Bangladesh Political Crisis: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Global Print Media Reporting

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Abstract

News reports represent the political position or ideological stance and affects the readers' idea about the event; and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been widely used to analyse news reports since 1970s (Yu & Zheng, 2022). The purpose of the study is to analyse the various representations of the Bangladeshi political situation in the newspapers around the world. The theoretical framework used in the study is Van Dijk's ideological square of CDA which comprises discourse structures, cognition and society. Micro-level discourse structures direct the study towards macro-level of social cognition. Eight newspaper articles are selected. The study explores the foregrounded or backgrounded elements in news in paradigm of different socio-political world perspectives through framing. The concept of framing constructed through polarity (positive or negative word choice), metaphors, labelling (to put emphasis) and categorization has been analyzed. The study reveals the perspectives through ideological deconstruction by making use of framing. The results from the framing and textual analysis of newspaper indicate the differences in the representation of the same news by multiple news sources. The study indicates that ideological square model is useful to elucidate discourse strategies which fabricate the concept of framing by identifying tinges in discursive construction of an intended perspective.

Keywords: news reporting, CDA, framing, print media, political discourse, discourse strategies

Introduction

In the contemporary world of information and digitalization news reports published from various forums effectively influence public opinions (Liu Wei, 2022). Hence, critical discourse analysis of news reports highlights social issues from various perspectives and stimulates the people for social participation (Si Xianzhu, 2022). However, the print media claims that the news reports are objective, the news undeniably reflects its author's ideology (Yu et al., 2022), which often influences reader's perception about a certain political or social move worldwide (Said, 2003).

On 5th August 2024 the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina resigned, due to a following week of protest in Bangladesh. The protest was started in the early week of July by the university students over a long-running job quota system. In 1972 the quota system was set by Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the country's first leader and father of Sheikh Hasina. The ratio of system was 56:44, whilst 56% was reserved for the children and grandchildren of specific families known as "freedom fighters" (who fought against Pakistan in 1971) and 44% was merit based. The protest was being fueled by the elevated rate of unemployment, due to which almost fifth portion of Bangladesh's population is unemployed, and the university students asked for a fair system that is merit based.

The study explores various perspectives constructed through linguistic choices by using framing on global print media reporting the conflict of Bangladeshi political situation, by adopting Van Dijk's ideological model with focus on framing.

Objectives:

- To analyse the ideological perspective about the political crisis in Bangladesh depicted in global print media.
- To explore the role of print media in building different perceptions related to the political crisis in Bangladesh.

Research Questions:

1. What are the various ideological perspectives being constructed about the Bangladeshi political crisis in the international print media?
2. What is the role of international print media in building different perceptions related to the political crisis in Bangladesh?

Literature Review

Diversified Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA covers any kind of institutionalized discourse, covers a certain topic it can be a social issue, environmental trend, political decision-making, technological and scientific development (Wang, 2023). In short all of the fields covered by CDA, develop comments to address social issues. The forms of comments include columns, blogs, editorials, cartoons, social media posts, etc. Wang (2003) elaborates that comments or discourse coming from different regions show diversity through language, aiming different purposes and perspectives under the cover of spreading information. These purposes better to say perspectives determine the content or style of the news reports. CDA is an interdisciplinary approach between social science and humanities.

In understanding and analyzing discourse with a focus of media representations of political conflicts CDA plays a fundamental role (Saif, 2023). According to Fairclough in 2013 language, power and ideology are the core elements being addressed by CDA. Fowler et al (1979: 185) postulates that CDA is such linguistics instrument which can be used and applied to a certain discourse situation or communicative event, as print media discourse in socio-political perspective. Regarding the discourse function in political and ideological processes, many linguists as Fowler (1979) and Kress (1983), conducted research. The research collectively proposes that CDA is the unveiling the implicit ideologies in text. It exposes the exercise of power to develop a certain perspective by uncovering ideological prejudices (Widdowson, 2000: 32). It is best defined as a framework for examining linguistic choices for the construction of a peculiar framing and representations in print media reports to shape people's opinion (VanDjik, 2006:131).

Print Media and CDA

Due to the mobility factor people widely rely on web-based news reports. Hence, for the past decade, print media has become the primary source of information around the globe (Hossain. Et al., 2022). With every passing day the circulation of printed versions is getting lesser (Kriebel & Moore, 1980; Miller & Kelly, 2017).

In his book *Linguistics and Criticism* Fowler (1986: p. 52) analyzed some news headlines and noticed that reality is not described objectively in news discourse, instead it is a way to transmit a specific ideology. In *Media Discourse* Fairclough puts his emphasis on underlying ideologies, talks about numerous approaches to print media include conversational, linguistic and semiotic analysis (Fairclough, 1995a). In his book *Critical Discourse Analysis* Fairclough proposes that text representation in print media news reports is an ideological process, tuned by societal determinants and effects (Fairclough, 1995b: p. 65). Apart from the conventional methodologies and approaches, new theories were proposed by some CDA practitioners, e.g. Van

Leeuwen's (2008) social action and social actor web along with tools and concepts from cognitive linguistics, e.g. Cap's (2013) proximity model and corpus linguistics are too applied in the analysis of news reports. The multimodality in CDA introduced by Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) based on the analysis of the grammar of visual design, has been widely accepted.

When various media news forums reported the same event differently at the same time the CDA of news report provides some insights into the fundamental causal strategies, constructed to develop a frame (Yu & Zheng, 2022).

Van Dijk's Cognitive Model and Framing

Van Dijk (1991: p. 198) is the first who highlighted prejudice in news reports and wrote various books on news analysis. CDA has its origins in numerous discipline such as text linguistics, cognitive science and rhetoric (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Forchtner & Wodak, 2018; Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 1). The basic difference between discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis is greatly problem-oriented and by systematic examination of "semiotic data" there is uncovering of implied ideology and power control (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The critical relation between discourse and ideology is being explained by Van Dijk's books (1998, 2000) and proposed a conceptualized framework that is "ideological square". To understand the representation and construction of social identities or events the phenomenon of framing is used in ideological square. There are three dimensions, the square comprises as in figure 1.1, that are discourse structures, cognition and society (Van Dijk, 2000).
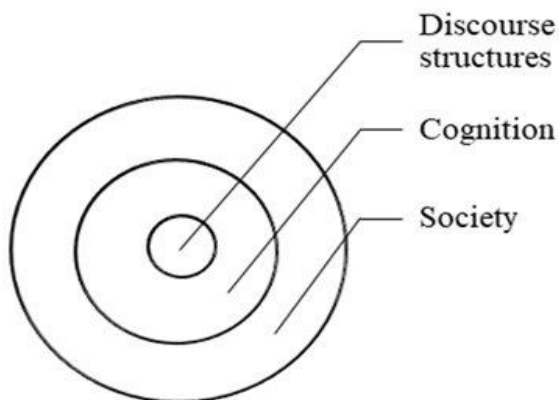

Figure 1.1

Discourse elaborates how ideologies or perspectives effect talk and text, how do we understand discourse by recognizing purposive vocabulary selection. The social dimension posits the kind of institution and groups involved in ideological (perspective) development. The cognitive explains the shared social cognition of group members.

When analyzing discourse, we mainly analyze the discourse structure, Van Dijk of the view that there are two main levels of text, which need to deconstruct to get the enveloped content-controlling power that are Macro level and Micro level. Both of the levels bring wholesome in the discourse. Numerous micro level devices as lexis, rhetoric, coherence and presupposition, lead towards macro-level propositions. Hence, political discourses mirror multiple views and personal backgrounds (Makarova & Shakoury, 2024). All of the elements involved at micro-level, organize the discourse which construct the discourse framing.

The organization of discourse refers to the strategy of framing. In framing, perspectives are built together with knowledge and beliefs which influence society's mental model (cognition) and

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discourse structure directly at various levels such as semantic level (Van Dijk, 2000). According to Van Dijk's "ideological square" framing is a crucial aspect to highlight a certain perspective while downplaying the other by developing the dichotomy of "in group" and "out group". The study explores strategical foregrounded or backgrounded elements in news reports in paradigm of different socio-political world perspectives through framing. The concept of framing constructed through polarity, metaphors, labelling and categorization has been analyzed.

Methodology

The aim of the current study to analyse the depiction of event of Bangladeshi political crisis as it exists in the global print media

Research Design

This study is based on a descriptive research design using both qualitative and quantitative approach to analyse various perspectives depicted in newspaper articles. The theoretical framework that the study is based upon the Van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). By adopting Van Dijk's ideological square, the discursive strategy of framing has been used in the current research. The discursive strategies of polarity (positive or negative word choice), metaphors (to identify distortions and potential biases), labelling (labels assignment to groups, people, identities or ideas) and categorization (to build certain narrative, grouping of information) has been used to construct the theoretical framework of framing.

Data Collection

Articles from 5 leading international newspapers were selected through Purposive Sampling. The newspaper articles were taken from the official websites of the five newspapers including BBC, Aljazeera, Washington Post, Dawn, Guardian. These articles were published on either 5th or 6th of August 2024. The selected articles were published around the same date as the main incident/event under consideration in the research study. All the articles were about reporting the political crisis in Bangladesh which led to ousting the former Prime Minister, Haseena Wajid on 5th August 2024.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the selected newspaper articles is based on descriptive research design (Adepoju, & Kalu, 2022) employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to describe various ideological perspectives.

Delimitations Research Procedure

There are a few delimitations for the research study, listed below:

- The study is limited to articles published in English newspapers only.
- The research only focuses on the newspaper articles which were published on the 5th and 6th of August, i.e. soon after the ousting of the former Prime Minister.
- The study includes one article each, published in popular and prominent newspapers representing the following regions: North America, Europe, Middle East, South Asia. However, newspaper article representing the perspectives from other regions of the world were excluded.
- The study analyses the political crisis that Bangladesh went through framed by various media publications, whereas other forms of analysis in CDA were not employed. The lexical items were listed and interpreted
- The discussion was carried out, also considering the existing literature

Findings and Discussion

In the contemporary world of information and digitalization news reports published from various forums effectively influence public opinions (Liu Wei, 2022). Hence, critical discourse analysis of news reports highlights social issues from various perspectives and stimulates the people for social participation (Si Xianzhu, 2022).

Discourse Topics

'Topics' are referred to as 'semantic macrostructures' which represent the global meaning or themes of a discourse (Wodak, & Meyer, 2015). The topics found in the articles are quite similar. Some specific examples from each article are given below:

Article 1.

The article focuses on the fall of Sheikh Hasina, who had ruled Bangladesh with significant authority for 15 years. Her resignation reflects the shifting power dynamics in the country. The article exhibits a critique of her governance.

Article 2.

The article "Timeline: The rise and fall of Bangladesh PM Sheikh Haseena" traces Sheikh Haseena's rise to power, highlighting her initial electoral victory in 1996 and subsequent return to leadership in 2009, which marked the beginning of her regime. The text focuses on the 2024 student protests against government job quotas, which escalated into widespread violence and eventually led to Hasina's resignation and flight from the country.

Article 3.

The article "Bangladeshi officials meet student demand to name Nobel laureate as leader" focuses on the appointment of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus as the head of Bangladesh's interim government, following student-led protests. This represents a significant shift in the country's political situation. It highlights the efforts made to restore order after the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, highlighting the urgency of stabilizing the nation through the formation of an interim government. Other topics include the influence of youth movements in contemporary political dynamics, violence and unrest and public reaction to Sheikh Haseena's resignation.

Article 4.

The article emphasizes Pakistan's official stance of solidarity with the people of Bangladesh during a time of political upheaval. This reflects Pakistan's diplomatic approach and its concern for stability in the region. Moreover, the article provides details on the chaotic violence that has gripped Bangladesh, mentioning the death toll and the attacks on minority communities. The legitimacy and impact of the student-led protests that led to Sheikh Hasina's resignation are emphasized, along with regional peace and stability in South Asia.

Article 5.

In the article "Bangladesh parliament dissolved a day after resignation of prime minister", the identified topics are student protests and its impact, military involvement in governance, and political power transition. The widespread celebrations and the "holiday-like" atmosphere in Dhaka are highlighted, reflecting the collective public-sentiments.

Discourse Strategies

The discourse strategies found in the articles were analysed. The analysis was done based on four main categories: polarity, use of metaphors, labelling and categorization. The explanation of each of the four categories shown in the table are discussed below:

1. Framing

Framing refers to selecting aspects of reality and make them stand out in the test to promote a particular incident, existing problem, solution or moral judgement (van Hulst et al., 2024).

In **Article 1**., the author frames the narrative around a change from authoritarian rule to newly found freedom, even though there is an underlying sense of uncertainty. The title of the article "Free again" suggests a return to a previous state of freedom, implying that the country had been under some form of suppression under Sheikh Haseena's regime. The article's framing emphasizes a contrast between the former rule of the Prime Minister being described as authoritarian, and the current situation which is portrayed as hopeful.

Article 2.

The article "The rise and fall of Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina" narrates a storyline of her political career and delineating the buildup of discontent that led to her resignation due to her overly authoritarian tendencies. It framed her existence as a political leader in terms of her successes and controversies.

Article 3.

This article primarily focused on portraying the transition of power in Bangladesh leading to the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Through framing the significance of student protests and the involvement of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus as a central figure in restoring order in the country, has been highlighted. It portrays Muhammad Yunus as a symbol of hope and reform, in contrast to Sheikh Haseena, who is representing an authoritarian leadership. In addition, framing presents the student movement as a decisive force, which shows that the students are not just participants but leaders in shaping the country's political future.

Article 4.

In the title, 'Pakistan expresses solidarity with people of Bangladesh, hopes for 'peaceful return to normalcy' , the "solidarity" and hope for a "peaceful return to normalcy" indicate the idea of us. vs. them. The framing presents Pakistan as a concerned neighbor, emphasizing its support for stability in Bangladesh. The use of phrases like "peaceful and swift return to normalcy" further reinforces this idea, portraying Pakistan as a peace-oriented nation.

Article 5.

The article frames the Bangladeshi political crisis as a transformative change, the dissolution of the Prime Minister as outcome of widespread protests. This put the students as agents of needed change. Moreover, the involvement of the army and the setting up an interim government are shown as necessary steps towards restoring stability in Bangladesh.

2. Polarity

In **Article 1**., polarity is evident between the oppressive regime of Sheikh Hasina and the liberating actions of the protestors. The language items used to describe Hasina's rule, for example, "autocrat," "silencing dissent," and "gross human rights violations," shows her government in a negative light. In contrast, the protestors are described positively, with words like "ecstasy," "celebrating," and "freedom of speech restored" emphasizing their role as liberators. The protestors are depicted as a united front, with "people of all ages and classes" coming together. This unity contrasts with the division within society, as reflected in concerns about the potential targeting of religious minorities and the lingering presence of political elites who had benefited from Hasina's rule.

Article 2.

In the article, polarity can be seen between the early career and negative aspects of the political career of Sheikh Haseena, which creates a clear good vs. bad equation. The polarity is further portrayed by the protestors' actions and her eventual resignation. The protests are depicted as a response to her failure as a leader, highlighting a growing divide between the government and

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the people. The use of terms like "crackdown" and "deadly protests" draw a contrast between the oppressive actions of the state and the resistance of the public.

Article 3.

The depiction of Muhammad Yunus is framed positively, as a Nobel laureate and pioneer of microlending, suggesting a superior individual who is opposed to the authoritarian tendencies attached to Sheikh Haseena. She is negatively portrayed through examples of her authoritarianism, legal war against Yunus, and manipulation of elections. This creates a clear "us versus them" picture where Younus represents the good, and Haseena represents an oppressive regime.

Article 4.

The article contrasts Pakistan's peaceful intentions with the chaotic and violent situation in Bangladesh. Words like "deadly protests," "chaotic violence," and "unrest" create a negative portrayal of the situation in Bangladesh, while Pakistan is depicted in a positive light through its expressions of solidarity and hopes for peace.

Article 5.

In this article, Haseena is portrayed negatively, with her governance associated with violence, authoritarianism, and corruption. Her resignation is celebrated and framed as victory for democratic rule. In contrast, Yunus is depicted positively, with references to his Nobel laureate status and his work in lifting millions out of poverty. The student protesters and their leaders are also portrayed in a positive light, as agents of change who have successfully challenged an oppressive regime.

3. **Metaphor**

Article 1.

The use of metaphors like "iron fist" to describe Sheikh Hasina's rule, invoke an image of harsh, oppressive control. The phrase "Bangladesh 2.0" is metaphorical as well, suggesting a reboot or fresh start for the country, much like a new version of software that implies improvement and modernization. Another significant metaphor is "taste of freedom," which conveys the idea of freedom as something tangible and experiential, something that had been absent or suppressed under Hasina's rule.

Article 2.

There are lesser number of metaphors used in the article but used in an effective way. The term "iron lady of Bangladesh" represents both negative and positive meaning, i.e. Haseena's tendencies as a good leader and an oppressive ruler, respectively. The phrase "rise and fall" is metaphorical, framing her political career as a journey with a clear rise and decline. Additionally, the term "crackdown" stands for the harsh measures taken by the government suppressing the public's opposition bringing out images of force and control. Moreover, words lie "growth" and "disparities" metaphorically represent expansion and imbalance to emphasize on the inequality that exists in the distribution of wealth during the rule of Haseena Sheikh.

Article 3.

The article makes use of a number of metaphors. For example, the phrase "volcanic eruption," is used to describe the protests, which implicates a powerful, uncontrollable force of change. Hence, it indicates how the established order was overwhelmed by the sheer force of public sentiment. Another metaphor is the portrayal of Haseena as a "monster," which signifies her to be a destructive force that needed to be removed for the country's welfare.

Article 4.

The metaphor of "chaos" and "violence" in the article emphasize on the disorder and instability. The description of Haseena's resignation and escape via helicopter can be seen as a

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metaphor for the collapse of her government and the desperate measures she took to flee the country. The metaphorical use of "resilient spirit" and "unity" in reference to the Bangladeshi people portrays them as strong and capable of overcoming the current crisis, aligning with Pakistan's supportive stance.

Article 5.

Metaphors in the article are used to highlight the dramatic nature of the events in Bangladesh. For example, the term "revolution" is used to describe the ousting of Hasina, suggesting a fundamental and positive change in the country's political landscape. The word "celebration" is used to describe the public's reaction to Haseena's resignation, reinforcing the idea that her departure is a cause for joy and relief. The phrase "new era" further emphasizes the idea of a fresh start for Bangladesh, free from the negative aspects of Hasina's rule.

Table 1. shows the frequency of metaphors found in the five articles:

Metaphors	Frequency
Article 1.	2
Article 2.	3
Article 3.	2
Article 4.	3
Article 5.	3

4. Labelling

In Article 1. Sheikh Hasina is labeled as an "autocrat" and "dictator," both of which carry strong negative connotations and simplify her complex role into a one-dimensional portrayal of authoritarianism. The protestors, in contrast, are labeled as "heroes" and "freedom fighters," which aligns with the positive framing of their actions. The article also labels the period following Hasina's departure as "uncertain," reflecting the ambivalence and anxiety about the future. The labeling of various actors, such as "army officers" or "development professional," helps situate them within the broader narrative of change and uncertainty.

Article 2.

In this article Sheikh Haseena and her rule has been labelled as "marked by impressive economic growth" and it is contrasted with the label of her being "accused of becoming a hardline leader." These labels simplify the aspects of her rule into identities. Furthermore, the protesters are labeled as a response to Hasina's failure to govern, and their actions are depicted as a catalyst for her downfall. The article also labels key events, such as the imposition of US sanctions and the COVID-19 economic crisis, as turning points that contributed to her resignation.

Article 3.

In this article, Muhammad Yunus is labeled as the "Nobel laureate," "economist," and "banker," emphasizing his positive traits and respect. These labels show him to be a deserving and capable leader in contrast to Hasina, labeled with terms "authoritarian" and "accused," highlighting her negative image. The protesters are labeled as "organizers" and "leaders," who have a central role to play with bringing political change.

Article 4.

In this article, Sheikh Haseena is labeled as a former prime minister who fled the country, which implies a sense of failure and cowardice. On the other hand, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus is labeled as a potential leader for the caretaker government, which lends legitimacy and a positive connotation to the interim leadership.

Article 5.

In this article various actors and events are categorized to support the target perspective. The categories are the student protesters, and their leaders depicted as heroes, the military as a stabilizing force, and Sheikh Haseena and her government as a corrupt and authoritarian ruler. The international community, the US and UK, is categorized as supportive of the democratic process and critical towards the government of Sheikh Haseena, which aligns with the article's overall framing of the events.

5. Categorization

In **Article 1**., the categorization is evident in how the actors are divided into the categories of "oppressors" and "liberators," "supporters" and "opponents" of the regime. The protestors are categorized as a unified force, despite their diverse backgrounds, while Hasina's supporters, including religious minorities who are feared to be targeted, are portrayed as isolated or endangered. Additionally, the potential future paths for Bangladesh, with one category being a hopeful, united country moving towards reform, and the other being a country at risk of "counter revolutions" and disintegration.

Article 2.

The article categorizes Haseena's early career as a period of economic success and political stability, while the later years as a time of increased authoritarianism and public unrest. The timeline itself acts as a categorization tool as it divides her political career into a series of events highlighting the progression from a popular leader to one who is eventually rejected by the general populace. The categorization further represents the context of Bangladesh's political scenario, where Haseena's government is seen as part of an authoritarian rule that eventually faces resistance.

Article 3.

Through categorization in the article, the actors are divided into two groups: the oppressed (students, Yunus) and the oppressor (Hasina, her government). The article aligns student protestors with broader global values of democracy and human rights whereas Sheikh Haseena is categorized as an outdated, authoritarian ruler who is not concerned about people's opinion.

Article 4.

Under categorization, the student protesters and the military are categorized as the agents that led to the fall of Haseena Sheikh. The Awami League party is categorized as the ruling elite that exploited the public sector job, whereas the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) is represented as the opposition demanding democratic elections.

Article 5.

Sheikh Hasina and her government are categorized as a corrupt and authoritarian regime that needed to be overthrown for the good of the country. The international community, particularly the US and UK, is categorized as supportive of the democratic process and critical of Hasina's rule, which aligns with the article's overall framing of the events.

Hence the newspaper articles were analysed based on Van Dijik's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The strategies of framing, polarity, metaphors, labelling and categorization, highlighting the perspectives portrayed through these writings published in the public domain.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study is to analyse the ideological discourse about the recent political crisis in Bangladesh as presented through newspaper articles, globally. Through framing, labeling, metaphors, and categorization, a narrative is constructed in the news articles. The results indicate

certain differences as well as similarities based on elements of discourse depicted by various print media houses around the globe. The overall points of conclusion are as follows:

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) being a vast field of research, it leads to the idea of extending the current research to forms of media other than the newspapers like talk shows, reels, YouTube videos etc. Additionally, media discourse on the same issue from two specific regions of the world can be compared through a detailed analysis; and tools other than the four discourse strategies can be used for the purpose of analysis

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