The Representation of the Arab Spring Narrative in English and Arabic News Media

Najat Alian

University of Leeds, United Kingdom

Since its emergence in late December 2010, the Arab Spring narrative has sparked many controversies among researchers, commentators, analysts, and scholars from different disciplines around the world in terms of the causes and the reasons behind it and even its name: ‘Arab Spring’.

This study explores the Arab Spring narrative in the English and Arabic mainstream news media from corpus-linguistic and critical discourse analytic perspectives. The Arab Spring bilingual corpus consists of two sub-corpora, English and Arabic, compiled from LexisNexis and other news websites. The English consists of 7,468 news texts with total of 5,723,158 words, while the Arabic comprises 7,645 news texts and a total of 5,327,953 words. Taken from prominent news media outlets from Western, Arab and Islamic countries and divided into three major text types, 'world news', 'news reports' and 'editorials and opinions' with date range coverage from 15 June 2010 until 31 August 2013, it allows us to examine the temporal aspects of the discursive construction of the Arab Spring narrative.

Combining quantitative and qualitative methods associated with CL and CDA, this study explores how different meanings of the terms and concepts related to 'protest vocabulary', such as protest, uprising, revolution, rebel, rebellion, awakening, riot, conspiracy and violence affect the way in which the Arab Spring is represented in the news. Further analysis is conducted to study the key topics in their contexts by means of concordance, keyword and collocation lists.

The analysis also identifies the main news actors and how they are represented, in terms of van Dijk’s (1998) ideological square, negatively or positively, by means of lexical choice, labels and stereotypes, indicating that many of the Arab Spring news stories are politically, socially and ideologically polarized.

References:


Keywords: Arab Spring, protest vocabulary, protest.