Analysing intersubjective resources in Persian and English newspaper opinion/editorials

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ABSTRACT
This study is to uncover the persuasive means of inviting or restricting alternative voices in Iranian and American press. About 10,000 engagement tokens were gathered from 216 newspaper opinions/editorials written between 2005 and 2010 on the Iranian nuclear program in two Persian newspapers, Iran and Aftab-e-Yazd, two English newspapers written by Persian writers – Tehran Times and Keyhan International – and two American newspapers written by American writers – New York Times and Washington Post. The Appraisal theory based on “contract” and “expand” linguistic features (Martin and White 2005) was used to compare the lexico-grammar of the engagement tokens. Central to their engagement are the dialogic heterogloss which acknowledges the diversity of voices in discourse and the undialogized monogloss which disregards the diversity. The investigation has revealed that whereas the op/eds written in Persian took the lead in using “endorse” and “counter”, two micro linguistic features of “contract”, (e.g., terms such as although, never, etc.), the American op/eds opted for “entertain” micro linguistic feature of “expand” (e.g., perhaps, argue, etc.). Interestingly, the op/eds written in English by the Persians stood in the middle, between the Americans and those written in Persian. However, when using terms that involve national interest, the latter group echo the Persian writers’ voice.

KEYWORDS: opinions/editorials; monogloss and heterogloss; Persian; American.

1. Introduction
The importance of opinions or “evaluative beliefs” in newspaper opinions/editorial (henceforth, op/eds; any belief that presupposes a value and requires a judgment about somebody or something), according to van Dijk (1996: 8), lies in the relation between ideology and discourse. Van Dijk (1998) believes
that opinions can be taken as truths if such truths constitute the norms and values of a specific people. Op/eds contain important ideological implications for the formation and change of public opinions, in setting the political agenda, and influencing the social debate, decision-making and other forms of social and political action (van Dijk 1996). To Oktar (2001) our ideology implies who we are, what we stand for, what our values are and what our relationships with others are, a kind of “us” and “them” locally or globally. Fairclough (2010) also believes that the ideological work of media discourse includes particular ways of representing the world, specific constructions of social identities and particular constructions of social relations. Richardson (2007: 149) describes the main function of op/eds as “forums for opinion, debate and dialogue”. They also play a significant role in communicating the identity of a newspaper. In fact, the writers of op/eds do not simply produce texts to represent an external reality but they also use language to acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations (Hyland 2001). The aim of this study is, however, to map the distribution of two major engagement tokens of expand/contract on the basis of Appraisal theory across the three ideologically different samples rather than showing how ideologies of op/eds are constructed and projected with these inter-subjective resources.

Op/eds, as the expression and persuasive communication of the official positioning of newspapers, offer up-to-date commentaries on issues at vogue, functioning as an important means of conveying governments’ opinions and attitudes to the rest of the world (Linhua 2009). In fact, depending on the stance of a newspaper, they may vary in their ideological presuppositions, implying that the ideologies of journalists somehow influence their opinions, which in turn would influence the discourse structures of the opinion articles in op/eds (van Dijk 1996). The spirit of persuasive social power, typical of the media power, according to van Dijk (1995a: 31) is that “action control presupposes mind control”. Mind control is more than just acquiring beliefs through discourse and communication. It is a function of properties of text as well as the properties of context and particularly the previous knowledge, attitudes and ideologies of recipients. Hence, a distinctive feature of manipulation is to communicate beliefs without explicit assertion, with fewer chances of them being challenged and rejected. As regards the variation in discourse structures, the writers of the op/eds construct solidarity and engage with their putative readers in an attempt to gain their support and consent. As a major meaning-making strategy at writers’ disposal to produce such variation, Appraisal system of inter-subjective positioning is exploited by the writers of op/eds to simultaneously invite multiple positions
into the mainstream discourse and negotiate for a position against the backdrop of other existing voices.

Although journalists, linguists and the public are aware of the phenomenon of inter-subjective positioning in argumentative texts, such as opinion pieces and editorials (A’Beckett 2009; White 2006, 2003; Martin and White 2005; among others), and despite the appreciation of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences with respect to this Appraisal system (Arrese and Perucha 2006; A’Beckett 2009), there have been hardly any extensive studies on how these resources operate in texts and exchanged in various languages and cultures. The current study aims to fill this gap by considering the ways in which the contract/expand variables will be investigated when it comes to the “resources of inter-subjective positioning” in the Iranian and American leading newspaper op/eds, which is deemed to contribute to the construction of solidarity and alignment. The initial hypothesis in this study was that Iranian press would likely endorse the official position on the nuclear issue and use more contracting resources whereas the US press would likely use different arguments that are put forward by various groups, which would then be evidenced with more expanding resources. This hypothesis emerges from the fact that with highly sensitive issues such as nuclear discussions and particularly in a closed society like Iran the newspapers need to echo the voices of authorities otherwise they can face severe sanctions. The other hypothesis would be to consider Iranians writing in English as “middle-of-the-roaders”, as on the one hand they tend to follow the authorities in the country regarding this sensitive issue, and on the other hand they tend to pretend to the international readers that they enjoy some kind of freedom.

It is worth noting that societies where freedom of expression is restricted have their context-specific circumstances under which journalists are required to carry out their ideological practices. Newspapers in Iran are required to acquire permission before commencing their journalistic practices, and have the right to put forth constructive, but not destructive, criticisms. However, the Republic ruling system of the country implies stronger adherence to national and religious rather than personal and group values, and Iranian newspapers would generally restrict other voices by way of “contract”. According to the Comprehensive Regulation of the Press in Iran, some projecting characteristics of journalistic activities allude that the news reports should not tend to weaken the ruling system or create structural disorders and should not attack ideological, cultural and religious values (Shokouhi and Moazed 2017).
2. Background

The undeniable power of journalistic discourse, as Cotter (2001: 417) asserts, leads us to the belief that the news which fits to print eventually finds its way into discussions by politicians and policy-makers, meaning that it effectively sets the national agenda for public discussion and functions as a paper-of-record for society. In fact, news writers take the advantage of a variety of linguistic resources to connect with their intended readership and to legitimize themselves as a reliable source for disseminating facts. Given this, the following section will establish the theoretical framework, namely the Appraisal theory, upon which the present study is built.

Exploring the expression of evaluation and engagement and the treatment of the same event in English and Spanish news reportage and commentaries, Arrese and Perucha (2006) utilize the Appraisal theory to elaborate on the evaluative categories in relation to writer stance and to the dimension of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. The results of their analysis have revealed the presence of various linguistic sources for the expression of evaluation both in the two sub-genres and the two languages. While news reports share similar engagement patterns across the two languages, the commentaries, including op/eds, display extensive as well as varying patterns of engagement in English and Spanish. The different patterns of engagement in Spanish and English op/eds are attributed to the varying context of publication and the ideological positions of the papers. However, what seems to be required here is whether or not political views should be used to delegitimize political powers, and this could be explained by investigating the politics of a country, like Iran, that seemingly is not a US ally.

In the analyses of language choices made by the Russian mass media for commenting on the Ukrainian Orange Revolution, A’Beckett (2008, 2009) focuses specifically on the means of evaluation. The study has found that newspapers used various linguistic tools to create myths in order to delegitimize the political powers of the Revolution and to discredit its supporters. The analysis further indicates that in Russian mass media events are often presented in an ironic light, and negative details are brought to the foreground while cognitive metaphors such as family and disease, and allusions are employed to reinforce the cultural prejudice that Ukrainians are inferior. The negative attitude toward the Orange Revolution reflects not only Russian government policy, but it is also supported by ethnic bias and cultural stereotypes.

In another recent work, Lihua (2009) investigates interpersonal rhetoric in the China Daily for the construction of the patterns of public opinion. The study which is based on Appraisal theory, investigates attitudinal lexis and modal ex-
expressions with the goal of discovering how op/eds would communicate their evaluation of the subject matter. The study contends that the author of an op/eds is more likely to be explicit in evaluating events and implicit in evaluating behavior, and that s/he seldom attributes attitudes to other sources. It is found that the modals of obligation and necessity are two particularly common modals, which indicate the authority and power nature of op/eds.

The studies above indicate the impact of the opinion and inter-subjectivity on the public through the rhetoric of the political op/eds. However, what they do not reveal are the differences in the distribution of the inter-subjective tokens used. To take the matter further to shed light on the interplay between the types of token, the present study draws basically on Martin and White’s (2005) engagement system of Appraisal theory in the context of Iran and the relation with the US in a hot debate of nuclear issue.¹ It is worthwhile to know that studies on Iranian newspapers are scarce (Izadi and Saghaye-Biria 2007 which is a critical analysis of some oriental themes, Ansary and Babaii 2009 which relies on the contrastive rhetoric of Persian and English, and Shokouhi et al. 2015 which discusses the evidential in Persian are a few mentionable sources). The justification for this study is twofold: first, Martin and White’s engagement framework was mainly derived from the studies on media discourse (White 2003; Swain 2007). Second, unlike other engagement typologies, Martin and White’s framework is rooted in Appraisal theory which in turn is grounded in a theory of language in which meanings are systematically related to the context in which they are expressed (Caldwell 2009).

What follows provides a detailed description of Martin and White’s (2005) theoretical framework on the classification of resources of inter-subjective positioning. Central to Martin and White’s (2005) engagement system is a clear-cut distinction between two types of utterances: the dialogic heterogloss which acknowledges the diversity of voices within discourse and the undialogized monogloss which discounts such diversity.

3. Theoretical framework

Engagement resources involve the communicative and rhetorical function of the words and expressions by which writers take a position towards the various

¹ This hot debate refers to the long political debate (2002–2015) on whether or not Iran should consent to the international restrictions on the non-proliferation treaty of nuclear technologies, or whether it should be entitled to continue developing its nuclear programs, which has eventually resulted in the provocative argument on Iran’s recent deal with the west that Iran could continue under supervision at a limited scale for ten years.
viewpoints and “value positions being referenced by the text, thereby aligning themselves vis-à-vis those who hold [...] these positions”, hence inter-subjective positioning (White 2003: 260). In Martin and White’s (2005) engagement system, the broadest and most clear-cut distinction is made between monoglossic and heteroglossic propositions. Instances of monoglossic propositions are prevalent in the op/eds, as in the following where the unmodalized, unattributed proposition emanates from the authorial voice and sounds fact-like, and as Martin and White (2005: 99) state “the communicative context is single-voiced”.

(1) The administration’s wariness of military options is also clear from recent efforts to dissuade Israel from attacking Iranian nuclear facilities. (Titled ‘Bomb, Bomb Iran: Not Likely’, The Washington Post, July 3, 2008.)

Here, however, as White (2003) suggests, in order to adequately describe and account for the communicative functionality of the engagement resources, it is necessary to see them as fundamentally dialogic or interactive. For this reason, monoglossic expressions of the type exemplified above were not the concern of the present study.

Among the heteroglossic resources, a broad distinction is made between the dialogic “contract” and “expand” locutions in their inter-subjective functionality (White 2003: 265). The distinction involves the degree to which an utterance allows alternative voices (expand), or restricts other voices (contract). Within the category of “contract”, two sub-categories are assumed: (1) “proclaim”, through which the textual voice represents the proposition as a reliable, grounded and valid, and (2) “disclamation”, through which the textual voice positions itself as being at odds with some contrasting position. The resources for realizing “proclaim” are three:

- “Pronounce” – formulations making use of intensifications or explicit authorial interventions, e.g. I contend…, We do believe …, etc. The Persian equivalent would be ma bavar/Eteghad darim ‘We believe that’.

- “Concur” – wordings such as of course, and certain types of “rhetorical questions”; similarly Persian albate functioning like of course in English.

- “Endorse” – foregrounding others’ convincing voices through attribution to external sources. Examples include X rightly mentioned. In Persian, one
would use *felani bedorosti zekr kard*, which is equivalent to the English ‘X rightly mentioned’.

To the extent that “concur” is being presumed, “contract” acts to increase the interpersonal ‘cost’ to those who would challenge the stance being advanced by the text. “Disclaim” is achieved through straight

– “Deny” (negation) – Unmodalized propositions including *no, not, never*. Some negative words in Persian include *na ‘no/not’ and hargez ‘never’*.

– “Counter” – which involves referencing another’s viewpoint for the specific purpose of rejecting it, by means of concessives, adversatives and other resources, such as conjunctives of time, contrast and cause, as well as continuatives that adjust expectancy, such as *still, only* and *even*. Persian equivalent words would be *hanooz ‘still’, tanha/faghat ‘only’, hata/garche ‘even’*.

As for the dialogic “expand” engagement, two modes are distinguished: “entertain” and “attribute”. The “entertain” category includes those wordings by which the authorial voice presents its position as only one among a range of possible positions, hence making dialogic space for those possibilities. Resources for “entertain” dialogic alternatives include: deductive wording such as, *seems, appears, suggests, apparently*, etc. (White 2003: 281–282); polarity and epistemic modality resources, e.g., modal operators, adjuncts and related speaker remark forms on likeliness, and “expand” type of rhetorical questions (White 2003: 262). Through attribution, the authorial voice, taking advantage of direct/indirect reported speech disassociates itself from the referenced position by attributing it to an external source. Here again two categories are distinguished (Martin and White 2005: 111–113):

– “Acknowledge” – locutions which make no overt indication of the author’s alignment/nonalignment with respect to the proposition. This is the domain of reporting verbs such as *say, report, declare*, etc.). Similar verbs in Persian are *goftan/ezhar kardan ‘say/declare’, gozaresh kardan/dadan ‘report’, etc.*

– “Distance” – formulations in which there is an explicit nonalignment of the authorial voice from the “attribute” material. Such effect is most typically realized by means of the reporting verb *to claim* and certain uses of scare quotes e.g. *to warn*. *Edea kardan ‘claim’, and ekhtar dan/kardan ‘warn’ are equivalent verbs in Persian.*
Such resources of inter-subjective positioning, as White (2009) has pointed out, make the meaning-making potential to influence audience’s perspective of the press on circumstances under focus. The focus of the present study is to expose such linguistic resources. The following Figure (Figure 1) sums up Martin and White’s engagement system as the methodological basis for the current study.

Figure 1. The engagement system (Martin and White 2005: 134).

It is worth mentioning that this framework has primarily been designed on the basis of English data, therefore its universality application is yet to be tested. We do not intend to test the universality of this framework in this study, however,
we tend to investigate whether there are differences in the linguistic behaviour of the Persian writers in comparison to their Persian Non-native writers of English and the American op/eds writer counterparts with respect to the use of the resources mentioned in the framework. The following section presents the details of data, data procedure and the analysis of the data.

4. Data and data analysis procedure

The data for this study include 216 op/eds from 6 leading Iranian and American newspapers (36 op/eds each newspaper): (1) Iran and (2) Aftab-e-Yazd meaning ‘Yazd’s Sun’ (both published in Persian), (3) Tehran Times and (4) Keyhan International (both published in English by Iranian writers residing in Iran), and two American papers, (5) The New York Times and (6) The Washington Post. The New York Times and The Washington Post were selected for a number of reasons: (a) they are both considered as elite newspapers according to international polls on their websites, (b) are among the largest media outlets in the United States, and (c) ranked third and fifth in terms of circulation size, respectively (Audit Bureau of Circulation 2010). The justifications for the selection of the Iranian newspapers are twofold: (a) their ease of access and (b) their representation of the two rather opposing right and left wing parties in the country.

The time period for the selection of the data is 2005–2010. The primary motivation for the selection of this time period was, in fact, contextual. That is, given the selection of Iran’s nuclear program as the unifying theme in our data, this period was acknowledged by major journalists and politicians (Izadi and Saghaye-Biria 2007) as Iran’s challenge with the international community. In order to control the data, hence limit the number of op/eds for our investigation purpose and to observe objectivity in the data collection procedure, for each newspaper the first op/eds published in the odd months of each year was selected, owing to the fact that its subject was contextually and politically a hot and active topic during the respective time period of 2005–2010, and all the six newspapers under study had published at least one op/eds per month.

Our three sample data sets consist of 3800 engagement tokens that are written in Persian, 2858 tokens written in English by the Americans, and 3333 tokens by the Iranians. To normalize the differences in order to eliminate the effects of gross numbers, we took the op/eds as the unit of analysis. In total we chose 72 op/eds for Persian (36 for each newspaper), 72 for American English, and 72 for the English printed newspapers written by the Iranians. It should be noted that each op/eds was slightly different in size. Nonetheless, the total num-
ber of words of the sample op/eds in three sets of data were close to each other. These were 32,843 words for the 72 op/eds in Persian, 32,121 words for American English and 32,496 words for the English written by the Iranians. Percentages were also taken from each set of engagement tokens to help the normalization further (See Table 1 below). The sampled data were analyzed manually in terms of the engagement resources as outlined in Martin and White’s (2005) “Appraisal” theory. To make the analysis more reliable, the data were reanalyzed by the researchers after a three-week interval and intra-rater reliability was calculated, using Cronbach’s alpha, according to which complete conformity with the results of the first round of analysis was observed.

In the next section the results of the analysis are presented, followed by the elaboration on the deployment of engagement resources by virtue of multiple instances found in the Iranian and American newspapers under study.

5. Results

The three sets of data taken from the six newspapers were analyzed for instances of resources of inter-subjective positioning. The frequencies of the occurrence of each resource were counted, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Inter-subjective resources in Persian, Persian Non-native English and American English opinion column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Tokens (ET)</th>
<th>Persian (total: 32,843 words)</th>
<th>Persian Non-Native English (total: 32,496 words)</th>
<th>American English (total: 32,121 words)</th>
<th>Grand total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialogic “contract”</td>
<td>2306 (23.1%)</td>
<td>1794 (17.9%)</td>
<td>1037 (10.4%)</td>
<td>5137 (51.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogic “expand”</td>
<td>1494 (14.9%)</td>
<td>1539 (15.4%)</td>
<td>1821 (18.2%)</td>
<td>4854 (48.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3800 (38.0%)</td>
<td>3333 (33.3%)</td>
<td>2858 (28.6%)</td>
<td>9991 (99.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1 the following hierarchy of frequency can be drawn. The hierarchy shows the most to the least occurrences of “contract” and “expand” tokens in Persian op/eds, Non-native English op/eds written by Iranians living in Iran and English op/eds written by the op/eds writers in America.
Analyzing inter-subjective resources in editorials

Persian “contract”
American English “expand”
Non-Native English “contract”
Non-Native English “expand”
Persian “expand”
American English “contract”

The two in stark contrast are the Persian “contract” and American “contract” tokens with the former standing at the top of the hierarchy and the latter at the bottom, and the Non-Native English “contract” right in the middle of the two. On the other hand, the American English “expand” is in contrast to the Persian “expand” tokens, with the former standing at the top and the latter at the bottom, and the Non-Native English “expand” right in the middle of the two. The details of the token occurrences for each “expand” and “contract” are presented in Figure 2.

![Figure 2. “Contract” vs. “expand” token frequencies for the opinion columns of the three sets of newspapers.](Colour online.)

In general, as far as these results indicate, while the American op/eds use more “expand” resources, Iranian op/eds, both written in Persian and English, make the greatest use of the dialogically “contract” categories. However, within the “contract” categories, those written in Persian outnumber those written in English by Persian Non-native writers of English.
Within the sub-categories of “expand” resources, the preferences of use in the three groups of op/eds are “entertain” and the ‘acknowledge’ subcategories of the “attribute”. As Swain (2007) has pointed out, choices of attribution in writing tend to limit the scope of the authorial voice whereas “entertain” devices, while making room for other voices to be heard, pave the way for the authorial position to come to the foreground.

Our data reveal similar patterns for the deployment of “contract” subcategories, namely “disclaim” and “proclaim”, i.e. the American and both Iranian op/eds opted for “disclaim” expressions more than their “proclaim” counterparts although the major differences were observed in the “proclaim” subcategories between the three sets of newspapers (e.g., “pronounce”, “endorse” and “concur”). In the next section, the reasons that underlie the relations between the above major frequencies are presented.

A Chi-square test was run to find out the significances (see Figure 3 for the P-values). In total, three sets of comparisons were made: (a) between American and Persian op/eds; (b) between American op/eds and those written in English by Persian writers; and (c) between op/eds written in Persian and those written in English by Persian writers.

(a) Overall, the “contract” and “expand” resources employed in the Persian and American op/eds were statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 13.172$, df = 1, $p = .000$) and ($\chi^2 = 35.269$, df = 1, $p = .000$), respectively. The main significance in the sub-categories in this section is for the “entertain” resource ($\chi^2 = 108.767$, df = 1, $p = .000$) and “proclaim” resource ($\chi^2 = 61.303$, df = 1, $\alpha = 0.05$).

(b) The Chi-square test between the op/eds written by the Americans and those written in English by Persian writers shows significant differences in their utilization of “contract” and “expand” resources ($\chi^2 = 21.099$, df = 1, $\alpha = .000$) and ($\chi^2 = 8.638$, df = 1, $\alpha = .003$), respectively. Furthermore, with respect to the sub-categories in this section, the “entertain” as well “attribute” and “proclaim” sub-categories show significant differences ($\chi^2 = 80.295$, df = 1, $\alpha = .000$), ($\chi^2 = 59.823$, df = 1, $\alpha = .000$) and ($\chi^2 = 57.674$, df = 1, $\alpha = .000$), respectively.

(c) With regards to the op/eds written in Persian and those written in English by Persian writers, the Chi-square test has revealed a significant difference in the “expand” resources ($\chi^2 = 9.035$, df = 1, $\alpha = .003$). Further, the analysis
of the “attribute” resources revealed significance ($\chi^2 = 8.411$, df = 1, $\alpha = .004$) as well.

The significances in the three sets above have the implication that there has been a lesser chance factor involved in the resources tokens in the sets, as they have been significant at $p \leq 0.05$. The results indicate that the experimentations in the study have been properly carried out.

Figure 3. P-values calculated for the “contract” vs. “expand” token Chi-squares with a degree of freedom (df) of 1 and 14.

(Colour online.)

In sum, it seems that “entertain”, “attribute” and ‘proclaim’ are the three sub-category resources with the utmost significance, and they will be discussed in the following section.

6. Discussion

Of the two major resources of “contract” and “expand”, “entertain” and “proclaim” that show statistically significant differences require vigilat discussion. The “entertain” resource which belongs to the “expand” resource is the most
frequent in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. It is interesting to note that out of the total 9991 tokens, the “entertain” sub-category by itself has comprised nearly one third of the total. Majority of the tokens in this sub-category belong to the Americans, which are 1386 tokens. There are 878 tokens for Persian writers and 951 tokens for the Persian Non-native English writers. “Entertain” in general with 48.49% indicates that writers despite their desire to sound receptive of other value positions, they attempt to take the role of presenters of public opinion by which they try to keep a distance from the external sources (White 2006). One reason for the high frequency of the Americans’ use of “entertain” is the overwhelming use of modals and hedges, such as *seems,* *appears,* *suggests,* and *apparently,* among others. It seems that the tokens expressed in Persian rely less on these hedges, which would then allow statements to sound more certain (Shokouhi et al. 2015). Persian op/eds writers’ use of fewer modals and hedges than the Americans can be sourced to the complexity of the English modal system.

In the American op/eds, most of “entertain”, “disclaim” and “attribute” tokens with 48.49%, 24.97%, and 15.21%, respectively, have acknowledged the presence of alternative viewpoints. In fact, only a small number of the attributive resources are used as a means of dissociating the authorial voice from the stance made by an external source. This can also justify the finding that the American writers of these op/eds do not seem to often “endorse” external sources.

In fact, given van Dijk’s (1995b: 142) axiom of high persuasion “ideologies may seldom be expressed at all”. We should further add that even linguistic choices should not be judged literally to refer to particular ideological concepts. For instance, although the literal presentation of linguistic choices *if* and *probably* in examples 2 and 3 below, respectively from the American English, indicate “entertain” according to the information in Figure 1, hence casting doubt on the possible actions that the US government might take on Iran, the modal *will* in example 2 could indicate certainty. If, considering the context of its preceding *if* clause, certainty interpretation is right, then this token could be considered a “counter” token rather than an “entertain” because the *if* clause leaves no room for any option to Iran. This sentence by itself has two messages. One is that it is considered a threat by the US, and the other is that it presumes Iran’s access to nuclear arms. In other words, although contractive engagements prefer non-modalized forms, this use of *will* seems to align with “counter”, which is a contractive device. In van Dijk’s critical analysis of reproduction of racism in journalistic discourse, disclaimers (including “denies” and “counters”) contribute much to the writers’ endeavor to engage in negative other-presentation and then...
positive self-presentation (van Dijk 1992). In effect, the *if* clause in example 2 construes a consequentiality through which the non-factual statements, such as evaluations and predictions, can be justified and established (White 2006). Therefore, the negative consequence of Iran’s hypothetical action is predicted with certainty, and the writer thereby is trying to justify his action by persuading the imagined reader to consent to the justifiable act of punishment.

(2) **If** [entertain] the diplomatic initiative fails, Iran **will** [counter] have nuclear weapons or there **will** [counter] be military action to prevent it. (*The New York Times*, “No time for threats”, 30 July 2007.)

(3) [...] an American military attack is **probably** [entertain] the one thing still able to unite Iran’s restive but nationalist population behind the unpopular clerical dictatorship. (*The New York Times*, “Military rumblings on Iran”, 27 January 2005.)

A similar problem persists in Persian (see example 4 below). Taking ‘if’ on its surface would confine us to consider it as an “entertain” whereas if the whole context is taken into account, it could be a “pronounce” token, which is a “contract” construct rather than an “expand” construct. However, both Persian examples 4 and 5 also yield a further interpretation. The ‘if’ in 4, which is used in the past tense, very likely indicates that the west should not be trusted because the past experience has illuminated this lack of trust. Also, example 5 indicates that Iran has continuously been honest in their accounts about the nuclear program. In this example, the writer is trying to call for solidarity and alignment.

(4) اگر [entertain] بنای به نهادیه شدن حق ایران در غنی سازی و رسمیت یافت ان از طرف NPT غرب بود که دو سال تعلیق همه فعالیت ها و اجرای پروتکل الحاقی معاهده [counter] پایه [counter] این شرایط را فراهم می‌آورد (ایران، حق گرفتنی/ست، 2 بهمن 1385).

‘**If** [entertain] it was to institutionalize Iran’s right in uranium enrichment and its legitimization by the West, the two years of suspension of the entire activities and enactment of the NPT additional protocol **should have** paved the way.’ (*Iran*, ‘The right to be taken’, 22 January 2006.)
Another substantial difference is observed in the “proclaim” resources, as shown in the result section with a degree of significance between American writers and Persian writers on the one hand, and American writers and Persian writers of English on the other hand. Of the “proclaim” resources, “pronounce” stands at top with 973 tokens compared to 599 for the “endorse” and 753 for “concurs”. Our calculations show that of the total “proclaim” tokens, Persian has the most with 49.6% followed by Non-native writers of English with 36.4% and lastly American English with as low as 13.9%. In support of utilizing “pronounce” in op/eds, as an element of “proclaim”, Hyland (2005: 173) suggests that writers, seeking to put forth a persuasive act, do not simply produce texts that plausibly represent an external reality but also use language to offer credible representations of themselves. As the nuclear issue is a politically sensitive issue in Iran, for the national interest as well as the international bodies, Persian writers of English op/eds in this particular scenario think they must echo the voice of those writing in Persian, and this happens for two reasons. One is that they think they should be unequivocal in the international arena and tell the world that the majority of Iranians think they are entitled to a nuclear program. The other is that they do not want to experience a ban on their newspapers because the issue is extremely sensitive to political leaders of the country. The following example in Persian, followed by one example from Tehran Times, are in order. In fact Tehran Times, written in English, confirms the statement mentioned by the Persian newspaper Iran.

(5) Tehran has **not only** [entertain] taken such measures to indicate its goodwill and the transparency of its nuclear activities, **but also** has **continually** [entertain] wanted the west to realize the difference between such voluntary cooperation and responsibilities and commitments’ (*Iran*, “The rejected argument on referendum in nuclear issues”, 6 October 2009.)
‘Mr. Lula da Silva, Brazil’s President, rightly expressed his unhappiness with the decision made by the United Nation’s Security Council and regarded it as an indication of the Council’s “contradictory” behavior towards Iran.’ (Iran, “Monopolizers’ club of veto rights”, 18 August 2010.)

(7) Both Lula and Erdogan have indicated [proclaim: endorse] that they believe Iran has a right to atomic energy. (Tehran Times, “Consequences of Iran’s proposal”, 22 May 2009.)

Yet, another difference to consider is between the “endorse” sub-category of “proclaim” (see example 8). Here, while the example from The Washington Post clearly states the Western delegates’ unhappiness with the address made by Iran, example 6 above from Iran Newspaper presents a direct statement about the Iranian ally’s unhappiness of the way Iran is treated by the Western delegates, and example 7 above from Tehran Times is confirming example 6. The Washington Post editorial also clearly states that Mr. Ahmadinejad’s “anti-Semitic” address (containing “anti-Israel libels”) represents “radical Arab and Islamic opinion” and it endorses the US State Department’s qualification of Ahmadinejad’s speech as “vile and hateful”. Therefore, the WP editorial is, actually, criticizing Obama’s Administration for “vindicating Mr. Ahmadinejad’s radical agenda” because it claims that despite the US “offer of dialogue” to solve the nuclear crisis peacefully, Iran has responded by “conspicuously expanding its nuclear program, campaigning to delegitimize Israel [...]” (WP).

(8) Western delegates walked out on the address, which the State Department rightly called [proclaim: endorse] “vile and hateful”. (The Washington Post, “Invitation to appease”, 22 March 2009.)

One other area of major challenge and difference, however not as major as “proclaim” subcategory, is the “deny” in the “disclaim” category (see example 9 shown by never). There is a closeness in number of the Persian tokens of this subcategory and those of Persian Non-native English writers, but maintaining a big gap with the two American newspapers. Resonating “denies” to a similar degree by the Persian and Persian Non-native newspapers once again could suggest that national interest is of the utmost priority for both groups. The argument here should not be seen as never acting as a defensive mechanism but echoing the dialogic space that provides the ground for building up a hetero-
glossic communication at a global level where Iranian writers tend to face the west by negotiating Iran’s re-entry and reallocation on the world stage by raising their legitimate rights to a peaceful nuclear energy and express their concerns on the unfair political isolation caused by the economic sanctions.

(9) [...] Iran has never [disclaim: deny] violated the terms of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (Tehran Times, “Napoleon Kouchner”, 18 September 2007.)

Those journalists in Iran who are political activists tend to “naturalize” the ideologies of the ruling system and the government. This requires them to be explicit in defining their viewpoints and to avoid hiding them behind neutral positions (Badii 2003), hence their heavier reliance on the attributive elements of “distance” and “endorse”. The majority of the “endorse” expressions in our sample of Persian op/eds are indirect, i.e. by attaching the “attribute” material to respective, credible and high-status sources in the socio-political context of Iran. As White (2003) has pointed out, “endorse” is favored in contexts where writers wish to propose their own standpoints in an implicit manner so as to make it less open to argumentation and challenge. This is how some Iranian journalists who have hunches against the ruling system try to move around the constraints. This is indicated by the low number of “distance” and extensive use of attributive “endorse”. American writers, on the other hand, do not need to appeal to these two sub-categories because of a different system of laws operating on their press. Jahani (2000) holds the view that “indirectness” in Persian, which is a sign of inferentiality, is common in Modern Persian. Further, Windfuhr (1982), holding a similar view to Jahani (2000) with regards to Persian, as stated in Shokouhi et al. (2015: 454), concludes that the “function of indirectivity or inferentiality can allow the speaker or writer to detach himself from the direct responsibility of the truth of an act or event. They also stress that indirectness is compounded in the current context of Iran where “authorities do not want to specify the source because of the unstable political situation in the government” (Shokouhi et al. 2015: 456).

Overall, it is true that this study has its focus on specific engagement tokens specified above, and that these tokens present some kind of reality around the nuclear issue, nevertheless a better depiction can be yielded if longer context is taken into account. As the following long text demonstrates, one gets the impression that even a supposedly reformist newspaper, such as Aftab-e-Yazd, intends to condemn some the neighbouring countries, that are deemed to be Iran’s
ally, as well as the international communities as if they are Iran’s foes in nuclear issues. This is evidenced by this excerpt from example (10) below:

This is while [concur] only one day before such statements were made, home and foreign media had announced [acknowledge] the ingratitude of the Iraqi’s correspondence with the international communities concerning “the worries over Iran’s certain nuclear programs”. [...] In fact [concur], Iran’s spokesperson’s claim [pronounce] on “stopping our regional allies’ worry concerning Iran’s nuclear program” occurs at a time when just in the past three days, three important neighboring countries have attempted to show Iran’s nuclear program as a great global and regional concern.

More interestingly, the last sentence of the long paragraph below ends with a rhetorical question implying a threatening tone to the local readers that everyone should be aware that this is a national and security issue and anything this is communicated against that is considered betrayal. So, in the end we might conclude that the differences in the distribution of tokens can also be attributed to the ideology and not merely a reflection of the differences in the language systems.

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‘However [counter], it seems [entertain] that understating certain regional covetousness has now turned into ignoring such excessive desire for
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7. Conclusion

The analyses of the engagement tokens in dialogized heteroglossic resources in six American and Iranian op/eds have shown that of the general “contract” and “expand” engagement tokens, the “entertain” subcategory of the “expand” has had the highest frequency. However, another subcategory of “expand”, that is “distance”, has had the least occurrences. That said, the main finding of the study across the three sets of op/eds has, nonetheless, been in the differences of subcategories of “proclaim” category, with Persian standing at the top of the hierarchy, Persian Non-native English in the middle, and the American op/eds at the bottom.

Regardless of how delicate the applied typology is, the identification and coding of the various realizations of its categories is not always straightforward (White 2003). The problem compounds when it comes to less frequently investigated languages like Persian. The limitation of such studies is that the linguistic devices that are identified for each engagement token cannot per se identify the role they play in identifying ideological concepts, unless the whole context in which the statement occurs is taken into account, as witnessed in examples 2
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to 4 above. Therefore, relying purely on linguistic choices for the identification of ideological engagement could be incongruous. A future direction for the study would be a focus on other evaluative categories, such as attitude and graduation. The implications for this study is twofold: one is a typological understanding of how Persian writers comparatively use engagement markers in media discourse at a sensitive level of discussion, namely nuclear negotiation under political pressure and economic sanction, and the other is educational benefit from the linguistic choices in the domain of engagement tokens whereby it would help us understand how Persian writers of English political texts relatively utilize these engagement markers, and what metaphorical differences they use that are not entirely Persian nor English.

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