

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CYBERSECURITY NEWS IN TURKISH MEDIA

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Abstract

During the past twenty years, a new concept of security called “cybersecurity” has come to the fore. Despite having no totally agreed-upon definition, cyber-security refers to a different understanding of security. In other words, military measures are not the main instruments to provide that kind of security. In a similar vein, as a result of globalization and the developments in information technologies, cybersecurity has become more critical for both governments and international organizations. Not only in Turkey, but in many other countries, the more digitalized the world has become, the more popular and debated cybersecurity-related issues have become in media discourse. On the other hand, it is known that, recently critical discourse analysis has been a quite useful analytical tool for researchers to analyze news discourse. Discourse historical approach is a methodological tool in critical discourse studies which stresses the significance of historical context within which the discourse is embedded and the power relations can be analyzed. This article serves two purposes: First is to shed light on the concept of cybersecurity in general and the second is to analyze the state of cybersecurity in media of Turkey in particular. In this sense, cybersecurity-related news in Turkish print and online media play a key role in monitoring cybersecurity in Turkey. The news will be analyzed through applying Critical Discourse Analysis (Discourse Historical Approach in this study). The main conclusion of the study is that cybersecurity-related news cannot have a self-isolated nature like national security news and cyber threats are similar although the countries differ.

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Keywords: Cybersecurity, cyberbullying, cybersecurity in Turkey, critical discourse analysis, discourse historical approach, news discourse.

Introduction

The internet which has been started as a government project of USA takes up an important space in almost every single human-being in contemporary world. Since the late 1970s, globalization has been a critical phenomenon in world politics and people's everyday lives. Globalization can be defined as a process through which decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have a significant consequence for individuals and communities in other parts of the world (McGrew, 1990). As one of the important consequences of globalization, the rise of internet technologies paved the way for new type of activities in trade, education or state security management. The digitalization of trade relations and the rise of e-learning practices have gained importance today. These developments have paved the way for the strengthening of the importance attached to cybersecurity.

Internet plays a key role in making everyday lives, national economies and governments more interconnected and interdependent. As a result of the rising importance of internet technology it has become clear that internet was indeed unique in the sense that it posits both advantages and challenges for security in the level of individuals, national units and international units like international organizations.

In today's world, real space is challenged by cyberspace while cybercrimes and cybersecurity issues gain significance. The term "cyberspace" does not have a general definition but it is critical to define it while discussing cybersecurity.

The article mainly aims to analyze cybersecurity issues in the context of Turkey through the lenses of news discourse with a special emphasis on the concept of "cyberbullying". Following this, another aim of the article is to shed light on the rhetorical motivations and traits seen in newspaper columns dealing with cybersecurity and cyberbullying using Critical Discourse Analysis. The article aims to contribute to the literature of critical discourse analysis studies particularly dealing with media discourse about cyber security issues.

The methodology of the study is Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) which is a variant of critical discourse analysis methods. DHA was first developed in order to study an anti-Semitic



stereotyped image, Feindbild in the 1986 Austrian presidential campaign of Kurt Waldheim. In the study of the 1986 Waldheim Affair, Wodak (1990) claimed that the context of the discourse has a major impact on the content of prejudice stories.

In the article, firstly, basic definitions under scrutiny will be provided. Then a brief summary about the literature on cybersecurity and cyberspace belonging by researchers in Turkey will be addressed. Then, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse Historical Approach will be covered as the methodological tool of the study. After that, the selections of the news will be described and the news analysis will follow.

Conceptual Considerations

Concepts have a major role in giving clues about the historical context in which they emerge. Defining concepts are also important for making researches in a more analytical and precise way. In this sense, producing a conceptual framework is significant before analyzing cybersecurity news from a Discourse Historical Approach.

Cyberspace: Gibson (1984) introduced the term cyberspace in his science fiction novel to represent a virtual environment. The concept of “cyberspace” does not have fixed and clear definition. In a similar vein provided above defined by US Department of Defence, cyberspace can be defined as the following: “a global domain within the information environment consisting of the interdependent network of information technology infrastructures, including the Internet, telecommunications networks, computer systems, and embedded processors and controllers” (Mbanaso and Dandaura, 2015: 18).

Cybersecurity: In simple terms, “cybersecurity” refers to the practice of ensuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information in digital sphere. Cybersecurity is known to be interrelated to information security (Azmi and Kautsarina, 2019: 23).

Cybercrime: Cybercrime can be defined as a crime committed via Internet and in cyberspace. It includes crimes like online frauds, crimes that have evolved due to technology (Kurbalija, 2016: 82).

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying can be defined as an activity sending a message that spreads through digital platforms to embarrass or distress someone.



Globalization: “Globalization” is currently a popular and controversial term. It both refers to interaction among countries but also every country does not experience that process in the same degree or level. Globalization can be defined as the ongoing process of greater interdependence among countries and their citizens (Fischer, 2003). There is a direct link between globalization trend and the emergence of cybersecurity discussions in academic and political discourse.

News Discourse: The news discourse does not reflect merely reality, hence, it should be noted that the news discourse is not a means to an end, i.e. delivering information. News reporting is socially created; therefore the events that are reported are not a reflection of their importance but reveal the operation of an artificial set of criteria for selection depending on the ideology of the news reporter (Burak, 2015: 73). Discourse-related practices can perform important ideological effects, that they can produce and/or reproduce unequal power relations between for example women and men (Burak, 2018: 54).

Critical Discourse Analysis: Under the influence of critical theory associated with the Frankfurt School, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) “sought to combine linguistic and socially grounded approaches to the analysis of discourse” (Crawshaw and Tusting, 2000: 27). CDA is concerned with making connections between socio-cultural processes on the one hand, and properties of texts on the other (Wodak, 2001).

An Overview of the Literature on Cyber issues in Turkey

The term cyber is commonly used as a jargon to describe computer, network, and related things to broadly describe as internet and its virtual environment. The works about the term cyber in social sciences and politics are not vast both in domestic and foreign academia. As not a surprise, the literature related to this term on the issues like cybersecurity and cyberspace published by scholars in Turkey is quite limited. Here are some of the studies that are worth of consideration.

Nezir Akyeşilmen’s book entitled “Cyberpolitics and cybersecurity with an interdisciplinary approach” (2018) is an insightful study covering cybersecurity within an interdisciplinary understanding. Moreover, Akyeşilmen’s studies (2016; 2019) and Sambur’s article “A liberal



framework for security and cyberspace” (2019) are other insightful studies regarding that issue.

On the other hand, the book *Cybersecurity and Defence: Awareness and Deterrence* edited by Sađırođlu and Alkan (2018) is one of the important works in the field. The article “Cybersecurity in Turkey” covering cybersecurity dynamics in Turkish context written by Bıçakçı, Ergun and Çelikpala (2015) is also significant as it analyses the issues from within. The article entitled “Transformation of Cyber Security into an Effect Tool in International Politics and International Actors” (Güntay, 2018) discusses the role of cyber attacks and data security about cyber intelligence in international policy formulation. Fulya Aslay’s article “Cyber Attack Methods and Current Situation Analysis of Turkey's Cyber Safety” (Aslay, 2017) is another work covering Turkey in terms of cybersecurity.

Another work dealing with the issue of cybersecurity is Keleştemur’s book “Cyber Intelligence” published in 2015. The article entitled “Understanding cybersecurity on axis of the cyber events” (Sertçelik, 2015) deals with specific cases. In addition, the work of Gürkaynak and İren entitled “Cyber Deadlock in Real World: International Relations in Cyberspace” (2011), the work of Kara (2013) and Uçar’s work “Cyber Threats and Methods of Defence” (2011) along with Bıçakçı’s article entitled “The Rebirth of NATO Between New War and Cybersecurity” (2012) are worthy of consideration. Moreover, the articles of Özçoban (2014), Sađırođlu (2011), and Daban (2016) are important in terms of dealing with cybersecurity both in theoretical perspectives and case study perspectives.

It can be concluded that, with the spread of cyber security studies and activities, the literature will be enriched. Also, the existence of the environment in which states are unprepared for cyber attacks paves the way for more need of such works and researches.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse Historical Approach as a Method and Theory

CDA has its origins in textual and linguistic analysis. It can be basically defined as an analytical research methodology that proposes a study of the relations between social inequality, discourse, power and dominance (Van Dijk, 1993). CDA’s employment of the term ‘critical’, makes reference to Frankfurt School stating that research should produce knowledge that will help in the emancipation of people from various modes of domination (Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 7).



CDA adopts an interdisciplinary approach, as CDA is problem-oriented and problems in society are too complex to be studied from one perspective (Wodak, 2000).

Over the last two decades, CDA has emerged as an established academic tradition in discourse analysis. CDA brings social theories together with linguistic theories. As a school or paradigm it is not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se but in studying social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a multi-methodological approach. CDA is concerned with making connections between socio-cultural processes on the one hand, and properties of texts on the other (Wodak, 2001).

On the other hand, consonant with CDA, Ruth Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) defines discourse as a context-dependent linguistic practice. The salient distinguishing characteristic of DHA is its endeavor to transcend the purely linguistic dimension and to include the historical, political, and psychological dimensions in the analysis and interpretation of a specific discursive event (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 35).

DHA incorporates the central concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in the analysis. 'Intertextuality' is used to refer to the ways in which a text draws explicitly or implicitly from other texts in the past or present while 'interdiscursivity' accounts for the ways in which discourses are connected to one another (Wodak 2007: 206).

The analysis in DHA is three-dimensional: Contents or topics, discursive strategies and linguistic means (Wodak, 2001:73). After having established the specific contents or topics of a specific discourse, the discursive strategies including argumentation strategies are investigated. Then the linguistic means are examined. In DHA, there are five discursive strategies to find the answers to the following set of questions:

1. *How are the persons, objects, actions, processes and phenomena referred to linguistically (Referential/Nomination) ?*
2. *What are the traits, characteristics, qualities and features that are attributed to the persons, objects, actions, processes and phenomena/events (Predication)?*
3. *By means of which arguments do writers try to legitimize and justify their decision (Argumentation)?*



4. From what perspective or point of view are these referential/nomination strategies, positive or negative predications and arguments expressed (Perspectivation)?

5. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly; are they intensified or mitigated? (Mitigation/Intensification)?

This study takes into consideration the discursive strategies (except argumentation strategies) and the linguistic means applied in the selected columns.

News under Scrutiny

The data that are subject to analysis are the newspaper articles published between 2016 and 2020. For every year two articles were selected. The articles were chosen randomly after a Google search that was made with the keywords “cybersecurity”, “cyberbullying” and “columns”. The main criterion is the content of the column. Each article uses at least one of the keywords of “cybersecurity” and “cyberbullying”. Also, the columns which were at the top of the Google search were selected. The timing of the analysis, which covers the period between 2016 and 2020 is particularly chosen because in April 2016, The Law No 6698 on the Protection of Personal Data entered into force.

The first selected article was written by Hüseyin Serdar and published in Hurriyet on February 14, 2020. This article was about a personal experience of the author. In his article entitled “Credit cards, the parrot and cyber crimes” Serdar told about a credit card fraud which has been investigating by the police for a long time. The second article of 2020 was written by Mahmut Tezcan for Duvar Daily. The article entitled “Cyber bullying and ‘sense-tightening’” was published on April 9, 2020. The time context of the article coincided with Coronavirus lockdown days and the author mainly dealt with the rise of cyberbullying attacks on social media.

The third article under scrutiny was written by Ertugrul Ozkok and published in Hurriyet newspaper on August 29, 2019. During these days, Humanitarian Development Foundation released their report on “Cyberbullying in Turkey”. In that report, it was stated that 28 % of the people were subjected to cyber bullying at least once in their lives. When Ozkok wrote that article entitled “How many of every ten Turks are sexual harasser?” a popular Turkish singer was harassed through text messages. The fourth article was written by Timur Sert for Sabah newspaper on November 1, 2019. During the week the article was published, Turkey had been one of the countries exposed to cyber attacks. The article entitled “The company



finding remedy to cyber attacks” stressed the need for functioning cyber security tools in contemporary Turkey.

The fifth article to be analyzed was written by Şahver Kaya on January 9, 2018 for Hürriyet newspaper. The article was entitled “ The Main Theme of 2018: Cyber security” The data security-related issues were on the agenda at that time. The sixth article to be analyzed was written by Songül Hatırasu on April 8, 2018 for Milliyet newspaper. The article entitled “ Digital Intelligence against Cyberbully!” mainly covered the issue of cybersecurity for children and young adults. The author wrote about the cooperation made among Turkcell, Ministry of National Education and DQ Institute.

The seventh article was written by Can Aydoğmuş on August 27, 2017. The article entitled “Cyber bullying” was written after a harassment exercised on a Turkish Minister and his wife on social media. Another column under scrutiny was written by Selim Öztürk on December 14, 2017 for Hurriyet newspaper. The article entitled “Do not be a Cyberbully” was published during a time when Samsung and Information Technologies Communication Institution issued a report on cybersecurity.

Another article under scrutiny was written by Yunus Karakaya on July 31, 2016 for Yeni Asır news portal. The article entitled “The importance of cybersecurity has increased” was written in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt on July 15. The article mainly associated cybersecurity weakness and coup attempt. Another article was written by Gila Benmayor on 7 April, 2016 for Hurriyet. The article entitled “ Why didn’t you apply to cyber Turks?” was written after the stealing of Turkish electorate’s identity information. Benmayor also wrote about a Turkish company working on cybersecurity safety technologies.

Data Analysis

Within the scope of the research, the relevant parts of the above-stated ten articles were analyzed.

“Credit cards, the parrot and cyber crimes”, Hurriyet February 14, 2020

“The cyber crimes fighting units have been seeking for this organization which hurt many people.” Here, the author describes cyber criminals as members of an organization which hurt people. “...Organized crime organizations that make all the communication on the internet are



very careful, they escape when they feel suspicious”. Here, the pronoun “they” refers to all the cyber criminals, not only the ones told in the article. The pronouns ‘we’ and ‘they’ are frequently used to construe pertinent in- and out-groups.

“Cyberbullying and ‘sense-tightening’” , Duvar Daily, April 9, 2020

“Cyberbullying cases among adults are often seen in Turkey”. Turkey here is a spatio-temporal reference. The author in order to make reference to the student who was subjected to cyberbullying on social media uses the term “a university student”; via this term he creates an anonymous identity that is indeterminate (vague). This is an example of indetermination through which the identity of the social actor is mystified (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 39). In the following lines of the article the author writes: “it shows that the mass making this interpretation does not have emotional adulthood and the responsibility expected from them although they reached biological adulthood.” Here, the “mass” refers to the cyberbullies. The term “mass” is a collectivized indeterminate noun that puts emphasis on the vastness of the people whom exercise cyber attacks on people via social networks.

“How many of every ten Turks are sexual harasser?” , Hurriyet August 29, 2019

“52 per cent of cyberbullies are themselves bullied. So, half of us are doing the same crap to ourselves.” In this expression, the author uses the word “crap” to make reference to cyberbullying. The evaluation about the cyber bullies in the text is realized within a negative lexical field. The author uses an insulting expression “crap”

“The company finding remedy to cyber attacks” Sabah, November 1, 2019

“Last week Turkey surged to first rank in the list of countries subjected to cyber attacks. Banking and financial institutions, energy and telecom infrastructures are under threat.” Here, examples of collectivization are used (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 55) through which the people in the organizations are referred to. “Picus Security aims to increase its international competitiveness in the field of cyber security with an investment of \$ 5 million taken from EarlyBird.” The Picus Security (name of the company) refers metonymically to the managers of the company.

“ The Main Theme of 2018: Cyber security”, Hürriyet, January 9, 2018

“The security of the data will be the biggest concern for us as the citizens and for the governments in 2018 and beyond”. Here, the author uses the word “concern” to refer to data



safety. This lexical choice reflects the seriousness of data protection. In the following line, the author says “The ability to safely obtain, store and study data has begun to enter our lives, both as a matter of personal and national security.” In this sentence, data protection is predicated as not only a personal security issue but also as a matter of national security. By using “our” the author constructs a unified and homogeneous identity that encompasses all groups regardless of their social backgrounds. The author refers to all the people using e-mails or/and social media tools etc.

“Digital Intelligence against Cyberbully!” Milliyet, April 8, 2018

“In addition to translating the trainings into Turkish, Turkcell is also working on “Turkification of the education”. Here, the author writes about digital trainings given to young people. Turkcell refers to the people working in the organization. This is an example of collectivization (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 55) and personification. In the article, the author provides direct quotations from the CEO of DQ Institute Dr. Yuhyun Park. The author represents Park as an authority through providing direct quotations from her.

“Cyber bullying”, Hurriyet, August 27, 2017

“Nobody can reach anywhere by attacking or insulting people. Cursing and insulting are just signs of weakness” The author uses “nobody” as a linguistic tool of indetermination through which the agents are generalized. Indetermination occurs when social actors are represented as unspecified, anonymous individuals or groups (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 39). In DHA analysis, predications are used to label social actors more or less positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively. The activities of “cursing and insulting” are attached to the cyberbullies to deprecate their identities.

“Do not be a Cyber bully”, Hurriyet December 14, 2017

“As one of the largest bleeding wounds of Turkey, many of us are not aware of the seriousness of cyber-bullying; however, young people's lives darken, their lives are stolen from them.” The author through using the expression of “the largest bleeding wound of Turkey” makes reference to cyberbullying. This is a form of predication strategy. “Many of us” is a way of indetermination.

“In the fight against cyberbullying, educators, families, young people, NGOs, private sector, relevant public institutions and organizations have a very important duty and responsibility.”



Here, “private sector” and “public institutions and organizations” are examples of collectivization (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 55) through which the people in the organizations are referred to.

“The importance of cybersecurity has increased”, Yeni Asır, July, 31, 2016

“Turkey must take action in cyber space. It will be crucial for the future for the National Security Council to take decisions in the light of the necessary legal arrangements and operations and to strengthen local and national cyber security solutions and strategies.” The ‘National Security Council’ is an example of personified institutional name through which the members of the Council are represented. “Turkey” stands metonymically for the statesmen. The metonymy (from the Greek for ‘name change’) replaces the name of a referent by the name of an entity which is closely associated with it in either concrete or abstract terms (Wodak et.al., 2009: 43). It is also a form of personification. Personifications are specific forms of metaphors that are rhetorically used to give a human form or to humanize inanimate objects, abstract entities and ideas (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 58).

“Why didn’t you apply to cyber Turks?”, Hurriyet, April 7, 2016

“Yesterday, Minister of Justice Bekir Bozbağ's statement that YSK will not share voter information with political parties is not in vain.” Here acronym YSK refers to Higher Election Committee and it is an example of personified institutional name. “Why do such things happen to Turkey?” Turkey stands metonymically for the people living in Turkey.

Conclusion

This article attempted to analyze cybersecurity issue in Turkey through the lenses of news discourse. To this aim, relevant newspaper articles were selected and analyzed via employing Critical Discourse Analysis methodology. News articles give significant clues about a society’s assumptions and opinions through making how much stress is put on some particular issues clear.

The concepts of cyberspace and cybersecurity have begun to gain significance as the information technologies are on rise in both the state discourse and academic discourse. The main conclusion of this study is that in the context of cyberspace, threats are similar not depending on space or time. It is known that the tools such as mobile phones or e-mail



communication take part in each of our lives and cybersecurity threats and risks posed against personal data and privacy are the same to all of us.

Cybersecurity-related news cannot have an isolated nature like national security ones because although countries and actors differ, the threats and the ways to combat these threats are similar. That is why international organizations sign conventions on Internet governance and protection of personal data over Internet.

Concerning the news discourse on cybersecurity in Turkey, it can be said that cyberbullying problem is a major challenge to people's communication. In addition, it is obviously seen that the importance attached to cybersecurity and digital security companies has increased. It can be said that cybersecurity problems like cyber bullying are threatening almost every segment of society and concrete steps must be taken in the fight against such cybercrimes. Finally, it can be said that, cybercriminals are engaged in activities in a similar way to organized crime networks and effective policies are needed.

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