



MANIPULATING NEWS LANGUAGE ON GAZA WAR: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The present study is a Critical Discourse Analysis of the media language related to positive-self representation and negative-other representation projected through the coverage of Gaza war. It aims at finding out the ideologies of positive-self representation and negative-other representation in media discourse related to Gaza war. The present study employs van Dijk's (2005) analytical framework, including van Dijk's ideological square and van Dijk's socio-cognitive model to explore the ideologies of positive-self representation and negative-other representation in the news language on Gaza war. This study analyzes 25 samples taken from 10 international media outlets and websites to expose their manipulation practices on the discursal and linguistic levels, influencing people's minds, increasing their polarity, altering the Gaza war's conception. The findings of the study indicate that media discourse regarding the Gaza war is biased. This is because anti-Israel actors are always stereotyped as extremists and terrorists, which participated in altering the perception of the international outlets of the conflict in Palestine from a war against Palestinians to a war against 'terrorism' i.e. Hamas. That is, Israel is always positively represented (positive-self representation) and Palestine is negatively represented (negative-other representation).

Key words: Gaza war, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Ideology, Media Discourse, Negative-Other Representation, Positive-Self Representation.

Introduction

During the war on Gaza, many media outlets manipulated certain linguistic and ideological strategies to favor a conflict party over the other and shed focus on a party's casualties while, on the other hand, cloak the casualties of the other party. According to Aljazeera (2023), media experts say some agencies are 'legitimising Israeli war crimes' in Gaza. The Intercept (2024) says that the "coverage of Gaza war in the New York Times and other major newspapers heavily



favored Israel”. A quantitative analysis by The Intercept shows major newspapers skewed their coverage toward Israeli narratives in the first six weeks of the assault on Gaza. Highly emotive terms for the killing of civilians like “slaughter,” “massacre,” and “horrific” were reserved almost exclusively for Israelis who were killed by Palestinians, rather than the other way around. The term “slaughter” was used by editors and reporters to describe the killing of Israelis versus Palestinians 60 to 1, and “massacre” was used to describe the killing of Israelis versus Palestinians 125 to 2. “Horrific” was used to describe the killing of Israelis versus Palestinians 36 to 4, (The Intercept, 2024).

Therefore, one **objective** of the present study is to shed light on some linguistic tools manipulated by media discourse producers to engineer the audiences’ attitudes regarding war on Gaza. It employs some tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to uncover the relationship between discourse structure and ideological representation in discourse. Another **objective** is to uncover the underlying ideologies encoded in the language of news concerning the killing and violence taking place in Gaza. In short, the present study aims at demonstrating how ideologies are reflected in language.

This investigation explains, interprets, and discusses the significance of the implied ideologies and identities in news language. In this study, the researcher observes the use of linguistics choices as effective, persuasive, and manipulative linguistic features that may change people's opinion, attitudes, identities, and interests. Throughout this examination, Positive Self Representation and Negative Other Representation from the ideological square of van Dijk (2004b) help the readers to identify how the parties of the conflict in Gaza are represented.

Theoretical Framework

Sheyhislami (2001) states that CDA is the field that is "concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive source of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political, and historical contexts" (p.1)

In his definition of CDA, van Dijk covers crucial points in relation to its nature. He is interested in examining the linguistic strategies involved in the reproduction of social constructs like “power” and “dominance” within discourse.

Quoting Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p.271-280), van Dijk (1998) lists the fundamentals of CDA as follows:

1. CDA addresses social problems.
2. Power relations are discursive.
3. Discourse continues society and culture.
4. Discourse does ideological work.
5. Discourse is historical.



6. The link between text and society is mediated.
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8. Discourse is a form of social action. (p.2)

Fowler (1981, 1986, 1996) doesn't use the term 'CDA', but he stresses a major CDA principle which is the interrelation between language and society when he refers to the significance of a "critical analysis [of discourse] ... which recognizes pragmatics and social and historical context" (1996, p.9). Moreover, by stating that language "crystallizes and stabilizes ideas" (1996, p.29), he stresses the relationship between language and ideology.

According to Fairclough (2006), CDA approaches language as one facet of social life which is closely interconnected with other facets of social life and is therefore a significant (though generally some neglected) aspect of all the major issues in social scientific research –economic systems, social relations, power and ideology, institutions, social change, social identity and so on.

CDA and Media Discourse

The two fields - CDA and media - have become increasingly intertwined or interdependent. Or "they are sharing a paradoxical relationship whereby one needs the other to survive, or rather thrive, yet each endorses considerable hostility for the other" (Bhatia, 2006, p. 174). Flowerdew (2020) confirms that attitudes are not innate but learned and language is a participant in constructing social reality.

van Dijk (1995) raises a very important question about the role that media plays in all fields of life; he says:

The question I would like to address here is, what is the role of the media in this complex contemporary framework of social, economic and cultural forces? Markets, politics, policies, exploitation, and marginalization all need an ideological basis. Such ideologies require production and reproduction through public text and talk, which in our modern times are largely generated or mediated by the mass media. (p.28).

Fairclough (1989) comments on the hidden power of the mass media, stating that "mass-media discourse is interesting because the nature of the power relations enacted in it is often unclear, and there are no reasons for seeing it as involving hidden relations of power" (p.49). Fairclough (1989) also argues that the power in relations in media discourse is shown in the way "producers exercise power over consumers in that they have sole producing rights and can therefore determine what is included or excluded, how events are represented and (as we have seen) even the subjects positions of their audiences" (p.50).

In the present study, the hidden nature of social power relations is obvious. That is, it is not clear if news agencies, when publishing news, have hidden interests or not. In other words, the ideological background or interests of news reports are ambiguous or "hidden", but we are almost



sure that every news agency has specific embedded message to be delivered. Thus, the focus on media discourse comes not only from the fact that it is the discourse type that is most popularly studied by critical analysts, but also because of its relevance to the present study.

van Dijk (1995) addresses the different involvements of media, both national and international, giving an example to clarify how they deal with racism and ethnic discrimination at a specific time; he argues:

To be sure, where ethnic conflict and racism are concerned, most mainstream media will reject extremism, violence, and blatant discrimination and exclusion. They, thereby, follow the official ideology of tolerance and equality propagated by national Constitutions and the charters of the United Nations and other international organisations. But locally and in actual practice, the role of the media is less positive. It has frequently been documented that ethnicism and racism are exacerbated by at least some of the media, as well as by the political and social elites that control them or have preferential access to them. (p.28)

van Dijk (1995) gives some examples about the negative role of media in some conflicts and how media are politically employed. He states:

We have witnessed the role of television and much of the press in the rise of nationalism in Serbia (Meeuwis 1993). Radio was used to incite ethnic hatred in Rwanda. Similar observations maybe made for the role of the media in ethnic conflicts in South Asia as well as in several parts of the former Soviet Union. (p.28).

van Dijk (1995) illustrates the nature of the relation between media and audience, he states:

The more the media were found to be powerful, the less independence was attributed to the audience, and vice versa, the more the public was assumed to be autonomous in its media usage, the less powerful the media were thought to be. (p.31).

Obviously, media are not only a tool that simply carries news to audiences; in fact, media control audiences and direct them according to hidden interests and specific ideologies, and they have become one of the most influential and serious means that dominate audiences.

van Dijk (1995) concludes his observation concerning the coverage policy of media, stating that "[i]n sum, in present global conflicts, and in ongoing and increasingly harsh forms of inequality, mainstream western media are far from innocent or impartial. On the contrary, they are an inherent part of the problems." (pp.30-31).

CDA and Ideology

Discourse and ideology are inextricably linked. Kress (1985) stresses the relation between ideology and discourse, stating that "[t]he defined and delimited set of statements that constitute a discourse are themselves expressive of and organized by a specific ideology. That is, ideology and discourse are aspects of the same phenomenon, regarded from two different standpoints" (p.30). Additionally, Nichols (1981) emphasizes the role of social relations stating that "[i]deology is how the existing ensemble of social relations represents itself to individuals; it is the image a society gives of itself in order to perpetuate itself" (p.1)

van Dijk (2003) also clarifies the relation between discourse and ideology, stating that "a theory of ideology without a theory of discourse is ... fundamentally incomplete" (p.88).



Ideology is regarded as one featuring principle of critical discourse analysis. Gee (1996) argues “discourses are inherently ideological.... they crucially involve a set of values and viewpoints about the relationships between people and the distribution of social goods” (p.5).

Obviously, CDA examines how underlying ideologies work and how goals are achieved directly or indirectly through hidden messages sent to audiences consciously or subconsciously, directly or indirectly using illusive linguistic tools that can lead the public opinion to the intended direction.

Furthermore, ideologies are not always negative or bad, rather they can be 'good' or 'bad', 'negative' or 'positive'. This depends on the consequences and effects of the practice of ideology within society. van Dijk (2001) states that "both racism and anti-racism are ideologies, and so are sexism and feminism" (p.14). In other words, since the concept of ideology defined by van Dijk (2004a) in terms of "the fundamental cognitive beliefs that are the basis of the social representations shared by members of groups" (p.27), these members and their beliefs decide if ideology is positive or not.

van Dijk’s Ideological Square

A fundamental factor in van Dijk’s model is ideology as it forms the structure of discourse and can be expressed explicitly and implicitly. If implicitly expressed in discourse, it is not easy to identify ideologies. van Dijk, therefore, introduces the term “ideological square” for analyzing ideologies, in which he identifies four discursive strategies. The square components are positive-self representation, negative-other representation, self-identity description, norms, and values description (see, Figure 1 below).

Positive-self representation is used to emphasize one's own good characteristics while negative-other representation is to reveal the others' bad or evil characteristics. Self-identity description means constructing or manufacturing a positive identity of the ‘threatened group’. Norm and value description focuses on the marginalized group’s emphasis of equality and justice, and the other's violation of norms and values (Badawi 2023).

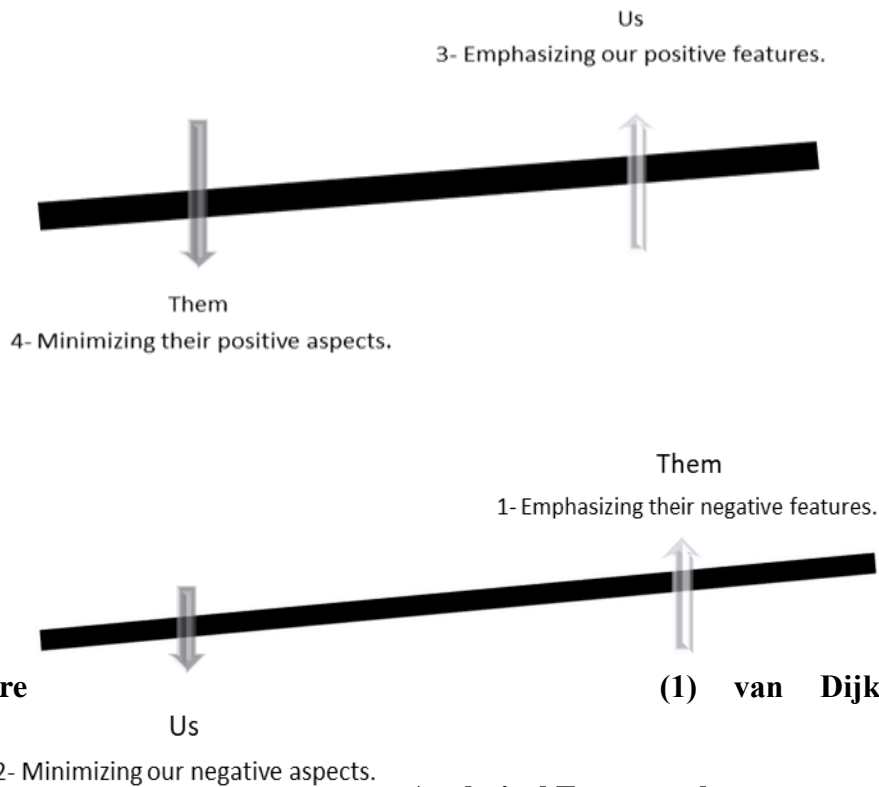


Figure Square

(1) van Dijk's Ideological

Analytical Framework

The researcher adopts van Dijk's (2005) analytical framework that focuses on semantic analysis as a framework for the analysis of the present study. However, syntactic analysis is also considered as media discourse producers have multiple choices other than semantic manipulation techniques (such as syntax manipulation) to manipulate discourse. To analyze a text, van Dijk (2005) suggests two levels of analysis namely macro level and micro level:

Macro level is on broader scale comprises power relations between groups and institutions, power as to control, control of text as well as discourse, access and dominance. On other hand, micro level of CDA deals with power relations between social actors of a group. It consists of language, discourse, verbal interaction and social practices. (Quoted in Ismail et al 2019)

According to Ismail et al (2019), van Dijk's (2005) analytical framework employs two macro strategies i.e. positive-self representation and negative-other representation. This means, different social groups have different ideological positions in any ideological conflict. These groups are polarized as 'Us' and 'Them' and presented through ideologies. The discursive moves that mediate these ideologies include:

Topics

Headlines, in most cases, deliver the most important piece of information and affect people's



interpretation of the text. Mostly, topicalized information presents 'Us' positively and 'Others' negatively.

Level of description

It refers to the level of details about in-group good things and out-group bad things. Level of description means 'to give many or few details about an event, or to describe it at a rather abstract, general level, or at the level of specifics' (van Dijk, 2005).

Euphemism

It means to select an indirect expression to substitute a more sensitive one. For example, some media outlets employ the word 'died' instead of 'killed' during the coverage of Gaza war to cloak the actor's criminality and do not arouse the audiences' emotions against it.

Implicitness and Explicitness

In light of van Dijk's ideological square, bad behavior of "Others" should be explicitly expressed while the bad behavior of "Us" should be tacitly stated (i.e., hidden). Concealing the bad attributes of "Us" is the extreme line of implicitness.

Disclaimers

Apparent denial, empathy, benevolence, and concessions are ways used in strategic maneuvering of argumentative discourse. A well-known example of apparent denial is "I have nothing against them, but they are (rude)" reveals that this strategy starts with a clause that denies real feelings and attitudes of the speaker while it ends (the rest of the sentence) with negative statements about the others (van Dijk, 2003).

Topoi

According to van Dijk (2005), topoi serve as basis criteria and readymade statements that could be utilized in arguments since people tend to use topoi repetitively regardless of topoi validity. Topoi are critical since people have the power to vote for or against any law or policy when influenced by certain ideologically-driven topoi.

Contrast

Dominant group utilizes "contrast" to emphasize its positive image and the others' negative image. "We plant, they reap" is a typical example of contrast. It is a form of polarization to emphasize our good things and their bad things (van Dijk, 2005).

Actor description

Actor description is controlled by ideologies of 'Us' and 'Them'. Actors may be described as the members of a group or as an individual, or by their first name, or by their family name, or by their positions, or relations to the other people' (van Dijk, 2005).

Authority

Authority means quoting authorities' statements to support or refute a claim. According to van Dijk (2005), speakers are accountable for what they say. Therefore, they quote an authority's statement as evidence of belief for those who deny it.

Categorization

Categorizing social groups into in-groups and out-groups and associating them with different ideological groups is called categorization. It labels social actors and proceeds to the generalization of in-group 'Us' with positive attributions and out-group 'Them' with negative



attributions. Social actors are polarized on the basis of inclusion and exclusion (van Dijk, 2005).

Evidentiality

Some authors use facts of certain types to support a claim and persuade audiences of certain information.

Lexicalization

Wherein authors select specific words carrying certain connotations for negative representation of the 'other' and positive representation of the 'us.

Polarization

It is to attribute negative things to the out-group and positive attributes to the in-group,

Vagueness

Creating ambiguity and uncertainty in meaning (Ismail et al 2019).

Game Number

It means using number or statistic figures to support the credibility of the ideologies of positive-self representation and negative-other representation (van Dijk, 2005).

Research Methodology

The sample analysis is conducted on 25 articles, news stories and news reports on the Gaza war published by 10 international media outlets and websites. The focus of this study is only on those news pieces in which ideologies of positive-self representation and negative-other representation have been embedded. The researcher believes that critical discourse analysis is a very useful tool with its discursive moves to explore these ideologies. These ideological news pieces are, therefore, critically analyzed by using the selected framework. The analysis has been carried out at sentence level. The sentences are randomly selected from ideological media discourses for the critical analysis. The analyzed sentences are numbered from 1 to 25 and the links of the original articles, news stories, and news reports are listed in the references list at the end of this study.

Discussion and Results

The researcher conducted a critical discourse analysis of news stories, reports, and articles on Israel's war on Gaza, using van Dijk's analytical framework. The analysis covers some discursive moves that mediate ideologies including:

Topics

Topics of media outlets' articles are ideological because they provide a gist of ideological information in favor of Israel. To name a few, topics of Fox News and The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) are best examples of this discursive move, as they tropicalize positive information about Israel and negative information about Palestine, which is an ideological function of topics (van Dijk, 2005).

1. *Israeli forces killed 40 Hamas terrorists, located weapons cache and underground tunnel in latest operation.* Fox News (2024)
2. *U.S. Experts Say Evidence Suggests Palestinian Militants' Rocket Hit Gaza Hospital.* The Wall Street Journal (2023)



Example (1) topicalizes extreme negative information about Palestine ‘negative other representation’. It explicitly considers Palestinian victims as ‘terrorists’ and implicitly justifies killing them. The ideological function of this topic maintains the **topos** (terrorism combat) that Israel and other superpowers work on rooting it deeply in the subconsciousness of the audiences. Example (2) is an extremely critical one as it exonerates Israel of the accusations directed to it regarding targeting a hospital in Gaza resulted in 500 deaths among them women and children. Words such as ‘experts’ and ‘evidence’ are topicalized to add validity and credibility to the accusation directed to the Palestinians and make it trustworthy. Finally, words such as ‘terrorists’ and ‘militants’ are topicalized (negative other representation) to indirectly justify the Israeli attack on Gaza and eliminate sympathy with Palestinian victims. In short, the authors topicalize positive things about Israel and de-emphasize negative things about it and the same time they emphasize negative things about Palestine and de-emphasize positive things about it (van Dijk ideological square).

Euphemism

Some authors use indirect expressions to substitute more sensitive ones to indirectly ease negative acts. For instance, in example (3):

3. *Accidentally a stray bullet found its way into the van ahead and that killed a three or four-year-old young lady*, (Sky News Britain) cited in The National (2024).

The sentence shows Sky News reporting on the death of the child Ruqaya Ahmad Odeh Jahalin, who was killed by Israeli forces in a shooting near the Palestinian village of Beit Ikka (The National 2024). By saying ‘three or four-year-old young lady’ instead of ‘child’, the broadcaster's reporter tries to ‘un-child’ Palestinian children to ease the negative impact of the crime. Even though killing an innocent lady is a heinous crime, using the word ‘lady’ instead of ‘child’ eases the crime slightly and cloaks the reality that may stir emotions of sympathy with Palestinians. Employing the expression ‘a stray bullet’ is another way to justify the Israeli crime by indirectly stating that the child was unintentionally killed by a ‘a stray bullet’ and that it is not a deliberate killing. In example (4):

4. *The targeted attack was the latest in a surge of violence inside the Gaza Strip since Israel launched a counteroffensive against Hamas*, Fox News (2024).

The word ‘*counteroffensive*’ indirectly suggests that Israel’s attack on Gaza is a response to a prior attack by Hamas. This type of euphemism eases the crimes committed by Israel during its assault on Palestinians and depicts this assault within the framework of self-defense right topos. Despite being a direct way of discourse manipulation, linguistic manipulation is still an effective technique widely used to influence people’s understandings. Lexical analysis, thus, is a straightforward and effortless mechanism employed to interpret the elites’ ideologies and attitudes.

Topoi

Israel employs readymade statements that could be utilized in arguments since people tend to use topoi repetitively regardless of topoi validity. Topoi are critical since people have the power to vote for or against any law or policy when influenced by certain ideologically-driven topoi. For example, pro-Israel media outlets tend to stress readymade topoi such as ‘the right to self-



defense' and 'terrorism combat' (see examples 1&4) to engineer the audiences' attitudes and mobilize crowds in support of Israel's political struggle against Palestinians. Examples (5&6) go in line with both topoi:

5. *Israel suffered a brutal terrorist attack on Oct. 7 and had a right to respond forcefully.* The Washington Post (2024).
6. *Israel launched its bombardment and ground invasion of the Gaza Strip after Hamas' October 7 terrorist attack.* CNN (2024a).

The reporters of The Washington Post and CNN promote the topoi adopted by the Israeli narrative, namely 'the right to self-defense' and 'terrorism combat'. This Ideological move is meant to both support the Israeli narrative and justifies any possible criticism may be directed to Israel in relation to its attack on Gaza.

Categorization

During the coverage of the war on Gaza, some media outlets construct in-groups and out-groups and associate people with two main ideological groups namely Israelis and Palestinians. This discursive construction starts with labeling of political actors, proceeds to the generalization of in-group 'us' with positive attributions and out-group 'them' with negative attributions. Political actors are polarized on the basis of inclusion and exclusion. Consider the following examples:

7. *The Israeli Defense Forces said it killed roughly 40 terrorists during its expanded ground operation.* Fox News (2024).
8. *Hundreds of Hamas gunmen invaded Israel, killing about 1,300 people and taking some 240 others back to Gaza as hostages.* BBC (2023)
9. *Israel reports that 182 of its soldiers have been killed inside the Gaza Strip during its fight against Hamas terrorists.* Fox News (2024).

The reporters of both BBC and Fox News categorize the parties of the conflict as positively represented in-group (Israel) and negatively represented out-group (Palestine). That is, the conflict parties are ideologically polarized through attributing positive attributes to the in-group and negative attributes to the out-group i.e. categorizing the war parties as good and evil. For instance, the positive expression 'Israeli Defense Forces' is attributed to the Israeli forces, and it is the official legitimate name of the Israeli army, while, on the other hand, negative expressions like 'terrorists' and 'gunmen' attributed to the Palestinian resistance. In other words, the authors want to say this is a war between a rightful legitimate authority and a terrorist militia i.e. the Palestinians. The landlords were depicted as terrorists while the newcomers (i.e. Israelis) are being always depicted as a legitimate authority that has the legitimate right to self-defense.

Vagueness

The previous examples namely (1, 2, 5, 6, and 8) illustrate how vagueness is utilized to deceive audiences during the ongoing war in Gaza. "The terrorists" are not clearly defined and the majority of foreign reports on Gaza war may contain vague words such as "terrorists", "militants" and "gunmen" without any obvious reference to who the real enemies are. Thus, pro-Israel audiences will most likely presuppose that those enemies are the opponents or anyone who opposes Israel (Presupposition). By analyzing the context discourse of the war on Gaza, this



implication can be readily understood since Israel is accused of being a brutal aggressor by the Palestinians and their supporters. The reason behind not revealing who the enemies are could be the fear of the reaction of the local and international communities since “the enemies” are in fact Palestinian civilians living in Gaza. Obviously, the pro-Israel outlets do not want to verify the pro-Palestinian narrative that Israel is ‘a brutal aggressor that insanely kills innocent people’.

Game Number

According to van Dijk (2005), using numbers or statistics to support the credibility of the ideologies of positive-self representation and negative-other representation is called game number. This analytical device is very helpful in showing the objectivity in the ideologies of positive-self representation and negative-other representation (Ismail et al 2019). There are many examples of this analytical move in the articles and news stories on Gaza war, see examples (7 &8) and:

10. *Hamas launched at least 5000 rockets from Gaza directed against Israel. This killed around 1400 Israelis with many Israeli soldiers and civilians including women and children.* BYJU’s (2023).
11. *Close to 250,000 people are forced to celebrate the rituals of Jewish life far from home in strange surroundings.* The Telegraph (2024).

In these examples, for Hamas’ negative representation, the ideological move of game number has been used to arouse the readers’ emotions against Hamas, and to support the credibility of the ideologies of positive-self representation of Israel. That is, giving accurate numbers about the rockets launched by Hamas against Israel and accurate numbers about the Israeli casualties enhances the credibility of the claims and accusations directed by Israel to the Palestinians. In example (11), The Telegraph’s reporter mentioned the huge number of Jews deprived from celebrating Jewish rituals to arouse the audiences’ emotions against the acts of Palestinians. The ideology of positive-self representation and negative-other representation has been emphasized through the ideological and analytical device, game number i.e. positive things of ‘us’ and negative things of ‘them’ have been emphasized through statistical figures.

Actor Description & Authority

Actor description is controlled by ideologies of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Here are some examples of actor description ideology:

12. *The U.S. government and independent security experts said Wednesday the preliminary evidence for a deadly explosion at a Gaza hospital compound pointed to a local militant group, casting doubt on Palestinian claims that an Israeli airstrike was responsible.* (WSJ, 2023)
13. *On October 7, 2023, the Palestinian Sunni Islamist group Hamas (a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization, or FTO) led surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip.* Congressional Research Service (2024)
14. *The IDF released footage on November 13 that it said showed a group of armed men at the entrance of Al-Quds Hospital, at least one of whom appeared to be carrying a rocket-propelled grenade launcher.* CNN (2024b)

In examples (13&14), there is a reference to the ‘identity’ of the Palestinian resistance. The actor description is ideological and in a negative sense. Hamas was described through extremely



negative description namely *'the Palestinian Sunni Islamist group Hamas (a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization)*. The high level of Hamas' description suggests that the author wants to assert the religious background of Hamas and that this group is designated as a terrorist organization, which indirectly urges the audiences to refuse any statements made by it and accept the Israeli narrative. In example (14), the author described a man at the entrance of Al-Quds hospital *'carrying a rocket-propelled grenade launcher'* to justify targeting hospitals by Israel. On the other hand, the author resorts to the **authority** ideological move in example (12) through describing the actor as the legitimate authority *'The U.S. government'* and credible inquiry committee consisting of *'independent security experts'* to enhance the credibility of the Israeli claims regarding targeting hospitals by Israel and attribute the accusation to the Palestinians.

15. *The Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza says more than 23,350 people - mostly women and children - have been killed by Israel in the war.* BBC (2023)
16. *Within seven hours of the fighting resuming, the Hamas-run health ministry said more than 60 people had been killed, adding to the nearly 15,000 Palestinians it said were killed before the ceasefire.* BBC (2024)

In examples (15 & 16), the speakers describe the identity of the health ministry as *'Hamas-run health ministry'* to indirectly doubt the numbers of civilians killed by Israel. In other words, the ministry of health is negatively represented because it is run by Hamas that is designated as a terrorist group by the USA and European Union. That is, the ideological move for the strategy of negative-other representation is manipulated to negatively represent Hamas and positively represent Israel.

Contrast

A dominated group utilizes "contrast" to emphasize its positive image and the others' negative image. A well-known type of contrast is to compare the situation of people before and after an era of a certain event, government, or leader. Here are some examples of this ideological move regarding contrast in the news language on Gaza war:

17. *At least 20 out of 22 hospitals identified by CNN in northern Gaza were damaged or destroyed in the first two months of Israel's war against Hamas.* CNN (2024a)
18. *Israel's bombardment of Gaza began after Hamas launched its brutal October 7 assault.* CNN (2024b)
19. *Israel has argued Hamas is responsible for the high civilian casualties, saying its fighters make use of civilian buildings and launch attacks from densely populated urban areas.* CBS News (2024).
20. *BBC analysis found that almost 98,000 buildings in Gaza may have suffered damage.* BBC (2024)

Pro-Israel media outlets keep contrasting the present situation of war with the previous situation before Hamas attacks on Israel, suggesting that "before the 'terrorist attacks' the situation was better". The blame is always on those who opposed Israel and sparked the war. In other words, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated after the attacks of Hamas, and the blame is always on Hamas for destroying thousands of hospitals, displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians, and killing thousands of civilians. Hence, the ideologies of positive representation of



the Israel and negative representation of the Hamas have been depicted through this ideological move, namely contrast. Thus, the importance of analyzing the strategy of contrast stems from the fact that such a strategy may be utilized to alter people's beliefs and affect their behavior.

Syntactic Manipulation

Manipulating sentence structure is adopted by speakers to emphasize and de-emphasize different meanings or actions (Badawi 2023). For instance, the active sentence "the Israeli forces shot many civilians" delivers a totally different meaning from the passive sentence "many civilians were shot (by the Israeli forces)." While the first sentence emphasizes that members of the Israeli forces are killers (the subject/agent), the second emphasizes that there are civilians were shot (a different topic). Moreover, if speakers want to cloak responsibility of the action, they simply omit the murderer (i.e., the Israeli forces) and focus only on the victim. In other words, the omission of (by the Israeli forces) in the second sentence implies that the murderer is not known yet (i.e., it could be one of the in-group forces or one of the outgroup's forces). Here are some examples of manipulating sentence structure:

21. *As of Oct 15, around 2700 Palestinians have been killed and about 1 million have been internally displaced.* BYJU's (2023)
22. *Since then, about one out of every 100 people in Gaza has been killed.* CNN (2024b)
23. *135 Palestinians were killed in the last 24 hours, bringing the overall toll of the war to 23,843.* CBS News (2024).
24. *The attack on the home in the Daraj neighborhood killed at least 20 people.* CBS News (2024).
25. *Civilians have repeatedly been caught in the crossfire of the conflict, with thousands wounded and many others having been taken hostage by Hamas and raped, tortured or murdered.* Fox News (2024)

By considering examples (21, 22, 23, 24, and 25), the speakers cloak responsibility of the action (killing and wounding civilians), they simply omit the agent (the Israeli army) that is the murderer and focus only on the victim. That is, the authors ignore the agent (killer, destroyer, abuser etc.) and focus on the action itself to indirectly exonerate the criminals or at least cloak their identity.

In the above sentences, there is only one exception, which is example (25), where the agent (Hamas) is mentioned to hold it responsible for the crimes of rape, torture, and murder. In other words, when the agent is the out-group, the speaker revealed it clearly to attribute the negative attributes of rape, torture, and murder to it. This clarifies the crucial role of this syntactic strategy that is used by speakers to cloak certain information (by using passive voice) and reveal other information (by using active voice) depending on the identity of agent whether it is in-group or out-group. In other words, if the abuser belongs to in-group, the speaker resorts to the passive voice to cloak its responsibility, while if the abuser belongs to out-group, the speaker uses the active voice to prove it guilty. To conclude, the syntactic structure of a sentence may play a significant role in determining whether the actor is positively or negatively represented. Syntactic manipulation includes a myriad of strategies including passive/active voice, nominalization, pronouns etc., however in this study only passive/active voice is discussed.



Conclusion & Suggestions

Based on the above critical discourse analysis of news language on Gaza war, it can be concluded that news articles on Gaza are replete with the examples of ideologies of 'positive-self representation' and 'negative-other representation'. Therefore, the language of news is highly ideological and replete with linguistic manipulation.

Media discourse is manipulated by leaders, elites, and people in power on different levels, including lexical, semantic, syntactic, and rhetorical levels. By manipulating media discourse, people in power highlight the in-group good attributes and the out-group negative features. Undoubtedly, this is geared towards controlling people's ideologies. Media discourse, thus, is a fertile soil for negative manipulation of language engineered to control people's minds to accept the prescriptive mental model being advocated. Accordingly, discourse analysis aims at evoking people's critical thinking, especially with the fact that people's attitudes, behaviors, and ideologies are subconsciously formed due to the influence of such manipulative discourse (Badawi 2023). The findings of the present study indicate that media discourse regarding Gaza war is biased, and that news language is manipulated through many linguistic strategies to negatively represent Palestine and positively represent Israel. Further research may be conducted on the ideological difference between the coverage of Gaza war and the coverage of the war in Ukraine, and the difference between the media discourse of the western and eastern media in relation to the conflicts in Middle East may be examined too.



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