

Critical Discourse Analysis of empowerment in “Amid the Rubble of Mosul, Francis Offers a Salve for Iraq’s Wounds”

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ABSTRACT

Positive Discourse Analysis is a complementary approach for Critical discourse analysis, yet the former intends to have a positive orientation to make the world a better place to live in. The present study attempts to find out one of the syntactic strategies positively used by The New York Times in a report entitled “Amid the Rubble of Mosul, Francis Offers a Salve for Iraq’s Wounds” through which the ideology of empowerment is used to encourage individuals and enhance confidence in their active participation in social, economic, and political processes. To accomplish the analysis of one of the syntactic strategies of the selected report, the present study intends to analyze a report on the first-ever papal visit to Iraq by Pope Francis through the lens of transitivity to examine how the media report from the New York Times utilizes this strategy to focus on the positive effect of the visit. The present study aims at finding (1) the types of empowerment and (2) investigating the most frequently used process in transitivity to reflect empowerment. It is hypothesized that empowerment has six types and (2) there are six processes of transitivity, with material process being the most widely used in the chosen report. The methodology of the present study includes (1) a theoretical survey of CDA and PDA, and (2) analyzing the chosen data qualitatively and quantitatively. An eclectic model is used based on Fairclough model of CDA (1989) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) for transitivity. The findings show how the selected tool, especially the material process, is functionalized to express empowerment in Media to affect the life of the ordinary people.

1. Introduction

The first-ever papal visit to Iraq by Francis which lasted four days from the 5th-8th of March 2021, is considered a significant event for both the Christians as an Iraqi minority in particular and the government in general. The main reason for selecting this event as data to be analyzed is the fact that the arrival of Francis was a new chapter that could help the country to move one step forward because of the Pope’s effective position as a common figure whose behavior or speech could influence others by encouraging them to make their lives a better place to live in.

The current study aims to find out the strategy utilized to reflect the idea of empowerment. A specific question is presented to be answered: what are the types of empowerment used in the chosen data? There are six processes in transitivity, what are the most frequent one utilized in the selected report through which empowerment is reflected?

The present study aims to identify the types of empowerment used positively and to determine the most frequent process used in the data. It is hypothesized that empowerment is revealed through several syntactic strategies such as transitivity that are positively utilized in order to create positive social changes. Transitivity is thought to have six types (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral and existential processes) and it is intended to be analyzed according Halliday and Matthiessen (2014).

2. CDA vs. PDA

According to Fairclough (1993) Critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) is a systematic approach that studies the relationships among “discursive practices, events, and texts, and wider social and cultural structures”. It examines how these practices are shaped by power relations and in what way the opacity of these relationships can secure power and hegemony. (Fairclough, 1993: 132-33). Van Dijk (2001) regards it an approach within discourse analysis which aims to reveal the ways in which language power and ideology are related to one another.

Wodak and Mayor (2009) regard CDA as a “research approach” its main focus on studying how the “social power abuse, dominance, and inequality” are reproduced by text as well as talk in the social and political context. The two scientists discussed how understanding, exposing, and ultimately resisting social inequality is the aim of CDA.

According to Fisk (1994) our words are never neutral they convey how we see ourselves, our identity, our knowledge and our value. while Roger (2004) points out that the analysis goal in using critical is to reveal power dynamics and highlight social injustice for the CDA perspective. The term critical should not be interpreted as denoting criticism or negativity. Being critical according to Kendall Gavin (2007) does not imply “being negative” in the conversational sense rather it implies “skepticism” (Kendall, 2007). It also includes offering alternatives, it can argued that the main theme examined in their conversational CDA are negative ones such as unfairness, dominant, hegemony and control, therefore it has been criticized and reveals that it could be involved some engagement with the positive aspect (Macgilchrist, 2017).

This is considered as a conclusion for what has been mentioned by James Martin in 1999 in his paper *Positive Discourse Analysis: Solidarity and change*. He claims that If discourse analysts are serious about wanting to use their work to enact social change, then they will have to broaden their coverage to include discourse of this kind – discourse that inspires, encourages, heartens; discourse we like, that cheers us along. We need, in other words, more positive discourse analysis (PDA) alongside our critique; and this means dealing with texts we admire, alongside those we dislike and try to expose. (1999:51–52) Martin (1999) believes that the focus of DA should include both “good news” that promote equality and harmony as well as “bad news” that include inequality. Martin's PDA is proposed as an auxiliary viewpoint to a CDA mentioning that the primary goal is to improve the quality of life in the immediate environment.

PDA “analyzes the discourse we like rather than the discourse we wish to criticize” (Macgilchrist, 2007). Likewise, Bartlett (2012) who agrees with Martin (2004) that the relationship between them is the same relation between the “yin and yang approach.” By analyzing both the positive and negative aspects of discourse, this approach illustrates that social action must be both constructed and deconstructed in order to comprehend, show, and reject social inequity. Therefore, it is important to mention that the relationship between PDA and CDA is a complementary rather than contradictory. I prefer theoretical complementarity to contradiction, and evolutionary as opposed to revolutionary rhetoric, so want to be understood as flagging a yin/yang perspective here – deconstructive and constructive activity are both required. (Martin, 2004:7)

PDA emphasizes on how language can make positive social change and empowerment (Martin, 2004). Previous studies have presented that media discourse can significantly impact public perception by stress positive aspects and inclusiveness of marginalized groups. It is important to mention the role of media coverage of this visit which played a crucial role in framing the significance of the event. The “language of the media” refers to the language used in newspapers, radio, television, and digital media to engage listeners, convey information, and influence public opinion, reflecting social reality and actively shaping public discourse. Media language aims to convey important information effectively. However, it can convey bias through word choice, issue framing, and fact inclusion (Fairclough, 1995).

3. Empowerment

Gaventa and Cornwall (2008) points out that empowerment begins with the claim that it happens between the powerful and the powerless individual or groups. It is a process that shifts power dynamics between the powerful and powerless, allowing individuals or groups to make positive choices and take actions that align with their goals and ambitions. This process, often perceived as oppressive, involves the creation of “transitive power” to realign power over relationships. Within this context, it has been defined as ‘the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives’. In the English-speaking world, researchers and aid workers liberally

utilize the term "empowerment" since the late 1970s. This comprises in the fields of adult literacy, social services, public health, social psychology, and community development (Simon 1994).

Empowerment according to Gutiérrez and Lewis (1999) empowers individuals by providing resources and information to recognize strengths and weaknesses, inspiring talent, boosting team building, and encouraging personal growth and self-redesign. In the US, it prioritizes marginalized individuals' perspectives, enabling them to take control of their situations and end the dominance they are under (Wise 2005).

In discourse, empowerment is the application of language and communication techniques that support people or groups, gaining confidence in themselves, and actively engaging in conversations and life-affecting decision-making. It entails encouraging an environment where everyone feels respected and heard, encouraging inclusive discourse, and providing a platform for the expression of various viewpoints (Stromquist, 2007). As stated by Holly Martinez (2022), the primary goal of empowerment theory is to provide people and entire societies the means, opportunities, encouragement, and power to exercise personal, interpersonal, and political authority in order to improve their quality of life. To put it another way, the ideology of empowerment supports members of society in challenging the political and social structures that oppress them and keep them from realizing their goals. It is a process that involves empowering individuals or groups to take control of their lives, make informed decisions, and overcome challenges.

It can be categorized into

1. **Personal** empowerment which enhances self-confidence and self-esteem.
2. **Economic** empowerment that improves financial independence and well-being.
3. **The political** empowerment which increases political participation and promotes civic engagement.
4. **Organizational** empowerment creates a supportive environment.
5. **Community** empowerment builds capacity to address needs and challenges.
6. **Gender** empowerment promotes gender equality.
7. **Environmental** empowerment promotes responsibility and stewardship.
8. **Digital** empowerment provides access to digital resources and skills.
9. **Social** empowerment improves social status and well-being.

These types of empowerment are interconnected and often overlap, fostering positive change in individuals and communities. (Martinez, 2022), it emphasizes on solutions rather than difficulties. At the level of community, people cooperate to achieve common goals. It emerges from individuals, who acquire skills to act. While at the individual level, psychological empowerment connects personal control and efficacy with a will to change and it allows individuals to recognize the relationship between their actions and outcomes.

Concerning how empowerment defined, it can be said that it means a way of using language and communication techniques to support, encourage, promote self-confidence, inclusive discourse, and decision-making, aiming to improve quality of life and environment by challenging oppressive structures.

4. Data and analysis

The report's headline is “Amid the rubble of Mosul, Francis offers a salve for Iraq’s wound” through which the overall meaning of the report could be concluded as the way of mentioning the important events that happened during the pope’s visit to Iraq on the 7th of March in 2021. This report is published in *The New York Times*. The present paper also shades the light on the qualitative and

quantitative perspectives of the data using an elected modal based on Fairclough model of CDA (1989) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014)

4.1 The Analysis

Transitivity is the main strategy found to manifest empowerment. It offers a framework for dissecting the ways in which states, actions, and events are expressed in language. Transitivity can be used at the micro level of analysis to draw attention to specific behaviors and characters in media reports, thereby reshaping the narrative to reflect empowerment. Numerous example of how the media can use transitivity to show empowerment during the pope's visit to Iraq are presented they are classified according to the different types of transitivity.

1. Material process

“He prayed for victims of all faiths who had endured war and armed conflict.”

2. Mental process:

“He said he hoped the pope’s visit would encourage Christians to return.”

3. Relational process:

“it was Francis, who as pontiff has prioritized reaching out to the marginalized and forgotten, who succeeded.”

4. Verbal process:

“He said that Christians who had fled the city “have memories, they have Muslim friends, they have homes here.”

5. Existential process:

No sentence containing the existential process.

6. Behavioral process:

“They hummed along with chants and expressed joy and relief that a pope had finally come to find them.”

The idea of being empowered has been presented in many sentences. The following examples exemplify how actions and speeches from effective figures like Pope Francis can empower publics by authorizing their experiences, encouraging hope and solidarity, and encouraging inclusive and supportive environments.

“Francis voiced sorrow and hope for a shrunken Christian community”

This sentence shed the light on the pope’s effort to convey the suffering of the minority group in Iraq and their hope to gain their rights, it also shows his hope to bring them again to be included within the big Iraqi community. By stating sorrow and hope, Francis admits the dilemma of the Christian community while also instilling hope, which can empower the community to persevere and rebuild.

“He prayed for victims of all faiths who had endured war and armed conflict.”

Conveying his sympathy toward the victims of all religion diversity regardless the differences of their regions, directions, colors. It is a way of welcoming and evaluating the diversity. His prayers reflect the misery of all victims regardless of their faith, his efforts for encouraging solidarity and common support, are vital for reflecting the idea of empowerment.

“Francis went to the wounded heart of the country, directly addressing the suffering, persecution and sectarian conflict that have torn the nation apart.”

Resolving conflicts and persecution based on sectarianism highlights the importance of mutual respect and understanding among diverse communities. His intention to heal the wounds of the

people in Iraq is based on his humanistic feeling and efforts to give Iraqis an equal opportunity. By directly talking about these issues, Francis brings global attention to them, this can empower local groups by authorizing their experiences and potentially encouraging global support and action.

“Francis went to the northern towns where many Christians now live, visiting a church packed with jubilant — and often unmasked — faithful in Qaraqosh, home of the country’s largest Christian population.”

His visit to these towns and collaboration with the local community increases and boosts morale and offers sensitive and spiritual support, empowering the community to remain strong. His interactions with the faithful prove his intention to be solidary and supportive with others, empowering the civic by strengthening their faith and resilience despite the difficulties they face.

“Other popes have dreamed of visiting Iraq, but Francis is the first to make the trip. In doing so, he has sought to protect an ancient but battered and shrunken Christian community, build relations with the Muslim world and reassert himself on the global stage.”

Removing barriers that may hinder participation and providing accommodations to be unified with Muslims where necessary is considered as one of the pope’s goals that are intended to be done while visiting Iraq.

His visit serves as a protective measure and a performance of solidarity, which empowers the Christian specifically by showing that they are not forgotten. It also raises interfaith dialogue, which can lead to wider social empowerment.

“Thousands of Muslims, Christians and Yazidis, he said, “were cruelly annihilated by terrorism, and others forcibly displaced or killed.””

Acknowledging the suffering and the harsh treatment with others from other religious groups promotes a message of shared humanity and accept and value the diversity. Identifying the violence faced by multiple faith groups empowers these groups by admitting their trauma and authorizing their suffering, promoting a shared memory and unity against violence.

“Francis, who has praised young volunteers, Muslim and Christian, working to rebuild churches and mosques.”

Removing the boundaries between the two groups, Christians and Muslims, by praising their collaborative efforts motivate them to continue and improve their efforts, rebuilding places of worship underscores the importance of support and mutual respect.. It is known that the pope is a religious figure therefore it is possible to affect others to do the same. The continuous improvement and encouragement is beneficent to create more solidary environments.

“I am sure it will be a first step for them to come back,” said Anas Zeyad, a Muslim engineer who is part of an international project to rebuild the churches. He said that Christians who had fled the city 'have memories, they have Muslim friends, they have homes here.'”

The speech that is reflected by the Muslim engineer shows the idea of belongingness of the Christians to their land. It is also shows the cooperation between the two groups, one of them build to make the other group live in a good place. The continuous improvement is done to create a good environment to be live in. This statement emphasizes the significance of community and belonging, this empower displaced Christians throughout repeating their ties to the town and the support they take from their Muslim friends.

“In his whirlwind trip, Francis has sought to make significant progress in tightening bonds between his church and the Muslim world.”

To strengthen bonds between different religious communities is a way of welcoming the evaluating the diversity among them. By strengthening inclusive bonds, Francis empowers mutually

communities to work towards shared understanding and peace, fostering an environment in which cooperation and coexistence are prioritized.

“On Saturday, the country’s most powerful and reclusive Shiite, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, met with the pope and released a statement stressing that Christian citizens deserved to ‘live like all Iraqis in security and peace and with full constitutional rights.’”

This declaration affirms the notion that every person should be granted equal rights and be a part of the fabric of the country, irrespective of their religious affiliation. Promoting brotherhood between various religious communities highlights how crucial empowerment and unity are.

The above mentioned sentences are presented in the report to show idea of empowerment among religions and the intention to live peacefully and bridging the gaps and activate the sense of belongingness to their land, their shared fate with other religions and their effort to have a humanities.

Media reports can effectively reflect and promote such a message when the pope was in Iraq by carefully choosing verbs and structuring sentences that emphasize positive actions. In the present study, transitivity is shown in the following table.

Table (1) frequencies and percentages of the process types.

No.	Process type	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Material	44	77.19%
2.	Mental	1	1.75%
3.	Relational	5	8.77%
4.	Verbal	3	5.26%
5.	Behavioral	4	7.01%
6.	Existential	0	0%
Total		57	100%

Depending on the percentages presented in the table, it is shown that the highest frequency is the material process which represent (77.19%) out of the total percentage. The same table also shows that the existential process is not found in the present report. This extensively use means that the present discourse depends mostly on expressing physical activities.

Media reports commonly utilizes material processes to describe the Pope's activities, such as “visiting” and “meeting”. The Pope was often the actor, while Iraqi people as the recipients of these actions. Using transitivity in media reports effectively constructs a narrative that emphasizes empowering and encouraging Christians in Iraq to make a positive change. By highlighting the Pope's proactive role and the benefits for the Iraqi community, the media fosters a sense of hope and agency. These findings demonstrate how language is used in media to promote positive social identities and empower marginalized groups

5. Conclusion

The paper comes up with the following:

1. There are six types of empowerment; personal, economic, political, organizational, community, gender, environmental, digital and social. Since a large portion of the narrative focuses on addressing the collective experiences and traumas of various communities in Iraq and fostering unity among them, community empowerment is the most frequently used type of empowerment in the passage.

2. Transitivity is extensively used in this report to manifest empowerment.
3. The material process is one of the six types of transitivity and the most frequent one among the others. It is used to reflect actions or events that take place in the human world outside of humans. Humans' physical experiences are discussed in this procedure. The subject of empowerment in the report likely focuses on actions and changes, concentrating on how the Pope's visit empowers and influences the Iraqi people and communities. This again lends itself to material processes, as they describe physical actions and their effects, rather than just stating the existence of entities or states.
4. The report on the Pope's visit to Iraq is event-focused as a result, they lack existential processes.

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