

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND MEDIA ATTITUDES: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE WAR ON GAZA IN AL-JAZEERA NEWS COVERAGE

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Abstract

This study is a qualitative study . It investigates the five discursive strategies in the representation of the war in Gaza in Al-Jazeera English news from the historical discourse perspective. The study attempts to answer the following questions: How is the representation of the war on Gaza named and referred to linguistically in the news coverage of Al-Jazeera? What characteristics are attributed to the social actors in the representation of the war on Gaza in Al-Jazeera's coverage? By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do Al-Jazeera try to justify and legitimate the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others? from what perspective or point of view are these namings, attributions and arguments expressed in Al-Jazeera to represent the war in Gaza? are they even intensified or are they mitigated? According to the questions , the study aims at :Revealing how the the war on Gaza is named and referred to linguistically in the news coverage of Al-Jazeera. Figuring out the characteristics are attributed to the social actors in the representation of the war on Gaza in Al-Jazeera's coverage. Exploring the means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do Al-Jazeera try to justify and legitimate the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others. Determining what perspective or point of view are these namings, attributions and arguments expressed in Al-Jazeera to represent the war on Gaza. Conducting if the utterances are intensified or mitigated.To achieve the aims of the study the following procedures are followed: Presenting a literature review that surveys the study's key concepts, including discourse analysis, media, war representation, Gaza crisis, discourse strategies, and the other related topics. By collecting data from the L selected channel representing the war on Gaza from October 2024 to October 2025. Then providing an adapted model that comprises linguistic strategies and structure upon which the empirical part of the study is based for the analysis of the data collected. The adapted model to analyse the data in question will be based on Wodak & Meyer's (2011)discourse strategies. And conducting a content analysis based on the adapted model. Analyzing the selected data from Al-Jazeera News that represent war on Gaza. Findings of the study reveals that, the In Al-Jazeera coverage, nomination is used to turn process into things e. g., fighting and bombardment, casualties, removes agency, Al Jazeera's predication strategies tend to attribute agency to Israeli actors in military/defensive contexts ("Israel strikes", "IDF targets", "Israel prime Minister, IDF spokesman, IDF's chief) while attributing suffering to Palestinian actors ("Palestinians were killed", "civilians died"). Israeli spokespersons are predicated as rational, strategic, and legitimately defensive. The key topoi are topoi of threat, danger, humanitarian crisis and numbers, constructing the Hamas militants as a threat, justifying military violence as necessary self-defense. Al Jazeera's perspectivization tends toward an institutional Western standpoint that treats Israeli state communication as primary, authoritative, and credible, while Palestinian voices — particularly those from Gaza — are more often framed as emotional testimony rather than political analysis.Intensifiers that amplify the force of claims about Palestinian violence are used frequently and Israeli violence mitigated.

Keywords: Discourse , Strategy , device, anthroponyms , refer , Gaza, war.

1. THE INTRODUCTION

Representation refers to the language used in a text or talk to assign meaning to groups and their

social practices, to events, and to social and ecological conditions and objects. Representation tries to investigate the role of language in social life is that meaning is not embedded in the reality that is perceived but rather that it is construed by linguistic representation (Anita, 2005, p.90). News media writers might imagine that their audience is positively engaged and interested in their connections to other people and to other's experiences of life. According to Topkev (2014), media representations are seen to be constructed through language (choices) and the prioritisation of some events and opinions over others, constrained by space and time limitations. The representation of war on Gaza in Al-Jazeera News is a complicated and multifaceted issue. It involves different factors such as historical context, political biases, and the different narratives that each side wishes to promote. It is important to approach the study of media representation via discourse analysis. Discourse study can be used to reveal biases in how Al-Jazeera news depict war on Gaza particularly during recent conflicts. It is important to approach the study of media representation via discourse analysis, considering the strategies and underlying motives of different news sources. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the discourse analysis and media attitudes to represent the war on Gaza in Al-Jazeera has not been tackled before. Moreover, the discourse strategies in the news of the selected channels to portray the war on Gaza that have not been addressed in any previous studies. Thus, the present study is an attempt to bridge this gap.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis (henceforth DA) examines the language in use. It is the examination of the meanings of language utilised in certain settings, the examination of language beyond the phrase level, concentrating on how sentences interconnect to create meaning, coherence, and achieve aims. Nonetheless, a solitary sentence or utterance can be analysed as a form of "communication" or "action," rather than only as a syntactic structure whose "literal meaning" derives from grammatical conventions. Linguists differentiate between two sorts of meaning, a distinction pertinent to DA. They differentiate between utterance-type meaning and utterance-token meaning (Levinson, 2000). Every word, phrase, or structure possesses a general spectrum of potential meanings, referred to as its "meaning range." This indicates its utterance-type significance. Nevertheless, words and phrases acquire far more precise meanings within their actual settings of usage. These are utterance-token meanings, also referred to as "situated meanings" (Handford & Gee, 2012).

2.1 Media Discourse

O'Keeffe (2006) admits that media discourse encompasses the entirety of how reality is portrayed in both broadcast and print media, ranging from television to newspapers. Media interactions are fundamentally discussions perceived by others, and the concept of engaging in an overheard conversation is not a novel event in a descriptive context. During a television or radio interaction between a presenter and an interviewee or guest, both parties are aware that their conversation is being broadcast to an audience. Consequently, they engage in a distinct form of dialogue compared to two individuals conversing on a train amidst others who cannot evade overhearing their exchange. The former necessitates audience inclusion and engagement, while the latter frequently entails exclusion (e.g., through guarded or coded references) and detachment (e.g., absence of eye contact and lack of inclusive references). Discourse can be either written or oral. Media discourse encompasses both textual content, such as news articles, and the methodologies involved in its creation and production.

Fairclough (2001, p.40) characterises media discourse as a "one-sided" phenomenon with a distinct separation between producers and interpreters. A significant role of media discourse is to facilitate communication between two domains: the public and the private, regarding the temporal context of media properties. Furthermore, Bell (1995) indicates that communicative event involves different actors, including reporters and editors, who deliver messages to the audience, which serves as the recipients, and notably, third parties representing diverse segments and influences within the public sphere. Producers of media discourse create their envisioned audiences for optimal subjects. They depict the war and justify their participation in it. Events are reported and understood by various individuals, including reporters, editors, and institutions. The interpretation of news consists of the opinions, reasoning, and aspirations of the individuals who report and disseminate it.

2.2 Features of Media Language

A prominent linguistic feature in media is the employment of catchphrases and attention-grabbing headlines. Media outlets frequently use succinct, controversial, emotionally charged language to engage the audience and stimulate interest. These headlines act as an entry point to the material provided, influencing the readers' initial view and contextualisation of the topic. The language of media is frequently defined by its tone and slant. Journalists and writers choose precise words, adverbs, and adjectives to create a tone that corresponds with their intended message or impact. The choice of positive or negative language could affect readers' perceptions of events, personalities, and concepts, thereby influencing the public opinion (Maqsud, 2024).

Moreover, media organisations may possess intrinsic biases affected by the political affiliations, ownership structures, and audience. This bias may be evident in the choice of sources, the framing of narratives, and the employment of charged language. Sensationalism and emotive appeals are often employed in the discourse of in media to receive intense responses from the audience. This is evident in news coverage, when emotive language, striking images, and personal narratives are employed to enhance emotional connection. Media outlets could evoke emotions to generate a sense of urgency or significance about a particular subject, hence sustaining audience engagement (Maqsud, 2024).

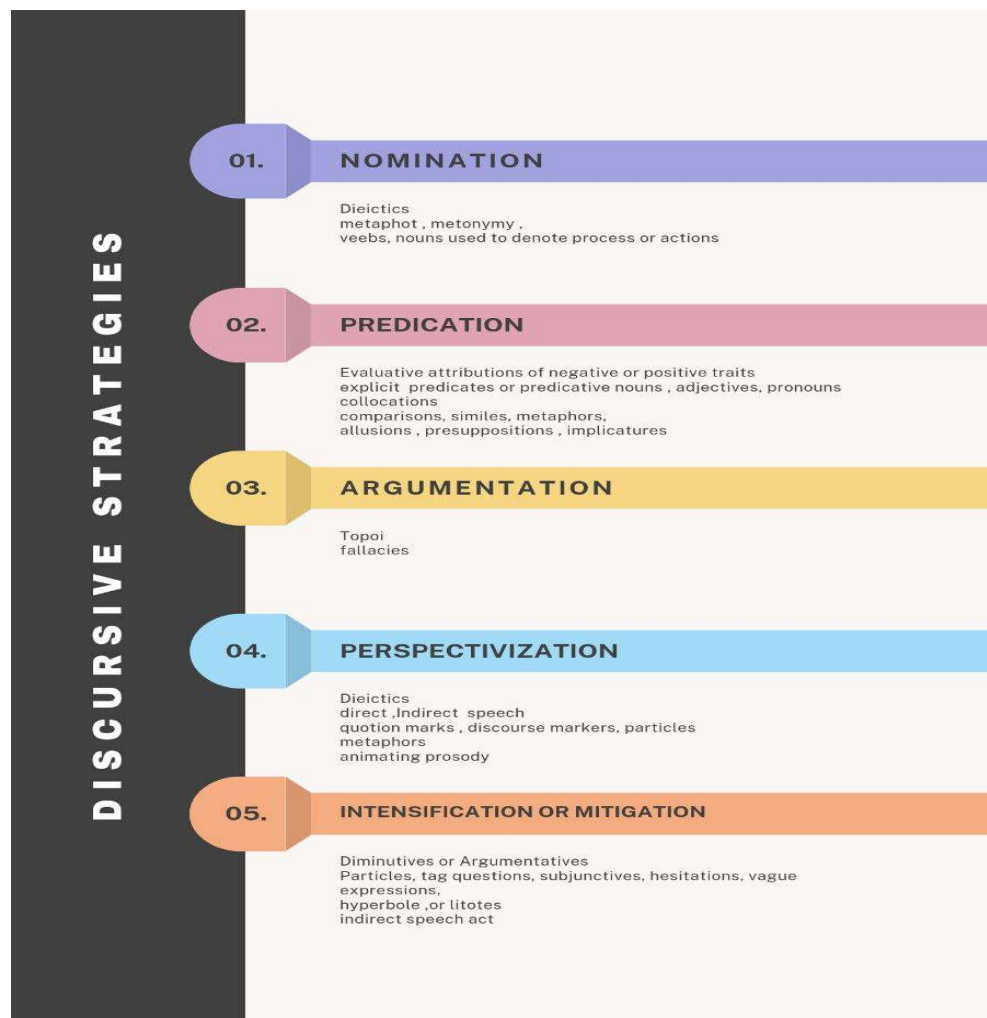
2.3 Al-Jazeera: Overview and Organization

Al-Jazeera was established in 1996 and situated in Qatar, the location was the inaugural independent channel in the Middle East. Al-Jazeera delivers the conventional news channel paradigm; within the context of the Western model, the organization has effectively challenged taboos and addressed contentious notions in the Islamic world, like sex topics, affairs of women, and religious extremism. Al-Jazeera operates continuously along with news programs, talk shows, and documentaries, supported by an extensive network of approximately forty offices and over one hundred correspondents and reporters globally (Sanchez, 2006).

The emergence of Al Jazeera channel considered as a marked a transformative event in Arab media, not alone due to its status as the first technical Arabic-language news television channel, yet mainly because of the distinctive programming that sets it apart from government-controlled networks. The broadcast station has accomplished many significant events internationally, starting with its representation of the initial events of the United States occupation to Iraq, Operation Desert Fox, in December 1998, followed by the 2002 conflict in Afghanistan and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. This representation confirmed Al Jazeera as a globally recognised resource of information, specifically within American and European political and media spheres. Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, it faced persistent criticism, comprising allegations of provoking the Iraqi people (Abul-Nasr, 2012).

3. THE MODEL OF ANALYSIS

Historical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach, this interdisciplinary study combined linguistic analysis with historical and sociological approaches. The DHA is three-dimensional: (1) having identified the specific content or topic(s) of a specific discourse, (2) discursive strategies are investigated. Then (3), linguistic means (as types) and context-dependent linguistic realizations (as tokens) are examined. There are strategies that deserve special attention when analyzing a specific discourse. Therefore, the five discursive strategies of Reisigl and Wadok's' five discursive strategies (2011) are preferable framework for the current study. The selected discursive strategies are: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, intensification or mitigation.



An Adapted Model of the Five Discursive Strategies by Reisigl and Wodak(2011, p.33)

4. DATA DESCRIPTION

The data of the current study is primary data because of dealing with the representation of war in Gaza in these news reports, the media texts are original units of analysis. The criteria Data collection in the ongoing study is based on particular criteria that have been taken into account. The criteria of data collection involve : the date of the study are sixteen news reports, they are from 7 October 2023 to 7 May 2024 (exactly 7 months, or 213 days), when the coverage of the media was well-defined about the war in Gaza, the selection of the reports was based on influence, reputation, and global leadership. Al-Jazeera news (English) represents common and public perspectives within the inter media. The units of analysis are firm or companies, Al-Jazeera(English) is media organizations and , the study will focus on a single point in time by analyzing the coverage from a specific limited period, for example one major military event and comparing how the channels represent it. The process of data collection was cautiously planned to ensure that the selection of the texts reflect credible and diverse discourses to represent Gaza's war. The data are available for research and can be applied effectively, and the data are conducive to achieving the established goals of the current study

5. DATA ANALYSIS

There are many nomination strategies that are used to construct and represent the social actors . Many devices are used such as proper noun, dieictics, generalizing anthroponyms, geopolitical anthroponyms, professional anthroponyms, relational anthroponyms , collectives, and abstract and concrete nouns.

The social actors in the data of Al-Jazeera English news referred to linguistically through nomination strategies by using proper names such as : Mohammed Salah, Brig Gen, Abu Obaida, Ashour's,

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Youssef, Al-Bawab, etc. The use of proper names performs different delegitimation (Abu Obaida, as terrorists commander in the speeches of Israeli government), and legitimation for example, Benjamin Netanyahu (prime Minister of Israel), legitimating him that he has institutional legitimacy. Each proper name is used to make the speech having more profound discursive decision, by personalizing responsibility onto individuals rather than distributing it across a state or people. These historical anthroponyms are not merely illustrative but they are argumentative weapons. Referring to the social actors by using deictics like the use of "we" to refer to al-Qassam brigades, 'we' to the Al-Jazeera team, in another context the personal pronoun 'we' refers to the Israeli government members. Through deictic choices, the speakers constitute themselves as political subjects in real time. When US President Biden says 'we're now very close'. The 'we' does enormous work, it invokes personal authority and biographical credibility, it distinguishes the individual from the office and it positions the speaker within a political identity ("fellow democrat").

But using generalizing anthroponyms like fighters, Israeli forces, experts, prisoners, slaves, civilians, troops, Americans, journalists, staff, army, worshippers, doctors, patients, leaders, commanders, militants, children, women. Generalizing anthroponyms are used for dissolving individual identity into collective categories. The social actors are referred to by using professional anthroponyms to identify people through their professions and institutional roles or social functions rather than simply by their personal names. By addressing the social actors as "US President Joe Biden" does not merely describe a fact but performs recognition of his political legitimacy. Professional titles are used to build the credibility and authority from which the speech derives its legitimating force.

The collective anthroponyms are used to represent the social actors as a one single unit, for example in the selected data under analysis the social actors are referred to as: Palestinians, the Israelis, the hostages, the refugees, the worshippers, the militant, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Russia, the international community, the protestors, etc. Instead of focusing on individuals, the discourse group people together under one identity. Collectives are used in "the Palestinians continue to resist...", the collective nouns 'Palestinians' constructs a national identity. The collectives are used to make abstract geopolitical entities (Qatar, Egypt, UK, Russia, etc.) emotionally accessible, to assign moral responsibility to collectives as if they were persons and to create dramatic narrative in which collective actors struggle, suffer, and triumph. The relational anthroponyms are used to show social and political connections by connecting individuals to larger groups or institutions to increase authority. The spokesperson of IDF gains importance through relationships to the IDF, thus, the power relation becomes visible. The relational anthroponyms 'Gaza's officials' is used collectively to reduce individuality and to show them as organized social actors into networks and help to shape audience interpretations as one group identity according to their profession or role. Relational anthroponyms are employed to help the speakers to construct collective identities such as "us" versus "them." They categorize individuals into groups and strengthen social belonging, solidarity, or exclusion. The social actors use relational anthroponyms to present groups positively or negatively. Geopolitical anthroponyms are used by referring to people through geographical, national, and state-related names, for example: Qatar, Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Moscow, Tel Aviv, Gaza, Israel, etc., they are used to present countries as one voice, representing actors rather than physical locations only like Washington, the Pentagon, UN, Gaza, the Arab World.

Abstract and concrete nominations are used to refer to the degree of specificity used when naming the social actors, institutions, political phenomena, and events. Concrete nominations are used to emphasize the responsibility and identities of who is accountable, for example: Israeli forces, Hamas, civilians, residents, president, children, women, hostages, families, mother, daughter, militants, fighters, army, missile, rockets, brigades etc. The social actors are clearly specified responsibility become direct and visible, in the war discourse, speakers strategically choose concrete lexical items to portray their own side positively while representing the opposing side negatively, for example in description of Hamas as terrorists, aggressors, and wanted depict them through their group as they are dangerous, violent, or illegitimate while the Israeli militants referring to them as soldiers and defending themselves. As a result, concrete nominations help speakers to legitimize their own actions, justify military responses, and gain public support. Meanwhile, the abstract nomination is realized by naming actors, actions and events in general, institutional, vague, and impersonal way, for example: the situation, the crisis, death, military operation, security, violence, terrorism, etc. These expressions

avoid directly naming, responsible actors who perform the actions may be obscure, the responsibility becomes unclear but they are used to make the events seem technical. The abstract nomination 'military operation' is used to soften controversial actions, and to reduce the emotional impact on the audience and listeners because they move attention away from specific actions or individuals and instead focus on broad ideological ideas. The speakers use abstract terms such as "security," "terrorism," "agreement," or "pressure" to present military actions as morally justified and politically necessary rather than as controversial decisions made by particular actors.

There are many social actors being discussed in the selected data (civilians, soldiers, mutants, spokesperson, journalists, witnesses, footage, IDF spokesman, defense minister, president of Israel, US President, mediators, hostages, refugees, doctors, workers, etc.) positive and negative predication are attached to the social actors. These descriptions are ideologically significant because they shape public perception. The predications are realised through different linguistic means like the use of adjectives, appositions, and metaphors to construct positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. By linking the linguistic choices to historical and political contexts, for example, in calling Hamas 'terrorists' to delegitimise them, and calling Israeli militants 'soldiers' to legitimatise them. Thus, such predications reflect ideology and power relations.

In the selected data, arguments represent the war in Gaza reasonably because there is freedom of arguing in the sense that social actors are free to present their opinions and claims, for example, in reporting the event of 7 October, the participants express the claim of sudden attack from the Israeli point of view and describing Hamas attack as brutal, and attributing 'Hamas fighter' as terrorists, they kill and murder people, shoot victims, firing machine guns, and describing the location of the attack as a site of the massacre. There is criticism and justification with evidence to the events. The social actors are allowed to question and criticize the arguments, the claims are questionable and ask for clarification. Thus, the point of view of the two war sides are represented in the same reports. Without insults for opponents, the social actors use the topoi fairly and logically, no manipulation or silence opposition, they are allowed to criticize the arguments. The argumentative principle of using plausible scheme which refers to the idea that a claim can only be considered properly defended when the social actor uses suitable and logical accepted patterns of reasoning that connect an argument to a conclusion, the participants use appropriate argumentation schemes correctly by choosing a type of reasoning that fit the issue being discussed, they use it logically to in which the premises support the conclusions. The argumentative principle of clarity of expressions and correct interpretation which makes the tackled arguments reasonable, the participants express their arguments clearly and interpret the situation of others accurately and fairly to prevent manipulation, misunderstanding and ideological distortion in the public discourse, being away from vague language, and ambiguous wording or misleading formulation, the arguments are presented in way that recipients understand the intended meaning clearly without twisting another person's words. As a result, the topoi are responsible and logical by conducting the main rules of the argumentation, disputes and constructive arguing that allow discerning topoi from fallacies.

The intensification strategy is employed in the selected data of to amplify meaning, reinforce ideological positions, increase persuasive impact, heighten emotional response and strengthen evaluation. Intensification reveals how long is used to construct social realities, legitimatising actions and shape public perception of political and historical events. The mitigation is employed to reduce certainty and present the events as conditional or projected rather than factual, by using modal verbs like 'may' to express possibility not certainty and open outcome. The speaker is not fully asserting truth, but only suggesting a potential scenario to avoid strong claims. It is used to reduce speaker's epistemic commitment and soften the assertiveness of the claim, thereby, by constructing the statement as tentative and non-definitive. The perspectivization in the coverage of Al Jazeera news channel of the war in Gaza is realised by adopting emotionally loaded perspectives that foregrounds the suffering, despair and physical trauma experienced by people and represent the humanitarian situation as severe and devastating. Thus perspectivization is achieved by guiding the audience to interpret the events from the victim's emotional standpoint.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Discourse-Historical Approach which is developed by Reisigl & Wodak (2011) as a branch of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that examines how language constructs, legitimates, and contests social power. Their framework identifies five discursive strategies through which ideology is encoded in text. Al Jazeera's nomination strategies are varied and politically charged. Al Jazeera platformed accusations against both Hamas and Israel, including accusations against Israel of committing "genocide," "ethnic cleansing," "terrorism," and "war crimes" in its selected reports. Israeli social actors are predominantly nominated in Al-Jazeera through institutional and military categories: "the Israeli military," "Israeli forces," "IDF," "Israeli officials," "prime Minister Netanyahu ." These nominations construct Israeli actors as a unified, purposive institutional entity responsible for military decisions – rather than individualizing them as human actors in the way Palestinian victims are individualized. Al Jazeera makes systematic argumentative use of international humanitarian law as an epistemic framework. Sources cited include UN agencies, human rights organizations, and international legal scholars, all of whom are granted high epistemic authority in Al-Jazeera's coverage. The argumentative logic is: because recognized international law prohibits collective punishment, siege of civilian populations, targeting of hospitals, and forced displacement, therefore documented Israeli military actions constitute violations of binding legal norms, not exercises of legitimate self-defense. Al Jazeera's argumentation grounds its claims in institutional legal authority that both sides are formally bound by. Al Jazeera systematically includes humanitarian organizations, UN agencies, and international legal experts as authoritative sources – a sourcing strategy that perspectivates the conflict from the standpoint of international law and humanitarian norms rather than from the standpoint of state military interests.

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