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The Effect of Ideology on the Rendition of Political Texts in Iranian Persian Newspapers and Western English Newspapers

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Abstract

This study aimed at finding about the extent to which ideological tendencies would influence the news writers' strategies in providing the finished product. It also attempted to uncover the underlying ideological assumptions hidden in the source text and the target text. For this purpose, the controversial issue of Iran's nuclear program was selected and the data was extracted from Tehran Declaration and the Iranian president's speech together with their renditions in Western English newspapers. Then, the syntactic and semantic features of the original text were set against those of the English renditions based on Hodge and Kress's framework (1996). The Chi square test was used to determine whether there were any significant ideological differences. The results revealed significant differences in terms of ideological tendencies.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis (CDA), ideology, media discourse, translation.

Introduction

Translation is rewriting of an original text and all rewritings regardless of their intention reflect a certain ideology, which implies rewriting is manipulation undertaken in the service of power (Lefevere, 1992). Media theoreticians such as

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van Dijk (1998) and Fairclough (1995) argue that ‘factual’ representations provided by news reports are not simple accounts of events, and are often shaped by particular points of view and systems of belief of their producers. According to van Dijk (1998), rich sources of transferring ideological assumptions to others are news media. The question is how ideological assumptions surface in media discourse.

The relationship between ideology and language has for a long time aroused the interest of scholars from various disciplines, particularly linguistics, political science, sociology and psychology. An area that needs to be more supplemented is that of the relationship between ideology and translation. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides translation studies with a tool for the analysis of ideological elements. Proponents of CDA believe that “hidden socio-political control actively constructs society on some level” (Atkins, 2002, p. 2). Texts as stand in society are not neutral, but ideologically loaded. Kress (1993) notes, “the everyday, innocent and innocuous, the mundane text is as ideologically saturated as a text which wears its ideological constitution overtly” (1993, p. 174). This study then aimed at finding about how the ideological stance of text producers can influence their construction of texts. Specifically, the following questions were addressed:

1. How do ideological assumptions surface in English and Persian media discourse?
2. Is the rendition of the political issue of Iran’s Nuclear Program, originally shaped in Persian, ideologically different in the Western news media?

Research Background

Translation scholars who are interested in the political definitions of ideology mainly believe that translating itself is a political act, as Tahir-Gürçağlar (2003) argues, “translation is political because, both as activity and product, it displays process of negotiation among different agents. On micro-level, these agents are translators, authors, critics, publishers, editors, and readers” (p.113).

The relationship between language and ideology has been a central topic in the study of media discourse for the past three decades. One of the major concerns of critical linguistics is how media language might work ideologically (Fowler, 1991; Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew 1979; Hodge & Kress, 1996). Kress (1989) believes that language always appears as the representative of a system of linguistic terms which are realizations of discursive and ideological systems. According to van Dijk (1998) ideological concerns are pervasive in the production of news. The routines, actors, events and institutional arrangements in news making are biased toward the reproduction of elite ideologies. Thus, preferential access is reflected in preferential quoting, favorable opinions and hence style.

Generally, during the past two decades, CDA as a multidisciplinary approach, has had the important role of illuminating the relationship between language and ideology in media discourse. Since “anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position” (Fowler, 1991, p.10), and as language is a social practice to express reality, CDA practitioners emphasize the need to critically examine the role of newspaper language.

However, studying the media discourse is not limited to one language; it sometimes comes into the area of translation as well. According to CDA advocates, “all language use, including translation, is ideological and this means that translation is always a site for ideological encounters” (Calzada-Pérez, 2003, p. 2). Similarly, Schäffner (2003) claims that all translations are ideological since “the choice of a source text and the use to which the subsequent target text is put are determined by the interests, aims, and objectives of social agents” (p. 23).

Method

Materials

The data in this study was related to the hot issue of Iran’s Nuclear Program. It was extracted from two news stories, one is related to ‘Tehran Declaration’ signed by Iran, Turkey and Brazil on the swap of nuclear fuel for the Tehran research reactor (17.05. 2010) and the other is related to then-president Ahmadinejad’s Speech on the 31st anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran (12. 02. 2010). In pursuing the above-mentioned objectives, on the one hand, the full-texts of Tehran Declaration and the president’s speech, and on the other hand, their renditions in Western English newspapers were selected.

All the data were selected from the online news sources. The Persian text of Tehran Declaration consists of ten provisions which have been rendered in various ways by Western newspapers. From the president’s speech those clauses related to the issue of Iran’s Nuclear Program together with their rendition in some Western English newspapers were selected.

Tehran declaration

The Persian text was selected from Mehr News Agency, published on May 17, 2010.

The English rendition was found in:

Express, published on Monday May 17, 2010

Global Security, published on Monday May 17, 2010

Guardian, published on Monday May 17, 2012

Morning Star, published on Tuesday May 18, 2010

Newsday, originally published on May 17, 2010 6:44 AM, Updated on May 17, 2010 6:19 PM

Reuters, published on Monday May 17, 2010

Telegraph, published on May 17, 2010

The Independent, published on Monday 17 May 2010

New York Times, published on Monday May 17, 2010

Iranian president's speech.

The Persian text was selected from the official website of Iran's president (www.dolat.ir) published on February 11, 2010.

The English rendition of the president's speech was found in:

Express, published on Thursday February 11, 2010

Los Angeles Times (Latimes), published on Friday February 12, 2010

Reuters, published on Thursday February 11, 2010

The Independent, from Reuters, Thursday, 11 February 2010

New York Times, published on Thursday February 11, 2010

Procedure

To conduct the study, the data gathered was analyzed within the framework proposed by Hodge and Kress (1996). For that purpose, at first the full Persian text of Tehran Declaration was selected from Mehr News Agency website. Also, the full text of President's Speech was selected from the Iranian government news agency website. At the same time, the renditions of the news were excerpted from the Western English media. While for Tehran Declaration the full text was used, for the President's Speech only those parts related to the issue of Iran's nuclear program were selected.

Then, using Hodge and Kress's framework (1996) and through a careful reading of the source texts and their renditions in the Western newspapers, each text was explored to identify the designated syntactic and lexical items. The results were then tabulated and their frequency was reported. To find about the significance of recurring patterns of ideologically significant instances Chi square test was employed. Moreover, the content of the texts was analyzed to check for words which were ideologically-loaded. In so doing, all the texts were perused to identify the ideas which recurrently appeared. Finally, the original text was compared with the English renditions to find whether there was any significant ideological difference between them.

Model of Analysis

The framework used for the study is the one introduced by Hodge and Kress (1996). They assert that the commonly invisible relationship which governs language, power, and ideology can be visible by analyzing the text based on this model. The model also reveals that the reader/listener usually does not

have access to the reality since the writer/speaker, depending upon his/her intention and/or ideology, may change or even show it the other way around.

In order to find the probable underlying ideology disseminated through the text, the following features form the basis of investigation within the framework proposed by Hodge and Kress: grammar, modality and lexicon (vocabulary).

Grammar

According to Hodge and Kress (1996), language consists of a related set of categories and processes and its grammar can show the community and the relationship existing there. They hold that each text is analyzed with regard to two properties: syntagmatic models and transformations.

Syntagmatic models which are categories and processes describing the interrelation of objects and events, are based on two basic subtypes: actionals (A) and relationals (R).

Actional model or actionals which describes the occasions where one or two objects are related to a verbal process (an action) can further be divided in to two subtypes: transactive (T) model and non-transactive (NT) model.

1) Transactives: Structures in which there are two entities (or objects) related by means of a verbal process. In this category, one of the entities affects another one. One causes the action, the other is affected by it and the action is passing from the actor to the affected. If the writer is concerned with establishing causes and causal relations, the T is the best model for the job.

Example: Iran could now enrich uranium to more than 80 percent purity.

2) Nontransactives: Structures in which only one entity is related to a process. In this case, it is not clear whether the entity is actor or affected.

Example: The episode began Monday.

Relational model or relationals does not involve a relation of action or process, but a simple relation, and it deals with relational and existential processes. It has two subtypes: equative and attributive.

In equatives which may be between two entities a relation is established between nouns, and no action is performed; rather, two entities are related to a verb. The equative model, however, is the articulation of the logic of a system and establishes the relationship between various categories.

Example: Iran was now a “nuclear state”.

In attributives which is between an entity and a quality there is one entity related to a quality, establishing the relation between nouns and qualities. The attributive model brings out the act of judgment. So, in the text in which there is a high number of attributives, the writer is judgmental.

Example: The Iranian nation is brave.

In this model, actional represents the relationships perceived in the physical world and relational displays the outcomes of the activity of the mind, making judgments, commenting and so on.

Another kind of operation which can be performed in language is transformation. Transformations in this model are a series of operations on basic forms such as deleting, substituting, combining, or reordering a system or its elements. Passivisation (P) and nominalization (N) are two types of transformations.

In passivization, the actor is deleted and the elements of a syntagm are reordered in the passive. The passive allows parts of the clause to be deleted. It serves space, as well as immediately establishing the topic. Agency may be immaterial, or predictable from context, or unknown, and anyway if it is known and is important, it can be specified straight away in the opening of the report (Fowler, 1991). In Thompson's words: "passivisation – the rendering of the verb in the passive form - involves deletion of actors and focuses the hearers or readers on certain themes at the expense of others" (1984; p. 120).

Example: The first package of 20% fuel was produced.

Furthermore, the texts can also be analyzed in terms of nominalization. Nominalization is a textual feature in which actions are turned into objects, and verbal processes are turned into nouns. There is frequent use of nominalization with 'agent deletions' (Hatim & Mason, 1990). The purpose in using nominalized structures is to simplify things; as a result, the identities of the agents are lost, therefore "leaving the attributions of causality and responsibility unclear" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 124). This device also helps "to reduce the complexity of an argument" (Thompson, 1984, p. 121). The main function of nominalization is to make the relationship between the actor and the affected opaque.

Example:

Earlier negotiations ... have sought to stop Iran from enriching uranium.

Modality

Another element is modality which according to Hodge and Kress (1996) "is the indication of the degree of likelihood, probability, weight or authority the speaker attaches to the utterance." (p. 9). Furthermore, modality "indicates the mode within which an utterance is presented as true, reliable authoritative" (p.85). The speaker/writer attitude hidden in the text, can reveal through modality which he/she used in the text.

Examples:

1. Iran must be powerful.
2. We don't believe in having it.

Vocabulary and semantic features analysis

The speaker/writer chooses certain lexical items and concepts to express his/her idea. If this selection of words is done systematically, and when the text is full of biased words, one can conclude that there is a certain attitude or ideology hidden in the text. As Fowler (1991) maintains, vocabulary or lexis is a major determinant of ideational structure. So, lexicalization refers to the use of ideologically-laden words in a text. According to Mason, (as cited in Fowler, 1991) the first and the most obvious way in which source text and target text diverge from each other is at the level of individual lexical choice. In a translation which is far from a slavish rendition of source text form, lexical shifts are to be expected. Lexical analysis is a proper means to assess the likelihood of an underlying ideology of a text. Different people may resort to different lexicon to describe an identical event. And since, as van Dijk (2006) points out, there is an interdependence relationship between vocabulary and ideology, it is useful to analyze the lexicon to determine if the language producer is using/choosing the vocabulary to imply a certain ideology.

Results

Grammatical Analysis

The grammatical features found in Nuclear Swap Deal and its rendition in Western newspapers are represented in the following tables.

Table 1. Grammatical Features Excerpted from Nuclear Swap Deal

Texts		Syntagmatic				Transformation		
		T	NT	R	Total	N	P	Total
Western newspapers	#	181	74	18	273	112	70	182
	%	66.3	27.1	6.59	100	61.53	38.46	
Source text	#	16	1	2	19	9	8	17
	%	84.21	5.26	10.52	100	52.94	87.05	
Chi square		$X^2 = 2.16$	$X^2 = 15.12$	$X^2 = 0.88$		$X^2 = 0.7$	$X^2 = 19.2$	
		P= 0.14	P= 0	P= 0.34		P= 0.4	P= 0	

As Table 1 indicates, with respect to syntagmatic model, there were some differences in the number of T, NT and R between two texts, but these differences were not significant in the number of T and R. As the table indicates, with respect to syntagmatic model, the most frequent one employed in the source text and Western newspapers was T (84.21 and 66.3 respectively). The most important differences related to NT. The results of the Chi square test, too, demonstrated significant difference between the number of NT used in the source text of Nuclear Swap Deal and its rendition in Western newspapers ($X^2 = 15.12$, $P < 0.05$).

According to Hodge and Kress (1996) the two actional models, i.e. T and NT present distinct versions of causality. In the T model there is minimally two entities related by a process. One of the two is seen as causing the action, the other is affected by it. So there is an *actor*, the *verbal process*, and an *affected* entity. Here the action is seen as passing from the actor across to the affected. In the NT model, there is minimally one entity related to a process. As there is only the one entity, it is difficult to know whether it is actor or affected; this model is vague about precise casual and affected status. Some examples of syntagmatic and transformation in the source text of Nuclear Swap Deal and Western newspapers:

ترکیه، LEU ایران را به ایران برگشت می دهد (T)

Iran struck a deal (T)

Iran, Brazil and Turkey sign a nuclear fuel swap agreement (T)

ترکیه و برزیل از رویکرد سازنده جمهوری اسلامی ایران قدردانی نمودند (NT)

It had agreed (NT)

تبادل سوخت هسته‌ای بستری برای شروع همکاری‌های مختلف، می‌باشد (R)

Turkey will be the venue (R)

With respect to transformations, in Table 1, regarding N's the difference was not statistically significant ($X^2 = 0.7, P > 0.05$). Nominalization, according to Fowler (1991), is a radical syntactic transformation of a clause, which has extensive structural consequences, and offers substantial ideological opportunities. Here, there are some examples of the declaration; the nominals are underlined:

معاهده عدم گسترش سلاح‌های هسته‌ای

Iran and the IAEA may station observers to monitor the safekeeping of the LEU in Turkey

Regarding passivization, Fowler (1991) maintains that actives and passives share the same propositional meaning, differing only in syntactic order. In passivization the agent is deleted, leaving the responsibility unspecified. As in Table 1, the result of the *chi-square* test for Ps is significant ($X^2 = 19.2, P < 0.05$). In the following examples given from the source text of Nuclear Swap Deal and western Newspapers, one cannot be certain of the specific identity of the deleted actor, because they are passives and the actor is deleted in them:

چنین حرکتی باید به تعامل مثبت و همکاری در زمینه فعالیت‌های صلح آمیز هسته‌ای هدایت شود
از هرگونه تقابلی اعم از اقدامات، رفتار و یا بیانیه‌های تهدیدآمیزی که به حقوق و تعهدات
هسته‌ای ایران تحت NPT لطمه می‌زند اجتناب گردد
همکاری هسته‌ای جایگزین آنها شود

In case the provisions of this Declaration are not respected
 As the agreement was announced
 Turkey will be required to return the uranium to Iran
 The grammatical features found in President's Speech and its rendition in Western newspapers are represented in the following Tables.

Table 2. Grammatical Features Excerpted from President's Speech

Texts		Syntagmatic				Transformation		
		T	NT	R	Total	N	P	Total
Western newspapers	#	59	48	13	120	30	18	48
	%	49.16	40	10.83	100	62.5	37.5	
Source text	#	47	12	30	89	6	8	14
	%	52.8	13.48	33.7	100	42.85	57.14	
Chi square		$X^2 = 0.15$ $P = 0.69$	$X^2 = 13.75$ $P = 0$	$X^2 = 11.75$ $P = 0$		$X^2 = 3.77$ $P = 0.05$	$X^2 = 3.8$ $P = 0.05$	

According to the results, the difference between the numbers of T in two texts was not significant. As the table indicates, with respect to syntagmatic model, the most frequent one employed in the source text and Western newspapers was found to be T (52.8 and 49.16, respectively). In this model, significant differences are related to NT and R. The results of Chi-square too showed significant differences between the number of NT in two texts and also the number of R in them ($X^2 = 13.75$, $p < 0.05$ for NT and $X^2 = 11.75$, $p < 0.05$ for R). Regarding the transformation model, the results of the Chi square test for N and P also demonstrated significant differences between the two texts ($X^2 = 3.77$, $p = 0.05$ for N and $X^2 = 3.8$, $p = 0.05$ for P). Here are some examples of syntagmatic and transformation in the source text of President's Speech and related texts of Western newspapers:

ما در نطنز روزی چند کیلو از اینها می‌سازیم (T)

We don't build nuclear bombs (T)

کاروان پیشرفت و شکوفایی ملت ایران در حال حرکت به سمت قله‌ها است (NT)

Mr Ahmadinejad said (NT)

ما خواهان دوستی و همکاری هستیم (R)

Iran was now a "nuclear state" (R)

تولید روزانه مان به سه برابر افزایش پیدا خواهد کرد (N)

And his announcement this week (N)

این کارهایی که انجام می‌شود (P)

It was reported (P)

Modality

The modality system of language is source of great potential for encoding opinion and ideology. Modality, as defined by Fairclough (1989), is “a categorical commitment of the producer to the truth of the proposition” (129). It “indicates the writer’s judgment on the credibility of the representation” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1990, p.49).

In this study, the texts were analyzed with respect to these features: modal auxiliaries, adverbs, and verbs. Modals found in Nuclear Swap Deal and its rendition in Western newspapers are represented in the following tables:

Table 3. Modals Used in the Nuclear Swap Deal

Newspaper \ Modals	Modal auxiliaries	Modal adverbs	Modal verbs	Total (Phrases)
Western newspapers	72 (9.2)	8 (1.02)	6 (0.76)	782
Source text	5 (4.85)	2 (1.94)	3 (2.91)	103
Chi square	$X^2 = 1.14$ $P = 0.28$	$X^2 = 0.33$ $P = 0.56$	$X^2 = 1$ $P = 0.31$	

As shown in Table 3, most cases of modalization were related to modal auxiliaries (9.2 for western newspapers and 4.85 for source text). According to Table 3, there are differences between the two texts in using modals, but as the results of the Chi square test show, these differences were not statistically significant. Some examples of using modality in two texts are presented below:

(Modal Verb) ما معتقدیم

ترکیه، LEU ایران را بدون هیچ گونه شرطی به ایران برگشت می دهد (modal adverb)

The deal forged with Turkey and Brazil appeared to be another attempt (modal verb)

Iran and the IAEA may station observers (modal auxiliary)

An omission that could open the path to a possible claim by Tehran

Modals found in President’s Speech and its rendition in Western newspapers are represented in the following tables.

Table 4. Modals Used in President’s Speech

Newspaper \ Modals	Modal auxiliaries	Modal adverbs	Modal verbs	Total (phrases)
Western newspapers	13 (4.49)	3 (1.03)	2 (0.69)	289
Source text	8 (5.88)	3 (2.2)	4 (2.94)	136
Chi square	$X^2 = 0.4$ $P = 0.52$	$X^2 = 0.33$ $P = 0.56$	$X^2 = 1$ $P = 0.31$	

As shown in Table 4, the differences between the two texts in using modality were not statistically significant. Here are some examples:

(modal auxiliary) من می‌خواهم به شما خبر بدهم

(modal verb) نمی‌سازیم چون اعتقاد نداریم

(modal adverb) ما به صراحت اعلام می‌کنیم

We would announce it (modal auxiliary)

We don't believe in having it (modal verb)

The president told a huge crowd, comments likely to add to Western concern about the Islamic state's nuclear ambitions. (modal adverb)

Lexicalization (Lexical Analysis)

Every speaker uses words to describe an event or action; these words reveal his ideology. According to Fowler (1991) vocabulary inventorizes the ideas we may speak of. The following tables show the number of the lexical features ideologically significant in two issues related to peacefulness of Iran's intention in Nuclear Swap Deal and emphasizing on Iran's nuclear rights; these issues were also analyzed in both source texts and Western newspapers to reflect the newspapers' preference for certain items, which is also significant in terms of ideology.

Table 5. Lexical Items in the Nuclear Swap Deal

Total words	Iran's Nuclear Right	Peacefulness Intention	Newspapers
3400	11 (0.32)	34 (1)	Western Newspapers
536	4 (0.74)	12 (2.23)	Source Text

There are words that have ideological significance. Regarding peacefulness category, Table 5 shows differences in using lexical items related to Iran's peacefulness intention (1% for Western newspapers and 2.23% for the source text). Regarding Iran's nuclear right, there is also a difference (0.32 % for western newspapers and 0.74% for the source text).

Following are some examples for Iran's peacefulness intention:

Western newspapers: Its nuclear program is peaceful

Source text: همکاری‌های صلح‌آمیز هسته‌ای

Examples for Iran's nuclear rights:

Western newspapers: Iran would have the right

Source text: حقوق تمام اعضا را یادآوری می‌کنیم

Table 6. Lexical Items in President's Speech

Total (words)	Iran's progress	Iran's power	Peacefulness intention	Newspaper
1033	0	1 (0.09)	2 (0.1)	Western Newspapers
248	8 (3.22)	11(4.43)	10 (4.03)	Source Text

Regarding Iran's peacefulness category, Table 6 shows significant differences in using lexical items related to Iran's peacefulness intention (0.1% for Western newspapers and 4.03 for the source text). As for Iran's power again there are differences, too (0.09% for Western newspapers and 4.43% for the source text). Regarding Iran's progress the results also show significant differences (0% for Western newspapers and 3.22% for the source text).

Examples for Iran's peacefulness intention:

Western newspapers: We don't build nuclear bombs

این کارهایی که انجام می‌شود، مسیر تولید بمب نیست

Examples for Iran's power

Western newspapers: "We must not neglect the power of the Iranian people,"
Ahmadinejad said

ایران مهمترین و بزرگترین قدرت منطقه

Example for Iran's progress

ایران سریعترین پیشرفت‌های علمی در جهان

Western newspapers: (omitted)

Discussion and Conclusion

The selected texts in both Farsi and English were critically analyzed to find whether there were differences between them and if there were any projection of a specific ideology through the discursive strategies adopted for the study. The two Persian texts and rendition of each in Western newspapers were analyzed in terms of syntagmatic and semantic models. In this regard the features of grammar, modality, and lexicon formed the basis of analysis. As availability of options is a means made by transitivity, what is ideologically significant is the speaker/writer's choice from other available possibilities which reveals his/her point of view. The ideological significance of transitivity also exists in newspapers. In the analysis of grammatical features in the selected texts, some differences were found between each Persian source text and its rendition in Western newspapers in terms of the syntagmatic model and transformations.

With respect to syntagmatic model in the Persian text of 'Tehran Declaration' and its renditions, there are some differences in the number of transactives, non-transactives, and relationals between two texts, but these differences are not significant in the number of transactives and relationals. The most important differences relate to non-transactives. The texts in Western newspapers have provided more non-transactive processes than the source text. Using non-transactive structures may be a symptom of tendency in the Western newspapers to downplay or not to present directly the source or the actor of processes. From the view point of transformation model, the difference between the source text

and target texts was significant in using passivizations but not nominalizations. There was shifting the voice in some cases from passive to active throughout the target texts. In most cases, the Western newspapers used active verbs with subjects related to Iran in order to place Iran in charge of some actions. From the perspective of using modals, there were not found significant differences between the source text and the texts represented by Western newspapers. Regarding lexicalization, the lexical choices made in the source text were classified into two categories of Iran's peaceful intentions of having nuclear energy and Iran's nuclear right. Findings of this study show some differences between the source and target texts; that is, Western newspapers' tendency was less toward expressing such concepts regarding Iran. These findings reveal that Western newspapers have taken different strategies in rendering certain ideologically-loaded terms and concepts.

As shown in the previous research (Fairclough 1989,1995; van Dijk 1985, 1995), choice of words is important both in providing readers with clues for interpreting events and defining how readers perceive the actions and intentions of the participants of an event. According to van Dijk (1988, p. 86) "carefully constructed news texts would employ a number of syntactic, semantic, rhetorical and devices in the spirit of impression management." These tools enable writers to manipulate the readers' opinions in political discourse. It is an important argument in CDA that writers/speakers are faced with a number of syntactic and semantic options everywhere inside the text. Part of the process of discourse analysis is to identify the linguistic and discursual features of language varieties to show how stance is represented in specific contexts. According to the findings of this study, there were specific underlying ideological principles, which influenced the production of the source text as well as the translators' strategies in providing the product.

Overall, the critical analysis of Tehran Declaration and President's Speech discourses with their renditions in the Western newspapers disclosed that it is possible to manipulate readers' mind through text to confirm or reject an ideology. Western newspapers appeared to be employing strategies consistent with their ideological position which are different from the ideological positions injected to the source texts. The implication is that EFL learners need to be taught reading strategies which enable them to uncover the ideology behind what is said.

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