MEDIA COVERAGE ON DISASTERS – THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

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Abstract

This conceptual paper has two main objectives. First, to shed light on the previous studies done in the field of applied linguistics exploring the skilful use of language by media and the role it plays in societies. Second, it draws the attention on the lack of language studies on man-made disasters represented by those calamitous events other than natural disasters such as the tragedies of the 11th of September, the crash of the Malaysian Hospitality Flight (MH17) and the mysterious disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 (MH370/MAS370). This gap is represented by two observations. First, in most of the studies done, man-made disasters were approached from other perspectives than language. Most of the studies were from political, technical or administrative perspectives. Second, the few studies done from language perspective had not covered the many sides of language use in media. Thus, unlike the studies on natural disasters, there is a lack of study that used various methodologies and lack of in-depth studies addressing significant issues related to the language use in the media. This paper identifies the gap and invites researchers and scholars to bridge this gap by widening the range of research to cover other characteristics of media language like the media-audience relation, the power of language represented by influencing the perception of people, the impact of authority on media and the difference between local and international media in relation to the area of the disaster.

KEYWORDS: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, DISASTERS, MAN-MADE DISASTERS FRAMING, MEDIA COVERAGE, TRAGEDIES

Introduction

There is a considerable amount of studies done on disasters and calamitous events. Those studies were mostly case studies conducted on natural disasters and man-made disasters. It is noticeable that most of these studies were done on natural disasters like earthquakes, hurricanes, avalanches and storms. It is remarkable that those studies on natural events were profound and in depth. That can be seen and observed through the use of various ways of data sampling like interviews and surveys. Moreover, many methods of analysis and methodologies were used in a skilful way to meet the objectives and provide answers to the various research questions. Below, the researcher will shed the light of some of these studies that were done on natural disasters.

Although natural and human-induced disasters share the same main characteristic which is the loss of life and the cause of much damage, there is still a slight difference between them. According to Gunn, A. M. (2007), man-made disasters or man-induced disasters are different from the natural ones in terms of happening. Natural disasters happen for pure natural reasons but the man-induced ones are the result of human errors or malicious intentions. Gunn, A. M. (2007) states that this kind of disasters is characterized by the fact that it makes us feel that we can prevent and avoid a future reoccurrence. In
Media Coverage on Natural Disasters

The importance of studying media coverage stems from the fact that media itself became important in the modern world. In the case of natural disasters, people all over the world can be updated with the most recent events through media. They can even watch and listen to the victims of these disasters. Disasters are represented by media as calamitous events and are given a priority in the coverage due to their tragic nature. Basically, mass media works as a tool to transmit and disseminate information on disasters and this work starts sometimes before a disaster, in the cases of predictable ones, and continued to the aftermath of these events.

Moreover, the role of media mentioned above can be affected by certain factors. According to Miles, B., & Morse, S. (2007), this type of media communication can be influenced by the journalistic form or the editorial decisions. For example, there might be a mixture of cultural, economic, social and environmental issues leading to the processes of interpretation and selection.

These afore mentioned processes might drift the media communication away from being a tool meant only for information transmission and open the door for socially-constructed sub-narratives.

To serve the main idea of this paper and to help readers have a closer look at the issue raised, the researcher classifies the previous studies of this section into sub-sections according to their aims and objectives. This classification shows that media coverage on natural disasters was approached from different angles to meet various objectives using various methodologies.

Media-Audience Relationship at the Impact Time

Media-Audience Relationship describes the relation based on trust between media and the audience who keep watching, listening and reading to keep themselves updated with the different kinds of news: political, social, environmental, economic …etc. One of the previous studies in this field was done by Perez-Lugo, M. (2004) entitled "Media uses in disaster situations: A new focus on the impact phase". In this study, not like many other studies that focused on the language after or before disasters, the researcher paid attention to the language used during the disaster. The researcher believed that the role of media communication in such situations is of three phases: before the disaster which prepare people for the possible upcoming disasters; after the disaster which provides people information on the community’s recovery; and during the disaster, that is “the impact phase” which provides people with things more important and valuable than the other two phases.

From the researcher’s perspective, media communication during disaster times may provide people with vital information emotional support, community sense and companionship. Moreover, through media, people get the feeling that they are not isolated and connected with others and the outside world.

Talking on media communication, the research on this area points out that media communication is seen as management tools and the relation between media and audiences is highly motivated by the content of that communication and media transmission. This is due to the audience who, keep watching, reading and listening to the news and reports by media through the three phases mentioned earlier. Perez-Lugo, M. (2004) mentions that mainly according to this reason, much of the research on this field is done on two phases namely: before and after disasters and thus, ignoring the impact phase.
Therefore, the objective of this research is to pay much attention to the ignored ‘impact phase’ as a relevant as well as an important phase of media communication during disasters. The researcher argues that this can be done by shifting the concentration from manager’s perspective to victims’ perspectives or experiences. This kind of shifting demands a practical intervention and a direct contact with people who suffered and closely witnessed such disasters.

The objective of this research is to demonstrate three main points. First, it tends to demonstrate the relationship between audience and media which has been ignored by the traditional approach. Second, the study strongly emphasized that the audience-media relationship remains available and solid through the different phases of a disaster. Third, the researchers also argue that, in the times of disasters, audiences always look for emotional support by the media than merely information and data.

As a practical move to fulfil the objectives of the research, 37 in-depth interviews were conducted with the residents of eight different communities in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. Mayagüez, the island’s third most important city, was one of the cities most affected by the impact of Hurricane Georges in November of 1998. He followed a convenience sampling and the people who were interviewed were carefully selected according to 2 criteria: they should be residents of the same place of the disaster and should have been somewhere in that place during the disaster.

The finding of the research shows that there was a strong relation between media and audiences and that relationship remained significantly important through the different phases on the disaster. That relation, as mentioned above, was a powerful people’s coping strategy. However, the reasons were different at each level: before, during and after the disaster. Another fact emphasizing the above findings was that, during the disaster, the value of the media contact was not only the transmission and pouring information but it was also the relation itself. In other words, media played the role of connecting people and providing them with emotional support and the sense of community. As a result, the study urges us to reconsider the role of media and to look from the victim’s’ perspective of the disaster and not from the managers point of view. Thus, it can be said that the media-audience relationship appears to be an important characteristic of media communication and should not be neglected.

*Media Characterization of the Legitimate Authority*

This characteristic of characterizing the legitimate authority is an indicator of the power that is processed by media to shape the understanding of its audience. It can be said that this power is originated from the special relation between media and audience. This relation allows and opens the door wide for the media to shape people’s understanding of the officials and those in power especially at the time of natural disasters.

A remarkable study that can be listed under this category is the one by Littlefield, R. S., & Quenette, A. M. (2007) entitled ‘Crisis Leadership and Hurricane Katrina: The Portrayal of Authority by the Media in Natural Disaster’. In their study, the authors, similar to the previously mentioned study, focused on the role played by mass media in the time of disasters and natural crisis. In addition to that, it pays a special attention on how media characterizes the officials in authority. Like the study by Perez-Lugo, M. (2004), this study concentrates on one natural disaster namely Hurricane Katrina that took place in New Orleans, United Stated of America.

As for the conceptual frame work, the study sheds light on a number of things related to the analysis of mass media. Several things were carefully studied like how media shapes the perception of reality, what role is played by media in the society and how legitimate authority is characterized.

Like other previous studies, Littlefield, R. S. et al (2007) agrees that media plays the role of transmitting information to the people who keep watching, reading and listening to it. In addition to that and due to
the nature of this study that explores the legitimate authority, Littlefield, R. S. et al (2007) suggest that the role of media goes further than that to be a voice to blame those in the authority.

The study adopts the ideas as well as the discussion of Kenneth Burke’s on the symbolic nature of language. The study makes use of these thoughts to explain how the natural disaster at issue is understood, perceived, and characterized by the media. In other words, Littlefield, R. S. et al (2007) adopt Kenneth Burke’s thought of how language shapes the audience perception of reality and that media is suggested to be the main player in this symbolic field of language. Media makes such thing possible by the careful choice of words to define situations and create orientations or attitudes.

As this study goes further, it talks about the role of media which has been discussed in previous studies. Beside the role of media in reporting and monitoring new information, it has other functions like uncovering the truth and ‘justice’, and telling stories that interest the audience. These things give the media a considerable power in the society and a trust-relation is found between media and the audience forming the society. Thus, through this power and trust that is given to the media, it can constitute and shape the perception of audience and communities. This is somehow related to what was mentioned in the introduction and suggested by Miles, B., & Morse, S. (2007) that media is influenced by several factors that can create sub-narratives and thus direct the understandings and perceptions of audience into a certain direction.

In order to achieve the main objective of this study revolving around the representation and the characterization by the mass media of the responses of legitimate authority, a close reading and a cluster criticism were conducted on 52 articles published during the week of August 29 through September 3, 2005, in the New York Times and the Times-Picayune of New Orleans. All of the articles chosen were directly related to that natural disaster ‘Hurricane Katrina’. Furthermore, the chosen articles were selected during the period mentioned above because that marks the first week of the crisis to catch the initial reactions of the media.

After data collecting, comes the data analysis which falls into two main steps namely the identification of the authority figures including state and federal officials, and the identification of clusters. The first step of identification involves reviewing the articles that are relevant or talk about the authority figures and their reactions as well as their responses on the natural disaster. The second step of the identification mentioned earlier involves locating and bringing up the clustered terms used by those officials as a response on that hurricane. Those terms were classified into positive as well as negative and were put into one table each. Then comes the discussion part in which those terms were discussed in details.

The findings of the study suggested that mass media in the times of crisis and natural disasters plays a multiple role. First, it is considered the source of information as it transmits real facts and reports the real truth on the ground. That establishes a ground of trust between it and the people who keep listening, watching and reading media. Second, media goes further and plays the role of reporting the effectiveness of the authorities and the officials. Thus, it can be said that media, through its relation with audience, is able to affect and influence their way of perception especially that of how they might look at the legitimate authority.

Media Discursive Construction of the Recovery Period

As mentioned above, the role of media coverage especially at the times of disasters is continuous from the time a disaster starts or even predicted. This role does not stop as the disaster finishes but it lasts even weeks, months or even years after this stage. This stage is called the recovery stage. A remarkable study was done by Cox, R. S., Long, B. C., Jones, M. I., &Handler, R. J. (2008) entitled ‘Sequestering of suffering: critical discourse analysis of natural disaster media coverage’. Not like other previous studies that focused on the time during the disaster, this study focuses on the aftermath of a disaster.
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Mass media at the time of disasters work on three phases namely; before the disaster that is characterized by the directions and preparing the people, during the disaster known as the impact time and after the disaster known as the time for recovery. Like other previous studies, it concentrated on one disaster and this time it is a forest fire that cause much damage and suffering.

According to Cox, R. S. et al, (2008) the phase aftermath a natural disaster known as ‘recovery’ includes several social, political, economic, and psychological stressors. The authors argue that this phase is much more important than the one known as the ‘impact phase’ during the disaster. Moreover, this phase got a little attention compared to the other two phases of a disaster. This study aims at examining and investigating the dominant discursive construction by the local media coverage of the phase of recovery following the natural disaster at issue - a Canadian natural disaster, the McLure Fire in British Columbia (BC), Canada, in 2003.

To achieve the aims of this study and as to get the data, the media coverage of the North Thompson Star Journal’s (NTSJ) on the disaster recovery process in two rural communities affected by a wildfire—Barriere and Louis Creek, BC, Canada was thoroughly examined. The data was a number of articles that were chosen within the period of three months after the McLure Fire from 1 August to 31 October 2003. The chosen articles were related directly to the natural disaster at issue. The exact number of the chosen articles was 250 mostly from the September issues. Those were not just news reports. They were letters to the editors, feature stories, editorials, advertisements and captioned pictures.

After data collection, the researchers tended to review the selected articles carefully to investigate the extent the NTSJ constructed the recovery discourse and the extent of how groups and individuals were subjectively positioned as a result of this construction. To achieve this study’s aims, two main methods were used; content analysis and critical discourse analysis. First, Content analysis consisting of an adapted version of Huckin’s (2002) four-step analysis of newsprint media was initially used. The purpose of using this kind of analysis was to identify thematic patterns in the media discourse of disaster recovery. Second, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used to investigate the media language used in the 250 NTSJ selected articles. CDA was basically used to uncover the system of meaning of the recovery discourse built in the media texts.

The findings were mainly classified into two groups; the findings of content analysis and those of the critical discourse analysis. The finding of the first kind of analysis i.e. ‘content analysis’ were classified into four main categories namely: effects of the fire, response to the effects, identified needs, and identified issues each with 18 to 25 topics. It was observed that there was a minimal account of emotional or psychological effects with just 11% of the whole coverage comparing to economic and material accounts that were 56% of the coverage and only on the first month aftermath the disaster. Public responses were framed also as heavily loaded with economic and material terms. Also, the theme environmental concerns with (10%) outweighed the themes of information-knowledge (4%) and spiritual-contemplative concerns (< 1%). Another finding was that the reactions of community members dominated the texts (60%), however, those hardest hit by the fire, residents of Louis Creek, were heard relatively infrequently (8%).

Concerning the finding of CDA, the study looks at the discursive strategies used by the media to frame the recovery aftermath the natural disaster. Also, the researchers look at the subject positioning made available in this construction. Sequestering of the suffering was considered the discursive strategy in this study. This term was used to refer to the recovery of the people who suffered greatly and the return to the normal functionality: economic and emotional. This term also constructs the return and the re-establishing of the routine as well as the normal life. It involves three sub-strategies; multiple eclipsing of emotion, return to normalcy, and erasure of Louis Creek. The first sub-strategy known as ‘Multiple eclipsing of emotion’ involves emotions like grief, sadness, anger, despair) that were minimized and often rendered invisible in the texts. The second sub-strategy known as Return to normalcy apparently
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refers to the return to the normal economic activities and repairing and fixing what has been destroyed. The third sub-strategy used is known as Erasure of Louis Creek which refers to the move used by the media coverage following the McLure Fire, namely the relative absence of Louis Creek in the text. Regarding the subject positioning made available in the media construction, it was found that the dominant one was constructing the survivor as inadequately equipped to take action without outside support and guidance. Therefore, media plays a significant role in the times of disasters especially in the recovery period that immediately follows disasters as discussed above.

The Difference in Media Reporting

This sub-section demonstrates and conveys the idea of the possibility that media reporting of the same disaster or event can be different. When talking about the difference in media reporting, an interesting study by Cowan, J., McClure, J., & Wilson, M. (2002) entitled ‘What A Difference A Year Makes: How Immediate And Anniversary Media Reports Influence Judgments About Earthquakes’ would be a good reference. What is interesting in this study is that it contains two studies at the same time. Having in their minds that media communication and coverage might affect the people and their judgments, the researchers try to see and bring up the difference on how the people judgments vary depending on the timing of media coverage of two natural disasters. Both studies examine how the media coverage affects people’s judgments differently in two cases: immediately after the disaster and one year after the same two disasters.

The aim of the first study, entitled ‘Descriptive analysis of newspaper reports on earthquakes’, was to investigate media coverage that covered two major earthquakes: immediately after the earthquakes and a year following the earthquake. The second study entitled ‘Judgments about earthquakes’, aims at examining the influence of this media coverage on the judgments of the people. To achieve the aims of the two studies, each study used a different sampling approach as well as different method of analysis.

For the first study, a descriptive analysis was conducted on 27 newspaper reports on the 1994 Los Angeles (n=12) and 1995 Kobe (n=15) earthquakes. The first study was conducted on the reports published on the first two days or one year after these natural disasters in one of the two major Wellington newspapers: The Dominion and The Evening Post. Every single one of these reports was carefully examined in terms of their positions in these newspapers, their content and the way they were reported. The main finding after the full analysis revealed that there is a difference between reporting immediately and one year after the disasters. The reports published immediately after the disasters were mainly about damage and the power of these earthquakes, while the reports published one year after the disaster were characterized by a description of damage and lessons taken.

As for the second study and to achieve the main goal of it, the reports were re-examined for their impact of the judgments on the two earthquakes. The researchers concentrated on two passages: one passage represented and contains the features of the reports published immediately after the disasters and the other passage contains the feature of the year-later reporting found on the first study. For the study to achieve its aims, 180 participants participated in this study. They were all students from areas around Victoria University of Wellington who joined the study voluntarily. There was also a control group from the same population of 20 students.

As the study time has come and the students were gathered, a two-section questionnaire was distributed to the participants. There were 7 versions of the questionnaire classified according to the content and the type of information included and extra one for the control group which makes a number of 8 different versions. Every article represented a specific type of information namely earthquake agency, general damage and specific damage which makes 3 questionnaire versions. These information types exist in each of the two disasters which mean increasing the number of these questionnaire versions to 6. For the other disaster called ‘Kobe’, there was an extra condition known as ‘lessons’ which raised
the number of questionnaire versions into 7. With the questionnaire version for the control group, the number reaches 8 different versions of the questionnaire.

For each questionnaire version, the first section included an article about a specific information type mentioned above that made up of the news reports. For the control group, there was a sentence instead of the article asking the students to think about a major earthquake in or near a city that has occurred in the last 5 years. The second section included a number of questions about the earthquake like general preventability questions and building codes questions. For the control group, the second section was different. For example, the phrase ‘the buildings mentioned in the article’ was replaced by the phrase ‘the buildings most affected in the earthquake’.

The main result of the two studies proves that there is a difference between immediate reporting and the late reporting of the disasters in issue. In the immediate reporting, participants attributed the damage to earthquake magnitude more than building design while in the case of late reporting, they attributed the damage more to the building design. This finding approves the hypothesis of the researchers. Moreover, it can be translated into the belief that that people can be influenced to attribute the damage to controllable causes. As a result, it can be said that the difference of media coverage can influence people and affect their way of judgments and the study mentioned above is strong evidence on this influential relationship.

Media Coverage on Man-Made Disasters

This section includes other studies done on man-made disasters. Moreover, this section introduces that gap of this study related to the research in the area of man-made disasters. In an attempt to clarify this gap, this section is further classified into two sections: Studies on man-made disasters from other perspectives than Language use and lack of in-depth studies on Malaysian airline tragedies. Each sub-section is carefully explained showing one half of the gap this paper want to draw attention to.

Studies on Man-Made Disasters from Other Perspectives than Language Use

This sub-section introduced the first half of the gap this paper wants to shed light on. The claim that most of the studies done on man-induced disasters were approaching the problem from different perspectives other than language is based on the review of literature as shown below. In order to have a look at those studies and support this claim, the studies below are classified according to their perspectives of how they approach the topic of man-made disasters.

Malaysian Government and the Two Malaysian Airways Tragedies

This section involved a study done on man-made disasters with the crises-management approach. The study is the one by Bakar, J. A., Hamzah, M. S. G., & Mastura, M. (2014) entitled ‘Crisis Management-Malaysian Aviation Tragedies’. Although media is mentioned in the study, the main aim of the study was not to analyse and look at the media coverage. Instead, media was used as a tool or a service used by the government dealing with the disaster. The main aim of the study was to investigate and shed light of the services as well as the treatments used by the Malaysian government to handle these disastrous tragedies.

The study used a conceptual framework to summarize and better clarify the aims and the organization of the study. That framework comprises of four main categories: Input, Treatments and Services, Outcomes and the impact. Media coverage was included on the first part of this framework known as the input side by side with society, aid and infrastructure. The second phase known as treatments and services was about the services provided by the government through the input mentioned above like
Insurance, Family Members, Malaysian Citizens, Local Media Agencies, International Media Agencies, Local Agencies and International Agencies.

The study concluded that the government used various ways to deal with the crises: MH370 and MH17. Measures have been taken to assist the airlines and the company has been nationalized. The immediate actions taken by the Malaysian government shows and proves its capabilities in managing crisis.

Journalists’ Attitudes at the Time of Disasters

This is another study looking at the disaster of the 11th of September but from another perspective which is the journalist’s attitude. It is related to reporting but not to the area of analysing the use of language. The study was done by Reynolds, A., & Barnett, B. (2003) entitled ‘This just in… How national TV news handled the breaking “live” coverage of September 11’. This study was conducted on the calamitous events of the 11th of September that caused much damage and a great suffering. Although, this study used media coverage as the tool to extract information but the main goal was not analysing the language of media in depth and to bring out the features of that skilful use of language.

The study looked at the media coverage in order to meet the main objective of the study that revolves around the attitude adopted by journalists at the time of the tragedy. The study tried to examine and investigate the role played by reporters in producing breaking news. The idea was to see and explore the extent to which the change in traditional reporting routines affected the type of information produced by the media. That main objective was apparent through the six research questions of the study investigating the role of journalists out of the normal coverage, the personal references used by journalists, the rumours or the unconfirmed information disseminated from anonymous sources and the impact of the media organization on the reports of journals.

In order to achieve the main objective mentioned above, the writers adopted the model of Shoemaker, P., & Reese, S. D. (2011) four levels of analysing media content. Those four levels are used by Reynolds, A., & Barnett, B. (2003) to analyse the media coverage to explore the role of journalists at the extra-media level, the organizational level, the routines level, and the individual level. This approach is mainly because it best suits the objective of exploring the difference in function between breaking news and the traditional news coverage focusing on routine and ideologies.

The writers introduced these four levels, adopting the idea of Shoemaker, P., & Reese, S. D. (2011) that the level of ideology is the level that sums all the other because it includes the assumptions of power in society. The routine refers to the impact of journalism on the journalists work while the individual level reflect how the content of the journalist’s work is affected and influenced by his attitudes, training and background.

The result was classified into five sections—one section for each research question. The results came in the form of percentages. For example and as for the first question asking about the attitude of journalists while reporting off the traditional way, it was found that they spend 81% of their time following the traditional reporting, 9% performing as eyewitnesses, 4% performing as experts and 6% appearing as social commentators. Concerning the second question related to the personal referenced by journalists, the study resulted in the findings that 33% of the journalists used personal references during their speaking turns. For those who acted as eyewitnesses, 62% of them used their personal references while just 32% of those followed the traditional journalism used as their personal references. The highest occurrence of the use of personal references was by the journalists who acted as experts.

The study succeeded in achieving the major aim and answering the six research questions. It concludes that there is a remarkable difference in the attitudes and the reporting of journalists in the case of breaking news broadcasting. They disseminate information as experts and social commentators. They reported unconfirmed information from anonymous sources considered as rumours. When
broadcasting breaking news during the disastrous calamity of the 11th of September, journalists used to frequently include their personal references. Thus, this means that the breaking news coverage created a different atmosphere and journalists found themselves unconsciously following a way other than the objective traditional coverage of normal situations in covering the news. The main reason for that is the nature of breaking news. Reynolds, A., & Barnett, B. (2003) claim that breaking news reporting is produced without having enough time for checking the violations of journalistic consigns that might arise. It is the opposite of what happen when reporting news stories in the traditional way in which they get revised and improved. As a result, it can be said that the role of traditional journalism in the case of breaking news broadcasting is limited.

**Lack of In-Depth Studies on Malaysian Airline Tragedies**

This sub-section sheds light on the other half of the gap stating that the few studies done exploring the media coverage on man-made disasters were not profound and in-depth enough comparing to the studies done on natural disasters. In other words, those few studies do not cover a wide range of issues related to the language used in the media. Below, the researcher provides some of these studies reporting on man-made disaster.

**A Comparison between Local and International Media**

One of these studies was done by Khanina, V., & David, L. G. entitled ‘A Comparative Study of the Online News Coverage Of the 2014 Malaysian Hospitality Flight 17 By Thestar. Com. My and Rt. Com’. This study was conducted on two online news websites namely: Malaysian-based online news source, theStar.com.my and Russian-based online source, civic rt.com. Choosing two news websites: one Malaysian and one Russian, the writers wanted to establish a kind of comparison between the two websites in terms of the news coverage of the tragic event of the Malaysian hospitality flight 17 called MH17. For a fruitful comparison, the news websites were chosen to be from different cultures and geographical areas. One was Malaysian to represent local and the other was Russian to represent western media based in another country other than Malaysia. That coverage is planned to be in terms of the average number of press release and the impact of how these two media agencies portrayed the calamitous event.

To achieve the aims of the study and to answer the research questions, the study uses theoretical testing for identifying and measuring news frames of online news coverage. The researcher decided on adopting comparative analysis to make a kind of comparison between the two local and international online websites. This methodology is used to meet the aims of the paper and to answer the four research questions on the number of the news reports released and produced by The Star and by the Russian online news website. Moreover, comparative analysis is used to compare and find the difference on the media coverage between the two news websites. In addition, this careful analysis of the news reports was conducted to find out the role of the two different media websites in escalating or resolving the conflict.

The study found that the local Malaysian online news website has produced more number of reports that the Russian online news website. On the other hand, the Malaysian local media agency produced less photo material than the other website. Looking at the number of video materials, the Malaysian local news website produced more than the other i.e. the rt.com which is a Russian media agency. This was one side of the difference between the two online news websites in terms of their coverage of the calamitous tragedy.

Moreover, the difference is also found in the peak days of the news coverage of the two news websites. The difference in the peak days is related to the days of producing press releases and publishing photos as well as videos. The first span was from the period from 18/07/14 to 31/07/14 and the other was in the period from 01/08/14 to 22/08/14.
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The study also found that there is a difference between the news coverage on the same crisis by the two news websites. Also, they tested the Facebook shares by its users for both news websites and found out that the Russian news website has more shares than the Malaysian one. The researchers also looked at Twitter and it was the same case as of the Facebook shares. Thus, the researchers justified that this is the case because the Russian website has more important information to share than the Malaysian website.

Through the review of literature, not like the studies on natural disasters, most of the studies done on man-made disasters were addressing these crises from other angles and perspective than the language used in media coverage.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the issue of media coverage at the time of disasters. It draws the attention to the media coverage on two main kinds of disasters: natural and man-induced disasters. It tries to explore and review the different studies and investigations done on the field of media reporting on these two kinds. Since these two kinds of disasters share many things especially the fact that they cause the loss of lives and properties, media is supposed to be following the same techniques and adopting similar approaches in the coverage and the reporting of these calamitous events.

The current paper highlights a gap found in terms of media coverage on man-induced disasters. It is observed that, in the case of natural disasters, media coverage was very rich and approached these disasters from different perspectives related to the language use and the art of media communication. The research done on media coverage of natural disasters explores many significant areas like the media-audience relationship, the power of media in influencing the perceptions as well as the understandings of people, the discursive construction by media of the recovery and impact periods. In contrast, the studies on media coverage of man-induced disasters is seen as insufficient and week. Compared to the studies on natural disaster, those on man-made disaster seem as shallow and not in-depth studies. Research on man-made disasters is seen either approaching these events from other perspective than the language use or talking about the use of language but in an insufficient way.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Since conceptual paper is trying to shed light and draw the attention of a serious gap, it has many recommendations for scholars, researchers and linguists. The aim of these recommendations is to increase the quality as well as the quantity of research in order to bridging the gap addressed in the study. In the case of this study, the gap is represented by the fact that there is a lack of research in the field of exploring the use of media language in media coverage of disasters and man-made disasters in particular. These recommendations can be summarized as follows:

Looking at the media coverage of both natural and man-made disasters, it could be seen clearly that the area of exploring the use of language in the media coverage of man-made disasters is not given much attention. This claim is based on two observations. First, most of the research done on man-induced disasters was approaching these events from other perspectives than the language use. Second, even the studies that approached these cases from a linguistic point of view by investigating the language use were few and not in-depth ones. Thus, it is recommended that researchers pay much attention to this side and conduct more in-depth studies exploring the power use of language.

Many language characteristics need to be discovered while talking about man-made disasters such as the media-audience relationship, the power of media in shaping the understandings of people, the media...
construction of the different phases of the disasters, media characterization of the legitimate authority and many other language characteristics of media communication.

The study of these language characteristics requires researchers and writers to use a variety of methodologies like content analysis or critical discourse analysis. The use of these methodologies makes it possible for researchers to explore the different sides and characteristics of language use in the media context. Moreover, to have in-depth data and sufficient to get a clear picture of the issue, a mix research tools are recommended to be used such as surveys and interviews.

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