

News headlines and ideological colorings

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Abstract

This investigation examines the representations of Iran and the West in some news headlines concerning the reflection of the Iranian nuclear issue by BBC and CNN within a highly critical period in 2010 and 2011. The significance of this period lies in the fact that it coincides with the heat of nuclear negotiations, further economic sanctions and the inception of fresh economic reforms taking place in Iran. Benefiting from the principles of CDA and SFG together with some insights into the world of the mass media; this study attempts to identify differentiated representations of Iran and the West concerning the Iranian nuclear issue.

Keywords: news headlines, the mass media, CDA, SFG, Iran's nuclear issue

1. Introduction

This article attempts to investigate the social and ideological powers of language by looking at some news headlines about Iran's nuclear issue from BBC and CNN according to the grammar of transitivity

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which is part of Halliday's systemic functional grammar (SFG). The significance of this research paper lies in the fact that the period of collecting the sample data (the second six months of 2010 and the first whole month of 2011), coincided with new rounds of nuclear negotiations between Iran and the West, and also a phase of further economic sanctions against Iran occurred simultaneously. In addition to these factors, the economic reforms themselves which took place within the same period in Iran and the cutting of certain subsidies on the part of the government have also been considered as a mediating factor in the quality of news coverage of the aforementioned news agencies. The political along with the economic contexts of the news items, therefore, seem to be quite tentative and critical and, hence, this investigation can be both linguistically and politically valuable in this period (2010 to 2011).

Today within the world of the mass media and press, the issue of partiality and preferential orientations together with manipulated or distorted representations of certain issues, seem to be most often regarded as something quite usual and ordinary (Teo, 2000). The ideological directions, power, and socio-economic factors along with political orientations all appear to drive the mass media towards particular paths, all in close association with the values that such factors often produce, or are possibly affiliated with.

According to Li (2010, p. 3445), studies of various discourse scholars like Fairclough (1995) have, to different degrees, indicated that the news media can be considered as both a site and a process of social interaction and ideology construction which can affect the structure of social thinking and knowledge. Along the same lines, since the Iranian nuclear program has for so long been under the spotlight by the most widely-known media and news centers throughout the globe, a thorough investigation of the discourse types employed by only two of such news media (BBC and CNN) which have extensively covered the issue, each according to its ideological perspectives, will be of linguistic and theoretical value as well as political significance in understanding the nature of their discursive practices concerning the same issue.

In order to further depict the exact nature of the media discourse, it is worth mentioning that there are many factors which have the

potential to influence the media discourse together with their ideological strategies and orientations. The discourse of the media when deeply looked into surely has much to offer in terms of various types of both explicit and implicit ideological orientations and political directions. Such orientations, either directly or indirectly, attempt to form the public opinion and drive the public towards adopting particular conceptions and impressions about specific issues (Steuter & Wills, 2009). Closely related to this perspective, Manli (2010, pp. 7487-7488) has pointed out that:

There is no doubt that the ubiquity of information communication between the advanced industrial countries and developing countries shows that the former largely dominate the information flow. Associated Press of America, France-Press, Reuters, and United Press International provide the whole world with international news reports that consist 80% of the total....It is also self-evident that they play a critical role in international public opinions....During the 2004 war in Iraq, the journalists from not only the western countries particularly the United States and Britain, but also other countries... have given coverage from their independent perspectives and enunciate many voices... to ensure the world audience have access to different alternative sources of information.

According to Messner and Distaso (2008, cited in Catenaccio et al., 2010, pp. 2-3), within the realm of media, "News is not just what others speak or write about, but also what the media themselves speak and write about; what makes an event worth reporting is that it has been reported on before." On the basis of this quotation, it can be concluded that, news agencies do not always mirror the reality; rather sometimes the media themselves put a voice into the very texture of their news coverage practices. Along the same veins, in order to put the significance of this investigation in lay terms, it has to be noted that the above-mentioned political and economic factors and issues within the period of data collection, all appear to have the potential to act as determining points in making BBC and CNN reopen new rounds of news coverage, but from slightly different perspectives concerning Iran in general, and its nuclear activities in particular.

By the same token, the selected news centers in this study (BBC and CNN) are among the agencies referred to above by Manli and, as he has pointed out, they have their own specific "voices" within the international gateways.

With respect to all the different ideologies and orientations that the media are believed to adopt, the issue of power seems to be the ultimate goal as well as the driving force in picking up particular ideological values. Following Fairclough (1995), since power is closely associated with politics, and politics manifests itself within language, one can easily claim that there would be an ever-existing link between language and power as well. Regarding such a link between politics, power, and media, Jackson (2005) as quoted by Atawneh (2009, p. 26) has pointed out that by the use of power:

Governments often make demands on the media to serve what they define as the national interest. They stage media events, frame the issue, and articulate positions that are, in essence, pure propaganda. Thus media can play a most influential role in forming received opinion; they constitute the main means by which politicians, governments, and institutions communicate with the public.

Such power exercises on the part of the governments in general and media centers in particular, can lead to various types of racism, preferential orientations, manipulated news coverage, and radical directions and associations within the news coverage of the mass media. According to Teo (2000, pp. 7-8), such "new racisms" may not be quite observable, rather they are more "subtle, covert and, hence insidious" when compared to the "old racism" and, hence, in order to locate traces of it, one has to go beyond the actual text and print as it is woven deep into the fabric of the discourse flow, intangibly bearing certain ideological values and driving the public towards adopting specific conceptions.

Iran's interest in nuclear power began more than thirty years ago, during the Pahlavi's regime, when Iran sought to establish a full-fledge nuclear power industry with the purpose of producing 23,000 megawatts of electricity. To achieve this goal, Shah wanted to buy nuclear reactors from the US and the Western Europe, but Washington did not approve the sales without conditions restricting Shah's freedom of action to use such resources. The size and some

of the objectives of this nuclear program of Iran, raised questions in the United States concerning its proliferation risk, and it also raised doubts regarding developing nuclear weapons.

Within the US approach of negotiations with Iran, proliferation concerns were quite central, but during Carter's presidency (1977-1978) a new round of nuclear negotiations resumed and Shah reached an agreement with the US. According to that agreement, Iran's consumed fuel had to be reprocessed in the Western Europe, and the Western Europe was obliged to return the reprocessed material in the form of fabricated fuel. After the Islamic revolution in 1979, Iran's nuclear relations with the West disappeared, but the apprehensions of a nuclear Iran in the Middle East did not vanish with the shah's overthrow and the West again exercised pressures against Iran's nuclear activities and programs. Now Iran emphasized its full rights to benefit from a nuclear industry and the US enmity towards the Islamic revolution significantly increased Iran's interest in establishing a nuclear industry. Since the Islamic revolution, Iran has been strongly emphasizing its full rights concerning a nuclear industry, and in this regard, significant progress been made, but despite Iran's acknowledgement that its activities are all peaceful, the West constantly keeps pressures on Iran to relinquish its nuclear program and believes that Iran's intentions towards nuclear power are not within the limitations of NPT (non-proliferation treaty) and Iran seeks to develop nuclear weapons as well.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 An Overview of SFG

According to Blommaert (2005, p. 22), a desire for the incorporation of “social semiotics” into a grammatical theory highly inspired Halliday to develop his systemic functional grammar (SFG). Halliday (1994), himself, in his introducing of SFG and with regard to its underlying motivation has pointed out that:

The aim has been to construct a grammar for purposes of text analysis: one that would make it possible to say sensible and useful things about

any text, spoken or written, in modern English. (Cited in Butler, 2003, p. 468)

SFG attempts to offer an overall view of how language functions, how meaning is constructed and conveyed as well as keeping an eye on the broader societal contexts which have an ever-present potential to affect language and its use. According to SFG, as Thompson (2004, p. 242) has put it forth, within any clause an inherent part of the meaning lies in the relationship(s) held between the clauses, and the grammar used within language also bears significant amounts of influence upon the constructed meaning. To put it another way, SFG assumes a “grammar of meaning” (Li, 2010, p. 3446), which consists of clusters of interrelated possible options in terms of a systematic network of choices from which speakers, on the basis of contextual factors, pick up certain selections to express different wordings and expressions.

These selections made on the part of the speakers are almost always the unconscious choices dictated by particular linguistic and extra linguistic factors which ultimately lead to the construction of contextually-appropriate meanings. The functions of such a grammatical system regards three different but interrelated types of meaning for language which are mostly referred to as the metafunctions: interpersonal, ideational (or experiential), and textual.

The interpersonal metafunction, according to Thompson (2004, p. 45), deals with the business of communicative interactions between individuals as well as the establishment and maintenance of appropriate social relations between people. It looks at the roles taken up by the parties involved in conversations and assumes that the main purpose of any conversational interaction is either to give or to demand information and the interactants are involved in a process of either giving or demanding it. Along the same veins, the ideational metafunction deals with representing the world and focuses on the participants along with the processes at work within language clauses. By process it is meant how the events or states in the world are realized in terms of the verbal groups present within the language clauses, who are involved in it, and how. This metafunction of language embraces the notions of experience,

cognition, emotion, mentalities and the like, and in order to delve into the structure of clauses to detect traces of such mindsets, it offers an analytical tool called transitivity which further looks at the interpretation of meaning.

Finally, the textual metafunction “enables texts to be negotiated” (Eggins, 2004, p. 296). It is concerned with how language users construct their messages so that they smoothly fit into the ongoing context of conversation (Thompson, 2004, p. 141). This metafunction seeks to describe the overall structure of clauses in terms of two major systems at work: theme and rheme. The former is the background or already-existing information which is shared between the interactants and the latter refers to the incoming new information which builds upon theme to construct the whole meaning consistency of the clauses.

In the end, it is worth reminding that, SFG seeks to offer a unified view of language by a combination of structural, semantic, and pragmatic theories of discourse. It sees language as being totally functional whose aim is to make meaning that is influenced by the social and cultural contexts (Eggins, 2004, p. 3).

2.2 The Evolution and Development of CDA

According to Sheyholislami (2001, p. 15), CDA is a branch of critical linguistics (hitherto CL) which was founded in the late seventies “by a group of linguists and literary critics at the University of East Anglia”. Within the evolution of CL, Halliday’s SFG was quite significant as CL also sought to detect traces of ideology in discourse. Following SFG, CL, as Teo (2000, p. 1) has asserted, seeks to go beyond the mere description of discourse and attempts to provide an explanation of the ways and reasons involved in the production of discourse. Within this branch of linguistics, discourse is seen as a tool reflecting the sociocultural processes and structures of communities and groups of people. Within the emergence of CDA, the fact that no text exists in isolation (Blackledge, 2005, p. 2), was of great significance and it highly

conveyed a necessity of doing full analyses about the relationships between discourse, its contexts, and the social groups.

According to Phillips and Hardy (2002, p. 4), CDA assumes that the discursive activities do not occur in a vacuum and they have no intrinsic meaning of their own, rather they are, more or less, “shared and social” phenomena, produced out of and as a result of interactions between various social groups and the complex societal structures. In a similar vein and with respect to the connection between discourse and society, Weiss and Wodak (2003, p. 13) have pointed out that:

CDA sees discourse as a form of social practice. Describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institutions, and social structure(s) which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned.

CDA is basically interested in language and power because language usually manifests various instances of discriminatory practices, the constitution and reproduction of unequal power relations as well as numerous cases of social asymmetries and imbalances all transformed via language (Blackledge, 2005, p. 5). In this regard, Wodak (2001, p. 11) has claimed that:

Power does not derive from language, but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and long term. Language provides a finely articulated means for differences in power in social hierarchical structures. (Cited in Blackledge, 2005, p. 5)

Regarding the ideological directions in discourse, it is worth noting that, as Achugar (2004, p. 293), has asserted, in almost any type of written or spoken piece of discourse certain types of ideologies are usually woven deep into the very fabric of the text which are in line with the interests of certain social groups along with their particular orientation(s) towards specific realities and issues, and detecting traces of such ideological meanings in discourse is an ultimate goal of CDA investigations. Following the same veins, in his conception of ideologies, Van Dijk (1995) has pointed out that:

Ideologies are basic frameworks of social cognition, shared by members of social groups, constituted by relevant selections of sociocultural value, and organized by an ideological schema that represents the self-definition of a group... ideologies have the cognitive function of organizing the social representations of the group, and thus indirectly monitor the group-related social practices and hence also the text and talk of its members. (Cited in Le, 2002, p. 375)

On the basis of the citation above, ideologies, hence, can be regarded as the organizing schema created by the societal factors, adopted by the members of the society that mirror their social values, beliefs, identities and definitions that, according to Fairclough (1995, p. 23), the “naturalized implicit” traces of which are persuasive within the flow of discourse.

CDA takes crucial account of the social contexts of language use, all with the purpose of shedding light on such issues as the relationships between discourse, power, dominance and social inequalities (Van Dijk, 1998).

The last but not least, and as previously pointed out, CDA is a branch of linguistics, but since it seeks to delve deep into the texture of discourse on the basis of social, cultural and cognitive factors, it can be regarded as an interdisciplinary enterprise whose whole theoretical framework appears to be, more or less, eclectic and unsystematic (Weiss & Wodak, 2003, p. 6).

In sum, CDA attempts to investigate how language portrays social, cultural and ideological perspectives and identities within its use, and with respect to the various contexts of its use.

2.3 Significance of Media Discourse and Its Political Affiliations

Today within our modern lives, the issue of news production and communication is no longer limited by the constraints of time and space. The rapid advancements in technology as well as the emergence of the media era have greatly eliminated the international borders in communication, offering “instantaneous communication”

all across unrestricted and globally-wide distances at little time, cost, and energy (Fairclough, 2006, p. 85).

With respect to the process of globalization within the modern world and its mutual interactions with the mass media, Wilkin (2001, p. 126) as cited by Fairclough (2006, p. 86), believes that, the mass media lay down the infrastructures necessary for bringing about important “changes in the patterns of production”, and in addition to that, they provide the main source of news, information, knowledge, etc. for the public. In a similar vein, Thomas et al. (2004, p. 57) have also asserted that the mass media, as a powerful force in society, offer much of the information needed to our daily lives. They further point out that news media can be viewed as “complex institutions” as there are lots of people involved in the processes of production and communication of news, both broadcasted and printed. In other words, as Flowerdew et al. (2002, p. 324) put it, the discourse of media remind of an “institutional voice”, rather than a personal one which means that such institutions within the process of news coverage of different issues, as Stamou (2001) has pointed out, “construct versions of reality”. Such manipulations are due to the fact that the media proceed according to the requirements of specific “selections” as well as “transformations” which have to be made on the basis of their preferential criteria, and in this regard, Fairclough (1995, p. 54), has adopted a similar view by asserting that the media have a tendency to interpret rather than “transparently report”. Closely related to such notions, Verschueren (1985) has also pointed out that:

The news is not only reported, but it is also interpreted, and interpreting any event involves the beliefs, opinions, hopes, and aspirations of those gathering, reporting and publishing the news, and in that process ideology inevitably co-determines what gets reported, when it is reported, and how the reporting is done. (Cited by Thetela, 2001, p. 349)

By the same token, Chouliaraki (2000, p. 295) has pointed out that, instances of “mediated discourse” do not merely mirror the realities, rather they, more or less, seek to “constitute” such realities by means of a “process of communication” all with the purpose of creating a “hegemony” of certain meanings, driving the public

mentality towards the adoption of specific worldviews and ideologies and, at the same time, suppressing the alternative mind frames.

In this regard, Clayman and Heritage (2002, p. 6) have pointed out that through choosing a particular mode of representation, the media attempts to reproduce and sustain “the current dominant ideology which becomes accepted as neutral or obvious” and, hence, upholding the sociopolitical status quo. With respect to such particular modes of representations, Kress (1994) has adopted a similar view and believes that:

There is the explanation involved in the selection of events. This explanation consists in saying: “these are the events to attend to”, and by implication, “don’t bother yourself with the rest”. The selected events have to be mediated, and this involves a second different kind of explanation. It consists in saying: “that’s what this event is like, and that’s how it is best understood. (Cited in Moore, 2002, p. 499)

On the basis of such claims and perspectives, it can be concluded that, the media most often seem to adopt preferential criteria in picking up the items to publicize and they appear to lay down an agenda for the inclusion and exclusion of particular articulations and voices. Within such manners of coverage, particular types of interpretations and analyses are usually undertaken which are all congruent with the Medias’ institutional interests and benefits.

Regarding the connections held between the realm of the media with that of politics, many studies have been conducted across various disciplines, and it is worth noting that, as Ekstrom (2001, p. 564) has put it forth, “non-mediatised politics is fictional” since the association between the two is so strong and undeniable that we can easily trust Fairclough (1995) as believing that the mediated politics as an essential part of the “contemporary politics”. Politics and politicians, according to Wodak (1989, p. 115), use language in particular conducts because politics, as put forth by Thomas et al (2004, p. 36), is concerned with power to control the different dimensions of society and the enacting of such a power is mostly constituted by the mass media which dominate the public sphere.

Along the same veins, Lewis (2005, p. 15) has pointed out that within our contemporary world, there are different “media networks” whose discursive practices are formed through a cultural and governmental force which is highly dominant and all-inclusive, causing the media to reflect and focus on the political interests of their relevant countries. By the same token, Couldry and Curran (2003, p. 3) have also adopted a similar opinion and believe that:

Media are unable to bargain over their basic rule of existence, which is that they depend on content generated by others. ...media power is an emergent form of social power in complex societies whose basic infrastructure depends increasingly on the fast circumlocution of information and images.

On the basis of such notions, it appears, therefore, that the media, in order to comply with their national and political values as well as assuring their future existence, have to adopt certain orientations which are all in line with the sociopolitical forces that dictate such factors. To put it another way, the media are not independent per se; rather they have to most often rely on a supporting governmental force which, in turn, puts a specific underlying voice and color into their discursive practices.

Closely related to this notion, Steuter and Wills (2009, p. 17) have stated that within the world of the media, “powerful political and economic forces” consistently and purposefully shape the content of news and, this way, the media discourse spreads a “powerful persuasive influence” upon the social life of individuals. Bagdikian (2004, p. 19) has also pointed out that, the United States, as the world’s richest country, constantly puts a voice into its news media, and its media most often quote those persons who are politically powerful and, hence, political influences are highly tangible within such media discourses.

Finally, with respect to the discursive practices of the mass media, it is worth mentioning that, not all media centers follow the outlines discussed above and, as Fairclough (2006) has pointed out, independent and autonomous media centers still exist, though quite a few, but most of such centers often tend to exhibit cases of preferentially manipulated representations and coverage.

The last but not least, with respect to the blurred diplomatic relations of Iran and the West on one hand, and the political tentativeness of Iran's nuclear issue on the other hand, it seems quite significant to conduct a critical study of the news coverage practices of two western news centers about this tentative issue within a specific political atmosphere.

To put it another way, Iran and the West have not been on friendly diplomatic relations since the Islamic revolution of 1979, and the selected news centers in this article both come from the western countries. Such being the case with the political context of this study, and concerning the political tentativeness of Iran's nuclear issue itself, it can be expected that an investigation in this respect will have much to offer and enjoy fruitful results.

3. Method

3.1 The News Centers (The Sources of Data)

As mentioned earlier, the data used for this thesis comes from two globally-famous news centers: BBC and CNN, whose relevant news items have been collected within a seven-month-long period, i.e. the last six months of 2010, and the first month of 2011. With respect to the selection of BBC and CNN for this investigation, the main underlying motivation was that these news centers are both from industrialized countries, i.e. Britain and the U.S respectively which, according to Manli (2010), largely dominate the world of communication and information.

Along the same veins, Manli (2010) has further pointed out that the news centers from the U.S and the Europe almost form 80 percent of the world news which undoubtedly play a key role within the international scene. Another motivating reason for selecting BBC and CNN in this study has been the diplomatic relations of Iran and the West. As it was pointed out earlier, since the Islamic revolution of 1979 Iran has not been on friendly diplomatic relations with the West and, accordingly, I have selected western news

centers to examine their perspectives concerning Iran and its nuclear program.

3.2 Importance of the Analysis of Headlines

Following Dor (2005: 11), today those who read newspapers rarely go through the whole stories, rather they most often only scan the materials and search for headlines and images. Along the same veins, he has further pointed out that:

When readers do read the reports themselves (or their first paragraphs), they read them within the interpretative framework constructed by the headlines. These headlines, coupled with the positioning of the pieces in the paper, and the surrounding visual semiotics, provide the readers of newspapers with an interpretative key, the importance of which goes well beyond the specific pieces of information included in the reports.

Following the same token, Teo (2000, p. 14) has adopted a similar perspective by saying that headlines are organized in such a way that “a minimum number of words” are employed to create a maximum load of information. By the same token, Van Dijk also views headlines as the organizing schema for the news and believes that readers can recall them relatively easily as they encompass the gist of the message. In this regard, Sheyholislami (2001, p. 66) has cited Van Dijk (1998) as believing that headlines:

Define the overall coherence or semantic unity of discourse, and also what information readers memorize best from news report...They express the most important information of the cognitive model of journalists, that is, how they see and define the news event. Unless readers have different knowledge and beliefs, they will generally adopt these subjective media definitions of what is important information about an event.

The headlines, therefore, seem to be of a highly functional value within the world of the public press and looking at them from an adopted transitivity perspective can have much to offer.

3.3 The Data, Its Selection, and Organization

Regarding the selection and sampling of the gathered data, first of all, it has to be mentioned here that only the news items have been collected for this investigation and, hence, the related comment columns, feature stories, editorials and the like have completely been omitted from the process of selection.

As pointed out above, the period of data collection was from July 2010 to January 2011 which was seven months long overall, and by means of referring to the websites of BBC and CNN twenty four news items were randomly collected; that is to say, twelve items from BBC and twelve others from CNN. For each news center, twelve news items collected within a period of 210 day means that every 17.5 days once, a relevant item should have been gathered, but in fact, the total number of the news items that BBC and CNN publicized concerning Iran's nuclear issue within these seven months was about 40 items, but, in order to have a more manageable set of data, one which would allow for better analyses, I collected only 24 news items from both of the news centers.

The collected news items are also distributed differently among these seven months and it is due to the fluctuating intensity of the aforementioned political and economic factors towards the end of 2010. That is to say, the intensity of such factors (new rounds of nuclear negotiations, economic sanctions, and domestic economic reforms) all increased towards the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011 and, hence, I mainly focused on the turning of 2011. To put it differently, within the last six months of 2010 (July, August, September, and October, December, and November) 9 news items have been randomly selected for any one of the news centers, and from the first month of 2011 (January) the rest three items have been gathered., as it is illustrated in the following table.

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Table 1: The total number of news stories gathered in 2010 and 2011

Total news stories		
Year	BBC	CNN
2010	9	9
2011	3	3

To be more specific, it has to be also pointed out that in some certain months the number of the items collected for any of the news centers also differs from that of the other, for instance, in August 2010 two news items were gathered for BBC, while only one item was collected for CNN.

The main underlying motivation for such a kind of distribution has been to cover a wider range of news items within the aforementioned period and also, to further make the selection and sampling procedures random and dynamic. The following tables demonstrate such distributions.

Table 2: The distribution of news items over time for BBC

Month	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Jan</i>
Year	2010	....	....	....	....	....	2011
Number of news items per month	1	2	2	1	2	1	3

Table 3: the distribution of news items over time for CNN

Month	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Jan</i>
Year	2010	....	....	....	....	....	2011
Number of news items per month	1	1	2	2	2	1	3

3.4 The Analytical Instrument: Transitivity

Transitivity which is part and parcel of the ideational metafunction focuses on the language clauses to determine the type of the process at work as well as the participants involved in it. A clause, as pointed out by Thompson (2004, p. 17) can be regarded as “any stretch of language centered on a verbal group.” Processes, on the other hand, refer to the categories of “doing”, “happening”, “sensing”, “being”, “meaning”, and “becoming” which according to Halliday (1994) embody the “world of experience”. In a similar vein, Thompson (2004, p. 87) has pointed out that “Processes are the cores of the clause from the experiential perspective.... The process is typically expressed ...or realized... by the verbal group in the clause.”

With respect to the participants involved, transitivity assigns such different roles as the “doer or sayer” “patients and goals (the acted upon)” and those “benefiting” from the actions and events. Transitivity, according to Thompson (2004), identifies three major processes: material, mental, and relational, and on the proximities among these three, three other additional processes also exist: behavioral, verbal, and existential. Any of these processes, as Thompson (2004) has put it, consists of the “goings-on” (the verb), accompanying nouns (participants) which may have qualities (attributes) and possibly going against the backdrop of adverbials which determine the type of the “circumstances” at work.

The first process which is the material one, deals with the physical actions (processes of doing and happening) such as *go, run, or throw*. They can also be of an abstract nature such as *design, draw, or grow*. This process can have two participants; the “actor” which is obligatory, and the “goal” which is optional. For instance, in “*Jack inadvertently broke the glass*”, *Jack* is the actor (the doer of the action), and *the glass* is the goal (at which the action has been directed) whereas *inadvertently* is the circumstance which further specifies the conditions of the action.

Mental processes are those of “sensing” i.e. “cognition”, “perception”, “emotion”, and even “affection” such as *feel, love,*

and hear. In this process again two participants are involved: the senser and the phenomenon. The former which is most often a human or at least an animate being, feels or senses the experience, and the latter refers to the felt or sensed experience itself as illustrated below;

- You [*senser*] can hear [*mental process*] his shrilling [*phenomenon*].
- She [*senser*] fancied [*mental process*] the thought of having him [*phenomenon*].

Relational processes deal with “having” and “being” and they are of two types: attributive and identifying. In attributive relational processes a specific quality called “attribute” is assigned to a participant named “carrier” which carries the assigned quality.

- The flower [*carrier*] is [*attributive relational process*] really [*circumstance*] fresh [*attribute*].

Identifying relational processes, on the other hand, attempt to identify a specific entity or participant called “token or identifier” from a more general participant called “value or identified”. To put it simply, this type of process seeks to differentiate two or more participants from each other and identify the specific or the more general one(s).

- The biggest city [*value/identified*] is [*identifying relational process*] Tehran [*token/identifier*].
- Hedayat [*token/identifier*] was [*identifying...*] one of the greatest authors [*value/identified*].

With respect to the three remaining process types, it is worth mentioning that they are, more or less, intermediate between the processes discussed so far, i.e. they have often some properties which are also present within the major process types discussed above.

The verbal process, which is one of these intermediary processes deals with verbs of “saying” such as *say, tell, criticize, or warn*. Such processes, according to Thompson (2004, p. 100) “are intermediate between mental and material processes” that is to say;

the act of saying is a physical action which, at the same time, mirrors an inner mentality. These processes often have two participants: the “sayer” that is typically a human or at least an animate being who conveys the message, and the “receiver” to whom the message is addressed. For example in “*Helen told her the truth*”, *Helen* is the “sayer”, telling the truth, and “*her*” is the “receiver” who has received some message. Here it has to be noted that, if the “receiver” is not a human being, or it is an abstract entity, then it is no longer the “receiver”, rather the “target” at which the message is directed. Apart from these participants involved, sometimes the message can be summarized in the form of a nominal group functioning as a distinct participant that is called “verbiage”. For instance, in “*he repeated his requests*”, *his requests* is the summary of the message conveyed by him (the sayer). If the “verbiage” is given in the form of a prepositional phrase, then it is called “matter” which again encompasses a summary of the message, as is the case in “*he thanked them for the coffee*”. To summarize my discussion on this process types, the following examples have been offered (adopted from Thompson, 2004: 102).

- I [*sayer*] explained [*verbal process*] to her [*receiver*] what it meant [*verbiage*].
- I [*receiver*] was reproached [*verbal process*] for not noticing anything [*circumstance: matter*].
- The report [*sayer*] sharply [*circumstance*] criticizes [*verbal process*] quality-control procedures [*target*].

The behavioral processes are also intermediate which are again between mental and material processes. Such processes deal with the physiological operations such as *laugh*, *cry*, and *frown* which despite being physical actions, simultaneously reflect psychological colorings and indicate the inner mental conditions. The behavioral processes typically have one participant: the “behavior” which is most often an animate being. For instance, in “*he laughed loudly*” the underlined word is the “behavior”. Apart from the “behavior”, sometimes another participant is also involved which further specifies the process and limits the scope of its interpretation, this

participant is called “range” as, for example, in “*she stared at the page*” the underlined part of the clause is the “range” which narrows the scope of “*stare*” down and directs it towards a specific point, i.e. “*the page*”.

Finally the existential processes merely express the existence of an entity and they have only one participant called “existent” as is the case in “*there is a lamp over the counter*”.

With respect to other roles adopted by the participants, a major one of them is that of “beneficiary” which, as Thompson (2004) put it, is, more or less, equivalent to the indirect object. “Beneficiary”, to put it simply, is a participant that is benefiting from an action or event within the process. For instance, in “*I bought him an ice-cream*”, the underlined word is a participant benefiting from the act of “*buying*”. This participant role can be at work in all types of processes except the existential one, but it is more associated with the material and verbal processes.

Although the discussion presented in this section covers the major outline of transitivity, much remains concerning the exact nature and the complexities of the various processes as well as their participant roles together with different circumstantial qualities.

Table 4: Transitivity, its processes, and participants
(Thompson, 2004, p. 108)

<i>Process type</i>	<i>Core meaning</i>	<i>Participants</i>
<i>Material</i>	<i>Doing & Happening</i>	<i>actor, (goal), (scope), (beneficiary),</i>
<i>Mental</i>	Sensing, Perceiving, Thinking, Feeling, Want	<i>senser, phenomenon</i>
<i>Relational</i>	<i>Being & Having</i>	<i>carrier, attribute value/token, identified/identifier</i>
<i>Attributive</i>	<i>Attributing</i>	
<i>identifying</i>	<i>identifying</i>	

<i>Verbal</i>	<i>Saying</i>	<i>sayer,(receiver), (verbiage), (target),</i>
<i>Behavioral</i>	<i>Behaving</i>	<i>behave (behavior)</i>
<i>Existential</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>existent</i>

4. Results

4.1 The Headlines from CNN

Out of the total number of headlines from the CNN's news items, seven of them represented material processes (50%), four headlines represented verbal (28%), and three others showed relational processes to be at work (22%). Although the headlines were 12 in number, in some of them two distinct process types were simultaneously at work which, accordingly, resulted in 14 processes.

4.1.1 The Representations of Iran

With respect to the material processes, in 71% of them, Iran has been assigned the role of "actor", and within the rest 29% no "actor" is present at all, rather the sentences are offered in passive voices, as is illustrated below.

As it is evident, within such material processes, Iran is quite active and mostly depicted as playing the agent role of the actions. The first process of the table above reads:

*Iran will build uranium enrichment centers, nuclear chief
says.*

This headline, as it speaks for itself, bears a verbal process (the underlined part) in which a material process is also embedded. Here within this material process, Iran is the agent of building uranium

enrichment centers. Interestingly, if we consider the time of this news item (August 16, 2010), we will see that it coincided with the heat of the West's pressure on Iran to abandon its uranium enrichment activities. Here the news center seems to be offering the message in a preferential and purposeful manner. That is to say; it first gives the overall message by means of a material process in which Iran is depicted as the agent of a negative and threatening action and then, this message is related to its source as saying it (the Iranian nuclear chief). To put it another way, at the time of broadcasting this news item, the building of enrichment centers by Iran was not in line with the West's interests and concerns and, hence, within this headline, first this point has been offered that Iran is the agent of a negative action and, after that, the validity of such a claim is enhanced by relating it to an Iranian top official as saying it.

Within the same headlines, the active agency of Iran is also extended to its role as "sayer" in the verbal processes, which seems to further construct an active picture of Iran concerning its nuclear issue. The following table offers some of such examples.

In all of these verbal processes Iran has been assigned the role of "sayer", and in the first process, Iran is trying to sell the idea of touring its nuclear sites to the foreign diplomats while, at the same time, a clash or conflict has been created in the form of a circumstance, i.e. "*despite absence of key critics*", which seems to violate the total reasonability of Iran's action. To put it differently, this headline conveys the sense that Iran has not considered all the conditions in its act of selling the idea. That is to say; Iran has acted impromptu and extempore.

Apart from this point, the word "*tour*" itself connotes the sense of a journey, usually a long one and undertaken for pleasure. This word can be regarded as employed by the news center to further indicate the point that visiting Iran's nuclear facilities takes a long time because Iran has many of such utilities in its possession, i. e. they are not one, they are not two, but many (stressing Iran's danger potential) and even visiting them cures nothing and does not worth the while; that is to say, it is just a tour and only good for pleasure and fun, but not gaining knowledge.

Within the second process in the table above, Iran is depicted as denying a claim. Interestingly, the word “*claim*”, means “*asserting that something is the case*” and this word appears to, more or less, connote a sense of certainty, while Iran is depicted as “*denying*”; a word which usually more collocates with such words as “*accusation*” rather than “*claim*”. To put it another way, in this headline the possession of secret nuclear sites by Iran is not referred to by such words as “*accusation*” or “*allegation*” which are associated with doubt, but the word chosen is “*claim*” which is more associated with certainty and knowing and, on the other hand, Iran denies such a claim which leads to constructing a chaotic picture in which the West appears to know something almost sure about Iran, but Iran still stresses its innocence and sincerity in having nothing to hide.

Finally, the relational processes are all attributive in which Iran for two times has been assigned the role of “carrier”:

- *Ahmadinejad ready for nuclear talks with world powers.*
- *Iran ready for talks.*

The first headline above, juxtaposes Iran with the West and, this way an unequal power relation seems to have been created. Apart from this point, the plural-making “*S*” in “*power*” helps to conceive the idea that the West is not a particular country or party; rather, it is a global coalition which is highly powerful and authoritative.

In the second process, Iran’s readiness for nuclear talks has been depicted which is a positive characteristic of Iran, showing its willingness to negotiate on the basis of the international laws and regulations, but the second part of the same headline, which is offered in the form of a material process creates another clash between the statements. To put it simply, the full headline reads:

- *Ahmadinejad: Iran **ready** for talks, **won’t yield** nuclear rights.* (Emphasis mine).

This headline clearly conveys the impression that Iran is quite tough and unreasonable in its nuclear negotiations; that is, Iran is apparently willing to talk (*Iran is ready for talks*), but actually it does not contribute so much in the course of the negotiations (*it*

won't yield nuclear rights). In the end, this entire paradoxical headline is related to Ahmadinejad as saying it and, this way, its validity is increased, i.e. a top Iranian official is saying such a paradoxical message which depicts Iran as wishing to enjoy the advantages of two mutually incompatible situations.

4.1.2 The Representations of the West

With respect to the material processes, the West has been represented only once and in an “actor” position:

- *Diplomats gather in Turkey to **tackle** Iran's nuclear program.* (Emphasis mine).

In this news headline, the western diplomats are depicted as “*gathering to tackle some problem*”, i.e. Iran's nuclear issue. The word “*tackle*” often collocates with such words as “*problem*” and here, through putting the diplomats in the position of the agent, and putting Iran's nuclear program in the position of the “goal” as well as using the verb “*tackle*”, the news center appears to construct a particular picture in which the diplomats appear to be problem-solvers and nuisance-removers, while the nuclear issue of Iran seems to be a threat which has to be “*tackled*” and removed.

In the verbal processes, there is definitely no trace of the West in any role and, as mentioned before, Iran is always the “sayer” in all of them. Finally regarding the attributive relational processes, the West is represented only once again, and it reads:

- *EU diplomat ‘disappointed’ in nuclear talks with Iran.* (Emphasis in original).

The EU diplomat in this headline bears the role of “carrier” which has been assigned an ‘attribute’ (*disappointed*) that is emphasized by the news producers. Further, through a circumstantial phrase (*in nuclear talks with Iran*), the underlying reason for the diplomat's disappointment has been identified and, overall it appears that the headline functions towards blaming Iran and sympathizing with the West.

4.2 The Headlines from BBC

The BBC news headlines represented three process types and the most dominant one was the material process which constituted about 61% (8 cases) of the total number of processes. The second dominant process type was represented by the verbal ones which constituted about 24% (3 cases) and, finally, the attributive relational process was the least often-used type which constituted the remaining 15% (2 cases) of the total number of processes at work.

4.2.1 The Representations of Iran

As opposed to the headlines from the CNN news network, BBC within the material processes assigned Iran a less active role, and even in one case it seems that Iran's agency has been attributed to its nuclear report rather than itself. The three headlines which bear material processes representing Iran as the "actor" of the actions are as follows:

- *Iran begins loading Bushehr nuclear reactor.*
- *Iran nuclear report raises new fears.*
- *Iran agrees to resume talks in November.*

In the first process above, Iran is the agent of loading a nuclear reactor which coincides the heat of the West's concerns over Iran's nuclear activities (August 2010) and, hence, within such a critical situation it depicts Iran as being active regarding its nuclear program. In the second process, Iran has been depicted as a threat which causes new fears. Interestingly, the adjective "new" that modifies the noun "fears" connotes the impression that Iran has already caused other fears concerning its nuclear program and now it has caused new ones. Along the same veins, the plural "S" in "fear" makes this word bear a global meaning rather than a local one and, at the same time, also makes it interpretable in more than just one way. That is to say; the word "fear" refers to a single threat which might be known to the globe, whereas the word "fears" refer to several distinct threats which might not be completely known to

the globe and, this way, it appears that Iran's threat has been portrayed as being multidimensional which causes multiple distinct fears. Finally, the last process seems to be connoting the sense that the nuclear talks have been previously stalled by Iran, and now it agrees to "*resume*" them and hold negotiations afresh, in spite of the fact, that it had previously attempted to stall them.

Apart from such representations of Iran's agency, in one case the headline puts neither the West nor Iran within the position of "actor"; rather it reads:

- *Stuxnet worm **targeted** high-value Iranian assets.*

Needless to say, this headline puts the nuclear facilities of Iran on the position of "goal" receiving harm and damage from a network virus and, this way, Iran has been depicted as undergoing a heavy loss. To put it differently, the word "*assets*", means "*something useful and valuable*", and when this word is accompanied by the adjective "*high-value*", its value and price are further emphasized which can be viewed overall to mean that Iran is undergoing an extremely heavy loss.

With respect to the verbal processes which are three in number, in two cases Iran has been placed in the agent position of "sayer":

- *Iran nuclear rights not negotiable, Ahmadinejad **says**.*
- *Iran **claims** nuclear technology breakthrough.*

Within the first process above, another relational process is also present which portrays Iran nuclear rights as being not negotiable and then such a relational process turns into a verbal one in which Ahmadinejad is the "sayer". Regarding the time of this news headline (November 2010), Iran was to start nuclear negotiations with the West and here in this headline, Iran's tough position concerning its nuclear issue has been offered first (*nuclear right not negotiable*), and then to further validate it, the source gets mentioned (*Ahmadinejad says*). It appears, therefore, that the news center attempts to depict the possibly futile results of the upcoming negotiations i.e. if Iran does not discuss its nuclear activities, then what is the purpose of holding nuclear talks?

Within the second process, Iran has been represented as being quite successful concerning its nuclear program, but only according

to its claim. This process also appears to be emphasizing the nuclear progresses which are taking place in Iran and, this way, alarming the West to be more vigilant and attentive. In regard to the attributive relational processes, in one case Iran has been assigned a positive attribute:

- *Iran ready for 'fair' talks on its nuclear program.*

In this process, Iran has been portrayed as being ready to hold talks, which is a positive quality for Iran, but as the main story unfolds, it is understood that such a positive quality had been just quoted from an Iranian official and, hence, the news network seems to distance itself from assigning Iran such positive attributes. A closer look at this process also reveals that the adjective “*fair*” which has received emphasis from the news center, further limits the scope of possible interpretations for “*talks*”. To put it simply, this adjective, like the rest of the headline, has been just cited from an Iranian spokesman and, hence, the impression is conveyed that the expression “*fair talks*” is valid only within the eyes of the person quoted rather than the West’s. That is to say; Iran is ready for talks provided that they are fair, as judged on the basis of the Iranian criteria, and only that way Iran is ready for negotiations. On the basis of this process it appears, therefore, that Iran’s readiness for talks is only conditional and restricted by an Iranian benchmark.

The other attributive relational process, as pointed out above, is embedded within a verbal process in which Iran has assigned its nuclear program a tough attribute:

- *Iran nuclear rights **not negotiable**, Ahmadinejad says.*

This process again communicates to the reader that Iran is completely self-willed and inflexible concerning its nuclear activities and then by means of relating the process to a high-ranked Iranian official, a color of validity is also injected into it. Regarding the time of this news headline (November 2010), as pointed out before, Iran was supposed to hold talks with the West in Geneva over its nuclear program, and here in this headline, prior to the launch of such talks, Iran’s position concerning its nuclear rights has been depicted. Such nuclear rights which are not negotiable are

again defined and determined by Iranian criteria which the West has not fully approved and accepted and, this way, a tough negotiating position has been put forth as created by Iran. To put it in lay terms, with respect to the time of the broadcasting of this headline, it appears that it, more or less, functions towards indicating a highly potential failure within the upcoming talks as well as Iran's lack of logic and rationale.

4.2.2 The Representations of the West

Regarding the material processes, in three cases the West has been assigned the agentive role of "actor":

- *EU tightens sanctions over Iran's nuclear program.*
- *EU spurns offer of Iran nuclear sites tour.*
- *Foreign diplomats tour Iran nuclear sites.*

In the first process above, the West is the agent of Iran's punishment as it further extends sanctions against Iran. The word "tighten" conveys the sense that sanctions have already been present and now EU has just increased them more than before. This word also connotes a sense of pressure and simultaneously conjures up such words as "hang", "loop", and "fasten" which all serve to depict the West in the position of power as exercising them, and Iran as the wrongdoer that undergoes them.

Within the second process, EU rejects Iran's offer of a nuclear tour. To put it in simple terms, the word "spurn" means to "reject something with contempt" and here in this process, the West has been depicted as holding Iran in contempt by not accepting its proposal which further contributes to placing the West in the position of power and control. Finally, with respect to the only verbal process in which the West is present, the headline reads:

- *Clinton urges Iran to fully engage in nuclear talks.*

In this process, apart from depicting the West as quite ready and volunteer for nuclear negotiations, the circumstantial adverb "fully" indicates that Iran has not been perfectly engaged within the previous talks and its participation has been, more or less, partial, faulty, and incomplete, i.e. indicating Iran's lack of compliance with the international laws and regulations.

5. Discussion

As previously pointed out, the analysis of BBC and CNN's news items showed that there were some differences and a lot of similarities within the representations of Iran and the West.

With respect to the similarities, both news centers attempted to mainly depict Iran as:

- Highly active in its threatening nuclear activities.
- A global concern-rising nuclear threat.
- Involved in a dangerous and highly unrestrained nuclear program which was quite non-complying with the international regulations.
- Acknowledging being highly active in nuclear programs.

In contrast to such representations of Iran, the West, on the other hand, had been portrayed mainly as: Highly powerful within the international scene and its pursue of Iran's nuclear issue.

- Acting in a cooperated front against the Iranian global threat.

These major depictions of Iran and the West clearly seem to be instances of differentiated representations, as they most often represent Iran as being highly active in its doubtful nuclear activities which cause global concerns and the West, on the contrary, has been represented as a major source of power as well as reassurance that pursues that global threat. As previously mentioned, the media representations are most often intentionally manipulated discourses and such manipulations all pursue the sociopolitical, cultural as well as ideological economy of the media. In this regard, Steuter and Wills (2009, p. 12) believe that understanding the "motivated representations" of the media allows for perceiving the relationships held between the "media contexts" and the real-world situations which are highly "critical" for the national and even global reasons.

By the same token, regarding the historical contexts of the sample news items in this study, in December 2010 Iran was supposed to hold nuclear talks with the West in Geneva, and prior to the inception of such talks, it seemed that BBC and CNN sought to

News headlines and ideological colorings

create a tentative and critical situation for such upcoming nuclear talks. To put it in simple terms, the news centers attempted to offer a specific profile of Iran prior to the start of the negotiations and in October, November, and even December, for instance, in some of the headlines, Iran has been represented as the agent of nuclear activities as well as setting tough negotiating conditions, as in:

- *Iran nuclear rights not negotiable, Ahmadinejad says. (BBC, November 2010).*
- *Ahmadinejad: Iran ready for nuclear talks, wont yield nuclear rights. (CNN, October 2010).*
- *Iran begins loading fuel into core of its first nuclear plant. (CNN, October 2010).*
- *Clinton urges Iran to fully engage in nuclear talks. (BBC, December 2010).*

By the same token, as discussed in the previous part of this investigation, in a considerable number of the headlines, there is an underlying concern-rising connotation about Iran and its nuclear activities. Such headlines mostly attempt to convey an impression of concern about Iran's physical nuclear activities and its faulty participation in the nuclear talks, as in the following examples.

- *Iran begins loading Bushehr nuclear reactor.*
- *Iran nuclear report raises new fears.*
- *Iran claims nuclear technology breakthrough.*
- *Iran will build uranium enrichment centers, nuclear chief says.*
- *Diplomats gather in Turkey to tackle Iran nuclear issue.*
- *EU diplomat 'disappointed' in nuclear talks with Iran.*

Needless to mention, in almost all of these headlines there is an underlying connotation, which says that Iran is quite unwilling for logical and reasonable talks and it wants to impose its ambitions upon the course of negotiations which are bound to fail, as Iran, despite its agreement to hold talks, is highly non-compliant with the international nuclear regulations. This policy of such news centers, with respect to Iran's blurred diplomatic relations with the West,

reminds of Sheyholislami's investigation where he says that some media critics like Chomsky (1989) and Hackett (1991) believe that the mainstream media do not always reflect the reality; rather due to their "economy", "concentration of ownership", "institutional constraints", "news production practices", and so on, they may not objectively represent the world, and especially in the case of international events and stories, their news reports and coverage are most often in line with the foreign policy of their countries (Sheyholislami, 2001, pp. 1-2).

6. Conclusion

This study was carried out to examine the function of language as a social tool which influences other social practices including media discourse. The overall purpose of this investigation was to focus upon the discursive practices of two globally-famous news agencies concerning the Iranian nuclear issue within the second half of 2010 and the first month of 2011. Since only two news centers (BBC and CNN) were selected, the conclusions which were put forth might not be quite applicable to all the other media centers and news agencies. In addition to that, my own nationality may have also had some significant amounts of influence upon the conclusions, and it may decrease the reliability of the findings, but all through my investigation, I have obsessively attempted to bear such a factor in mind and distance myself from any kind of preconceptions prior to, and within the course of my analyses and investigations.

The last but not least, since only two news centers' discourse types have been analyzed, the findings and conclusions again might not completely mirror the exact and thorough perspective(s) that the West may hold toward Iran's nuclear issue and, hence, in order to get a more inclusive view of the West's overall stance on it, more media centers and news agencies should be selected and scrutinized.

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Appendices

Appendix A: CNN's headlines gathered in the second six months of 2010 and the first month of 2011. For seeing their full-text stories, refer to www.cnn.com.



Diplomats gather in Turkey to tackle Iran's nuclear program

By Ivan Watson, CNN

January 21, 2011 1:05 p.m. EST



EU diplomat 'disappointed' in nuclear talks with Iran

By Ivan Watson, CNN

January 22, 2011 11:32 a.m. EST



Iran offers new nuclear talks

By the CNN Wire Staff

November 7, 2010 9:34 a.m. EST

Iran touts tour of nuclear sites, despite absence of key critics

By the CNN Wire Staff

January 15, 2011 6:29 p.m. EST



Iranian nuclear talks end; another round set in Turkey

By the CNN Wire Staff |

December 7, 2010 1:04 p.m. EST

Ahmadinejad ready for nuclear meeting with world powers

From **Elise Labott**, CNN

September 24, 2010 1:27 p.m. EDT

Iran denies claim of top-secret nuclear site

By the CNN Wire Staff

September 11, 2010 1:58 p.m. EDT



Iran begins loading fuel into core of its first nuclear plant

By Azadeh Ansari, CNN

October 26, 2010 5:03 p.m. EDT



Iran will build uranium enrichment centers, nuclear chief says

By the CNN Wire Staff

August 16, 2010 9:54 a.m. EDT

The logo for CNN World, featuring the letters "CNN" in a stylized white font on a red background, followed by the word "World" in a white sans-serif font.

Iran sends letter to nuclear watchdog about restarting talks

From Ivan Watson, CNN

July 26, 2010 1:36 p.m. EDT

The logo for CNN World, featuring the letters "CNN" in a stylized white font on a red background, followed by the word "World" in a white sans-serif font.

Iran says it will attend another round of nuclear talks

By the CNN Wire Staff

November 30, 2010 6:35 a.m. EST

The logo for CNN World, featuring the letters "CNN" in a stylized white font on a red background, followed by the word "World" in a white sans-serif font.

Ahmadinejad: Iran ready for talks, won't yield nuclear rights

By the CNN Wire Staff

October 17, 2010 11:59 a.m. EDT

Appendix B: BBC's headlines gathered in the second six months of 2010 and the first month of 2011. For seeing their full-text stories, refer to www.bbcworld.com.

7 January 2011 Last updated at 12:18

EU spurns offer of Iran nuclear sites tour

3 December 2010 Last updated at 22:32

Clinton urges Iran to fully engage in nuclear talks

By Kim Ghattas

BBC News, Manama, Bahrain

15 January 2011 Last updated at 14:15 ET

Foreign diplomats tour Iran nuclear sites

A group of foreign diplomats is touring

29 October 2010 Last updated at 05:52 ET

Iran agrees to resume nuclear talks in November

8 January 2011 Last updated at 09:38 ET

Iran claims nuclear technology breakthrough

10 November 2010 Last updated at 07:08 ET

Iran nuclear rights not negotiable, Ahmadinejad says

23 September 2010 Last updated at 09:35 ET

Iran ready for 'fair' talks on its nuclear programme

23 September 2010 Last updated at 06:46 ET

Stuxnet worm 'targeted high-value Iranian assets'

By Jonathan Fildes Technology reporter, BBC News

21 August 2010 Last updated at 16:18 ET

Iran begins loading Bushehr nuclear reactor

7 September 2010 Last updated at 18:40 ET

Iran nuclear report raises new fears

By Jon Leyne *BBC Middle East correspondent*

26 July 2010 Last updated at 17:36 ET

EU tightens sanctions over Iran nuclear programme

6 December 2010 Last updated at 21:33

Iran nuclear talks in Geneva end first day without deal