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**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

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A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to explore Arab spring consequences that prevailed in the Tunisia after 2010-2011 as reflected by CNN in its online news articles released in its website 2013. The main concern of the study is to unveil CNN's hidden ideologies towards Arab spring upheaval in Tunisia investigating its discursal "Self" and "Other" representations. To achieve this goal, the researcher utilized the following theories: 1) van Dijk's theory of Semantic Macrostructure (1980); to examine macro and micro structures of CNN's online news articles, 2) van Dijk's theory of Ideological Square (1998c); to examine CNN's ideologies embedded within its online news articles and 3) Wodak's Discourse- Historical Approach; to endorse linguistic and ideological analysis of CNN's online news articles. Fairclough's three-dimensional Approach was utilized to organize the process of analysis of the study corpus. Within the linguistic analysis, macro and micro structures of CNN's online news articles were analyzed. At the macro level, the semantic macrostructures of the online news articles, under study, were outlined to determine their global meaning. At the micro level, the syntactic, lexical and rhetorical structures of online news articles, under study, were examined to determine their local meaning. Within the ideological analysis, the CNN's online news articles were analyzed to determine its ideological positive "Self" (in-group) and negative "Other" (out-group) presentations. This analysis was conducted along the macro and micro structures analysis of CNN's online news articles, under study. The findings revealed that CNN's ideological orientations towards its positive "Self" and negative "Other" were varied as far as Tunisian conflict is concerned. Thus, it presented the Tunisian poor victims of self-immolation as the positive identities while the Tunisian political regime(s) as the negative "Other" identities.

**KEY WORDS:** Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); Media Discourse; Ideology; Macro and Micro Structures; "Self" and "Other" presentations; CNN.



## **Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Media news representation cannot be regarded as a direct and easy reproduction of events as it involves a process of selecting, structuring and formulating such events via language (Fairclough, 1995b). Language is, then, the main tool to persuade people to accept certain representations of news events which must be organized logically and naturally for the sake of spreading the views of dominant people and then accepting them as common –sense knowledge providers (Fairclough, 1995b). In this sense, all news representations are reported from a particular angle due to the fact that all media institutions and organizations are politically, socially and financially situated (Fowler, 1991).

The application of critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) to analyze online news helps create and increase awareness and deep understanding of the linguistic strategies used to construct "Self" and "Other" ideological representations. Thus, in this study, it is considered as a viable approach to unearth the implicit ideologies hidden in the CNN's online discourse. As such, the researcher of the present study intend to concentrate on the ideological use of language to build the "Self" and "Other" polarities embedded within the CNN 's online news article.

#### **1.1 OBJECTIVE**

The present study aims to identify the semantic macro and micro structures of CNN 's Arab spring online article and its ideological representations of "Self" and "Other" towards the Arab spring consequences in Tunisia. As such, it will be an attempt to answer the following question:

-What are the semantic macro and micro structures of CNN's Tunisian Arab spring online article and their ideological representations of "Self" and "Other"?

#### **1.2 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

The proposed model of CDA adopted in this study is based on:



## **Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

1 - Van Dijk's Semantic Macrostructures Theory (1980) which shows the linguistic analysis of the news text on both levels: macro and micro.

2 -Van Dijk's Ideology Square Theory (1998) which shows the in-group and out-group ideological presentations; and

3 -Wodak's Historical Approach (2001, 2009) to connect the linguistic – ideological analysis with Intertextual analysis by background information that facilitates the process of news text understanding.

The first van Dijk's two theories examine the cultural, social, political and ideological factors affecting CNN's news texts that concern with the Tunisian conflict after the Arab spring whereas Wodak's approach is utilized to show the historical and political information that may help clarify the reason behind CNN's ideological view. The two theories and approach will be discussed below.

### **1.2.1 Van Dijk's Theory of Semantic Macrostructures**

Van Dijk (1980) provided a method to analyze the structural organization of news text. According to him, news reports have a hierarchal schema named a superstructure that has certain categories, with the most important details come before the less important ones. The global superstructure represents the overall structural organization of a news text which covers the main event, commentary, background and evaluation categories. Each category is associated with a topic or a macroproposition. The news text covers many macropropositions which can be reduced to the main one that summarizes the news text as a whole. The textual-structural categories can be exploited to steer the reader's comprehension and interpretation.

Van Dijk (2009, p.68) believed that semantic macrostructures should be the first step in analyzing the text to be studied: "I often advocate beginning Critical Analysis [...] with an analysis of semantic macrostructures, that is, with a study of global meanings,



### **Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

topics or themes". Thematic structures or topics are derived from the text itself. Sentences formulate topics covered within the text, representing macro-propositions. These macro-propositions, in turn, can be reduced to more general ones. These general ones should be cut down to one main macro proposition that represents the whole item of the news story (van Dijk, 2009). The analyst and reader's prior-knowledge about the topic in question helps infer many macro-propositions (van Dijk, 1988b). This theory will be utilized to analyze the headline and the body of CNN's news report, under study.

#### **1.2.2 Van Dijk's Theory of Ideological Square**

Defining ideology as a basic shared, socio-cognitive system of a group, culture or society, van Dijk (1998a) suggested the ideological square to be applied to analyze any type of a news text, showing our positive Self–presentation and their negative Other–presentation. Words may be exploited to refer to ideological conventions, creating a suitable model in the readers' minds (Ali, 2011). This notion facilitates the comprehension of these news texts, influencing the reader's interpretation of them. The present paper utilizes the ideological square to interpret CNN 's positive "Self" (in-group) and negative "Other" (out-group) as far as the Arab spring consequences events in Tunisia is concerned.

#### **1.2.3 Wodak's Historical-Discoursal Approach**

Wodak's approach (2001, 2009) provides background information with which the discursive event is embedded. Hence, it is useful to expose the implicit meaning of a news text to be explicit by relating it to the relevant historical –socio-political situations in which it happened. Such information will be of a great help to guide the reader to comprehend the news text. This method can be used with the analysis of semantic macrostructures or with the ideological analysis. To comprehend the Tunisian communicative event, it is useful to apply this approach to achieve an



**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

objective analysis. CNN's ideological views can be understood by integrating the historical, socio and political context with the whole process of analysis.

The two theories and approach support each other, working together to create and clarify the overall meaning of the news text, in question.

#### **1.2.4 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Approach (1995a)**

Fairclough's Three-dimension approach of CDA (1995a) will be utilized in the present study. It consists of three dimensions or steps (description, interpretation and explanation) which will be followed by the researcher throughout the process of analysis of the CNN's selected news article to manifest its positive "Self" (in-group) and negative "Other" (out-group). 'Description' is connected with the linguistic part of analysis while 'interpretation' and 'explanation' are connected with the ideological part of the analysis. In fact, this approach connects the two levels of analysis, micro and macro together. Thus, the linguistic structures are described linguistically and, then, interpreted and explained, ideologically. In other words, the first step is concerned with the linguistic analysis while the other two steps are concerned with the ideological one. That is to say, the linguistic analysis serves to achieve the ideological analysis which concerns with overall theme or topic of the news story. As such, the linguistic analysis and ideological analysis will be linked together, achieving the main target of the current study.

The study's theoretical framework will be illustrated in the following figure (1):



**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

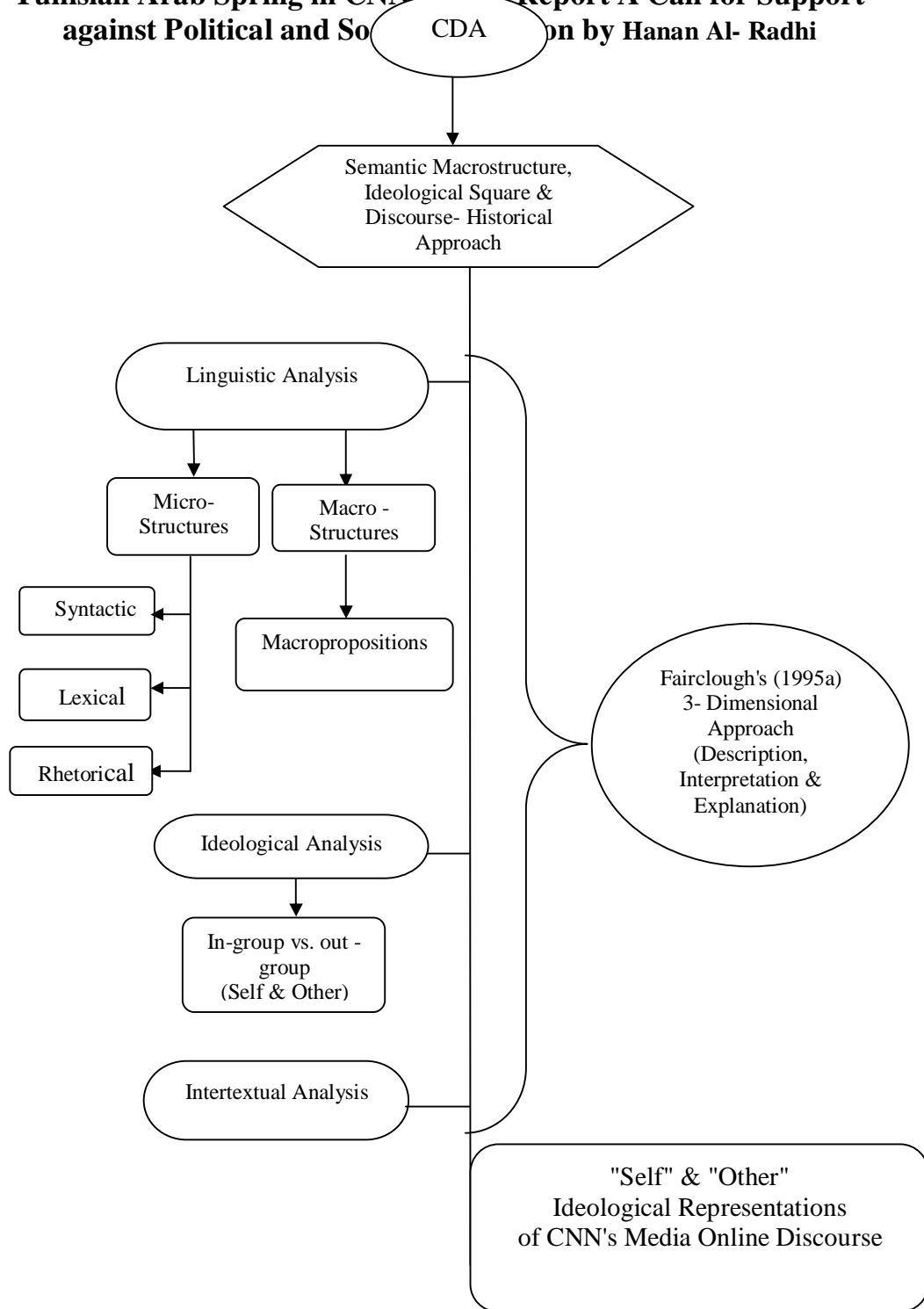


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



## **Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

### **2. Analysis of CNN's Article**

The present news article was published by CNN's website on 12 March 2013. It concerns with another incident of the self-immolation of a Tunisian man protesting poverty, unemployment and life hardship. This report reminds the readers with the first victim Mohammad Bouazizi's self-immolation for the same reasons at the end of 2010, provoking the Arab spring uprisings not in Tunisia only but in many countries in the Arab world. CNN documented the event, reflecting its ideological view. CNN's title is Tunisia: Tunisian man sets himself on fire to protest unemployment.

#### **2.1 Macro Structures Analysis**

The following section will deal with semantic macro propositions of CNN's news story article focusing on how its view of positive "Self" and negative "Other" is reflected by the semantic macrostructure.

##### **2.1.1 Thematic Structures**

CNN's news story consists of nine sentences only from which many initial macro propositions can be derived and formulated. The first step should be started with the headline, "Tunisian man sets himself on fire to protest unemployment". In general, "because headlines exist to capture the attention and interest of the perspective reader, they are almost always good, concise encapsulation of the semantic macroproposition as understood by the news text writers and editors" (Ali, 2011, p.304). First, the headline comes as an encapsulation of the news report having space restrictions. As such, the CNN's headline gives a straightforward summary of the news event. It is written to show "who-what-where-when formulaic news headline style" (Bell and Garret, 1998, p.75). Semantically, within CNN's news story, 'who' is a Tunisian man; 'what' is self-immolation because of unemployment; 'where' is Tunisia; 'when' is in one daylight post-Arab spring revolution. This is well illustrated in CNN's headline in





**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

which the overall theme of the news story is exposed. However, CNN's headline may have two embedded semantic macro propositions:

- 1) An unemployed Tunisian man burns himself because of poverty and desperation
- 2) Tunisian people suffer from economic hardship and unemployment.

These two macropropositions can be reduced to the main one: "Out of economic hardship and desperation, a Tunisian poor man burns himself to protest unemployment". The suggested macrostructure answers what, where and how the event did happen. Background information about Tunisia will be of great use to understand the headline semantic macro-proposition and its intended ideological purpose.

The headline concentrates on an important point that concerns with self-immolation incident to protest economic hardship, social oppression and governmental corruption. This directs the readers to the real cause of the victim's suicide; unemployment. In turn, this encourages them to read the whole news text and this is the main goal of any good headline. In other words, CNN has succeeded in enticing the readers' attention in the western world about a Tunisian desperate man's self –immolation.

The basic main topic in the CNN's news story is concerned the self –immolation of 27 years old man to protest unemployment. But CNN deals with other sub-topics that are related and connected with the main one, aiming to provide a full picture of the Tunisian event. Many propositions can be listed:

M1: a 27 year-old unemployed man burned himself to protest unemployment.

M2: Mohammad Bouazizi, a street vendor, set himself on fire, in December 2010 after a municipal policewoman insulted him and confiscated his fruit-selling carriage provoking the wave of Arab spring all over the Arab world.

M3: Self-immolation became a cry against social oppression and governmental corruption.

### **2.1.1.1 Derivation of Semantic Macrostructure**



**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

The above three macro-propositions (M1-M3) can be summarized into a main general one (M4), formulating the Semantic macro-structure of CNN's news article that concerns with the self-immolation of an unemployed man in Tunisia:

Out of his despair, Tunisian poor- unemployed man set himself on fire to protest social oppression, economic hardship, governmental corruption and stifled freedoms as his fellowman Mohammad Bouazizi who burned himself in December 2010 to provoke Arab spring wave in Tunisia, the Arab world and Middle East.

To sum up, the researcher summarizes CNN's news text in one sentence providing a comprehensive picture of the event. As it is mentioned before, the semantic macrostructure of the news story is derived from the summarization of the total number of the topics of the news story. Thus, the semantic macrostructure for CNN presents a summary of Tunisian man's self-immolation with which the readers have no need to read the whole news text. It is more elaborative and comprehensive that covers the whole news story with one complex sentence including many propositions.

It concentrates on the victim's burning himself out of his despair with quite a clear reference to:

- a) The main reasons behind the event; to protest social oppression, economic hardship, governmental corruption and stifled freedoms.
- b) His fellowman Mohammad Bouazizi's self-immolation in 2010 which led to a huge wave of revolutions swept Tunisia, the Arab world and Middle East.

To conclude, the semantic macrostructure answers the following questions required for the news story writing:

What: self-immolation

Who: a young man

Where: Tunisian capital, Tunis

When: post-Arab spring revolution, 2013



## **Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

Why: to protest unemployment and poverty

How: setting on fire

### **2.1.2 CNN's Semantic Macrostructure and van Dijk's Ideological Square**

The basic main semantic macro-structure of CNN's news text is derived from the whole news story. It is formulated from the three macro-propositions. This main one is connected with the headline: 'Tunisian man sets himself on fire to protest unemployment'. But it is more comprehensive showing the whole news story whereas the headline focuses on the main information-self-immolation of a Tunisian man. With such semantic macrostructure, CNN intends to indicate that Tunisian poor people protest their life hardship. As such, it expresses its ideological message showing its support to the Tunisian poor victims in their struggle against the Tunisian political regime(s). In fact, by doing this, CNN endorses its ideological view of positive "Self" and negative "Other" it insists on maintaining and manifesting throughout its text and this can be reflected within the main semantic macrostructure.

Thus, CNN expresses:

- a) Its support for the Tunisian victims representing the positive "Self"
- b) Its antagonism for the Tunisian regime(s) representing the negative "Other"

As such, CNN's text is connected with van Dijk's theory of Ideological Square of positive "Self" (in-group) and negative "Other" (out-group) presentation.

### **2.1.3 CNN's Semantic Macrostructure and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach**

To understand CNN's ideological view about this event, the self-immolation of a Tunisian man, one should notice the following (CNN.com, 2011):

- 1) CNN is one of the most watched and read media institutions in the world. This is a clear evidence for its success in reporting all the issues that provoke the public opinion everywhere. Its history proves that it was the first news outlet which reported



**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

the gulf war with all its miseries and the first channel which reported natural catastrophes and their consequences. In general, despite its claims of objectivity, CNN tries to reflect the oppressed poor people's struggle against their oppressors. It informs the western world about different events the world witnesses, especially, those ones occurred in the Arab homeland. The self- immolation of Tunisian poor men is one of the events that CNN interested in. The Tunisian news story reflects the Arab people's suffering because of dictatorship for long times. CNN seeks, among its goals, to report the Arab issues reflecting the American viewpoint.

2) CNN concentrates on the main event briefly and directly in an attempt to draw the attention of the American-western public opinion to a crisis the Tunisian people suffers from for the sake of sympathizing with victims. To achieve objectivity, it committed to, CNN reports self-immolation event in Tunisia with all its aspects (S.1, S.2 and S.3) connecting it with the first one (S.5, S.6 and S.7) which is the main reason for erupting the Arab spring uprising not in Tunisia only , but, in Arab world and Middle East (S.5). CNN presents its views asserting that this event unleashed a wave of public rejection against social oppression, governmental corruption and stifled freedom (S.8). CNN ends its news story saying that this event has become common in some Arab countries besides Tunisia as Jordan, Bahrain and morocco (S.9). This asserts the fact that the Arab countries suffer from the same circumstances. By indicating this, CNN sheds light on this event concisely and intensively aiming to draw the attention of American-Western readers.

## **2.2 Semantic Micro Structures Analysis**

The following section will deal with semantic micro structures of CNN's news story text to show how its orientation of positive "Self" and negative "Other" is constructed syntactically, lexically and rhetorically. In fact, the micro structures are used, on purpose, to establish CNN's ideological view towards the Tunisian event showing its ideological representation of positive "Self" and negative "Other".



## **Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

### **2.2.1 Syntactic Structures Analysis**

Two categories will be analyzed and discussed in this sub-section. They are related to the manifestation of CNN's ideological representation of "Self" and "Other" concerning the self-immolation of a Tunisian man, the core of case study (1).

#### **2.2.1.1 Actor Role**

S.1, S.2 and S.3 present the actor (agent) and patient in the same identity; the Tunisian man who set himself on fire to protest unemployment and its related consequences. The victim committed suicide, thus, became, both, the actor and patient together, at the same time. Actually, bad circumstances, economical and social oppression, corruption and poverty with no-hope life are the main reasons behind the victim's action. Furthermore, the Tunisian governments and regimes, the past and present ones, are responsible for this painful end. This means that they are real actors behind the action. Because of its failure in finding real solutions for the suffering of Tunisian people, Tunisian political regime, after the Arab spring, should take the responsibility of what had happened. The same thing can be said about Bouazizi's self-immolation (S.5) as it is the same as the second incident. It is also, Tunisian political regime, before the Arab spring, should pay for this incident. S.7 has two actors. The first is a municipal inspector who insulted the victim, Bouazizi, leading to his suicide after spitting and slapping him on his face and confiscating his fruit cart. The second is Mohammad Bouazizi who set himself on fire to end his suffering in life. In S.8, Bouazizi's fatal protest is the agent as it led to a huge wave of protests and revolution in Tunisia, the Arab world and Middle-East. Finally, in S.9, people, in different places, committed self-immolation as a way of protest to reject their circumstances. CNN ends with this indication that self-immolation becomes common in different parts of the Arab world to protest the oppression and life hardship whatever they are. By this, the Arab governments carry the total responsibility of Arab people's sufferings in life. In other words, CNN tries to indicate that the Arab regimes are the



**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

implicit actors as their negligence and indifference to their peoples' suffering have led to such incidents. For this, they are the real actors in the CNN's news story.

Thus, one can notice that there are two groups of implicit actors in the CNN's news story. The first is the Tunisian political regimes while the second is the Arab political regimes. CNN accuses both actors of being the main reason behind the self-immolation incidents due to their failure to help people get rid of the hard situations, social oppression, governmental corruption and stifled freedoms they suffer from not in Tunisia only but in Arab countries, as well. Thus, it is a clear accusation of failure against Tunisian regimes before and after the Arab spring wave to help people have better chances of life. Hence, they are the main actor in the whole news story accused of failure to find solutions to the suffering of Tunisian people, in general, and the poor, in particular leading to a huge wave of an uprising that swept the whole country for the sake of demanding radical change. The Arab regimes are also accused of the same failure that led to the same incidents of self-immolation.

### **2.2.1.2 Reporting Past and Present Event**

Four categories of grammatical constructions of past and present tense verbs can be noticed within CNN's news story. While past constructions cite the past information, the present ones confirm present factual information. It is worthy to mention that the simple past tense category is the most utilized one within CNN's text.

First: Passive Voice Category

'Was...credited' (S.5) is the only passive voice construction in CNN's new story where the actor and patient are the same person; the first victim of self-immolation, Mohammad Bouazizi, whose suicide at the end of 2010 because of poverty, was credited to ignite the first spark of Arab spring in Tunisia. In fact, he is the main reason behind a wide range of demonstrations against social oppression and governmental corruption. He, also, ignited a huge wave of revolutions in many countries in the Arab world. By his sacrifice, he became the main factor for change in Tunisia and Arab countries ended with the fall down of old Arab dictatorships, a hidden patient that can be easily recovered from the text. Because of him, many dictators were thrown from their posts after his severe action.



**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

Second: Simple Past Category

More details are provided in S.7 about the incident, itself. The police municipal officer 'seized' (S.7) his belonging, the fruit cart, slapping him on his face. He couldn't bear this insult. In his fatal reaction, he burned himself on the morning of the next day. He 'doused' (s.7) the fuel on his body and 'set himself ablaze' (s.7) in front a police building. He burned himself in front of the government officials and people. In S. 8, CNN repeats its reference to Bouazizi's self-immolation (fatal protest) which is the first spark in the Arab spring (a wave of regional dissent against oppression, governmental corruption and stifled freedoms). 'Unleashed' (S.8) reflects the event metaphorically showing that Bouazizi, in setting himself on fire, opened a big window to shout against social oppression, governmental corruption and stifled freedoms. He unleashed a wave of popular protest against the corrupted political regime(s).

Third: Simple Present Category

'Sets' (S.1) is a simple present tense used in the headline to assert a fact happened on the real ground. A Tunisian poor man burns himself alive as a symbol of protest against his bad economic and social situations. By such usage, CNN aims to indicate that such event will be present forever in people's minds. It will be alive in the readers' minds at any time they read the text. In other words, CNN wants to give the story recipe of immortality in the minds of people everywhere as a present event, not a past one. It is about two poor unemployed persons committed suicide; the first in 2010 and the second in 2013; and with the continuation of bad circumstances, Tunisia will see more cases of suicides and self-immolation. Thus, the title, written in present tense, will keep the event alive in the memories forever as if it wants to indicate that the Tunisian poor people will continue burning themselves till their difficult economic, social and political problems will be solved forever.

Fourth: Present Perfect Category

'Has...become' (S.9) is a present perfect structure utilized to describe an event happened in the past but its effect is still remaining to the present time. CNN ends his



## **Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

text with this sentence connecting its tense, present perfect, with the present time to assert a fact that the event has taken place in the past but it still persists in the minds in Tunisia, Arab countries and the whole world. Furthermore, CNN aims to indicate that self-immolation incidents are repeated not in Tunisia only but in different Arab countries like Jordan, Bahrain and Morocco. It ends its news story with a strong implication that as far as internal political and social miseries continue, the self – immolation incidents will continue.

### **2.2.2 Lexical Structures Analysis**

Within this section, the lexical structures of CNN news story will be analyzed to establish how "Self" and "Other" view is reflected to cause an impact on the readers positively or negatively following its ideological motivation. Such lexical structures are selected for imposing certain ideologies.

#### **2.2.2.1 CNN's Register of Despair**

As the news story is about the self-immolation of unemployed man to show his rejection of the hard circumstances he is surrounded by, the register of despair is prevailed and differentiated lexically. This means that the sense of despair is referred to by various words and expressions. 'Setting on fire' is the action that CNN's whole story revolves about and lexicalized variously. It is repeated for five times as it is the main focus of the news story. A desperate man, out of his despair, committed a suicide by setting himself on fire (S.1, S.2, S.5, S.7 and S.9). In the first two repetitions 'sets himself on fire' is concerned with the current unemployed man; the news story is about, for the sake of emphasis (S.1 and S.2). The third and fourth ones, 'setting himself on fire' and 'sets himself on fire', are used to refer to Mohammad Bouazizi, the vendor who burned himself 2010 rejecting social oppression (S.5 and S.7). CNN seeks to indicate that it is not the first event of self-immolation as there was another man who, by his setting himself on fire, provoked the Arab spring uprisings in Tunisia and Arab world to protest life hardship. The second victim imitated the first to attract the attention of Tunisian government and media methods to his crisis as he had no solution but committing suicide by setting fire to himself. In other words, by his doing, he meant to assert that the consequent Tunisian





### **Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

governments, which came to power after the fall of President Ben Ali, didn't take any remedial and real action after Bouazizi's self-immolation. This means, in turn, that people suffering continued and Arab spring didn't bring its positive results, yet. In the fifth time, CNN uses 'self – immolation' to assert that it becomes common in the Arab world after the Arab spring. Many Arab citizens, in Jordan, Bahrain and morocco, burned themselves as a way of their rejection of 'the social oppression and governmental corruption and stifled freedoms' (S.9). This asserts a fact that poverty, corruption, oppression, unemployment and other social problems are spread in the Arab world. Self-immolation is the easiest way to protest as Arab spring governments failed to find successful solutions for Arabs' suffering.

'Fatal protest' is a collocation that is used to describe Bouazizi's self –immolation (S.8). The event was fatal and dangerous leading to the death of a poor man to protest poverty and inhumane treatment spurring huge public protests in Tunisia and the whole Arab world. 'Unemployment' is repeated twice. The first is in the headline (S.1) while the second is in the lead (S.2). CNN aims with such repetitions to clarify that the main reason behind the painful event is the unemployment. This means that the poor person committed suicide as a way of protest against his bad unbearable situation that he couldn't tolerate.

#### **2.2.2.1 CNN's Register of Arab Spring**

Two lexical expressions can be discussed within this register that concerns with the Arab spring. CNN refers to the wave of Arab spring in its news text as 'Arab spring uprisings' (S.5). CNN refers directly to the phase of changes witnessed by the Arab world. It describes it as Arab uprisings intended to make the change Arabs dreamed of for a long time after decades of oppression, suffering and lack of freedom. It is 'A wave of regional dissent against oppression, governmental corruption and stifled freedoms' (S.8). CNN presents its definition to what it is called as the Arab spring, summarizing it to those in the western world who do not know the Arab spring. It is a total rejection of any form of oppression in society. The second reference (S.8) defines the first (S.5). In both cases, CNN provides its readers in the world, western



## **Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

part in particular, with information about the Arab spring wave that spread in the Arab world and its reasons and effects.

Briefly, CNN, in both registers, cements its ideological view with which it supports the poor people represented by the self-immolation victims taken as the positive "Self" and criticizes the corrupted political regimes taken as the negative "Other".

### **2.2.3 Rhetorical Structures Analysis**

Under this sub-section, CNN's rhetorical devices of information sources and numbers will be discussed to show their role in shaping its ideological view of "Self" and "Other" towards the Tunisian event. At the same time, it aims to draw readers' attention to the main event the news story is about; the self-immolation of an unemployed man.

#### **2.2.3.1 Information Source**

To cement its credibility and objectivity, CNN relies, in its news story, on a trusted information source which released the news to the media and people. CNN depends on the official Tunisian authorities that carried the responsibility to declare the news (S.2). S.3 clarifies which authorities CNN depends on. They are Tunisia's *national civil protection* and *civil defense authorities*. By doing this, CNN depends on an authoritarian governmental authority to endorse its credibility and trust.

#### **2.2.3.2 Numbers**

CNN depends on numbers which are taken as factual numerical information supporting the news outlet's credibility and objectivity. Without figures and numerical facts, readers may question. Thus, this device helps achieve the goals of credibility, objectivity and professionalism. Furthermore, by relying on numbers, CNN provides its readers with specific objective information.

In its first reference to numbers, CNN mentions that the exact age of the victim is 27 (S.2). It refers to the age, deliberately, to assert that the victim was in his prime of life. Thus, it is unfamiliar for a young man to commit suicide unless his surrounding



### **Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

circumstances are unbearable. The same thing can be said about the first victim, Bouazizi, whose age is not more than 26 (S.5). This should be taken as a solid evidence of economic and social deterioration in Tunisia. With this indication, CNN aims to assert that the Arab spring in Tunisia didn't achieve its intended goals of prosperity as the suffering and life hardship continued. To deepen this sense, CNN mentions that Bouazizi's daily earning does not exceed \$10 (S.6) which is a poor figure that doesn't meet the basic needs of a human. Here, CNN provides its readers with conclusive evidence of the high rate of poverty in Tunisia.

To sum up, the micro structures analysis of CNN's news story reflects its ideological view towards the Tunisian crisis. It supports the Tunisian poor people representing the positive "Self" and antagonizes the Tunisian political regime(s) representing the negative "Other". As such, CNN' text is linked with van Dijk's Ideological Square of positive "Self" (in-group) and negative "Other" (out-group) presentation.

### **3. Conclusion**

CNN, throughout its news report, addresses the Tunisian crisis erupted after a young vendor committing suicide publically. CNN provides its readers with information about the incident reflecting the agony of the Tunisian victims of self –immolation, in particular, and Tunisian poor people, in general. Furthermore, CNN expresses its ideological view concerning the Tunisian event and its crisis.

To sum up, CNN expresses:

- 1) Its support for the Tunisian poor victims of self-immolation presented as the positive "Self."
- 2) Its antagonism for the Tunisian political regimes, the old and new ones presented as the negative "Other".

As such, CNN's news article has pertained with van Dijk's Ideological Square of positive "Self" (in-group) and negative "Other" presentation. The overall CDA case study of CNN's news story titled 'Tunisian man sets himself on fire to protest unemployment' will be summarized in the following table 1.



## Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi

Table 1: Summary of CNN's Case Study

Category	Theme	Ideological Representation
Semantic Macrostructure	Self-immolation victims Economic hardship & corruption The Arab spring uprisings	Positive for the "Self"( the poor victims) Negative for the "Other" (political regimes)
Syntactic structures		
Actor Role	To establish explicit actor: self-immolation victims To establish implicit actor: Political Tunisian regime(s)	Positive for the "Self"( the poor victims) Negative for the "Other" (political regimes)
Reporting Past and Present event	To inform about past event To provide background information and historical facts To inform about present event To provide factual information	Positive for the "Self"( the poor victims) Negative for the "Other" (political regimes)
Lexical structure		
Despair register	To reflect the despair of Tunisian poor people ( victims)	Negative for the "Other" (political regimes)
Arab spring register	To reflect the Arab spring's wave of uprisings	Positive for the "Self"( the poor victims) Negative for the "Other" (political regimes)
Rhetorical Structures		
Information Sources	To assert credibility & objectivity	Positive for the "Self"( the poor victims) Negative for the "Other" (political regimes)
Numbers	To endorse credibility & Objectivity To assert facts, evidence & truth	Positive for the "Self"( the poor victims) Negative for the "Other" (political regimes)



### Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi

The following figure 2 outlines CNN's ideological representation of positive "Self" and negative "Other" for its case study that concerns with article titled 'Tunisian man sets himself on fire to protest unemployment'.

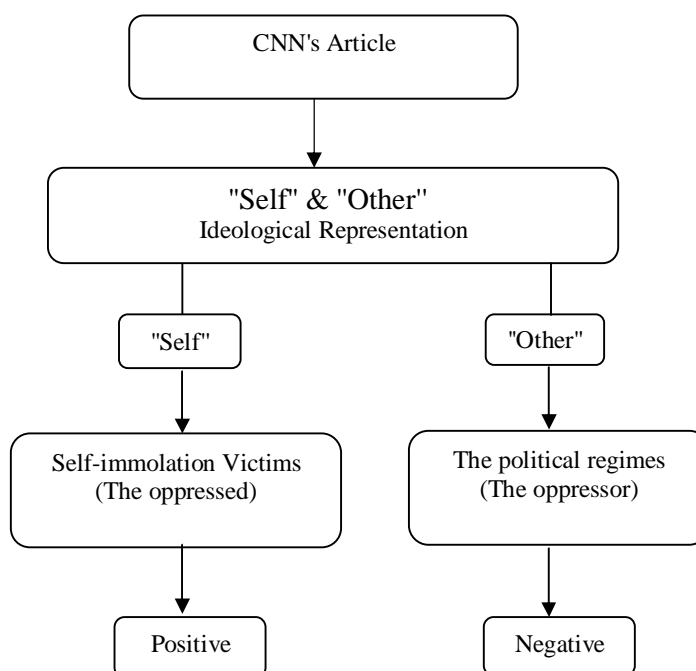


Figure 2: CNN 's Ideological Representation

### 3.1 Final Discussion

CNN intends to show its intended ideological media message towards Tunisian self-immolation event comprehensively to its readers reflecting its ideological views of positive "Self" and negative "Other" as far as the Tunisian conflict is concerned.

For the suggested semantic macrostructure, it is formulated from 3 macro propositions which are reduced to the main one summarizing the CNN's whole story. With such macrostructure, CNN's intended media message asserts the following points:

- a) Tunisian poor people's continuous suffering out of their difficult and miserable circumstances reflected by two self-immolation incidents.



**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

b) Tunisian regimes' failure in their policies to help the poor people get rid of their miseries forcing two of them to commit suicide.

More specifically, CNN, by its suggested semantic macrostructure, expresses support for the Tunisian poor people (victims) antagonism for the Tunisian political regimes. The researcher noticed that the CNN's ideological media message concerning post-Arab spring era in Tunisia, can be outlined as the following.

**"Continuation of Arab people's economic suffering and life hardship"**

The message, here, aims to direct the readers' attention towards the Arab human's economic suffering and life hardship that continued after the Arab spring revolution in Tunisia. Arab spring doesn't improve the difficult situation the poor Tunisian people are surrounded by. In fact, it is the same sufferings and difficulties. The second victim's self-immolation is the best evidence of the continuation of such economic suffering and life hardship. Such hardship has led Adel al-Khadri to attempt committing suicide. Put differently, the deterioration of life and economic conditions is the same before and after the Arab spring wave not in Tunisia only but in all Arab countries. Briefly, Arab people in Arab homeland are surrounded by such hardship. As such, CNN tries to reflect Arab people's suffering asserting that Arab spring has failed to uplifts them out of their bad deteriorated situations which are still prevailing. In other words, the Arab spring has failed to provide the Arab people with the economic prosperity they dreamed of to ease life hardship and difficulties for them. Killa (2013), in his study concerning Arab spring, reached the same conclusion.

Concerning the micro structures, CNN tries to use its asset of micro structures (syntactic, lexical and rhetorical structures) to serve its thematic ideological media message towards the communicative event in Tunisia. In fact, the micro structures are of great significance in news texts outlining what the news outlets aim to convey to their recipients. Ideological discourse structures combine the strategy of positive "Self" and negative "Other" presentation (van Dijk, 2006). Accordingly, CNN utilized its syntactic components to reflect its ideological goal in concentrating on the positive "Self", negative "Other" or both of them. In his research on political news that concern with racism and discrimination, van Dijk (1991) asserted the syntactic



**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

structures' significance in news discourse by carrying hidden ideologies. Many different lexical registers are detected in CNN's news articles about Arab spring in Tunisia. Sheyholislami (2001) asserted that the style of writing is not arbitrary. On the contrary, it is purposeful reflected by certain lexical choices. This point is confirmed by Fiske (1994) by indicating that lexical words are not neutral targeting unbalanced power relations. Moreover, McGregor (2003) asserted that "the genre becomes a means through which the institution extends power" (p.5). CNN utilized different rhetorical devices that include, mainly, information sources (direct and indirect speech) and numbers. Pan and Kosicki (1993) and van Dijk (1988) asserted the important role of rhetorical devices in any systematic analysis of discourse.

To sum up, CNN stands with Arab people in general, and Tunisian people, in particular, presenting them as the positive "Self" to be supported and endorsed. At the same, it stands against the Arab political regimes, in general, and Tunisian regime (s), in particular, presented as the negative "Other" to be antagonized and rejected.

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MJAL8:3 Autumn 2016

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### **Appendix 1: CNN's Online News Story**

#### **1) CNN: Tunisian man sets himself on fire to protest unemployment**

2) A 27-year-old man protesting unemployment set himself on fire in the Tunisian capital, Tunis, authorities said Tuesday.

3) The man suffered third-degree burns, Tunisia's national civil protection and civil defense authorities said.

4) He was taken to the same hospital where Mohamed Bouazizi was taken in December 2010.

5) Bouazizi, who died after setting himself on fire, was widely credited for spurring Arab Spring uprisings across North Africa and the Middle East.

6) The 26-year-old street vendor earned about \$10 a day selling fruit.

7) But after a municipal inspector [seized his belongings](#), Bouazizi -- in an act of economic despair -- doused himself with fuel and set himself ablaze in front of a government building.



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**Tunisian Arab Spring in CNN's News Report A Call for Support  
against Political and Social Oppression by Hanan Al- Radhi**

8) The fatal protest unleashed a wave of regional dissent against oppression, government corruption and stifled freedoms.

9) Self-immolation has since become more common in the Arab world, with people setting themselves on fire in Tunisia, Jordan, Bahrain and Morocco.