Framing Obama
A Comparative Study of Keywords and Frames in Two Washington Newspapers

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Abstract
This study aims to contribute to the understanding of ideology conveyed by lexical items and framing of texts. Since ideology is embedded in language the frames used in newspapers construct a narrow ideological perspective for the readers to interpret subjects and events through. On the basis of editorials from The Washington Post and The Washington Times that cover President Barack Obama, the study examines how the editorials differ in their framing of Obama and which discourses and keywords occur unusually frequently in each newspaper. Findings suggest that when it comes to framing, The Washington Post allows for a relatively balanced perspective on Obama as they both support and criticise him, while The Washington Times overwhelmingly condemns and attacks Obama. A keyword analysis points to unusually frequent discourses on race, conservatives and reforms in The Washington Post, and spending, unemployment and political institutions in The Washington Times. Because of their ideological differences the newspapers construct a reality where the subject, Obama, is presented in very different ways.

Keywords
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1. Introduction

In today’s society, mass media is a vital source for getting information on current events and politics. News media play an important role in shaping public opinion and politicians often use newspapers as platforms to reach people. What is written about politicians in editorials and columns can affect the public perception of political candidates.

Newspaper editorials express opinions which are normally not personal but rather institutional as well as political and widely different in their ideological presuppositions (van Dijk 1998:21-22). Norman Fairclough (1989:49) argues that, since newspaper editorials are consumed by a mass audience and the individual consumers are unknown, newspapers address an ideal subject who interprets the text using the right presumptions. The ideology of a text is only really effective if the consumer is able to make the necessary implicit assumptions (Fairclough 1989:77). Because the readers themselves bring in these implicit assumptions, editorial language is an effective way of imposing ideological assumptions on the reader (Fairclough 1989:83).

This study aims to investigate how editorials that cover President Barack Obama, from two newspapers, differ in their framing of Obama and which discourses and keywords occur unusually frequently in each newspaper. A discourse, in the sense applicable for this study, is composed of signs or language and is defined as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 2002:54). The newspapers that will be used are the Washington broadsheets The Washington Post and The Washington Times. Based on readings of a selection of the newspapers’ editorials, the hypothesis tested in this study is that The Washington Post is more liberal than the conservative The Washington Times. This study will utilize the critical discourse analysis’ presumption that language in itself is not neutral because ideologies and values are both shaped by and reflected in language (Paltridge 2006:182). Additionally, all language and discourse are said to be imprinted with values and ideology independent of the writer; the ideologies are social and institutional structures embedded in language (Fowler 1991:42). Newspapers are therefore laced with ideology. This leads to the second hypothesis which is tested in this study; that the words that are used in newspaper editorials are indicative of certain ideological and structured discourses and frames.
1.1 Scope of the study

The purpose of this study is to compare political editorials that deal with President Obama from *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* in order to investigate how they differ in their discourses and framing of Obama. To achieve this, a combined approach of qualitative and quantitative analysis will be used. Corpus linguistic tools will be used for a lexical analysis to determine unusually frequent keywords in the two newspapers, and critical discourse analysis will be used to study the framing of Obama in the editorials and the contexts of keywords. The following research questions will be posed:

- Which keywords are unusually frequent in *The Washington Post* compared to *The Washington Times*?
- Which keywords are unusually frequent in *The Washington Times* compared to *The Washington Post*?
- Do *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* differ in their framing of Obama, and if so how?
- What type of discourses about Obama can be identified in the two different newspapers?

2. Theoretical framework

This section presents a few important ideas and studies that this analysis builds on. Perspectives on what defines newspaper editorials will be presented along with explanations of concepts and terms used in the analysis.

2.1 The editorial genre

Genres are specific types of texts that share features, structures, and often have the same purposes (Paltridge 2006:84). The editorial genre in newspapers is defined in contrast to the hard news: instead of claiming objectivity, the act of giving opinions is foregrounded (Allan 2004:83). In doing this, editorials are often seen as the section that
gives a voice to the newspaper, by employing different textual and rhetorical styles to present their opinions (Fowler 1991:209). Editorials are often argumentative and persuasive, as they aim to convince readers to see the world from their favoured perspective (Fowler 1991:211). Editorial writing often features modal auxiliaries that carry with them a sense of strong authority, such as must be and will be, as well as generic statements that give the impression of definite knowledge of a topic (Fowler 1991:211). Another common strategy employed in editorials is the creation of “us versus them” categories, in which the newspaper and its perceived community are contrasted with an opposing force (Fowler 1991:212). Language is used in order to achieve the purpose of the genre (Paltridge 2006:85). In the case of this study, that means that the editorial language will aim to give voice to ideas of the newspaper.

2.2 Discourse and ideology in newspapers

Newspapers do have a great deal of influence over public opinion, over which issues are discussed and on what terms an issue is discussed (Allan 2004:47; 77). Stuart Allan (2004:3) argues that news media play a crucial part in “establishing a discursive space, one framed by the state and economic domains on either side, for public deliberations over social issues”.

In this study ideology is defined as an underlying framework of assumptions that adjusts and transforms social subjects (Kavanagh 1995:314). The function of ideology is to create a reality which seems obvious; it works as an enforcer of a particular world view or notion of society (Kavanagh 1995:309-311). In order to achieve its purpose, ideology in newspapers is not overtly stated but rather hidden or implicit; it is, however, not as hidden in the editorial sections as in the news sections (Paltridge 2006:45). The ideology of a text is only truly effective if the reader brings in the necessary implicit assumptions (Fairclough 1989:77). Fairclough (1989:112-113) argues that “ideological differences between texts in their representation of the world are coded in their vocabulary”. Fairclough (1989:52) also argues that newspapers not only create content but they also reproduce the subjects in the content with the help of the attributes they ascribe to these subjects. In this study a political leader, Barack Obama, is the subject of discussion in the editorials and the attributes assigned to him will be revealing of how the newspapers see him and which ideological perspective they take.
2.3 Social constructivism

This thesis incorporates critical discourse analysis as a method which builds on the social constructionist idea that society is created by language; social actors create a “common sense” reality through language usage and social interactions (Van Gorp 2007:62). This implies that reality is constantly subject to change through language. In terms of journalistic texts, this means that newspapers, through their language use and framing, present a limited option of interpretations of the issue at hand to be made by the audience (Van Gorp 2007:62). Categorisation by vocabulary can, for instance, carry with it strong judgment of subjects and is an important part of conveying an ideological message to the readers (Fowler 1991:84). Referring to people as pluralised groups and placing discriminatory values on these perceived “groups” of people, such as, *foreigners, homosexuals, blacks, demonstrators*, and “the loony left”, in order to dehumanise them, or referring to groups of people using non-human attributes such as *packs* or *monsters* is especially common in the popular press (Fowler 1991:111-129).

Fowler (1991) presents a number of tools that can be used to open up a text and reveal its underlying structures and values – these are tools such as transitivity, transformation, modality, and lexical analysis. Lexical analysis will be utilised in this study. The most utilised method in studies of underlying ideologies in texts is, according to van Dijk (1998:31), the study of lexical items. Ideology is usually not visible in a single lexical item, but when put in context with other lexical items and propositional clauses, ideology becomes apparent (van Dijk 1998:31-32).

2.4 Framing

The term ‘framing’ lacks a universal definition and can therefore be conceptualised in different ways. Its most general sense refers to the shaping of a text (Van Gorp 2007:60-61), or as Huckin (1997:82) defines it: frames are the perspective a writer takes when presenting content. Frames can be said to function as a structuring principle that gives coherent meaning to an array of language (Gamson et al. 1992:384). In some cases the term ‘frame’ may be replaced with labels such as ‘representation’ or ‘argument’ (Van Gorp 2007:61). An intrinsic characteristic of frames is that they often go unnoticed as they are naturalised in our understanding of the world; for example, media frames are
often unacknowledged by both readers and producers of the texts (Gamson et al. 1992:380-384). Nonetheless, frames are always embedded in discourse and in media texts (Van Gorp 2007:61). It is possible for the same event to make different type of sense depending on the framing by the writer, and depending also to some extent on the audience in its interpretation of the text (Van Gorp 2007:63). A frame is therefore “a persuasive invitation, a stimulus, to read a news story in a particular way, so that a specific definition of an event, [...] and a moral judgment of a person come more easily across the receiver’s mind” (Van Gorp 2007:73). When studying frames it is important to look at foregrounding, that is, the values and issues that are emphasised in the text (Huckin 1997:82).

Martina Temmerman (2010) has shown how the concept of framing can be used to determine how politicians portray themselves in the Belgian press. In this case frames in interviews with politicians, published in newspapers, were studied. Temmerman (2010:132) asserts that “[w]hoever wants to spread a message, will need a frame to give it a certain structure”. With that in mind she analysed which frames politicians chose to apply when presenting themselves in the press and how the frames allowed for sociopolitical issues to be seen through an ideologically determined perspective. In this study the term ‘framing’ will be closely related to the notion of ‘representation’ as it will aim to identify how Obama is represented and talked about in the editorials and which discourses he is placed in.

2.5 Keywords

The term ‘keyword’ may be defined in a variety of ways. Wierzbicka (1997:15-16) defines keywords as “words which are particularly important and revealing in a given culture”. This broad concept of a keyword being something important and revealing of a culture can be brought down to a smaller scope and be said to be a word that is revealing of a specific corpus (or collection of texts). A keyword in this analysis is therefore defined as a word that is unusually frequent in one corpus compared to the frequency of the same word in a different corpus (Baker 2006:125).
3. Material and methodology

The process of material selection and the method used when carrying out the analysis will be described in this section.

3.1 Material

The two newspapers The Washington Times and The Washington Post were selected based on the fact that they are both broadsheets, written in the same formal style, from the same geographical area. Because of these qualities it will be better justified to attribute differences in linguistic choices and framing of issues between the newspapers to differences in the underlying ideologies. The material that is used in this study consists of editorials written on Obama from The Washington Post and The Washington Times. Not all editorials ever written on Obama in the two newspapers could be included in this study, as the material would be too vast to study. The database LexisNexis was used to find the editorials, using the search term Obama. This term alone produced far too many results, so the material had to be delimited further. This was done by adding the term editorial under section and specifying that the term Obama had to be included in the headline of the editorial in order for it to be included in the corpora. This definition helped narrow the editorials down to 612 in The Washington Times and 1,072 in The Washington Post. Since this is still too many editorials to process for this study, the 400 editorials placed first in order of relevance in the search results were selected from each newspaper; these constitute the corpus material for this study. A slight modification had to be applied to The Washington Post, where duplicate editorials appeared at times from the earlier-distributed version of the paper, The Bulldog Addition, and these duplicates were disregarded and replaced with the next most relevant editorials. This procedure provides a large quantity of material that is sure to be focused on Obama as his name is included in the headings and not just briefly mentioned in the body of the text.

Two sub-corpora consisting of the 10 editorials from each newspaper that were deemed most relevant by the search engine LexisNexis were also compiled and used for the

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1 The search was performed on 10/15 2011.
qualitative analysis, as it is not possible to study the framing of every single editorial for this limited project. By using the 10 editorials that appear at the top of the search list created when sorting the articles by relevance, it is ensured that Obama will be a strong focus of the editorials and he will not just be mentioned in passing.

3.2 Methodology

The approach for the study’s linguistic analysis will be based on corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis.

The main characteristics of a corpus linguistics approach are that it is empirical and observes naturally occurring language in a corpus, and that it utilizes computers for analysis (Biber et al. 1998:4). A corpus is defined as a large body of electronically stored data (Baker 2006:1). In this study, the editorials from the two newspapers form the main corpora which are then used in a lexical analysis. Frequency lists will be created in order to determine which fifteen words occur unusually frequently in each newspaper in comparison to the other newspaper; the number fifteen is chosen because of the limited scope of this study. Frequency lists are normally used to provide foci for further lexical analysis, and, together with collocating terms, they give hints as to the most important themes of the corpus (Baker 2006:121).

The program AntConc is used to measure the frequency of words used in the editorials. The program is able to list keywords, show word clusters, collocations, and contexts of keywords. In this study, AntConc is used to compare the corpora from the two newspapers with each other in order to determine which words have unusually high frequencies in the two newspapers. A selection of the most frequent keywords will be put into context using the concordance list in AntConc. This is done in order to establish how the words in the frequency lists are used in sentences, and to establish what they refer to. When analysing the unusually frequent keywords in the two newspapers, the names of the authors, the bylines, and the names of the newspapers are excluded as that information is irrelevant to the study, only the headlines and bodies of the editorials are analysed here. All data is also treated as lowercase, so as not to differentiate between the same words depending on whether or not they are capitalised.

The keyword studies using AntConc will be combined with a more qualitative approach, in order to study a small selection of texts in their entirety. A qualitative study
is a useful complement to frequency lists, as they do not per se describe the discourse in the texts, but they do point us in a direction of what the important themes might be and they provide us with linguistic patterns (Baker 2006:178). In order to supplement this quantitative approach, critical discourse analysis will be used on the sub-corpora. More specifically, framing will be studied. Van Gorp (2007:64) argues that frames are made visible in media content through word choices, arguments, visual images and descriptions. With this in mind keywords, attributes, and descriptions of Obama and the issues the newspapers associate with him will be closely examined in the sub-corpus to determine how they differ in their framing of Obama. Since this is a limited study, only a few important framing patterns will be picked out and reported on.

4. Results

First significant keywords for both newspapers will be presented and put into context and then the study will turn to the closer analysis of framing in the sub-corpora, where after analysing all editorials in the sub-corpora the main frames found will be presented (see the appendix for full-length editorials).

4.1 Keywords

A Keyword in this analysis is defined as a word that is unusually frequent in a corpus compared to the frequency of the same word in a different corpus (Baker 2006:125). The keyness-value presented in Tables 1–4 is calculated by log-likelihood. This means that the frequency of a word is calculated in both the main corpus and in the reference corpus and then the absolute difference between the two frequencies are calculated. This means that a high keyness number indicates that the word deviates in the source corpus from the estimated frequency and is a good thematic indicator for the corpus.

Table 1. The fifteen most unusually frequent words in The Washington Post corpus compared to The Washington Times corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Keyness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>260.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>198.463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>but</td>
<td>151.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>and</td>
<td>130.465</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in Table 1, *The Washington Post* uses certain grammatical words more often than *The Washington Times*. Certain pronouns, especially, are more frequently occurring. The pronouns *I, he, him, his, my* and *me* all have a high keyness-value, and although interesting to analyse further they will not be focused on here as they say more about the style of writing and addressing the audience than the framing of Obama in the editorials.

If all the grammatical words are sorted out from the list and the focus is solely on lexical words, the table would look like this:

Table 2. The fifteen most unusually frequent lexical words in *The Washington Post* corpus compared to *The Washington Times* corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Keyness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>mccain</td>
<td>90.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>campaign</td>
<td>82.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>79.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>reform</td>
<td>79.406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>clinton</td>
<td>76.703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>my</td>
<td>67.534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>65.801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>candidates</td>
<td>56.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>republicans</td>
<td>51.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>race</td>
<td>50.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>african</td>
<td>47.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>democratic</td>
<td>47.430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>barack</td>
<td>46.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>conservatives</td>
<td>44.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>social</td>
<td>39.991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen by Table 2, *The Washington Post* invokes the names of the politicians *McCain, Clinton*, and *Roosevelt* more often when discussing Obama. *Clinton* is used to refer both to Bill and Hillary. The words *candidates* and *republicans* could also suggest that they are comparing Obama to other politicians to a larger degree than *The Washington Times*. The words *black, African* and *race* seem to point us in the direction of a focus on Obama’s ethnicity.

Table 3. The fifteen most unusually frequent words in *The Washington Times* corpus compared to *The Washington Post* corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Keyness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>mr</td>
<td>1828.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>255.325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>administration</td>
<td>178.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>federal</td>
<td>141.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>house</td>
<td>136.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>mrs</td>
<td>131.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>the</td>
<td>123.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>walpin</td>
<td>116.492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>government</td>
<td>115.543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>department</td>
<td>103.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>96.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>jennings</td>
<td>89.479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>billion</td>
<td>82.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>rate</td>
<td>80.604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>million</td>
<td>80.178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that *The Washington Times* does not have many grammatical keywords, but it would still be useful to sort out the definite article, *the*, and the personal titles *Mr.* and *Mrs.*, which actually could be argued to be lexical words but are deemed uninformative in this context as *The Washington Times* simply chooses to give people they refer to titles. The new list would look as follows:

Table 4. The fifteen most unusually frequent lexical words in *The Washington Times* corpus compared to *The Washington Post* corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Keyness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>255.325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>administration</td>
<td>178.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>federal</td>
<td>141.779</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on Table 4, it seems as if The Washington Times focuses more on political bodies and buildings such as administration, government, department, and white and house, which often collocate. They also invoke the names of two people who were fired by Obama, Jennings, and the George W. Bush appointed inspector general, Walpin, more often than The Washington Post does. There is also a greater focus on numbers as seen by the words billion, million, rate, and percent. Due to spelling, Gadhafi is unreliable as a keyword in The Washington Times, as The Washington Post seems to favour the spelling Gaddafi.

These keywords alone do, however, not tell us much about the ideology of the editorials or the discourses in which they appear. The contexts in which the keywords appear provide a wider understanding of what type of discourse they appear in.

### 4.2 Keywords in context

AntConc can create concordance lists and collocation lists which make it easy to quickly see how keywords are used in the editorials. The word race, for instance, can have several meanings depending on the context in which it appears. In order to study how the keywords are generally used in the editorials, it is useful to study the immediate context of the words. Here is an example of how the context tool for keywords look, using the keyword race in The Washington Post, sorted alphabetically by the preceding word:
Figure 1. Instances of ‘race’ in *The Washington Post* in AntConc

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HT</th>
<th>KWC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The word race in <em>The Washington Post</em> takes on homonymous meanings, as can be seen just from the few sample contexts in Figure 1, but is mostly used to refer to ethnicity in relation to Obama; his speeches about race and race as a campaign issue. It is also, although less frequently, used to refer to a competition, as in the presidential race and the competitive race. When they talk about Obama and race it is often in the form of how he addresses, and how he will overcome, “the race issue”, sometimes even criticising Obama for not acknowledging race enough and the extent to which it matters. By placing Obama in discourses such as those exemplified in (1) and (2), they turn race into a bigger issue than Obama himself perceives it, or wants it, to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(1) [Obama] really doesn't want this campaign to be about race, but it is going to be about race, he needs to control the race debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(2) The press will create a forest fire [because] [r]race is just too titillating to ignore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The keyword <em>African</em> is almost exclusively followed by the word <em>American(s)</em>, implying that there is a stronger focus on the African American community in connection with Obama in <em>The Washington Post</em>. <em>Black</em> is also a keyword which is followed by the words <em>Americans, man, president, community, candidate, and voters</em>, again supporting the hypothesis that there is a discourse on race in <em>The Washington Post</em> that does not seem to exist in <em>The Washington Times</em>. A possible explanation as to why this is the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
case could be that *The Washington Times* seems to continuously criticise Obama and to bring up race in a text that is condemning someone might label you a racist; *The Washington Post*, on the other hand, seems to indulge in real injustices caused by race, and hypothetical problems that may arise because of Obama’s race, which need to be dealt with. The fact that *McCain, campaign and candidates* are keywords in editorials on Obama seems to suggest that *The Washington Post* wrote more extensively about Obama during the lead up to the presidential election than *The Washington Times* did. The fact that *conservatives and republicans* are unusually frequent in *The Washington Post* compared to *The Washington Times* might be an indication of an “us versus them” categorisation (Fowler 1991:212); the left leaning paper uses these words to refer to the other perspective whereas the right leaning paper does not include those terms because they are already writing from that perspective. This hypothesis could be supported by the keywords in contexts in examples (3), (4) and (5).

(3) Conservatives caricature Mr. Obama as an ultra-liberal

(4) Why, oh why, do conservatives hate America so?

(5) Republicans are still busy cooking up bad ideas

*The Washington Post* does, however, also use the keyword *democratic* to refer to the democratic *party, base, candidates and ticket* so that hypothesis might be invalid. The keyword *reform* in *The Washington Post* is often collocated with *health-care, immigration and financial*; that is, Obama’s proposed reforms are an important theme in this newspaper. Words focusing on active reforms fulfil the purpose of editorial language in *The Washington Post*, as it gives a liberal voice to the newspaper (cf. Paltridge 2006:85). However, there seems to be room for a more conservative or centrist political discourse in the newspaper as well. This can be seen in the most frequent collocate of the keyword *social*, which is *security*. They are warning Obama that *unless you raise taxes so high that you risk choking economic growth, you also will have to trim Medicare and Social Security benefits*, and proclaiming that, *[w]e could bring Social Security into balance through surprisingly modest reductions of benefits for more well-off citizens.*

In *The Washington Times*, the keyword *unemployment* most frequently occurs with the word *rate*, showing that an important theme in their editorials is the unemployment rate under Obama’s administration. Unemployment seems to be brought up in negative
discourses on Obama’s failure to lower the unemployment rate, as seen in examples (6) and (7).

(6) When it comes to putting people out of work, Mr. Obama is second to none. He took office with the unemployment rate at 7.8 percent. It's now 9.1 percent

(7) President Obama is asking Congress to raise taxes on job creators [...] while doing nothing to alleviate the 9.1 percent unemployment rate

The top co-occurrence for federal is government, followed by law and spending. The word federal takes on negative connotations in the editorials, and the reason why it is used a lot more frequently in The Washington Times might be because they wish to bring attention to the centralisation of power, which according to conservative discourses is something undesirable. The keyword house is indeed overwhelmingly collocated as white house, followed by the house; these two terms are metonyms for the political institutions and activities associated with the buildings. Together with department and administration this shows that political institutions are mentioned more often in The Washington Times. The numeric keywords billion and million appear almost exclusively with a dollar amount, suggesting a theme of spending in connection with Obama, for example: $745 million in campaign spending, his $825 billion so-called stimulus, and Mr. Obama spent between $500,000 and $1 million of taxpayer money to fly to Ohio. The keyword percent has the lexical items unemployment, approval rating, and support as frequent collocations. When speaking about Obama’s approval rating, an aspect focusing on dwindling support seems to be overwhelmingly favoured, as exemplified in (8), and in (9) where Obama’s ratings are compared to former president George W. Bush’s.

(8) Among people who attend church weekly, Mr. Obama's support has dropped from a high of 60 percent in January 2009 to 41 percent

(9) A June 9 Fox poll showed Mr. Obama's comparable rating at a slightly worse 38 percent approval and 51 percent disapproval

Jennings was in Obama’s department of education before he was called on to resign by social conservatives who alleged he had dealt inappropriately with students in the past, as explained in (10) and (11) in The Washington Times.

(10) There are detailed write-ups in Mr. Jennings' books about all the students he counseled to "use a condom." Is it unreasonable to expect that schoolteachers and counselors like Mr.
Jennings actually might discourage high school students from engaging in inappropriate and possibly dangerous relationships?

(11) There are shocking new revelations this week of tape recordings from a youth conference involving 14-year-old students. The conference, billed as a forum to encourage tolerance of homosexuality, was sponsored by Mr. Jennings’ organization [...] The conference sessions appear to have had less to do with promoting tolerance and more to do with teaching children how to engage in sex

Jennings is commonly collocated with the word homosexual in a context which calls for his resignation. The reason why The Washington Times, in their recreation of Jennings as a subject, chooses to foreground his sexuality when they speak of him negatively suggests that there is an implicit assumption that homosexuality is a negative and deviant characteristic, as I do not believe that they would ever foreground someone’s heterosexuality in the same situation (cf. Fairclough 1989:52). The firing of Walpin is treated with suspicion that it might have been on grounds of political differences rather than on incompetence, as can be seen by the fact that unethical is a strong collocate of his name. It supports the underlying ideology of a conservative newspaper to report on a possible unethical firing on Obama’s part, whereas it is consistent with a liberal or centrist ideology, like in The Washington Post, to leave it out (cf. Kavanagh 1995:309-311). The keyword force is most commonly preceded by the letter O: the O Force seems to be a nickname given to Obama and his administration by The Washington Times. The intended rhetorical effect of such a nickname, as exemplified in (12) and (13), might be to dehumanise Obama and turn him and his administration in to an alien force (cf. Fowler 1991:111-129).

(12) Overlooking the motives of Muslim terrorists has become an O Force obsession, this gimmick helps the O Force imply that the industry is holding off on drilling

(13) Those Republicans were successful presidents – especially compared to the imploding O Force

4.3 Framing

The framing of the editorials in The Washington Post sub-corpus written during Obama’s candidacy for the presidency makes it clear that they support Obama over McCain, as they even discuss what he should do to secure the win, as in examples (14), (15) and (16).
(14) It is without ambivalence that we endorse Sen. Barack Obama for president

(15) To win the presidency, Barack Obama needs only to battle John McCain to a tie on foreign policy and national security

(16) The upshot in all these cases: Obama’s positions have come to look safe and reasonable, undercutting McCain’s core argument about Obama’s inexperience

Instructions on how Obama should act is a very common theme in the editorials (Fowler 1991:211), as seen by their discussion on whether or not he should make up with the progressive left and what topics he should include in his state of the union address. They want to help define Obama’s agenda with assertions like those in (17), (18) and (19).

(17) Obama’s first goal must be to expand the economy and create jobs

(18) The president must reach out and form meaningful relationships with the party whose members have berated him daily and belittled his accomplishments

(19) Obama must reach out to personally involve key liberal legislators in policy decision making

There is also an emphasis put on Obama as a person in the editorials; for example in one editorial his relationship to his father is discussed, in another editorial they list people who have been instrumental to Obama’s career, and in one editorial they try to explain his friendship with the Chicago insider Rezko, as seen in example (20).

(20) The friendship may have reflected the fact that both men were outsiders, trying to establish themselves in the rough-and-tumble world of Chicago

This added focus on the personal may explain the lack of focus on political institutions in The Washington Post, and The Washington Times’ inclusion of several keywords referring to political buildings and institutions. The issue of race is also present in the framing of the editorials in the sub-corpus, which can be seen in examples (21) and (22).

(21) The racial landscape that Obama might transform

(22) The whole affair allowed Obama to address head-on the elephant in the room – race

There is in fact an entire editorial, Misreading Obama’s Identity, dedicated to discussing Obama’s racial identity, thereby constructing a reality where race is an important part of society (cf. Van Gorp 2007:62). As seen in example (23) and as
established in the keywords, there is a conservative discourse on Obama’s economic stance in The Washington Post sub-corpus as well. The underlying ideology in the editorials seems to be a socially progressive but fiscally conservative one, as seen in statement (24).

(23) President Obama also regularly flays the rich, whom he accuses of not paying their “fair share.” This seems odd, given that the top 10 percent of earners pay about 70 percent of all income taxes

(24) [Obama’s] vision should be based on a social safety net and compassion, but also on fiscal discipline

This centrist ideology could also explain the more nuanced approach to Obama, as there is room for both praise and critique, as exemplified in (25), (26), (27) and (28).

(25) OF COURSE, Mr. Obama offers a great deal more than being not a Republican

(26) Mr. Obama is a man of supple intelligence, with a nuanced grasp of complex issues and evident skill at conciliation and consensus-building

(27) It must be said that Obama was loyal to a fault

(28) The Nobel Peace Prize award to Barack Obama seems goofy -- even if you're a fan, you have to admit that he hasn't really done much yet as a peacemaker

One editorial is a self-critical text examining the Obama tilt in their coverage and their lack of probing examination on where he stands on certain issues, thereby, as exemplified in (29), presenting a self-awareness perspective seemingly lacking in The Washington Times.

(29) The op-ed page ran far more laudatory opinion pieces on Obama, 32, than on John McCain, 13

The first editorial in The Washington Times sub-corpus shows Obama in a negative light by comparing him unfavourably to Reagan, as exemplified in (30), (31) and (32).

(30) Reagan: "Tear down this wall." Obama: Tearing down this country

(31) Reagan: Abortion is murder. Obama: Abortion is paid for

(32) Reagan: Thou shalt not speak ill of any Republican. Obama: Thou shalt not speak to any Republican
In order for this frame to have the intended ideological effect on readers, they need to share the implicit assumption that Reagan’s values and actions are desirable (cf. Fairclough 1989:77). Likewise, in the last two editorials, written about Obama when he was a presidential candidate, *The Washington Times* lists reasons why Obama does not deserve praise. As exemplified in (33), (34) and (35), the presuppositions at work here are that these liberal traits are undesirable (cf. Fairclough 1989:77).

(33) Mr. Obama supports gun-control laws across the board

(34) The Illinois Planned Parenthood Council gave Mr. Obama a 100 percent rating on his voting record

(35) On labor issues, the Illinois AFL-CIO gave Mr. Obama a 92 percent rating

As supported by the keywords, a frame of excessive spending is also applied to Obama in several editorials, in relation to his stimulus package, (36), and campaigning, (37).

(36) $1.15 trillion of spending

(37) An astonishing record $745 million in campaign spending

There is also a frame of *flip-flopping* in place in six of the editorials when referring to Obama, as can be seen in examples (38), (39) and (40).

(38) The Obama administration flip-flopped in dealing with the presidential crisis in Honduras

(39) Mr. Obama has changed his position on residual troops four times

(40) His glaring flip-flops have led voters to question his sincerity and his competence

This kind of indecision is framed as a negative trait in the editorials. Another common theme in the editorials from *The Washington Times* is the foregrounding of Obama’s incompetence and weakness, as exemplified in (41), (42), (43) and (44).

(41) Doubts about Barack Obama's ability to lead persist

(42) Mr. Obama's major weaknesses (in addition to his liberalism) are his limited experience regarding national security and foreign relations

(43) The United States finds itself noticeably weaker in international affairs than it was when Mr. Obama took office

(44) [Obama] is a weak defender of America's interests

In the lead up to the election Obama is framed as weak in comparison to the Republican candidate John McCain, as seen in example (45), and during his presidency he is
described as weak and unable to accomplish things compared to George W. Bush, as seen in examples (46) and (47).

(45) [Obama] has appeared weak and unsure of himself in addressing a number of key issues [...] he appeared weak and timid in contrast to Mr. McCain's more robust stand

(46) Mr. Bush was not loved, but he was feared, which Machiavelli advises is a more durable position

(47) The one solitary success Mr. Obama has enjoyed came from continuing President Bush’s policy of using drone aircraft for selective strikes on terror targets

In a similar vein, as seen in example (48), Obama’s failures to deliver on promises are often foregrounded as well.

(48) Mr. Obama's unprecedented, fawning outreach to the Muslim world has produced no tangible results

As frames and ideologies are coded in the vocabulary of a text, these editorials can be said to possess a negative framing of Obama, as the vocabulary is largely evaluative and negative (Fairclough 1989:112-113). They assert that Obama desperately needs to change the narrative, and that Obama's freshman-year foreign policy was the worst in living memory. However, in an editorial written when Obama was sworn in as president, the language is not as explicitly visceral against him; they try to deflate his “supposed” popularity and describe his campaigning as dubious, but there is also a sense of them wanting to reach out to him, as seen in example (49).

(49) If Mr. Obama and Republicans reach out to each other in a sincere effort to reach decisions that are best for the country (and the devil is always in the details), good things can happen for the nation, regardless of the ideologues and fanatics [...] [w]hatever the political disagreements, they can be debated and with good will resolved another day.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the results of this study the hypothesis that The Washington Times is more conservative than The Washington Post is valid. It was also shown that newspapers are, indeed, indicative of certain ideological and structured discourses and frames. Going back to the research questions, it was shown that the keywords in The Washington Post highlight discourses on race and reforms in those editorials which are
largely absent in *The Washington Times*. There is also the possibility of an “us versus them” categorisation in *The Washington Post* as seen in examples (3), (4) and (5) (cf. Fowler 1991:212). The keywords relating to numbers (*billion*, *million*, *percent* and *rate*) in *The Washington Times* are indicative of discourses on spending, approval ratings and unemployment rates. Instead of a focus on Obama’s personal relations, as in *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times* has unusually frequent lexical items that are metonyms for political institutions. When it comes to framing, it would appear that *The Washington Post* allows for a more balanced perspective on Obama as they both support and criticise him, while *The Washington Times* overwhelmingly frames Obama in a negative light by foregrounding his weaknesses and failures. From this study it would appear that *The Washington Post*’s critique of Obama mainly seems to be on economic issues, while the praise is on social issues, which would suggest that a socially progressive and fiscally conservative ideology is present in the newspaper. Through their use of different frames, *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* allow for widely different interpretations of Obama and his actions (cf. Van Gorp 2007:63). Due to differences in their political ideology, the newspapers construct different, naturalised frames in which Obama is often presented in opposing ways (cf. Gamson et al. 1992:380-384). The framing of the editorials seems to correspond to the economic and institutionalised ideologies of each newspaper, satisfying both readers’ and advertisers’ expectations of a socially progressive but fiscally conservative newspaper on the one hand and a hard-line conservative on the other (cf. Allan 2004:3).

An obvious limitation issue is that the study cannot be completely exhaustive by closely studying every editorial ever written on the topic of Obama in the newspapers; this means that the results on framing and discourse cannot be presented as definite conclusions on all editorials, only the ones used in the study are accounted for. Words and sentences that carry highly ideological or controversial ideas may not be spotted in the frequency list if they are not used often enough. There is also the issue of subjectivity, this study cannot claim objectivity; Researchers always frame their studies, and this is an unavoidable problem as there is no such thing as true objectivity since ideology is always imprinted in language (Fowler 1991:42).

Future studies may want to focus on editorial writing as a genre or look at rhetorical devises used in the different newspapers; there were some similarities in textual strategies, as both newspapers uses modal auxiliaries indicating a strong sense of
obligation and certainty (such as has, must and will) to indicate an authoritative speaker (Fowler 1991:211).
References


