

“The Linguistics of Ethnic Nationalism in the Western Balkans”

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Abstract

The Western Balkans socio-political discourse is heavily focused on the exclusive and radical ethnic nationalism and ideology. In this regard, the media and the political elites, through their focus on symbols, myths, ethnicity, tradition, history, language and culture play an important role in shaping the public opinion. Consequently, the daily newspapers in reporting the views of the political elites, within linguistic, discursive, socio-political and ideological contexts, can influence the masses who usually do not analyze the news critically. The paper also seeks to examine and interpret differences in language use by selected Western Balkans political leaders and the way their language choice influenced public opinion. Political, nationalist and ideological discourses promoted by the political elites are very specific and the journalists should report such discourses objectively. Therefore, it is significant to compare and contrast the role played by the media and the political elites in their linguistic, discursive and socio-linguistic choices in the text that may carry ethnic nationalist and ideological meanings. The theoretical and conceptual framework of the paper was based on Fowler's (1989; 2003; 2010) works: *“Language and Power”*, *“Analyzing Discourse”* and *“The Critical Study of Language”*. In order to test research objectives on the coding and analyzing

ethnic nationalism and ideology in the Western Balkans newspapers, the research employed critical discourse analysis for N=534 randomly selected news from the following four newspapers: *Dnevni avaz* (Bosnia and Herzegovina), "*Večernji list*" (Croatia), "*Večernje novosti*" (Serbia), "*Vijesti*" (Montenegro), limited to a period between 2016 and 2018.

Key words: Newspapers; Linguistics; Ethnic Nationalism; Public Opinion; Ideology; Discourse Analysis;

1. Introduction

Nationalism is both the historical and conceptual notion, characterized by the promotion of interests of a particular nation and the maintaining of the state sovereignty. Nationalism fosters an idea that the state-governance should be free from outside interference, which is vital for independence, sovereignty and self-determination (Triandafyllidou, 1998; Hobsbawm, 1990). However, the significant number of works hardly makes the difference between nationalism as loyalty to a nation-state and loyalty to a nation. In the Western Balkans, the ethnic conception of national identity is widely spread in contrast to civic national identity (Chandra, 2006, 397-424). Therefore, historical memory, myths, language, ethnicity and religion are key determinants of a nation and nationalism. That is why most of the political analysts agree that nationalism in the Western Balkans is in the full swing, while socio-political, economic, security, and demographic crisis are deepening. Therefore, in the Western Balkans fragile societies, ethnic nationalism and ideology preoccupy the public sphere. Actually, radical ethnic nationalism has become a tool for the political elites to gain the elections, to stay in power and to shape the public opinion (Pickering, 2018:22; Gellner, 2006, 123-134). Since the newspapers are financially dependent, their reporting is highly nationalistic and ideological. A quick scanning of the Western Balkans daily newspapers will reveal the permanence of ethnic nationalist and ideological news. Thus, do the newspapers deepen and heighten nationalist feeling in the Western Balkans? The research aims to examine fostering of ethnic nationalism by analyzing the daily newspapers from four countries, namely *Dnevni avaz* (BiH), *Večernji list* (Croatia), *Večernje novosti* (Serbia) and *Vijesti* (Montenegro) period from 2016 to 2018. In particular, the paper aimed to determine the frequency of news related to the topics of ethnicity, nation,

language, religion and history on one hand and political, economic, social and technological issues on the other hand. Critical discourse and content analysis included title, subtitle, speech, story, image accessories and other newspapers sections. These elements certainly influence and shape both linguistic-discursive representation and socio-cultural and political perceptions of the public (Machin & Mayrm 2012, 77; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, 61-62; Brubaker, 2009, 22-23; Fowler, 2007, 10-19).

2. Theoretical Framework

The newspapers are often influenced by different socio-political, economic and security conditions, which certainly limit the freedom of the press. On the other hand, the political elites often use ethnic nationalism and ideology language, which is literally reported in the the daily news. That is why this research is based on Fairclough's (1989) critical discourse theory as it analyses the "social interaction in a way that focuses upon their linguistic elements and which set out to show up their general hidden determinants in the system of social relationships, as well as hidden effects they have upon that system" (5). Therefore, critical discourse analysis is in its nature critical as it goes beyond the text, context and socio-cultural conditions. Although it is interpretative, it avoids subjectivity. Fairclough, in *Critical Discourse Analysis* (2010) and *Analyzing Discourse* (2003), examined the relationship between language, ideology and power on one hand and the relationship between text and language, genre and orders of discourse, society and culture on the other hand. By using critical discourse analysis Fairclough (1989) emphasized "a range of properties of texts is regarded as potentially ideological, including features of vocabulary and metaphors, grammar, presuppositions and implicative, politeness conversations, speech exchange, systems, generic structures and style" (2).

Fairclough, as one of the most important critical discourse analysts, placed social relations within a broader context. He was in particular interested to analyze the dynamics of power relations. His framework for critical discourse analysis encompasses text analysis, the analysis of the process of text production and interpretation, and social analysis of discourse events. There are three dimensions in his framework for studying discourse: 1) analysis of spoken or written language texts; 2) analysis of discourse practices, the process of text production, distribution and

consumption and 3) analysis of discourse events as instances of socio-cultural practices.

Text analysis focuses on the formal characteristics and description of texts as vocabulary and semantic structures (dictionary, grammar, cohesion, meaning, composition, terms, vocabulary, and text structure). This analysis also includes meaning and form, which is difficult to separate, since the meaning is realized through the form, so differences in meaning require a different form. Likewise, a different form also implies a different meaning. By using this model, it is significant to determine semiotic choices that reflect thinking the patters and political choices of selected Western Balkans political leaders. Indeed, this is the best way to examine an ancient saying, "you are what you say," i.e., how words depict the person.

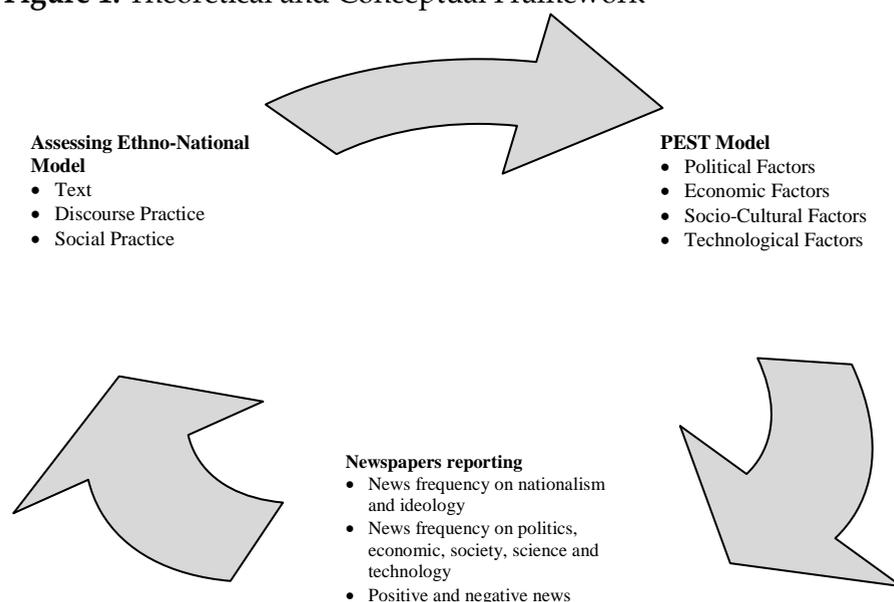
Then, the discursive practice is interpretative and it emphasizes the production, use and distribution of the discourse that is the subject of study. Since every piece of writing has a purpose, meaning and target audience, it is important to use inter-textual relations between text and other discourses. By using this approach, we can analyze both the production and consumption of the text (news) in the Western Balkans. Changes in society and culture, in which the media play an important role, also reflect the practice of the media, which includes their discursive practice. Finally, social practice (or socio-cultural practice) explains and relates social and cultural events, such as the study of how political and ideological aspects affect social change. Since news is produced for the specific social context in the Western Balkans, the news should be contextualized in a way how they affect, influence and shape the society.

In addition to this division, there is a difference between linguistic text analyses and inter-textual analysis. Inter-textual analysis represents the boundary between text and discursive practice in questioning the analytical framework. The inter-textual analysis actually looks at the text from the perspective of discursive practice. Namely, while linguistic analysis is more descriptive, the inter-textual analysis is interpretative. It uses the evidence provided by linguistic analysis and interprets them in a certain way, thereby placing the text in the appropriate discursive practice. Without linguistic findings, inter-textual analysis could be non-objective, so that its linguistic data gives objectivity (Fairclough, 2010: 132-133).

The reporting of a journalist should serve a particular purpose rather than becoming an end in itself, especially not in mere nationalist and ideological reporting. While the journalist job is a technically demanding

and complicated, the analysis of the social context can represent a problem. However, problems appear in the interpretation of social and political functions and the origin of linguistic choices, i.e. the attempt to place the text in a particular social context (Lahdesmaki and Solin, 2000: 21; Fowler, 2007: 10-41). Therefore, the second part of the theoretical framework was based on PETS model, which was used for the analysis of political, economic, socio-cultural and technological aspects of newspapers reporting on selected Western Balkans political leaders.

Figure 1: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework



3. Research Methodology

This research employed critical discourse analysis, which is the systematic, objective analysis of the text, discursive practice and social practice. In particular critical discourse analysis explores how socially and individually ideas were created within sociolinguistic context. Therefore, critical discourse analysis is suitable for analysis of qualitative, interpretative and social constructionist aspects of the media, especially for determining implications and interpretation of a particular event or an idea. Discourse as such does not have ultimate meaning and constructive

ends if they are not placed within historical and sociolinguistic contexts (Neuendorf, 2002, 10). Therefore, Hardy (2001) argued that the discourse is constructed and contested in the process of its production, dissemination, and consumption within sociolinguistic environment (28). By employing critical discourse analysis, this paper aimed to describe, interpret and explain the types and frequencies of news related to selected Western Balkans political leaders. In particular, critical discourse analysis was placed within socio linguistic context.

This paper employed critical discourse analysis as to determine:

- What is the predominant type and frequency of news in selected daily newspapers?
- What is predominant type and frequency of the news related to selected Western Balkans political leaders such as Bakir Izetbegović (BiH), Milorad Dodik (BiH), Kolinda-Grabar Kitarević (Croatia), Aleksandar Vučić (Serbia) and Milo Đukanović (Montenegro)?
- What is the level of positive and negative news in selected daily newspapers?

Critical discourse analysis was based on the the following newspapers: *Dnevni avaz* (Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Večerni list* (Croatia), *Večernje novosti* (Serbia) and *Vijesti* (Montenegro). These newspapers were selected purposefully because of their popularity and frequency of distribution in the Western Balkans. Randomly selected news were as follows: *Dnevni avaz* (174 news), *Večerni list* (200 news), *Večernje novosti* (70 news) and *Vijesti* (90 news). Newspaper articles were searched on newspapers website according to selected political leaders and mentioning of the following words in their context: nationalism, ideology, politics, economics, society, education, culture, science and technology. The search result yielded altogether N=534 news that contained necessary information and the terminology for textual, discursive and socio-cultural discourse analysis. The search was narrowed down to the period from 2016 to 2018.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

By applying critical discourse analysis, the research has been analyzing the predominant type and frequency of the news concerning the focus of news on nationalism, ideology, politics, economics, society, culture, education, science, technology and others within the context of selected

Western Balkans political leaders. Then, the research obtained and analyzed the data regarding predominant type and frequency of the news related to selected Western Balkans political leaders. Finally, the research obtained and analyzed the data regarding the level of positive and negative news.

Table 1: Predominant Type and Frequency of the News

Type of news	<i>Vecernji list</i> (Croatia)	<i>Vecernje novosti</i> (Serbia)	<i>Vijesti</i> (Montenegro)	<i>Dnevni avaz</i> (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Nationalism, ideology, politics	76.5%	70%	70%	82%
Economics	8.5%	13%	13%	6.7%
Society, education, culture	3%	11.5%	4.5%	5.7%
Science, technology	2.5%	0%	0%	1.1%
Others	9.5%	5.5%	12.5%	4.5%

Table 1 demonstrated that predominant type and the most frequent news in all selected newspapers cover nationalism, ideology and politics. There is no significant difference between daily newspapers in reporting nationalism, ideology and politics as predominant and the most frequent types of news. According to obtained data *Dnevni avaz* with 82% cover nationalism, ideology and politics followed by *Vecernji list* 76.5%, *Vecernje novosti* 70% and *Vijesti* 70%. Since the news was selected and analyzed only in relation to selected political leaders, obtained results clearly explain predominant ethnic nation-state emphasis by political leaders in the Western Balkans. Given that the Western Balkans political leaders use ethnic nationalism for domestic, regional and international purposes, the general situation in those countries is problematic from democratic, economic, and diplomatic and security points of view. The politics of extreme ethnic nationalism, at home and abroad, also inhibit regional cooperation and stability of the Western Balkans. Therefore, data analysis signifies that socially constructed extreme ethnic national identification could produce inter-ethnic and wider regional violence and conflict. The

history of the Western Balkans has provided numerous evidence that large-scale ethnic violence mostly provoked by the elites, occurred predominantly because of extreme ethnic nationalism (Fearon and Latin, 2000, 850). The data demonstrated that daily newspapers rarely address issues related to economics, society, education, culture, science and technology.

Newspaper titles, parts and paragraphs predominantly demonstrated nationalism, ideology and politics. Reference to whole articles was omitted because of the length of the paper. In the course of the text analysis, we looked at *factors of nomination*, *noun-construction* and *the constructions of facts*. Very often interviews of the selected Western Balkans leaders included carefully selected *verb-process* to denote and highlight the responsibility of the act in connection to the other ethnic groups. Then, most of the statements by the Western Balkans political leaders predominantly include words "they," "their" and *negative presuppositions*. These carefully selected words were mostly used for hidden and open subjective *generalization and collectivization*, whereby everything was ethnically divided into us and them. Detailed analysis indicated that *presuppositions*, selected *nouns and noun-construction* were used for adding a value and unique ethnic position in comparison to other ethnic groups. Finally, the number of newspaper articles used *association and quantification* to distinguish one ethnic group from the other. Some of the prevailing terminology in interviews of the Western Balkans leaders included: "motherland", "war" "Serbs/Croats/Bosnians (Bošnjaks)/Montenegrins", "ethnic violence", "borders", "violence" "loyalty" "aggression", "national sentiments", "multi-ethnicity", "legitimacy", "discrimination", "national feelings" "history" historical memory" "corruption", "constitution", "rights", "ethnic representation", "peace", "stability", "cooperation", "genocide", "crimes", "great powers", "hostilities", "apathy", "depopulation," "take measure", "normalization", "Russia", "Turkey", "EU", "NATO", "national unity", "patriotism", "national project", and others. The frequency of these terms clearly indicates how ethnic nationalism shape politics, policies and diplomacy of the Western Balkans countries.

Interviews of selected Western Balkans political leaders also indicated significant discursive and social dimensions. Their interviews were skillfully connecting history, myths, religion, language and ethnicity to present-day socio-political realities. Overall, their *tone and the message* were colored with fears for ethnic survival and expressive warnings for the

future of their ethnic groups. The audience could make *interpretation* of their interviews and speeches that history should not be repeated or "our" ethnic group will encounter the same destruction. The Western Balkans political leaders skillfully reinforced the same *narrative* and *shaped the public opinion* by predominantly using these discursive messages. That is why news predominantly included the following terms about the Western Balkans leaders: "a patriot", "a servant of the people", "a strong hand", "a strong leader", "a defender of a nation", "a fighter for a nation."

Table 2: Predominant Type and Frequency of the News related to Western Balkans Political Leaders

	<i>Večernji list</i> (Croatia)	<i>Večernje novosti</i> (Serbia)	<i>Vijesti</i> (Montenegro)	<i>Dnevni avaz</i> (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Kolinda Grabar Kitarović	41%	11.5%	0%	36%
Aleksandar Vučić	6%	22.8%	12.5%	7.5%
Milo Đukanović	4%	12.8%	35.5%	4.5%
Bakir Izetbegović	26.5%	28.6%	25.5%	17.5%
Dragan Čović	7.5%	12.8%	3%	14.5%
Milorad Dodik	15%	11.5%	23.5%	20%

According to *Vecernji list* (Croatia), Kolinda Grabar Kitarović (41%) was mentioned the most, followed by Bakir Izetbegović (26.5%), Milorad Dodik (15%), Dragan Čović (7.5%) and Milo Đukanović (4%). In comparison to *Večernje novosti* (Serbija), *Večernji list* (Croatia) was less reporting on average about the selected Western Balkans political leaders. Then, *Večernje novosti* (Serbija) had more news covering Bakir Izetbegović (28.6%) than their President Aleksandar Vučić (22.8%), Milo Đukanović (12.8%), Milorad Dodik (11.5%) and Dragan Čović (12.8%) had similar news coverage in this daily newspaper. When it comes to *Vijesti* (Montenegro), this newspaper had no single news on Kolinda Grabar Kitarović. They had most new on Milo Đukanović (35.5%), Bakir Izetbegović (25.5%), Milorad Dodik (23.5%), Aleksandar Vučić (12.5%) and Dragan Čović (3%). Finally, *Dnevni avaz* (Bosnia and Herzegovina) had mostly news on Kolinda Grabar Kitarović (36%), Milorad Dodik (20%), Bakir Izetbegović (17.5%), Dragan Čović (14.5%), Milo Đukanović (4.5%) and Aleksandar Vučić (7.5%).

The process of classification news into positive and negative took into consideration the research objectivity. The numerical value of negative vs. positive news was based on textual analysis of news regarding the characteristic thoughts of opposition, gossip, insult, defamation, security, violence, war, ethnic exclusivity and similar attributes.

Table 3: The Level of Positive and Negative News

	<i>Večernji list</i> (Croatia)	<i>Večernje novosti</i> (Serbia)	<i>Vijesti</i> (Montenegro)	<i>Dnevni avaz</i> (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Negate news	86%	88.5%	82%	80%
Positive news	14%	11.5%	18%	20%

Table 3, indicated that the negative news level prevail in all selected daily newspapers. As according to obtained data: *Večernji list* (Croatia) had 86% negative news, *Večernje novosti* (Serbija) 88.5%, *Vijesti* (Montenegro) 82% and *Dnevni avaz* (Bosnia and Herzegovina) 80%. Selected negative news are as follows:

- *Dodik: If Kosovo joins the UN, the Republika Srpska will also demand it;*
- *Grabar-Kitarović: Instability in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the highest security threat in the region to Croatia;*
- *Izetbegović: Serbia and Croatia are praising the warplanes, saying they are preparing a war;*
- *Dodik: Mladić will remain a historical hero and patriot, he prevented a new genocide against Serbs;*
- *Vucic: I hope that there will not be a war, a decision not to demolish Serbia;*
- *Dodik: We must fight for our positions openly, and openly say the British have been permanently directed against us;*
- *Grabar-Kitarović: Croatia didn't participate in systematic and organized crimes against humanity; we were defending Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

Obtained data demonstrated that yellow journalism is widely spread in the Western Balkans. Consequently, negative newspapers reporting and public exposure to negative news have led to fears, distrust, apathy and insecurity. In addition, negative reporting, coupled with the negative ethnic nationalist politics contributed towards low civic national consciousness, economic stagnation and depopulation of the Western Balkans region.

Mulalić and Karić (2016) are right in asserting that “there are endless discussions related to the war, ethnic territories, ethnic representation and ethnic culture, language, history and identity. This emphasis puts aside real socio-economic problems and creates artificial ethnic boundaries and barriers between different ethnic groups that are destined to live together” (140).

5. Conclusion

This paper demonstrated how interdisciplinary could be useful in the study of linguistics of ethnic nationalism by employing critical discourse analysis. In particular, interrelated disciplines such as linguistics, literature, mass communication and politics look into the questions of nationalism, ideology and politics. The paper demonstrated how critical discourse analysis could be used in the study of the speeches delivered by Western Balkans leaders and how they shaped the public opinion. Critical discourse analysis, which is predominantly used in the field of linguistics and literature, determined the meaning and frequency of the news related to ethnic nationalism and identity, with the strong emphasis on ethnicity, nation, language, religion and history. In addition, critical discourse analysis determined that the Western Balkans political leaders do not focus on economics, society, education, culture, science and technology, which is in effect demonstration why ethnic nationalism prevails over civic and nation-state nationalism in the Western Balkans. Actually, ethnic nationalism was one of the major reasons for a large-scale violence in the 1990s.

The paper also demonstrated that the Western Balkans political leaders do not focus on economics, society, education, culture, science and technology which contributed towards persistent insecurity, economic stagnation, lack of basic state infrastructure, growing public frustration and apathy, socio-political divisiveness, governance failure, state institutions malfunctioning, corruption, unemployment, migrations and renewed fears from inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts. The EU policy-makers need to re-engage the Western Balkans as to change negative regional dynamics and exclusive ethnic models by focusing on civic and nation-state models. Indeed, civic and nation-state models could bring about *stabilocracy* in the region, prevent corruption and depopulation and bring the Western Balkans countries closer to the EU.

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