

Nataša Stojan*

Sveučilište u Splitu

Filozofski fakultet

Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE 2024 AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Original scientific paper

UDC 811.111(73)`42

3.074.1(73)"2024"

070.447:342.511.1(73)"2024"

<https://doi.org/10.18485/kkonline.2025.16.16.14>

The aim of this research is to analyze media representation of the 2024 U.S. presidential election in two respectable American daily newspapers by implementing the methodological and theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. This paper contains analysis of articles published in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* from 1 September 2024 to 4 September 2024 focusing on the topics of the newspaper articles, modes of discourse representation, and news sources. Analysis revealed some differences and similarities between the two newspapers. The total number of articles related to the election in both newspapers is similar, but the difference is in the number of articles that dealt with particular topics. In *The New York Times*, there were more articles discussing the Republican Party, and in *The Post* more articles focusing on both parties simultaneously. The results showed that there were small differences between the two newspapers in modes of representing discourse. There were also certain differences between the newspapers in the usage of news sources. However, there was a big difference between them in the number of reported sentences spoken by Trump and Harris. Trump had almost double the number of sentences reported than did Harris in *The Post*. There were 106 sentences by Trump and 46 by Harris. There was an equal number of sentences spoken by each (24) in *The Times*. These differences reflect certain ideological differences between the two newspapers.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, U.S. presidential election, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*.

1. Introduction

Politics can be viewed in two different ways. Firstly, it is considered as a struggle for power between those who want to gain and maintain their power and those who want to resist it. Secondly, it is considered as cooperation, practices, and institutions for resolving confrontations of interest over influence, liberty, money etc. (Chilton, 2004: 3). A crucial political event for all countries, but especially for the U.S.A. considering its global political impact, is the presidential election. There are important linguistic, communicative and discursive dimensions of politics that are frequently studied and analyzed within the theoretical and methodological framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. This analysis has been frequently applied to media discourse in general, the impact of which on political developments, and its influence on people's beliefs, opinions and ideologies is very important. The media can be viewed as "the primary institution of ideological reproduction, possibly even more important than the system of formal education" (van Dijk, 1989: 110). Discourse meaning of newspaper articles may be analyzed at a global level, which includes

* Filozofski fakultet u Splitu, Poljička cesta 35, 21000 Split, Hrvatska; e-mail: nstojan@fst.hr

overall meaning of whole discourses, or at a local level, which refers to meanings of words, clauses sentences, paragraphs (van Dijk, 2013: 182). Presentation of news and topic formation signal prominence and importance of news events, issues, and newsworthy actors and their activities. According to the author (van Dijk, 2013: 183), underlying attitudes and ideologies may influence the choice of topics, and in the habitual polarized nature of ideological discourse, some topics may be categorized as negative, others as positive or neutral.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis is a theoretical and methodological approach frequently utilized for analyzing "how language functions in maintaining and changing power relations in contemporary society, and how people can become more conscious of them, and more able to resist and change them" (Fairclough, 2001: viii). According to Fairclough (2001: 36) this approach focuses on relations of power that are enacted and exercised in discourse, including the " 'hidden power' of the discourse of the mass media". Fairclough (2001: 41) explains this concept of 'hidden power' by emphasizing the fact that the nature of power relations enacted in mass media discourse are not quite clear due to due to participants being separated in time and place.

Discourse can be classified, by the criterion of orientation, into two main types: 1) personal (personal oriented) in which the speaker acts as the individual and is engaged in a reduced type of communication at a close distance; and 2) institutional (status- oriented) in which the speaker acts as the representative of a certain social status and refers to communication within the status and role relations. There are different types of institutional discourse: political, diplomatic, mass-informational, legal, administrative, advertising, sports, scientific, etc. (Karasik, 2000, cited by Kenzhekanova, 2015: 193).

The analysis of features of political discourse that is represented by mass media, in our research by newspapers, can reveal "not only specific features of this type of discourse, but also spheres of its contact with other types of discourse to some extent" and thus show "closer interdependence of types of discourse within each class allocated according to the status characteristics" (Kenzhekanova, 2015: 198). According to Kenzhekanova (2015: 199) political discourse represented in mass media is formed in the sphere of interaction of a political discourse and mass media discourse, which has its own objectives, interprets reality in the text, it is potentially characterized by subjectivity, which enables journalists to manipulate information in the desired direction for potential readers.

Processes that are involved in both the production and consumption of texts, in our research texts related to the presidential election, are referred to as discursive practices and these practices of journalism are "the processes through which journalists produce

texts, and readers use and understand them" (Richardson, 2007: 75). According to Richardson (2007: 42) discourse occurs in social settings (of production and consumption), which makes it always socially situated and in the case of mass-media, or, in our case newspapers, discourse is institutionally based. Furthermore, discourse is viewed as "socially and institutionally originating ideology, encoded in language" (Richardson, 2007: 42). Another valuable definition is provided by Kress (1985, cited in Fowler 1991: 42): "Discourses are systematically- organized sets of statements which give expressions to the meanings and values of an institution...A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area of concern of that institution, whether marginally or centrally. " Thus, the focus of analysis of newspaper discourse should include the form, the organization and the presentation of news at both textual and intertextual levels.

Discourse involves social conditions of production and social conditions of interpretation that refer to "three different 'levels' of social organization: the level of the immediate social situation, the level of the social institution, and the level of the society as a whole (Fairclough, 2001: 21). Thus, the main goal of CDA is to analyze the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, both of the situational context and of institutional and social structures (Fairclough, 2001: 21). This relationship is summarized in the following figure.

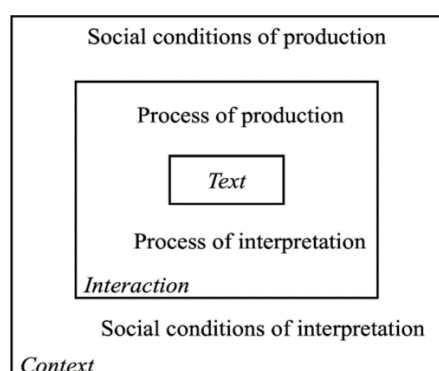


Figure 1 Discourse as text, interaction and context (Fairclough, 2001: 21)

This figure shows the relationship between texts, interactions and contexts and in correlation with them, three stages of critical discourse analysis can be discerned (Fairclough, 2001: 21): description, interpretation and explanation.

Description deals with properties of text, including all its heterogeneous features, such as vocabulary, textual structure, sentence types, modes voice, meaning, etc. Furthermore, linguistic analysis also covers textual organization above the sentence, such as intersentential cohesion and various aspects of the structure of texts. "Whereas linguistic analysis shows how texts selectively draw upon linguistic systems (again, in an extended sense), intertextual analysis shows how texts selectively draw upon *orders of*

discourse- the particular configurations of conventionalized practices (genres, discourses, narratives, etc.) which are available to text producers and interpreters in particular social circumstances" (Fairclough, 1992b: 194). In addition, the formal properties of a text can be regarded as traces of the production process, and as cues in the interpretation process (Fairclough, 2001: 20).

Interpretation deals with the relationship between text and interaction, with the text being seen as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the interpretation process. In the interpretation process intertextual context is crucial because interpretation is determined by which discourse types are drawn upon (Fairclough, 2001: 121). Intertextual analysis mediates the connection between language and social context, making it possible to bridge the gap between texts and contexts (Fairclough, 1992b: 195). The category of intertextuality subsumes the process of continuous absorption and transformation of texts, creation and reinterpretation of texts, inclusion of other texts or its elements, separate elements of various discourses interpenetrating each other creating specific meaning, thus influencing interpretation process in various ways (Kenzhekanova, 2015: 196). An important form of intertextuality is discourse representation i.e., representation of what newsworthy people have said, which is a crucial part of news reporting. It is defined as "a form of intertextuality in which part of other texts are incorporated into a text and usually explicitly marked as such, with devices such as quotation marks and reporting clauses" (Fairclough, 1992a: 107). Direct and indirect speech are used in discourse representation, with an important variable in the case of indirect speech, which is the degree to which "boundaries are maintained between the representing discourse and the represented discourse", because indirect speech is integrated into the representing discourse (Fairclough, 1995: 81). Explanation deals with the relationship between interaction and social context, wherein production and interpretation processes, as well as their social effects, are socially determined (Fairclough, 2001: 21).

3. Societal and institutional contexts

This part of the paper focuses on social determinants of discourse considering the societal and institutional contexts. The U.S. presidential election of 2024 can be deemed controversial for several reasons. Trump was the first convicted felon to be elected president¹. At the age of 78, he is the oldest person to win office. He is the first U.S. president to be elected to two nonconsecutive terms since Stephen Grover Cleveland. Another unusual thing also occurred. His opponent, president Biden withdrew his

¹ On May 30, 2024, the jury convicted Donald Trump on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records to conceal his reimbursement of Michael Cohen for a hush-money payment to adult-film star Stormy Daniels. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/New-York-indictment-of-Donald-Trump-2229245>)

candidacy and endorsed Kamala Harris as his replacement. Trump won the popular vote by a relatively small margin and a sizeable majority of electors. His victory can be described as one of the most stunning political comebacks in U.S. history. (<https://www.britannica.com/event/United-States-presidential-election-of-2024>)

Both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* are considered prominent news organizations in the U.S. They have won numerous awards for their reporting, *The Post* won 78 Pulitzer Prizes (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Washington-Post>), and *The New York Times* 136 (as of 2025) (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-New-York-Times>). They are known for their highly professional investigative, national, and international reporting that is conducted in a restrained and objective manner. Both newspapers are considered very reliable in their reporting, they fully covered presidential campaign trail, provided updates on candidates, polls and other important facts related to Democratic and Republican Parties. These facts confirm them as reliable sources for conducting an analysis of newspaper discourse reporting on the 2024 American presidential election.

4. Methodology

This paper makes a thorough analysis of newspaper articles that reported on the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Articles selected for the analysis were published in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* from 01 September to 4 September 4, 2024 (digital editions). Total number of articles from *The Washington Post* is 28, and 26 from *The New York Times*.

In this qualitative-quantitative study some methodological aspects of CDA developed by Fairclough and van Dijk have been implemented for analysis. Thus, the following features of newspaper discourse are analyzed: topics of newspaper articles, modes of discourse representation, and news sources within the concept of intertextuality. Linguistic analysis in general is descriptive and can be conducted at various levels. According to van Dijk (2013: 182) discourse meaning can be analyzed "at a more global and a more local level". Analysis in this case focuses on the analysis of the meaning of discourse at a global level, focusing on the overall meaning of newspaper articles. The aim of the analysis is to determine and compare the topics of selected articles related to the American presidential election, which can reveal some underlying attitudes and hidden ideologies of newspapers. Topics are divided into four categories, the number and percentage of articles that deal with these topics is determined, so that the results from both newspapers can be compared and some interesting insights into their ideologies related to current political situation can be revealed.

This paper adopted Fairclough's definition of intertextuality, which is based on the work of Kristeva (1986), who coined the term in the context of her accounts of the works

of Bakhtin (Fairclough, 1992a: 101). In the context of the development of an analytical framework of CDA, Fairclough (1992a: 84) defines intertextuality as "basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth." The concept of intertextuality in newspaper discourse can be considered through modes of discourse representation that can be direct and indirect (Adi, 2010: 54). This paper analyzes instances of direct and indirect discourse representation with the aim of determining how other texts are intertextually drawn upon in newspaper articles in order to frame news in specific ways and add meaning effects that influence potential readers' understanding of news. This paper also analyses news sources, which are divided into: specified, semi-specified and unspecified news sources (Zhou, Qin, 2020: 93). These aspects of intertextuality help "portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures". Furthermore, this methodological approach shows "what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them" (Fairclough, 2001: 135).

5. Analysis of Articles from *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*

5.1. Description - article topics

Textual analysis of newspaper discourse was conducted at the level of description. Discourse meaning of newspaper articles at a global level is analyzed and the topics of articles related to the American presidential election were determined. The following table shows categories of topics and the number of articles that deal with those topics.

Table 1. Topics related to American presidential election in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*

	<i>The Washington Post</i> (28 articles)	<i>The New York Times</i> (26 articles)
Republican Party	7 (25%)	12 (46%)
Democratic Party	7(25%)	6 (23%)
Both parties	14 (50%)	7 (27%)
General topics	0	1 (4%)

There are 28 articles in *The Washington Post* that cover the presidential election and 26 in *The New York Times*. Topics of articles were grouped into four major categories: Republican Party, Democratic Party, both parties, and general topics. Considering the fact that the presidential election was in focus, two candidates, Donald J. Trump and Kamala Harris, are discussed in most articles that write about their political parties.

In *The Washington Post* there are 7 articles (25%) that deal with the Republican Party. They focus on: Trump and Elon Musk; Trump's 1776 Commission on patriotism; Trump Trials; Trump's campaign contribution; Trump's visit to Arlington Cemetery;

Trump's claims about troop deaths during his presidency; JD Vance's house guarded by Secret Service.

The analysis showed that 5 articles could be categorized as negative towards Trump and his policies, while 2 discussed Trump and Vance in a neutral way. In *The New York Times* 12 articles (46%) focused on the Republican Party. This topic covered the following issues: Trump voters; Trump's visit to Arlington National Cemetery; the Trump-Kennedy alliance; JD Vance and the immigration debate; JD Vance and the 2017 Heritage Foundation Report; Trump trial (3 articles); a Trump clemency recipient convicted; Trump and Brian Kemp; Trump media shares; left and right media outlets' coverage of Trump's Arlington cemetery visit. 4 articles were negative towards Trump and JD Vance, 1 article wrote about Trump's voters in a positive way, and there were 7 articles that discuss Trump neutrally.

In *The Washington Post* there were 7 articles (18%) that dealt with the Democratic Party. They focused on: Harris's position on reparations to Black Americans; Harris's ties to tech companies; attempts to gain union support; Biden rating polls; Harris's campaign helping Democratic candidates; Harris proposing a tax benefit for new small businesses; JD Vance's house guarded by Secret Service. The analysis showed that 5 articles discussed Harris and Biden positively, 1 article discussed Harris in a slightly negative way, and 1 article discussed Harris in a neutral way.

In *The New York Times* there were 6 articles (23%) that dealt with the Democratic Party. They wrote about: Harris's campaign strategy; Tim Walz's visit to Minnesota state fair; rallying for Union Support; Democrats' tax policy; Biden's Asylum Restrictions; and Harris's view on tax policy. There were 2 articles that wrote about Harris and Walz in a positive way, 1 article discussed Biden in a slightly negative way, and 3 articles neutrally discussed Harris and her campaign.

In *The Washington Post* there were 14 articles (50%) that dealt with both parties. They discussed: Trump's visit to Arlington National Cemetery- attack on Biden administration regarding the Afghanistan withdrawal; the U.S.- China relationship; candidates' campaign strategies (Trump trying to damage Harris's standing); campaign overview (major events: debate, gunshots, Biden ending his candidacy); campaigns (inside the Harris strategy, inside the Trump strategy); health brief (wages for disabled workers, e-cigarettes regulation, abortion, coronavirus vaccine); battleground states; attack on Harris by a pro-Trump group; Jimmy McCain supporting Harris; Republican states suing Biden's student loan forgiveness policy; Democrats criticizing Project 2025; campaign brief (Harris's candidacy, anti-Trump PAC, Project 2025, Biden's abortion policy); analysis of polls - which candidate represents higher threat to democracy; small business economic plans; Liz Cheney's support for Harris. The analysis showed that 8

articles discussed Harris and Trump and their campaigns in a neutral way, 4 articles discussed Trump negatively and 1 article positively, 2 articles dealt with Harris positively.

In *The New York Times* there were 7 articles (27%) that dealt with both parties. They focused on: Trump and Harris's donors; Nikki Haley's voters; JD Vance assailing Harris's policies with inaccurate claims; U.S. Steel takeover by Nippon Steel of Japan; problems with voter registration in San Antonio; Liz Cheney endorsing Harris; Iran trying to discredit American democracy during the presidential race. The analysis showed that 4 articles discussed Harris and Trump in a neutral way, and 3 articles wrote about Trump and JD Vance negatively. In *The New York Times* there was one article that didn't write about political parties, it dealt with TikTok providing information about the U.S. presidential election.

5.2. Interpretation of Articles

5.2.1. Modes of Discourse Representation

Reported speech in the form of direct and indirect reported speech is an important part of newspaper discourse (Krestel, Bergler, Witte, 2008). Direct speech presents someone's original words included in a text with quotation marks, usually with a reporting clause. Indirect speech is used for indirect discourse representation, speaker's words are included in a text without directly being quoted thus quotation marks are omitted and indirect discourse is realized by a subordinate clause. There is a special case of discourse representation, preset direct speech, which refers to a mixture of direct and indirect speech in the same sentence (Vološinov (134).

The proportion of modes of discourse representation in selected articles from *The Washington Post* is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Reporting modes in *The Washington Post*

Number of sentences	Direct speech	Indirect speech	Preset direct speech
1381	343 (25%)	157 (11.3%)	65 (4.7%)

The total number of sentences in the articles from *The Washington Post* is 1381. Direct speech accounts for 25% (343 sentences) of the total number of sentences, indirect speech 11.3% (157 sentences) and preset direct speech 4.7% (65 sentences). Here are some examples of direct speech (example 1), indirect speech (examples 2, 3), preset direct speech (examples 4, 5):

[1] "I think there has to be some form of reparations, and we can discuss what that is," she (Harris) said in the interview with the Root. "We're looking at more than 200 years of slavery. We're looking at almost 100 years of Jim Crow. We're looking at legalized segregation and in fact, segregation on so many levels that exist today based on race. And there has not been any kind of intervention." (*Advocates hope Harris will boost momentum on reparations to Black Americans*, 3 September 2024)

[2] While he was not technically calling for a national curriculum, Trump described it as a new directive for teaching. (*With his 1776 Commission on patriotism, Trump helped spark a culture war*, 2 September 2024)

[3] Earlier in Detroit, Harris directed her fire at Trump, saying his record shows he will continue to be hostile to workers. (*Harris makes pitch to union voters in 'blue wall' states*, 2 September 2024)

[4] Biden resisted, declaring defiantly that he would not quit the race, telling ABC's George Stephanopoulos that only "the Lord Almighty" could convince him that he should get out. (*A political summer like no other — and the photographs that defined it*, 3 September 2024)

[5] The tech mogul's remarks could backfire by creating a litmus test for Harris, said Hauser, of the Revolving Door Project, because if she replaces Khan, "it's going to look like she was bought and paid for by Reid Hoffman and a handful of other tech oligarchs." (*Silicon Valley had Harris's back for decades. Will she return the favor?*, 3 September 2024)

Example 1 is an example of direct discourse representation and like all the examples of direct speech it contributes to the authenticity and fidelity of what is being represented in a newspaper article.

Examples 2 and 3 represent indirect speech. Indirect discourse representation allows the reporter's interference, thus in the example 2, initial part of the sentence, *While he was not technically calling for a national curriculum*, represents reporter's personal opinion. Example 3 includes the reporter's opinion on Harris's reaction, by commenting *Harris directed her fire at Trump*.

Examples 4 and 5 represent a mixture of direct and indirect speech. By using both indirect and direct speech, the reporter empowers the narrative effect of the statement. He makes a particularly strong assertion by using direct speech to emphasize authenticity and fidelity of what is being stated.

Table 3. Reporting modes in *The New York Times*

Number of sentences	Direct speech	Indirect speech	Preset direct speech
1332	246 (18.5%)	172 (12.9%)	50 (3.8%)

The total number of sentences in the articles from *The New York Times* is 1381. Direct speech accounts for 18.5% (246 sentences) of the total number of sentences, indirect speech 12.9% (172 sentences) and preset direct speech 3.8% (50 sentences). Here are some examples for direct speech (example 6), indirect speech (examples 7,8), preset direct speech (examples 9,10):

[6] "The hesitation we have right now in joining forces with Trump is that he has not apologized or publicly come out and said Operation Warp Speed was his fault," she (Nicole Shanahan) told Adam Carolla, a podcast host. (*How Donald Trump and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Unlikely Partnership Took Shape*, 2 September 2024)

[7] Stepping up her efforts to win over the business community, Ms. Harris announced that she would increase the capital gains tax at a far lower rate than what Mr. Biden had proposed

— a move that came after pressure from her campaign's biggest donors to back off some of its most aggressive tax proposals. (*Harris Tells the Business Community: I'm Friendlier Than Biden*, 4 September 2024)

[8] The next week, Mr. Kennedy's running mate, Nicole Shanahan, told an interviewer that she and Mr. Kennedy were considering dropping out and supporting Mr. Trump, making public what had been privately in the works for weeks. (*How Donald Trump and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Unlikely Partnership Took Shape*, 2 September 2024)

[9] In November 1999, Senator John McCain, the Arizona Republican and former prisoner of war in Vietnam who was widely considered a military hero, said that his newly launched presidential campaign had made "a very bad mistake." (*Others Have Politicized Arlington, but Trump's Approach Has No Precedent*, 1 September)

[10] Steven Cheung, a spokesman for the Trump campaign, said he would "continue to fight to move this Hoax into federal court" and attacked the pending sentencing, saying the criminal case "should be put out of its misery once and for all." (*Judge Denies Trump's Request to Move Criminal Case to Federal Court*, 3 September 2024)

Example 6 is an example of direct discourse representation, it provides someone's exact words, thus contributing to the accuracy and factualness of what is being reported.

Examples 7 and 8 represent indirect discourse representation. In those examples reporter's interference, comments, observations, or opinions are included. Thus, in example 7 a reporter provides his own comments: *Stepping up her efforts to win over the business community*, and *a move that came after pressure from her campaign's biggest donors to back off some of its most aggressive tax proposals*. Example 8 includes a reporter's comment: *making public what had been privately in the works for weeks*.

Examples 9 and 10 represent a mixture of direct and indirect speech. Those examples are used to provide stronger emphasis, make a strong assertion, emphasize authenticity even more by using direct speech specifically in combination with indirect speech. Thus, in example 9 "*a very bad mistake*" is directly quoted, which makes it even more emphasized, its accuracy is strongly asserted. Further example includes "*continue to fight to move this Hoax into federal court*", and "*should be put out of its misery once and for all*" (10).

5.2.2. News Sources

"The function of reported speech is to convey information in two steps: from a *source* to a *reporter*, and from the *reporter* to a *reader*" (Krestel, Bergler, Witte, 2008: 2823). In news reporting a source can be "a person, an institution, or a document, which provides reporters with timely and newsworthy information" (Zhou, Qin, 2020: 93). There are three categories of news sources: specified, semi-specified and unspecified news sources (Zhou, Qin, 2020: 93). Specified sources are those whose names, position, personal details etc. are explicitly included in news reports. Semi-specified sources are only partially identified, they are usually in the form of collective nouns that have general meaning, like officials, leaders, advocates etc. Unspecified sources are quite vague, they are included in the news

when reporters want to hide them for a specific purpose, or are not sure of the specific information of source (Zhou, Qin, 2020: 93). The distribution of news sources is shown in the table below.

Table 4. News sources in *The Washington Post*

	Specified	Semi-specified	Unspecified	Total
Number	515	21	29	565
Percentage	91.2%	3.7%	5.1%	100%

Specified source accounted for the highest proportion among the three types of news sources, 91.2% (515 sources). Examples of specified sources were politicians, attorneys, spokespersons, campaign managers, chiefs of staff, ordinary people (voters) etc.: Donald Trump, Kamala Harris, Steve Cheung (Trump spokesman), William Barr (attorney general), Debbie Olving (a retired teacher) etc. Since Trump and Harris were crucial actors in this analysis, the number of sentences that were reported, either directly or indirectly in the selected articles was compared. There were 106 reported sentences spoken by Trump, and 46 sentences that Harris spoke.

Unspecified source accounted for the second largest proportion, 5.1% (29 sources). These included: 2 people, an adviser, a staffer, an unidentified campaign aide, a Republican strategist etc. The semi-specified one accounted for quite a low proportion, 3.7% (21 sources). Examples of semi-specified sources were: conservatives, Democratic leaders, Trump’s lawyers, cemetery officials, reparations advocates, industry lobbyists, experts, campaign officials etc. It could be argued that some examples of sentences that included semi-specified or unspecified sources may have expressed journalists’ ideology to a certain extent.

Examples of sentences that contained unspecified sources are:

[1] **Harris aides**, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive moment in the campaign, said this is the latest in a line of unsuccessful attacks Trump has used against Harris and cast doubt on whether this one would gain traction.

A Harris campaign aide said neither Harris nor Biden had been invited to the Arlington Cemetery commemoration. (*With boost from grieving families, Trump sharpens attacks on Harris*, 1 September 2024)

[2] "This is a moment in the message arc of us seeking to define her, she’s seeking to define herself," **a Trump adviser** said. "We have a defined candidate — everyone knows everything about the person. There’s lots of new information about Kamala Harris that people just don’t know." (*Trump aims to drag down Harris as he scrambles to keep up in tight race*, 2 September 2024)

[3] As **another adviser** told reporters last month: "If you think this race is going to be decided on likability, you’re making a grave error because neither one of them is going to be liked at the end of this race." Like others, the advisers spoke on the condition of anonymity to more candidly discuss strategy. (*Trump aims to drag down Harris as he scrambles to keep up in tight race*, 2 September 2024)

The above examples show that unspecified sources are used when some interesting and sensitive information related to political campaigns are discussed.

Example of a sentence with semi-specified source:

[4] **Some critics**, however, say this effort could amount to a mostly symbolic attempt to arrest government spending. Increased costs for Social Security and Medicare are the primary drivers of the nation's long-term fiscal imbalance, and many **budget experts** are skeptical that such a commission — which would still need approval in Congress — could translate into meaningful deficit reduction. (*Trump eyes plan that may give Elon Musk role in auditing U.S. agencies*, 2 September 2024)

The above example shows that some critics, not specifying which ones exactly, do not believe that Trump's commission for eliminating wasteful regulations and spending will stop government spending. In this way, readers are guided to a great extent, since these judgments cannot be traced back. What is more, journalists focus crucial economic issues in the U.S. and those are increased costs for Social Security and Medicare that are main drivers of the nation's fiscal imbalance.

Table 5. News sources in *The New York Times*

	Specified	Semi-specified	Unspecified	Total
Number	426	29	13	468
Percentage	91%	6.2%	2.8%	100%

Specified source accounted for the highest proportion among the three types of news sources, 91% (426 sources). Examples of specified sources are politicians, attorneys, spokespersons, campaign managers, chiefs of staff, law professors, ordinary people (voters): Donald Trump, Kamala Harris, J.D. Vance, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Justice Merchan (judge), Martin Horn (professor emeritus), Vickie Stevens (American worker), etc. With presidential candidates being at the focus of this research, the number of reported sentences spoken by them were compared. The analysis showed that there were 24 reported sentences spoken by Trump, and 24 sentences spoken by Harris.

Semi-specified source accounted for the second largest proportion, 6.2% (29 sources). Examples were: Trump's aides, cemetery officials, prosecutors, authorities, tax experts, economists, campaign officials etc. The unspecified source accounted for quite a low proportion, 2.8% (13 sources). They included: one person, others, a man, 2 people, etc.

Examples of sentences that contain semi-specified sources are:

[5] **They (Trump's aides)** also wondered whether some of Mr. Kennedy's supporters would balk at the idea of his working with Mr. Trump, whose administration gutted environmental protections, empowered big corporations, and pursued other measures at odds with Mr.

Kennedy's most cherished causes. (*How Donald Trump and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Unlikely Partnership Took Shape*, 2 September 2024)

In the example above, semi-specified source, *Trump's aides*, is used for placing emphasis on the differences between Trump's and Kennedy's politics, related to environmental protections and big corporations.

Examples of sentences that contained unspecified sources are:

[6] Finally, it was not clear to Mr. Kennedy's advisers what he would, or could, do in a Trump administration. Some took Mr. Means at his word when he mentioned the vice presidency, **one person** close to Mr. Kennedy said. **Others** argued that it was probably posed as a hypothetical — or that it was a misunderstanding. (*How Donald Trump and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Unlikely Partnership Took Shape*, 2 September 2024)

[7] Iran's vast network of influence operatives and hackers includes front companies controlled by the Revolutionary Guards Corps, according to **one Iranian official** and **another Iranian** who works in the state's media and information sector, both of whom are familiar with the country's disinformation campaigns. Both asked that their names not be published because they were not authorized to speak publicly. (*Iran Emerges as a Top Disinformation Threat in U.S. Presidential Race*, 4 September 2024)

In example 6 important political decisions were discussed, as well as some speculations regarding the role that Mr. Kennedy might have in the Trump administration. Thus, it is not surprising that unspecified sources are included in reporting. In example 7 unspecified sources are used for reporting on Iran, which is considered a top disinformation threat to the U.S. presidential race.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper focuses on the differences and similarities between newspaper discourse of two respectable American daily newspapers, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. A thorough analysis of articles published from 1 September 2024 to 4 September 2024 was carried out by implementing methodological tools of CDA developed by Fairclough and van Dijk. At the description level textual analysis of the articles was conducted. The results showed that the number of articles related to the presidential election in both newspapers was similar (28 in *The Washington Post* and 26 in *The New York Times*). The difference between them emerges in the number of articles that dealt with particular topics. Thus, 25% of articles in *The Washington Post* wrote about the Republican Party, whereas 46% of articles wrote about this topic in *The New York Times*. 50% of articles in *The Washington Post* include both parties in their texts, and 27% in *The New York Times*. The number of articles that deal with the Democratic Party is similar (25% in *The Washington Post* and 23% in *The New York Times*). The analysis of topics has revealed polarized nature of newspaper discourse, which is always ideological to a certain degree. Thus, in *The Washington Post* there were 9 articles that wrote about Trump and members of his party in a negative way, and 7 in *The New York Times*. There were 11

articles in both newspapers that wrote neutrally about Trump and his party, and 1 in both papers wrote positively about Trump and his politics. When it comes to Harris and members of her party, in *The Post* 7 articles discussed Harris and Biden in a positive way, and 2 in *The Times*. 9 articles in *The Post* wrote about Harris neutrally, and 7 in *The Times*. 1 article in *The Post* discussed Harris negatively, and in *The Times* in 1 article Biden was discussed in a slightly negative way. We can conclude that *The New York Times* focused more on the Republican Party in individual articles, and in *The Washington Post* the focus was on presenting politics of both parties comparatively in the same texts. In *The Washington Post* there were slightly more articles about Trump and his party that presented them in a negative way, and more articles about Harris and her party presented positively, but we can conclude that their ideological preferences were mostly similar.

At the interpretation level, by comparing the results of the analysis of modes of discourse representation, we can conclude that there are small differences between the two newspapers. The biggest difference is in the usage of direct speech, *The Washington Post* has a higher percentage, 25%, as opposed to 18.5% in *The New York Times*. If we consider the occurrence of both indirect speech and preset direct speech together we come to the following proportions: 16% occurs in *the Washington Post*, and 16.7% *The New York Times*. The results show there is no big difference between the two newspapers in modes of representing discourse. By using indirect speech and preset direct speech reporters can intervene in the original voices, which makes their reporting somewhat biased, with their ideology being conveyed to a certain extent. In some examples it can be difficult to discern which information comes from the news source, and which from reporters. In this way, by blending indirect speech with reporters' voices, reporters can and do implicitly influence readers.

There were also certain differences between the newspapers in the usage of news sources. Although the percentage of specified news sources was almost the same, 91.2% in *The Washington Post*, and 91% in *The New York Times*, there was a big difference between them in the number of reported sentences spoken by Trump and Harris. There were 106 sentences spoken by Trump, and less than half fewer spoken by Harris (46) in *The Post*, and an equal number of sentences spoken by each (24) in *The Times*. There was a bigger difference in the percentage of semi-specified sources, there were 6.2% in *The Times* and 3.7% in *The Post*. When it comes to unspecified ones, percentage is higher in *The Post*, 5.1%, as opposed to 2.8% in *The Times*. The biggest number of semi-specified sources in *The Times* was used in the article about Biden's asylum restrictions, and of unspecified sources in the article that wrote about Trump and Kennedy's partnership. The biggest number of unspecified sources in *The Post* was used in the article about Trump's endeavor to include a new 1776 Commission in a national curriculum, and semi-specified sources were used the most in the article about Trump sharpening his attacks on Harris.

All in all, our research has confirmed that both newspapers are highly representative. They used experts in a particular field related to the topics covered in the articles like law and economics professors, economic experts, fellows working in different institutes, but also voters, regular people, residents of different cities etc. In this way, reporters presented opinions from various viewpoints contributing to the authenticity and veracity of their reporting. Both newspapers quite rarely relied on unverified pieces of information but resorted to them occasionally when some controversial political topics or situations were being discussed.

References

- Adi Trisno, B. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Terrorism in Newsweek Magazine*. Verlag: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing Political Discourse*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and Power*. 2 nd ed. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Fairclough, N. (1992a). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Express.
- Fairclough, N. (1992b). Discourse and Text: Linguistic and Intertextual Analysis within Discourse Analysis. *Discourse & Society* 3.2, 193-217.
- Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the News. Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Karasik, V.V. (2000). About types of discourse. *Language personality: institutional and personal discourse* (pp. 5-20). Volgograd: Peremena.
- Kenzhekanova Kenzhekankyzy, K. (2015). Linguistic features of Political Discourse. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6 (6), 192- 199.
- Kress, G. R. (1985). *Linguistic Processes in Sociocultural Practice*. Victoria: Deakin University Press.
- Krestel, R, Bergler, S. & R. Witte (2008). Minding the Source: Automatic Tagging of Reported Speech in Newspaper. In N. Calzoral, K. Choukri et al. (eds) *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'08)*, Marrakech, Morocco. European Language Resources Association (ELRA)
- Kristeva, J. (1986). Word, Dialogue and Novel. In T. Moi (ed) *The Kristeva Reader* (34-61), New York: Columbia University Press.
- Richardson, J.E. (2007). *Analysing Newspapers. An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. Red Globe Press.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2013). Ideology and Discourse. In M. Freeden, M. Stears (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (175–196). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

van Dijk, T. (1989). Critical News Analysis. *Critical Studies*, 1 (1),103-126.

Vološinov, V. N. (1973). *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. New York: Seminar.

Zhou, R., Qin, S. (2020). A Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reports on Sino-US Trade War in *The New York Times*. *English Language Teaching* 13 (10), 85-98.

Online sources

<https://www.britannica.com/event/United-States-presidential-election-of-2024>

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/New-York-indictment-of-Donald-Trump-2229245>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Washington-Post>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-New-York-Times>

<https://www.nytimes.com/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/>

Primljeno: 19. 9. 2025.

Prihvaćeno: 17. 10. 2025.