of course, not negative at all). For instance, *predict, sponsor, proved right, and says* which are used with Obama, the U.N and Turkey. (*Obama confidently predicted that Putin would regret his decision to enter the Syrian civil war; A few weeks ago, the United Nations sponsored a sad round of Syria peace talks in Geneva, Switzerland; Perhaps in the long term Obama will be proved right and Syria will, in fact, become Putin's Vietnam; Turkey says Russian planes continue to violate its airspace*).

As for Hyperbole, the idea that Russia is an enemy that seeks to deceive, kill and separate Europe and the West in general is made explicit throughout the whole report. In every paragraph of the report hyperbolic terms are used to describe Them in a heinous way (*Russia is threatening; Russia is outplaying; Russia is contributing to the growing wave of Syrian refugees*). CNN cannot be more explicit in describing Russia and has gone beyond the limit of using violent words in this endeavor.

Regarding the Compassion move in this report, CNN gave some space to this move when it described the Syrian 'wave' of refugees, which is caused by Russia, as a matter that the United Nations will never be able to handle. In saying this, CNN relates the origin of the problem to Russia, on the one hand, and shows that it cares about the refugees, on the other (*The victims, as always, are the Syrian people, who are giving their lives as world powers and terrorist chieftains decide their fates. Russia agreed to the plan, but it made clear that the shooting halt did not apply to "terrorist" groups. In other words, Russia agreed to nothing but did intensify its attacks in Aleppo, helping secure huge strategic gains for Assad*).

Negative Comparison is also exploited in this report (*But so far, Putin has not only turned the tide of war in Syria, reversing what was a steady loss of territory for Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, but he is also playing his Syria intervention as part of a global chess match against the West. To put it bluntly, Putin is running circles around the United States and Europe*). Using this strategy, CNN negatively compares the acts of Russia and Putin in order to present them in a bad image.

In terms of Generalisation, CNN generalises the acts of the Russian part in more than one place in the report (*Russia's actions are contributing to a continuing and growing wave of Syrian refugees, with repercussions for the United States and its allies; Russia, by helping create more refugees from Syria, is helping divide Europe against itself*). This is part of CNN's endeavor aims to cast blame on Russia by generalizing whatever Russia does as affecting not only Syria, but also extends to Europe and the West in general.

The report makes use of the strategy of Concretisation, by considering negative things done by Russia (*Russia is gaming the United States at the diplomatic table; Russia is courting the Syrian Kurds, threatening American links to important allies in the fight against ISIS*). Hence, CNN emphasises the negative mental model in the viewers' minds.

In terms of the strategy of Warning, all of sub-headlines of the report present a warning from Russia and implicitly urge the west to take action, stating that Russia is fooling the them (*Russia is using Syria to run circles around U.S.; Russia is taunting Turkey, hoping for a crack in NATO unity; Russia is courting the Syrian Kurds, threatening American links to important allies in the fight against ISIS; Russia's actions are contributing to a*



*continuing and growing wave of Syrian refugees, with repercussions for the United States and its allies; Russia, by helping create more refugees from Syria, is helping divide Europe against itself.*)

Regarding the Norm and Value strategy, the report plays on the cord of human values and normalcy when it presents Them as deceivers who want to deceive, acquire illegally and divide a country all of which go against the norms and values of human beings in general. This strategy is followed in the report in order to incarnate the mental model which is drawn in the minds of the audience which resembles Them in negative terms and thus we should hate and fight Them.

The report makes a number of presuppositions as well. For example, the sentence *'It is quite clear that Russian President Vladimir Putin views the United States not as a partner or even as an adversary but as an enemy'* presuppose that Russia looks forward to get into a war with the U.S. because that is what the 'enemy' aims to do. Therefore, the report makes use of the strategy of Presupposition so as to emphasize the negative acts of the out-group.

## 5. Results of Analysis

This section shows the results of the Ideological Discourse Analysis. In other words, it presents the kinds of discursive strategies used in the reports published by CNN to cover the Syrian crisis. Moreover, it also shows the difference between the CNN's reports before and after the Russian military involvement in Syria.

To begin with, CNN polarises between the in-group and out-group, especially when it comes to discussing the Syrian crisis. CNN represents the policy of the United States' government, thus, it deals with all its opponents as the out-group. Hence, Russia, the Syrian regime and its army, and all other supporters of Assad are often represented negatively in CNN's reports concerning the Syrian crisis.

In terms of the use of the Discursive Strategies, CNN use ten strategies in most of its reports, namely, Negative Lexicalisation, Hyperbole, Compassion Move, Apparent Altruism, Negative Comparison, Generalisation, Concretisation, Warning, Norm and Value Violation, and Presupposition. Two strategies were not found in CNN, namely, Apparent Honesty and Alliteration.

Regarding the Russian involvement, before September 2015, the month during which Russia sent its army to Syria, the reports focused on the issue of the refugees, their humanitarian needs, education, and the like. However, after Russia's intervention, CNN turned its attention to the Russian actions there, putting a great effort in order to present them in a negative image. Ironically, the so-called ISIS were not present in neither periods which draws many question marks on CNN's purpose, especially after the heinous acts that this terrorist and totalitarian group did in Syria. The following diagram illustrates this issue:

Table (1) Frequency of Occurrence of Russia and the Refugees before Russia's Involvement

	Jan	Mar	Sep	Total	Per
<b>Refugees</b>	14	3	33	50	100%
<b>Russia</b>	0	0	0	0	0

Table (1) shows that before the Russian involvement, CNN was focused on presenting issue of the Syrian refugees which received a total of occurrence (50) times corresponding to (100%) of the overall occurrence. This is divided into (14) times on January, (3) on March, (33) on Sep. On the other hand Russia, received no attention at all during that period.

Table (2) Frequency of Occurrence of Russia and the Refugees after Russia's Involvement

	Oct	Dec	Feb 2016	Total	Per
<b>Refugees</b>	0	0	7	7	9.2%
<b>Russia</b>	36	3	30	69	90.7%

Table (2) shows a drastic change in CNN's attention regarding the presentation of the Syrian crisis. The table shows that after the Russian military came to Syria, CNN turned its compass from the refugees to talk about Russia which received an overall occurrence (69) times which corresponds to (60.7%), divided into (36) times on October, (3) on December, and (30) on February 2016. The refugees received less attention with a total of frequency (7) times, corresponding to (9.2%), which is mentioned (7) only on February 2016. Fig. (1) below illustrates this variation in detail.

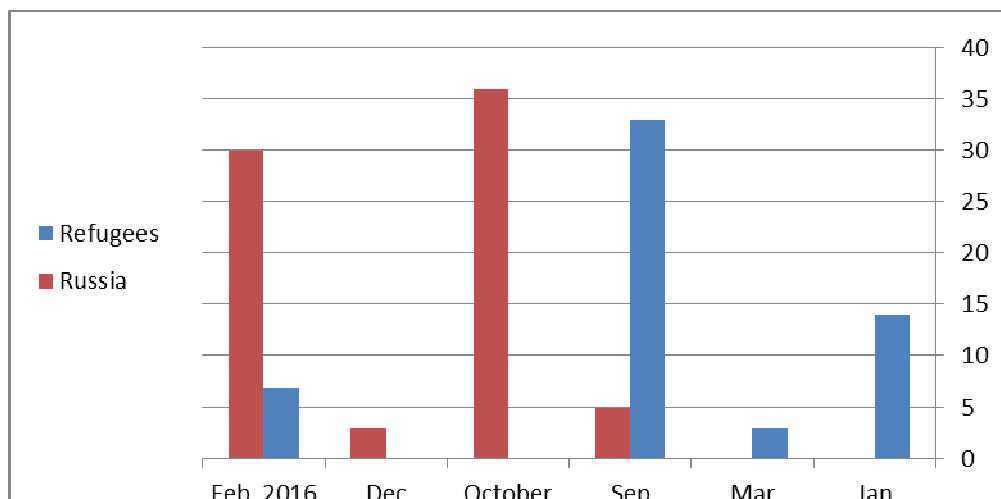


Fig. (1) Frequency of occurrence of the Refugees and Russia in CNN's reports, before and after Russia's involvement.

## 6. Conclusion

1. The language used in CNN's presentation of the Syrian crisis is manipulated by adhering to a number of discursive strategies which serve to either to positively present the self, or negatively present the other.
2. There is a polarisation between the in-group and out-group in terms of reporting the Syrian crisis on CNN. The negative acts of the others are emphasised by using discursive strategies such as Negative Lexicalisation, Hyperbole, Negative Comparison, Generalisation, Concretisation, Warning, Norm and Value Violation, and Presupposition. Whereas the positive acts of the self are emphasized by using strategies like Compassion move and Apparent Altruism.
3. The positive acts of the others and the negative acts of the self are either mitigated or hidden.
4. Two strategies were not found in the reports on the Syrian crisis by CNN, namely, Apparent Honest and Alliteration.
5. CNN shows that the regime is more dominant and powerful than the 'rebels' who are 'supported by the West'. This is used in order to authorize the acts of each channel's in-group regardless of any negative consequences.
6. Before Russia's intervention, CNN focused on the refugees in the first place, but when Russia involved, it turned its attention to the Russian actions in Syria.

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