

## Power and Ideology in Reality TV: A Critical Contrastive Approach to English Cooking Competition TV Programs and their Arabic Replications

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**Abstract:** *This case study is a cross-cultural qualitative investigation of the oral discourse of conflict scenes in two English cooking-competition TV programs and two of their Arabic replications broadcast between 2014-2015 in order to highlight the differences and similarities in the dynamics of power and the targeted ideologies for homogenization. Drawing from the field of critical discourse analysis, the analytical framework integrates the social theory of discourse with speech acts and face theories. Results show that the cross-cultural similarity is in promoting the capitalist dominant discourse and the ideology of competitiveness while the difference is in empowering the powerless, which is the primary ideological role of discourse in the Arabic replications. The results generate two hypotheses: first, the representations of power and ideologies transmitted through the replicated programs differ from those transmitted by the origin programs; second, the ideologies of the Arabic replications mirror the conditions and the demands of their societies at a specific point in the history of the region when these replications were broadcast. Empirical research is needed to explore the nature and measure the size of the ideological impact of these programs and the audience awareness of the transmitted ideologies.*

**Keywords:** cooking programs, critical discourse analysis, ideology- power

### 1. Introduction

Reality TV is a media genre that is flourishing in an era when “social mobility and media visibility [became] the touchstones of individual achievement” (Biressi and Nunn 2005:4). Its unscripted programs present ordinary people and are either competition or non-competition programs. Example of non-competition programs in the Arab TV is “The Kind Forgiver” or “ʔlmesameh Karym”, and the cooking program “The Dining Table” or “CBC sofa” and examples of competition programs, which retained their English names, are “The Voice”, and the cooking program the “Top Chef” and “Carzy Market” or “ʔlsouk ʔlmagnoon”. The success of reality TV is attributed to its being a convincing assimilation of real life. Its popularity positively correlates with “the level of emotional realism and personal revelation” of the disappointments and the frustrations of the participants (Biressi and Nunn 2005:3-5).

However, reality TV is criticized on the grounds that it fosters “inter passivity” by featuring “the other”, who is a real person, assuming the burden of the audience who live in a state of “estrangement” from reality as a result of being overloaded by the pressures of modern life (Odgen 2006). Nevertheless, the supporters of reality TV regard this as a point of strength because it makes the audience feel better about themselves when they compare their ability to that of the program participants in facing life challenges and in handling pain and suffering (Kilborn 2003).

In the United States, the increasing number of the cooking programs, a sub-genre of reality TV, broadcast on Food Network indicate their increasing popularity. Their number went up from two shows in 2005 to 11 shows in 2010 and 16 in 2014 rendering the habit of watching these programs in the United States an “obsession” (Hare 2011). However, cooking programs are regarded as one of the “under-analyzed genres” (Ketchum 2005) and a worldwide gap in academic research on this genre is reported (Johanston 2006). In the Arab region, most TV cooking programs are replications of programs originally produced in and for different cultures. To the researcher’s knowledge, no studies have been conducted to critically investigate either the cross-cultural differences in the discourses of these programs nor their ideological content and impact. Therefore, reports on the history, content, popularity, and cultural effects of these programs can only be found scattered across public media. For example, Mostafa in 2017, reported that the interest in cooking programs started by Egyptian viewers 30 years ago with the broadcast of Mona Amer’s cooking program “Always Prosperous” or “Dayman Amer”. In Egypt, since 2010, these programs have become “not less important than political and news programs and talk shows” (Mahmoud and Fathi 2017). Watching them has become a “new habit” and an “addiction” by the Egyptian viewers (Hassan 2015). It was reported that “45 percent of advertisements on satellite TV are now linked to cooking shows” which further supports the increasing popularity of this genre (Ehab 2016). Since then, Arabic satellite channels, becoming aware of the growing public interest in these programs, hurried to replicate foreign competition programs in order to “attract those who like to watch cooking programs and in the same time enjoy the thrill of competition” (Al Wassat 2015). In conclusion, insufficient data preclude confident conclusions on the impact of these programs on the Arab/Egyptian viewers.

Motivated by the dearth in research on cooking TV programs in the Arab region, the present study adopts a qualitative approach for a cross-cultural investigation of the representations of power and related ideologies in the oral discourse of four conflict scenes: two conflict scenes in two English-speaking programs and two conflict scenes in their Arabic replications. The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the intra and intercultural differences and similarities in the dynamics of power in the conflict scenes under study?

RQ 2: What are the similarities and the differences in the discursal realizations of power representations in these scenes?

RQ 3: What ideologies are accentuated and targeted for homogenization in these conflict scenes with regard to their temporal contextualization?

## **2. Review of literature**

On one hand, research on the discourse of cooking TV reported that it accentuates social and cultural values (Matwick and Matwick 2015). For example, Adema (2000) in exploring the relationship between food programs viewing patterns and contemporary American culture, concluded that food television not only highlighted the centrality of food as a tool for identity expression, but it also erased social distinctions and challenged the traditional view of food as a marker of social class by publicly sharing elite food recipes. With the pressures of time and the fast pace of modern life, people become nostalgic to quality family time. Food television satisfies this need for togetherness as it invites its viewers to the kitchen “traditionally a site of family interaction” (118). It also provides free-of-guilt pleasures in a body-conscious culture obsessed with low-calorie foods, thus providing “safe and economical ways to experience familiar and exotic pleasures” (119).

In Slovenia, Tominc (2015) conducted a thematic analysis of these programs in the period between the 1960’s and the 1990’s to identify their cultural effects. It concluded that these programs “acted as a vehicle of modernization”. This cultural transformative effect applies the “performance approach to identities” whereby identity is first modeled then practiced before it is finally institutionalized and become socially prominent (Blommaert 2005:208).

On the other hand, research on cooking competition programs attributed their increasing popularity to the growing interest in the dramatic performances by professional and amateur chefs while indicating a trend to abandon the traditional “female-centered” non-competition programs as well as promoting respect for the hierarchy and reinforcing the culture of game playing (Nilsson 2013; Oren 2013; Kohli and Quartz 2014). Moreover, competition reality TV authentically frames the relationship between the powerless by situational default (the contestants) and the all-powerful (the judges/mentors) (O’Keeffe 2011:1-2). Therefore, this genre is said to facilitate the penetration of certain ideologies into people’s lives by establishing a cultural frame to which the audience can refer. This frame is based on the implicit message that the ordinary individuals can enjoy “the freedom of taking on new identities” (Biressi and Nunn 2005:146).

From another perspective, Gallagher (2004), who pointed out to the saturation of global media of United States produced media texts, explored the

cultural impact of the international version of the Japanese cooking program *Iron Chef* on the viewers in the United States. This investigation was motivated by the existing research on media globalization, which mainly focused on its impact on the receiving subordinate cultures while ignoring the impact of non-western media production in the west in addition to the warnings against the erosion of local cultures under the pressure of media globalization. Gallagher (2004) concluded that the cultural impact of *Iron Chef* was in representing “Japan as a nation of lovable cooks”, thus reassuring the viewers in the United States of the “unthreatening eccentricity of Japanese culture” while comforting their fears of Asian economic superiority.

### **3. Theoretical background**

In order to explain the interrelationship between power, ideology and language, the study draws on the field of critical discourse analysis (CDA), with Fairclough’s (1989) social theory of discourse as its underpinning linguistic theory. Within the framework of CDA, power is relational in nature and is enacted during asymmetrical encounters where disagreements and conflicts motivated by clashes of interests and struggles over power occur (Locher 2004). During these encounters, alignments are formed. An alignment “includes any kind of synchronization across participants on the intellectual and/or emotional level” (Wine 2008:2). Power takes several forms and is derived from several sources. As to its forms, it can be invested on by the society, built on knowledge or expertise or, derived from economic or financial status. These forms constitute the “dominant blocs”, or the groups of people which enjoy social forces to impose their own ideologies (van Dijke 2006). Ideologies are the “foundational beliefs that underlie the shared social representations” and that form “the basis of a social group's self-image” and “organize its identity, actions, aims, norms and values” (van Dijke 2006:116-120).

The sources of power are: physical force, sanctions or rewards (in material or non-material forms), status derived from social or institutional position, authority resulting from using certain abilities for functional purposes, charisma by having intellectual or social super powers over others, and argumentation. Power is also identified in terms of five parameters: the domain of power or the area of life on which this power has an effect; the tools used to exercise it; its intensity in relation to its effects; the emotional cost involved in exercising it; and, finally, those exercising it (Maier 2001).

The relationship between power and ideology is twofold (Fairclough 1989:76-84). While ideologies primarily rely on power for existence, they also function as a tool in the hands of the powerful to legitimize their beliefs and social behaviors. Fairclough (2003) pointed out that capitalism as the controlling ideology of global economy uses competition and consumerism as its tools. However, van Dijke (2006:117) explained that ideologies do not necessarily

represent the dominant blocs because the powerless in the society can also have their own ideologies of “resistance and opposition.”

Within the critical perspective of the social theory of discourse, language not only functions as a social practice, but also as an agent of social change because discourse is a vehicle for promoting ideologies (Allawzi 2018). Taken from this perspective, the dominant blocs enjoy special discursal rights, forming what van Dijke and Poppe (2007) termed “dominant discourses.” Consequently, dominant discourses grant the dominant blocs the tools to enforce their ideologies through dominating the content of discourse, the freedom of actions and the social identities of the powerless. This results in the formation of dominant ideologies, which, in turn are responsible for the emergence of these dominant discourses (van Dijk and Poppe 2007). The general tendency of contemporary societies is to “avoid practicing overt power for the enforcement of ideological hegemony” in favor of covert cognitive power (Talbot, Atkinson and Atkinson. 2003:37). Through its masterful use of language, media has become the most effective tool for practicing covert cognitive power to ideologically hegemonize the minds of the masses and to gain public consent for the ideologies of the dominant blocs by subjecting the discursive events to the invisible process of legitimization and naturalization (Fairclough 1989; Maier 2001; van Dijke 2006).

The social theory employs the “critical language study” (CLS) approach to discourse analysis which extends the focus of analysis from “single invented utterances” to real extended data. In contrast to mainstream linguistics, which regards language as static, CLS proposes that language is dynamic based on the interrelationship between language and the surrounding social structures whereas not only does the social structure shape language, but language in itself also has the ability to cause social change and powerful ideological effects (Locher 2004). This establishes CLS as a useful approach for a critical investigation of any “sociolinguistic order molded in social struggles and riven with inequalities of power” (Fairclough 1989:10).

Consequently, a critical investigation of the representations of power and ideologies promoted in media discourse needs to address the two interrelated contexts: the immediate situational context, or context with a small (c), and the social and ideological context, or context with a capital (C), and benefits from three interrelated sociolinguistic concepts: historicity, positioning and indexicality. Blommaert’s (2005:129) statement that “people speak from a particular point in history” implies that discourse is inherently “historically charged” because it is positioned in a certain point in time, whereas indexicality entails that every utterance indexes a social meaning. Therefore, discourse becomes “intrinsically ideological” in nature (Blommaert 2005:160). CLS involves three stages: a description of textual properties, an interpretation of the interactional processes in the text in relation to the immediate c-context, and finally an explanation of the interrelationship between the text and the C-context

in order to understand the role of discourse “in the inception, development and consolidation of social change” (Fairclough 1989:197).

#### **4. The focus of the study**

In order to investigate the discursual representations of power and related ideologies, the analysis is guided by Goffman’s (1976; 1981) work on face and footing and speech acts following Austin (1962) and Searle (1969).

To begin with, power is interwoven with face work for several purposes: to “soften disagreement” (Locher 2004:4) and “maintain equilibrium” in the interaction; to avoid threatening the “social fabric” (Locher 2004:59); or, to assert one’s identity and face saving in the struggle for power. Face is “the positive social values a person effectively claims for himself” (Goffman 1976:5). Positive face is the individuals’ need for acknowledgement and acceptance, while negative face is the individuals’ need for autonomy, freedom of action and rejection of impositions. However, when the expectations to sustain these faces are not fulfilled, a face-threatening act (FTA) occurs causing a ‘state of disequilibrium’ (Goffman 1981:19).

The theory of speech acts proposes that language is dynamic and performative and its functions are not limited to giving information (“Speech Acts Theory” 2019). Speech acts are categorized as assertive, expressive, commissive, directive and declarative. The skewed distribution of discursual rights to perform these acts reflect the asymmetrical relations in conflict negotiations. Accordingly, speech acts reinforce power relations and embody ideological representations (Fairclough 1989).

The study focuses on the use of questions as a form of directive speech act, which can be an FTA to the questioners and the hearers. The questioners’ positive face can be negatively affected in two cases: if the desired information is not received; or if the topic of the question is opposed. Similarly, questions can threaten the hearers’ negative face by limiting their answer choices or by threatening their positive face and undermining their self-esteem (Wang 2006). According to Wang’s (2006) typology of questions as markers of power, the use of Yes/No, or close-ended questions, is more powerful than the use of Wh-questions because the former impose more constraints on the addressees. However, the Wh- open-ended questions demand giving new information and choosing a response from among a variety of choices. They are challenging because they control the topic of the conversation and “occur in an already-established environment of disagreement, accusation, complaint” (Wang 2006: 533). While negative interrogatives are assertions that impose a certain point of view, tag questions extend the conversation, and tags after declarative speech acts are reported to be the most limiting (Wang 2006). Moreover, posing questions relates to framing because exchanging the right to ask questions results in changing the social roles of the participants and their status within the speech events. In other

words, claiming the right to question indicates having a powerful status (Wang 2006: 531-538).

With regard to conflict negotiations, Wang (2006) differentiated between two types based on the enacted forms of power. The first is the institutional dialogue, which is asymmetrical by nature and is goal-directed, where power overtly exists through the use of formal speech or through favoring the powerful with certain discursal rights. The second is casual conversation as is the case between peers, friends and family members, where power covertly exists and the participants have equal participation rights. Conflict negotiation is either competitive (win or lose) or collaborative (win – win) (Fraser 2001).

Moreover, conflict negotiations provoke resistance. Resistance discourse is marked by the use of counter strategies to assert power in the face of the powerful and to exceed the discursive rights imposed by the powerful. The present study investigates the following resistance strategies: changes in conversational labor, not answering questions directly or responding to a question with another question, the use of the inclusive ‘we’ to show in-group alignments in the face of the threats or the impositions made by the powerful, or opting out from the conflict using silence as “a way of being noncommittal about what more powerful participants say” (Fairclough 1989: 136). Settlements of conflicts are either verbal as in negotiations, verbal fights, or making verbal guilt trips or non-verbal using coercion as in psychological harassment or by doing strikes or boycotts (Fraser 2001; Cortini 2001).

In relation to conversational labor, the study limits its investigation to four strategies reported to positively correlate with the level of power and to reflect the stance towards the ideology of preserving a fixed social hierarchy (Fairclough 1989; Locher 2004). The first strategy is interruptions to compete for the floor by restricting the contributions of others; the second is repetitions in uptakes or in the form of emphasis or repair to signal unmitigated disagreement or rudeness. While the third strategy is issuing presuppositions, or context interpretations by the powerful, the fourth is giving feedback in its overt form which is used more by the powerful but can also signal the attempts of the less powerful to gain power. The last strategy is the use of modals whereby modal auxiliaries are used to soften arguments and to mitigate power, expressive modality indicates commitment to the truth of a proposition. In light of Goffman’s (1981) view of footing, although the changes in the distribution of conversational labor among the participants are regarded as natural occurrences in social interactions, these indicate alterations in the interactants’ social roles and stances, causing temporary or permanent reframing of alignments.

## **5. Research data and design**

### **5.1 The data**

#### **The format of the programs “The Taste” and “MasterChef”**

For the two programs, each season begins with blind auditions of either professional or amateur cooks. In “The Taste” (TT), four judges, who also act as mentors, taste one spoonful of food to choose 16 contestants. Each episode consists of team and individual challenges. In the team challenge, each mentor selects one dish representing his or her team to be sampled by a guest judge. The mentor of the team placed last in the challenge must eliminate one of his team’s member (“The Taste” 2019).

In “MasterChef” (MC), the contestants are divided into two teams. The team members with the worst dish in the group challenge must undergo a time pressure test to make a standard dish (“MasterChef” n.d.). The two programs use the asides to create an illusion of intimacy with the audience as the team and the judges evaluate themselves and the others (Kilborn 2003).

Data consists of four conflicts from four different episodes, two conflict scenes from two English programs and two conflict scenes from their Arabic replications. These conflicts occurred either between the judges and the contestants, or between the contestants themselves. The episodes of the Arabic replications of the two programs, which retain their names in the English versions, were broadcast in 2014 and 2015.

## **5.2 Content summary of the conflict negotiation scenes**

### **The Taste - English (TTE)**

Nigella Lawson (NL), the judge/mentor, is in a very critical situation as she has only two remaining team members: Crystal and Jacqueline. The challenge theme is “Guilty Pleasures”, and the dishes must be a culinary delight. The conflict took place between NL and Crystal as each has a differing vision of the dish. With an apparent aversion to Crystal’s dish, NL attempted to convince her to change the dish. However, Crystal insisted on her choice. NL commented on Crystal’s knife skills, advising her to beware of cutting her fingers. Since Crystal refused to listen to these directions, NL decided on Jacqueline’s dish for the challenge (The Taste 2017).

### **The Taste - Arabic (TTA)**

In episode 9 broadcast in 2015, Chef Aneesa is left with three participants on her team: Galal, Nayera and Khamis. This team has been underperforming. The conflict started when they were placed last in the teams’ challenge. Out of infuriation, Chef Aneesa threatened to abandon the team if they did not do exceptionally well in the individual challenge and then she left the cooking station angrily. In response, Galal threatened to leave the competition unless the Chef came back. Hearing the team’s raised voices, Aneesa returned. During the confrontation, the team voiced their concerns that she was not showing appreciation of their efforts. Despite these perceived grudges, Chef Aneesa



convinced Galal to put his apron back and to continue with the competition (The Taste 2015).

### **MasterChef - English (MCE)**

Ashley and Taylor are in Chef Gordon Ramsay's (GR) team. In the team challenge, they made the wrong cooking decisions. The two contestants stood in front of GR and the other judges to receive the evaluation of their dish. Conflicts arose between the two contestants and were intensified in the asides as each party blamed the other for the faulty decisions (MasterChef n.d.).

### **MasterChef - Arabic (MCA)**

The contestants split into two teams for the team challenge. Each team of four was assigned a leader. The conflict occurred among the members of the Red Team in an episode broadcast in 2014. The other three team members, Afnan, Abed and Youssef did not approve of Noha's leadership skills. Afnan appeared to be the actual team leader whom the team, including Noha herself, referred to. After losing, the team faced the judges. They stated that Noha was incapable of making decisions and that she exerted the least effort in the team challenge. Noha asserted that she regarded herself as an ideal leader, one who maximized the potential of her team members by delegating tasks. Both the team and the judges refused to accept this excuse (MasterChef 2019).

## **5.3 The study design**

The study adopts a qualitative research design to investigate the oral discourse of the two conflict scenes in the English programs and the two conflict scenes in their Arabic replications. The results of the conflicts analyses are reported in relation to each of the first two research questions. The answers to the first research question unpack the nature of conflict negotiation dialogues and the nature of power.

The analyses of the second research question highlights the discursual features of power and integrate the three stages in the CLS framework in order to relate the use of speech acts, face threatening acts and the nature and distribution of the conversational labor to the immediate context of the conflicts dialogues and to reveal the targeted ideologies for homogenization.

In the discussion section, a sociolinguistic perspective is adopted in answering the third research question. This section incorporates the focus of the third stage of CLS to explain the interrelationship between the representations of power and the promoted ideologies as related to the temporal and social contextualization of their production and interpretation.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 Answers to the first research question

The intra and intercultural differences and similarities in the dynamics of power in the conflict scenes under study are represented hereunder by first outlining the commonalities between the programs before highlighting the contrasts. To start with, there are intra cultural differences in the types of conflict negotiation dialogues. In the English programs, the institutional dialogue is prevalent in MCE between the powerful GR and his team, while the conversational type marks NL's dialogue with Crystal in TTE. In the Arabic replications, the institutional dialogue is used in MCA between the judges and the contestants, while the conversational type is used in TTA in the dialogues between Chef Aneesa and her team and among the team members in MCA.

On the one hand, there is a cross-cultural similarity in the purpose behind using the institutional dialogue, which is to foreground respect for the hierarchy and to highlight the asymmetrical power relations between the judges and the participants. On the other hand, there are cross-cultural differences in the purposes behind using the conversational dialogue. In TTE, NL employs the conversational dialogue with a collaborative style in order to mitigate disagreements and to enforce a win-win situation; in contrast, Crystal's conversational dialogue is competitive in style to prove NL was at fault for opposing her decision. In the Arabic replications, the conversational dialogue is used to reflect equal power among the contestants in MCA, whereas it is utilized as a resistance strategy by the powerless in TTA, indicating the contestants' solidarity in resisting Chef Aneesa's belittling authoritarian treatment. Conversational dialogue is used by the powerful Chef Aneesa indicates a change of footing and marks taking a compromising stance towards conflict resolution.

The factors triggering conflicts indicate cross-cultural similarities. The conflicts in the English programs and the Arabic replications are driven by the need of the powerful (the judges) and the powerless (the contestants) for face saving. However, with the exception of the judges in MCA who relinquished the full exercise of their power, the need to save the positive face of the judges and the contestants is foregrounded in TTA. The opposite is true in the English programs as the need to save both negative and positive faces is highlighted.

In relation to conflict intensification and resolution, there are intra and cross-cultural differences. While in TTA, intensification occurs in direct confrontations, there is a prevailing spirit of competitiveness among the contestants in MCA but in non-direct confrontations. In TTE, the conflict intensifies mainly in the direct confrontations between NL and Crystal, whereas in MCE, intensification occurs between Ashely and Taylor in the asides as well as in direct confrontations.

Conflict resolution in the Arabic replications is temporary and non-definite. In TTA, a final equilibrium of powers is attained after Chef Aneesa pleaded with

Galal to put his apron on and not to withdraw from the competition. However, the change of footing from the authoritarian to the conciliatory Chef marks a 'concession' that was, in reality, a temporary resolution. Chef Aneesa did not grant the team the appreciation they demanded. Instead, she reiterated her threat. In MCA, the resolution to the power struggle between Noha and Afnan is left to be decided upon in the individual challenge. In the English programs, the conflict is resolved by adopting the non-settlement approach with NL in TTE who decided to ignore Crystal and to depend instead on the other contestant's dish for the team challenge and with Ashely in MCE tacitly choosing silence to opt out from the negotiation dialogue. In brief, verbal power is the only form used in the English programs and their Arabic replications.

The parameters and the sources of power differ for the judges and the contestants. Sanctions is the main source of power for all the judges in the sample since they all have the right to contestant elimination which makes the fate of the contestants the domain of their power. However, the sources of power varied among the judges with the exception of the judges in MCA, who downplayed their power. In addition to status, prestige and argumentation, charisma is most successfully used by GR in MCE. Its dramatic effect immediately showed on the faces of Ashely and Taylor while he was interrogating them. Neither NL nor Chef Aneesa successfully exploited their charismatic power. In NL's case, her charismatic power was temporarily curtailed by Crystal's defiance, making her resort to the power of argumentation. Similarly, Galal's charisma, which surpassed that of Chef Aneesa, enabled him to lead the team in resisting the Chef's threats.

During the exercise of power, the judges have to deal with its cost as in managing resistance while protecting their positive face. However, the powerful judges in the English programs have the courage to admit to that burden. On one hand, GR expresses the pressure he is under by referring to his embarrassment at Ashely and Taylor's failure by stating "What I believed in both of you weeks ago coming in this competition was nothing short of phenomenal, but right now with these two guys standing behind me ...I look the biggest idiot in this kitchen". NL's misgivings are reflected in her comments on Crystal's rejection of her advice: "I'm really a bit worried about the knife skills... some blood is going to get spilt...and maybe I'm just gonna punch that knife into my breast...". In contrast, Chef Aneesa does not clearly express the pressure she has to handle. Instead, her role shifts from being a condescending and authoritarian mentor, whose prerogative is to issue threats, to the compromiser to ensure her team remains intact.

Moving to the contestants, there is a cross-cultural similarity in their sources of power, with the exception of Taylor and Ashely in MCE, where the overwhelming power of GR effectively crushes any attempt to exercise power on their part. In brief, all the contestants resort to argumentation for resistance and

for face saving. For example, Crystal uses argumentation to reject NL's imposition on her negative face, while Galal and Khamis combine it with threats to counteract Chef Aneesa's belittling treatment that threatens their positive face. The only difference is in MCA when the contestants resort to vague responses to the judges' questions to express their disapproval of Noha as the team leader and when Afnan uses her expertise as her source of power over the team.

## 6.2 Answers to the second research question

This section highlights the similarities and the differences in the discursual realizations of power representations in conflict scenes in the English programs first before moving on to the Arabic replications. To start with, the data on the English programs show a linguistic behavior typical to that of the powerful and the powerless. Exceptions mark the tentative attempts by the powerless in the face of power. In relation to speech act, the authoritative GR in MCE uses the directive for orders: "Get it together, girls" and Wh- questions to demand information: "Why are you doing things and testing them that you have never tasted before?" In contrast, the contestants mainly use the representative speech act to respond to GR's questions.

In TTE, NL produces a wider variety of speech acts than does Crystal. She uses the expressive as in: "I'm worried you gonna cut yourself" and the directive for orders: "You've got to make sure Crystal that this is more than a good idea." Her Wh- questions to Crystal reflect the stressful and the highly charged context they share as in: "What are you thinking?" and "Where is your sweet element gonna come in?" In contrast, Crystal produces fewer speech acts as in the representative "I know it is" and reuses it with an intensifier as in "Then it really is gonna taste fantastic" to assure NL that her dish is bound to be a success. Moreover, Crystal is the only contestant in the sample who used a defying question marking objection and resistance of NL's authority "So why don't you help me make a truffle?".

With regard to conversational labor, interruptions and repetitions are used by the powerful and the powerless for different purposes. Interruptions are used for denying responsibility for the wrong decisions as in:

Ashley: That was Tylor's idea...she wanted carrot puree at the bottom of the plate...

Taylor: (interruption) No that was...

Ashley: (interruption) no...

Taylor: (interruption) No...we both said carrot puree and I said can you nail that... and you said yes...

Or, are used for face saving as in:

Crystal: I feel one hundred percent confident, Nigella...

Nigella: I do not....

Moving to repetitions, in MCE, Ashley repeats what Taylor said to signal disagreement:

Taylor: We both said carrot puree and I said can you nail that and you said yes.

Ashley: and I said leave some hole so we can have sautéed carrots.

In TTE, NL uses repetition more often than does Crystal for emphasis as in commenting on Crystal's knife skills: "I'm really worried about your fingers...I'm worried you are gonna cut yourself...I do not want you to cut yourself". Crystal uses repetition once as a take up to signal disagreement and to imply self-confidence:

Nigella: Then it really is gonna taste...

Crystal : It is gonna taste fantastic.

Moreover, the powerful use modality more often than do the powerless. In MCE, GR uses 'Just' as a restrictive and a booster emphaziser to indicate his unquestionable authority in face-to-face confrontations with Ashely and Taylor as in: "Just answer me who moved this?" Expressive modality is used to soften disagreements by GR as in: "I mean I have seen better performances", and by Ashly as in the aside: "Honestly, I did not really agree with our concept in the beginning", and Taylor as in: "I did not really agree with our concept in the beginning but I asked if we can".

In TTE, NL uses expressive modality as in: "It may be fabulous... I am not sure it fits into this challenge", and in: "Then in this case you know I am here to give suggestions", and the modal auxiliary 'Could' as in: "You could do what you want to do". NL also uses 'But' within her turn to reevaluate her own contribution as in "I'm here to give suggestions, but you could do what you want to do". Crystal uses expressive modality once during the conflict to give an emotional reason for her choice: "I feel one hundred percent confident, Nigella".

The judges in MCE and TTE, use overt feedback in the direct confrontations with the contestants and covert feedback to their fellow judges and the audience in the asides. In MCE, GR overtly tells Ashely and Taylor: "I have never ever seen such a dysfunctional 45 minutes in the history of this competition" and covertly in the aside, he comments to the other judges "Taylor and Ashly are flustered in like anything... Oh my Lord". In TTE, NL uses covert feedback in the aside as in: "Crystal is really set on doing what she wants to do" and uses a variety of structures for overt feedback. She uses objection in the form of question: "But where is your sweet element gonna be?" and inserts an intensifier to indicate the necessity for Crystal to change her dish when she knew that another team was doing the same dish as in: "You are going absolutely against them". The contestants, as the powerless, use the asides for feedback as in Taylor commenting on their decision- making process: "Our final dish is completely not we have planned on. Ashly and I were definitely not on the same page".

Presuppositions are formed mainly by the powerful in the English-speaking programs. In MCE, the powerful GR presupposes a better quality from his team whereas NL presupposes that the contestants are here to learn and that they are expected to respect her expertise: “This is about gaining new skills and perhaps listening to someone who has some idea of what is needed for the competition in order to progress”. During the conflict, she presupposes that Crystal’s dish is not a good choice: “I just don’t see how it is gonna work”. However, Crystal, in her attempts to protect her right to make decisions, and to stand for them, presupposes that her dish “will taste fantastic.”

Moving to the Arabic replications, the voice of contestants in these programs is more heard as they employ the linguistic behavior that is expected from the powerful. They use a wider variety of speech acts than do the powerful. For example, in TTA, Galal’s orders to the team project his powerful status: “Let’s not talk about the past...Let’s focus on what’s coming up”.

“Ihna mish hnitkalim fi illi fat, khallina fi illi jay”

Galal uses the declarative followed by a tag question: “The Chef is not coming, right?” to express his disappointment.

“Il’shef mosh ha ti;jy, sah?”

Khamis uses the representative speech act to draw the Chef’s attention to the problem “Chef, we did not expect you to leave us; we did what we had to do”:

“Shef, ihna ma:kona:sh mutawkeyi:n inek hatsi:bi:na, ihna ɔmlna ili: ɔlina:”

Galal uses the expressive to articulate how he feels towards Chef Aneesa’s patronizing treatment “Seriously I’m fed up with all this”.

“ Biga:d, ?na zeh?ht min kul dah”

Furthermore, to give personal reasons for refusing to put up with Chef Aneesa’s treatment, Galal said: “I have confidence in my experience”.

“ ?na ɔndi: seqa fi: khbreti:”

Galal also uses the commissive speech act in reference to the apron he took off : “I will put it on when she comes back”.

“?wa:l ma: elshif Aneesa tiji: halbesu”.

In contrast, Chef Aneesa uses a commissive speech act in the form of a threat in: “If you cannot show me that you can be creative and that something has improved in you, I’m not going to work with you”.

“?idh ma rah tefarjoni: inokome fi:kome ?ibtika:r, fi:kome tatawar shi:, ma: rah ?eshtaghal mekum khalas, yalla”

The few instances of Wh- questions in TTA characterize the challenging situation facing Chef Aneesa and the contestants as one of disagreements, disappointments and complaints. For example, Khamis, disapproving of Galal’s decision to withdraw from the competition, uses the exclamatory: “What do you mean that you are backing out Galal?”

“Galal, tinsheb i:h bas ya Galal?”

The contestants in MCA exhibit a similar linguistic behavior. They employ a wider variety of speech acts than do the judges. For example, Youssef uses the representative speech act to declare his opinion: “Noha was not a distinctive member in the team”.

“Noha ma: ka:nt cuduw momayaz fi: al fari?”

Afnan, as the actual team leader, produces more directives during the team challenge than do the others: “If you are finished with the mushroom clean it and cut it”

“ʔidh kuntum ʔentahitu: min al mashrum, nadhfooh wa ʔatacu:”

Her use of expressive acts implies having the leader’s right to evaluate the performance of others as in “God bless you, Abed”.

“ʔlah yebarek lak ya cbd”

In MCA, the judges use a limited variety of speech acts in contrast to the contestants (the powerless). For example, they use the directive speech act in the form of Wh- questions to demand an explanation of why the Red Team lost the challenge “What happened with you? How did you distribute the work, Noha?”

“I:sh sa:r ma:ckum? Ki:f waza:cti: eshughl ya Noha?”

and in the form of Yes/No question, which is a feature of institutional dialogue that reflects power and authority as in: “Does this mean that you are accusing Noha, as the team captain, of not living up to her responsibilities?”.

“Yacni: inti: keda betlumi: Noha kakaptin ʔsar fi: huʔuʔu wa fi: muhematu:”

One exclusive feature of the linguistic behavior of the contestants in MCA is that their language of resistance constitutes mainly of offering vague responses to the judges’ questions. For example, there is Youssef’s single reply: “No comment” when asked about Noha’s leadership style, “la: tacli:k”, and Afnan’s ambiguous answer:

“The boys can answer your question who did well as the team captain”.

“ʔiʔwlad yeʔdaru: yejawbu:k cla hada ʔelsoʔa:l mi:n ”

Moving to conversational labor, interruptions and repetitions are not used in MCA due to the prevailing institutional dialogue and avoidance of face-to-face confrontations. In TTA, repetition of orders by Chef Aneesa strengthens her powerful grip on the team and consolidates her status as the powerful authority figure while Galal uses repetition for emphasis “I swear to God...I swore by God once again”.

“ʔhlef b’llah..ba:cd ma hlaft b’llah:

On the one hand, the judges in MCA do not use modality because they tend to refrain from displaying their power. On the other hand, Afnan uses ‘But’ for disagreement: “Today Noha made me take the role of the captain but she only has the title because she is hitting below the belt”.

“ʔel you:m Noha khalatni: ʔkhod du:r al captin bas heya bas moga:rad du:r al captin ʔsha:n heya: sahih betelcbha: bi muntaha: ʔdanaʔa:”

In TTA, Chef Aneesa uses expressive modality to indicate commitment to the truth of her utterances as in: “You know that ...today it is even stranger...I mean we’ve come last”.

“wa elyu:m aghrab yaʔni talʔna bi ʔkhar markaz”

and Galal uses ‘But’ ‘lakin’ to express disappointment as in: “But you left us and walked away...”.

“wa lakin enti: mesheti: wa sebtina:”

The language of resistance in TTA is marked by the use of the inclusive ‘We’ which implies solidarity as in: “We can talk to her later” and to set of Chef Aneesa’s authority as in: “The problem is that we feel sorry for ourselves”.

“ihna momken netkalim mach baʔdi:n”

“el moshkela ʔnu: ʔhna: zaʔlani:n ʔla: halna:”

In the Arabic replications, the right to give feedback is shared by the powerful and the powerless in equal measures. In their confrontation in TTA, Chef Aneesa and the team use overt feedback as in the Chef’s: “You know that I am not at all happy. Instead of you improving yourselves, you are going backward. Three episodes till now and we have achieved nothing”

“ʔentom ʔa:rʔi:n ʔenu: ʔna: mosh mabstu:ta: menkum ʔabadan. Badal ma: tetawaru: ʔam tergaʔu: la wara:”

and the contestants “We work together the three of us...you cannot do that”.

“ʔhena beneshtaghal maca: baʔdh...ma: yenfaʔsh keda... ma: yenfaʔsh keda...”

In MCA, the judges use covert feedback in the asides to comment on the contestants’ performance as in: “The only problem is that they all want to be leaders... too many chefs spoil the broth”.

“ʔl mushkela ʔlwahi:da: ʔanahom kulahum keyadiyyi:n...ʔdha ketret ʔshefya: tekhrab ʔshoraba:”

They use covert feedback to evaluate Noha’s leadership skills: “This is your second time as the team leader, and we are seeing you here in the individual challenge”.

“hadhi tanyi: mara: tokoni: kaptin ʔl fariq wa nelaqiki ʔudamna:”

However, the contestants use covert feedback in the asides to evaluate their own performance or that of each other, but they avoid using overt back by resorting to vagueness.

Finally, the powerful and the powerless share the right to make presuppositions, which are interpretations of the context usually made by the powerful. For example, in TTA, Chef Aneesa and Galal are the two powerful figures in the conflict negotiation. Chef Aneesa presupposes that threatening to leave the team will make them improve their performance and Galal presupposes



that mentor appreciation is a prerequisite for continuing in the challenge: “There is no appreciation whatsoever...why should I continue with the challenge then?”.

“ma: fi:sh ʔay taqdi:r khalis ...ʔkammel ʔ'ttaḥdi: leih”

In MCA, while the judges anticipate the team’s defeat, Afnan presupposes that Noha is being deliberately mean.

Overall, the conflict scenes in the English programs and their Arabic replications constantly suggest to the viewers the ideology of competitiveness, which inspires the format of these programs. This is conveyed in the lexical choices that evoke the spirit of competition as in “Challenge”, “Leader” “Captain”, “Last” and “Competition”. Moreover, the results indicate cross-cultural differences and similarities in the discursal representations of power. Conflict discourse by the powerful across the sample displays linguistic and discursal features typical of dominant discourse. The salient linguistic features are the use of directive speech acts in the form of questions, using the two forms of feedback and forming presuppositions. However, the discursal behavior of the powerful in the English programs is further marked by the use of expressive modality, which softens the directives and the use of expressive speech acts to express concerns and disappointments. These two linguistic devices rarely appear in the Arabic replications where the opposite is true whereby the discursal behavior of the powerful in the Arabic replications is marked by the use of commissive and directive speech act as in threats and promises.

In contrast, the discursal behavior by the contestants (the powerless) is generally marked by the use of representative speech acts to answer the questions of the judges. However, the discursal behavior of the contestants in the English programs is denoted by the use of a single instant of a defying Wh- question in addition to the tendency not to give feedback and to rarely form presuppositions. In the Arabic replications, the contestants (the powerless) form presuppositions and use the directives in the form of orders, Wh- and tag questions, and commissive speech acts as in threats and promises in addition to the use of the inclusive ‘We’ as well as the use of vague responses to show in-group alignments in the face of threats and impositions.

## 7. Discussion:

The broadcast English programs and their Arabic replications in the sample are historically positioned in an age when the ideology of capitalism is naturalized in the public cognition “as the overall system(s) in which contemporary societies develop” (Blommaert 2005:159). In one sense, capitalist ideology established its own discourse as the “discourse of contemporary times”. The capitalist dominant discourse, also described as “strategic discourse”, is “oriented to instrumental goals, [and] to getting results” in contrast to communicative discourse which is “oriented to reaching understanding between participants” (Fairclough 1989: 198). The capitalist dominant discourse became popular with the emergence of

television as a cultural institution. In fact, TV facilitated the internalization of capitalism whose discourse “colonized people’s lives” (Fairclough 1989:197).

At another level, a distinct feature of contemporary media is the replication of foreign TV programs as a tool to globalize capitalism and its ideological attributes: democracy, consumerism and competitiveness. These programs promote democracy by granting ordinary individuals equal rights to fame and the freedom to take on different personas. They promote consumerism by celebrating gifted individuals, and they endorse the ideology of competitiveness as a reflection of the global capitalist system (Fairclough, 2003; Biressi and Nunn 2005:146; Blommaert 2005). Moreover, the study has shown that the quest for fame magnified the individual’s right to face saving, which emerges as the common driver for the conflicts in the data. In such a way, media plays the leading role in the performance approach to the internalization of modeled identities.

However, the results indicate that the targeted ideologies for homogenization in the Arabic replications were not all identical to those targeted by the original programs. For example, the English programs foreground respect for the expertise of the powerful. Ignoring this expertise is an FTA to the powerful thereby triggering the conflicts. Moreover, the discourse of the conflict negotiation dialogues in these programs grants the powerful the discursive tools to maintain the upper hand in the struggle for power, while at the same time limiting the discursive contributions of the contestants (the powerless). This indicates the prominence of the ideology of preserving social hierarchy (Fairclough 1989; Locher 2004).

In contrast, imposing on the negative face of the powerless constitutes the FTA that unleashes the conflicts and the struggle for power in the Arabic replications. Moreover, granting the powerless the discursive rights of the powerful leads to a change of footing. Within this context, the powerful are presented as either relinquishing their sources of power or accepting to subject them to negotiation. We may then conclude that a different perspective of power is modeled in the Arabic replications. This perspective validates the claim of the reality TV supporters who celebrate this genre as a “platform” marking a “more democratic era of TV” (Biressi and Nunn 2005: 2; Odgen 2006) and echoes the findings by O’Keeffe (2011), Matwick and Matwick (2015) and Tominc (2015) on the ideological transformative role of TV cooking programs.

The historical positioning of the broadcast Arabic replications of cooking competition programs between the years 2014 and 2015 indexes a social meaning. The period in question witnessed a decline in the force of the first waves of revolutions and protests in the region, referred to as the ‘Arab Spring’. This decline constituted what became known as the ‘Arab Winter’, a period marked by an intense struggle between the state and the civil society. In some Arab countries bearing witness to these upheavals, the struggle ended in favor of the power of the

state. It is worth noting that the Arabic replications clearly demonstrated that the verbal form of resistance is discouraged, as indicated by containing the contestants' attempts in TTA to strike against the overbearing authority of Chef Aneesa and to boycott the competition. This suggests that the ideologies and the representations of power promoted in the Arabic replications showcase the demands of the powerless for more freedom of speech and action.

## **8. Conclusion**

This study was driven by the reviews in the literature on the ability of media discourse to “construct deep ideological messages out of trivial, sociologically insignificant events or phenomena” (Blommaert 2005: 163). The findings endorse the conclusions of the ideological role of cooking competition TV programs in promoting “the visibility of ordinary people” and amplifying “the audibility of their voices” by creating a cultural frame marked by authentic representations of the powerless and the ordinary to encourage “pseudo-intimacy” with these representations (Biressi and Nunn 2005:2). Therefore, the qualitative analysis of the four cases of conflict and struggle over power generates two possible hypotheses: first, the representations of power and ideologies transmitted through the replicated programs differ from those transmitted by the origin programs; second, the ideologies of the Arabic replications mirror the conditions and the demands of their societies at a specific point of the history of the region when these replications were broadcasted.

It should be noted that reflecting certain ideologies in social and discursal practices does not necessarily raise the public awareness of these ideologies due to their implicit nature (Van Dijke 2006). Therefore, empirical research is still needed to investigate the validity of the above hypotheses as well as to unpack the nature and measure the size of the ideological effects of cooking TV programs on the audience and to explore the degree to which the audience are aware of the transmitted ideologies through this genre of reality TV.

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