

Media Framing of the Israel-Palestine Conflict: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Aljazeera and CNN Instagram Account

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Abstract

This research aims to see how a media displays an ideology by framing the discourse of an issue. The data in this study are words and sentences in captions that represent how the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is reported through the Instagram accounts of CNN (@cnn) and Aljazeera (@aljazeeraenglish) news channels. In this research, the author uses qualitative methods to collect and review the findings. The data is analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis by Van Dijk which includes macro structure, superstructure, and micro structure. Based on the results of the data analysis, it can be concluded that there are differences in the way the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is represented. This shows that each media channel from both @aljazeeraenglish and @cnn on average reflects their respective ideologies by using their views on the conflict to frame an event. In general, it can be seen that the way the @aljazeeraenglish account frames an event is indirectly impartial and uses several words that express criticism regarding the conditions that occur in Palestine. While on the @cnn account, they frame the news directly factually, and optimistically without taking sides. The use of words in news strongly influences how a media account carries the ideology it wants to convey.

Keywords: CDA; Israel-Palestine; Media Framing

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of our needs in communication. Through language, we can observe differences in elements within societies and cultures. A powerful language can have a significant impact on social practices that influence public perception. Social power can be defined in terms of control, where groups exert the greatest power when they can control the actions and thoughts of other groups (Schiffrin et al., 2007). According to Fairclough (2013), the power possessed by a more dominant group can influence several aspects, namely laws, rules, norms, habits, and even ideology, which is commonly referred to as hegemony. Ideology is defined as a system of beliefs or ideas, including social representations, that can display the social identity of a particular group, and can organize and integrate social beliefs (Schiffrin et al., 2007). Therefore, there are many ways in which language can be expressed, one of which is through the media (Luhulima et al., 2023). Media is a platform where discourse is highly influential in shaping social cognition and influencing public opinion. This is corroborated by Van Dijk, who states that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focuses on how the mental representation of social groups is influenced by social structure. In this case, a topic of news can influence how people emphasize important information in a text or conversation. This phenomenon can be observed through critical discourse analysis by dissecting deeper into each element in a discourse both in text and non-text. Van Dijk argues that the socio-cognitive approach in CDA consists of three main elements in the process, namely society, cognition, and discourse. He emphasizes that social power consists of several parts in a complete and complex language. Critical discourse can influence the thoughts and actions of each individual, and while discourse itself can represent various language structures, even an ideology. According to Leimena (2023), CDA

is an analysis that views language as a major factor in the process of social interaction and can also be used to see the inequality of power that occurs in the social environment. In addition, CDA is a valuable tool for analyzing conflicts by examining how language is used to construct, reinforce, and challenge power relations, ideologies, and social realities. The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most controversial conflicts in the world (Ramadani et al., 2024). This conflict involves various aspects of life such as politics, society, culture, and religion that can harm many people, especially in the region. The conflict continues to be characterized by territorial disputes, historical grievances, and competing national narratives (Amairah, 2024). Amidst the chaos and complexity of this conflict, media representations play an important role in shaping public perceptions and understanding of the conflict. However, in sensitive conflict contexts, the media can also influence public opinion by emphasizing hidden ideologies. In recent years, the rise of social media has revolutionized the dissemination of news and information, offering unprecedented access to diverse narratives and perspectives. Among these platforms, Instagram ranks as the second most popular social media platform globally. This was stated by Business of Apps, in their news excerpt titled "2021's Most Popular Apps: Global App Downloads and Revenue". Hence, Instagram also plays a dynamic role for some news organizations. This is utilized by prominent and influential news accounts, such as Al Jazeera (@aljazeeraenglish) and CNN (@cnn). These internationally-based accounts are highly respected and often report on global issues. Through carefully curated content including images, videos, and captions, these media giants have the power to influence millions of users worldwide, shaping their perceptions and attitudes towards the Israel-Palestine conflict.

While previous research has extensively analyzed media representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict, there remains a lack of research on how platforms like Instagram, especially through their reels, express ideologies that shape public perceptions. Prior studies have examined traditional media representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict, predominantly focusing on textual framing and the inherent ideological biases within mainstream outlets. For instance, Bhowmik and Fisher (2023) employed textual analysis to reveal that CNN's coverage predominantly adopted a war journalism approach. Zahoor and Sadiq (2021) discussed the transition of traditional newsrooms to social media platforms as a cost-effective means for expanding outreach. Similarly, Suwarno and Sahayu (2020) demonstrated the utility of CDA in unveiling how mainstream news frames depict Palestine as the aggrieved party. Other research has further contributed to understanding media bias and ideological constructions through traditional news articles (Shahzad et al, 2023; Harared & Iriyansah, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to explore how news platforms, particularly Al Jazeera and CNN on Instagram, represent the Israel-Palestine conflict, focusing on the portrayal of Palestinian aid seekers. Unlike prior research, which has largely focused on traditional media outlets, this study investigates how hidden or indirect ideologies are conveyed through social media posts, particularly Instagram reels. By applying Van Dijk's CDA framework, this study critically analyzes linguistic elements in the media coverage of the conflict, offering a deeper understanding of how media constructs ideologies related to the conflict and influences public opinion.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a content analysis approach. Content analysis, as defined by Barelson (1952), is a technique for systematically analyzing media content to uncover the meaning of messages. This approach is particularly suited to examining how language in media influences public opinion, especially in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict on Instagram. Data was collected from two international news accounts on Instagram: @aljazeeraenglish (Middle Eastern perspective) and @cnn (Western perspective).


The selected posts focus on the killing of Palestinian aid seekers by Israel, with captions from February 29, 2024, to March 5, 2024. The goal is to compare how these media outlets represent the conflict and any ideological differences they may present. The analysis uses Van Dijk’s (2003) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, which includes three dimensions: macrostructure (overall topic), superstructure (discourse organization), and microstructure (linguistic details such as semantics, syntax, and style). By analyzing these elements, the study aims to reveal how media discourse shapes public understanding and conveys ideological messages

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this section, the researchers analyze how @aljazeeraenglish and @cnn convey and frame the killing of Palestinians waiting for aid through their Instagram captions. Using Van Dijk’s CDA framework, the study examines both macro and microstructures in the posts to reveal ideological representations, highlighting either positive or negative portrayals in self-presentation or the representation of others.

Table 1. Analysis on the News of @aljazeeraenglish (29 February 2024)

Caption			
<div><div></div><div><p>aljazeeraenglish Israeli troops opened fire on a group of Palestinian aid-seekers in #Gaza City who "dangerously" approached them, according to an Israeli military official quoted by #Israeli media.</p><p>At least 104 Palestinians were killed and 760 injured when they were attacked at a roundabout south of Gaza City while waiting for food aid, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.</p><p>In a post on X, the Israeli military said dozens of Palestinians were injured by "trampling" as the crowd grew "violent" and began "looting" the trucks.</p><p>The military official, quoted by the Times of Israel, said that some members of the crowd began heading towards Israeli forces who were in charge of overseeing the aid delivery in a way that "endangered" them, adding that the troops then "opened fire at the crowd".</p><p>The military is conducting a review of the incident, it said on X.</p><p>Tap the link in bio for LIVE updates.</p><p>#Israel_Gaza_War #Palestine #Israel</p><p>File: Kosay Al Nemer, @reuters</p><p>10w</p></div></div>			
Discourse Structure	Observed Matters	Elements	Information
Macrostructure	Thematic	Topic	The killings were perpetrated by Israeli forces by shooting at Palestinian aid seekers, resulting in many casualties and injuries claimed by the Israeli military.
Superstructure	Schematic	Summary, Lead, Story	Summary: Israeli military official says troops shot at aid-seekers in Gaza City Lead: "Israeli troops opened fire on a group of Palestinian aid-seekers in

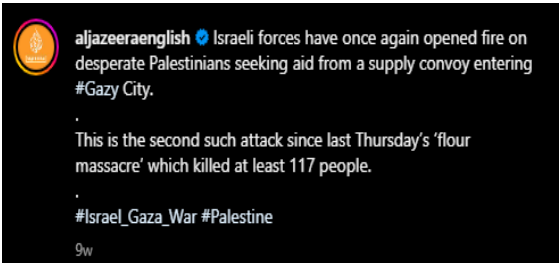
Microstructure	Semantic	Background, Details, Presupposition, and Intentions	<p>#Gaza City who 'dangerously' approached them, according to an Israeli military official quoted by #Israeli media."</p> <p>Story: Caption on @aljazeeraenglish content on 29 February 2024</p> <p>Background: Giving information about the chaotic situation and condition that occurred with statements by Israeli military officials regarding the troops opening fire towards a group of Palestinian aid-seekers in Gaza City who were approaching them "dangerously".</p> <p>Details: Showing the number of Palestinian casualties, the crowd's mass situation, and also the media showed the responses from both the Israeli military and Palestinian Health Ministry as supporting data.</p> <p>Presupposition and Intentions: The media emphasizes the new perspective on the situation and conditions of the Palestinian people as victims of Israeli aggression, which is expressed through several active and negative word emphases.</p>
	Syntactic	Tenses, Coherence, Pronouns	<p>The appearance of "opened fire", "attacked", "killed", "injured", "trampled", "violence", "looted", "endangered", "troops", and "crowd" words.</p>
	Stylistic	Lexicon	<p>The media chooses "opened fire", "attacked", "killed", "injured", "trampled", "violence", "looted", "endangered", "troops", and "crowd" and mentions as many as one to three times.</p>
	Rhetorical	Graphics, Metaphor, Expression	<p>The use of hashtags and quotation marks in the @aljazeeraenglish post.</p>

The framing of the current situation in Gaza by Al Jazeera English reflects a focus on the violence and chaos surrounding aid distribution and the response of Israeli forces. According to reports, Israeli troops fired upon Palestinian aid-seekers, allegedly leading to numerous casualties and injuries. This is epitomized in statements like the Israeli military's claim that injuries were incurred due to "trampling" as the crowd grew "violent" and engaged in "looting" of trucks delivering humanitarian aid. The language employed by Al Jazeera is direct and factual, yet it also evokes an emotional response by portraying the severity of the conflict. The

use of descriptions such as “dangerously” and the depiction of civilians’ desperate actions underscores the tension between Palestinians and the Israeli military during this humanitarian crisis. Furthermore, the choice of words suggests a strong pro-Palestinian perspective, with an emphasis on Israeli aggression. The framing emphasizes a narrative of victimization for the Palestinians, highlighting the chaotic and desperate circumstances that led to their actions. The incorporation of hashtags like #IsraelGazaWar, #Palestine, and #Israel serves to contextualize these events within the larger historical and political narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The strategic use of apostrophes also reinforces the reporter’s intended message, guiding public opinion towards a particular ideological stance. Thus, Al Jazeera’s coverage provides a multifaceted view of the ongoing situation, combining factual reporting with emotive language to highlight the gravity of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Table 2. Analysis on the News of @aljazeeraenglish (5 March 2024)

Caption



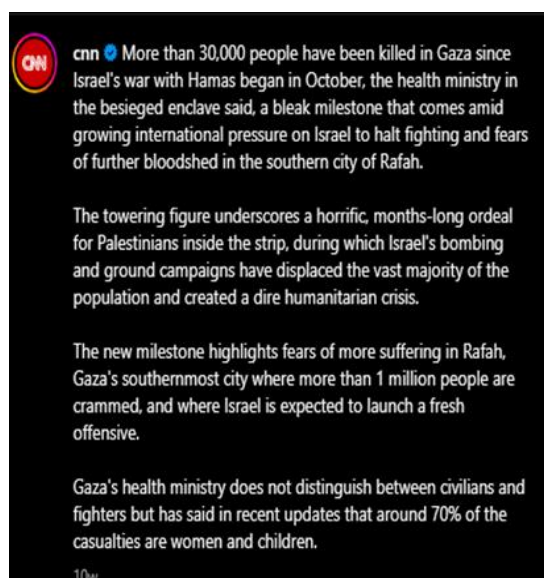
Discourse Structure	Observed Matters	Elements	Information
Macrostructure	Thematic	Topic	The repeated violence against Palestinians by Israeli forces highlights a recent incident where Israeli forces opened fire on Palestinians who were seeking help.
Superstructure	Schematic	Summary, Story	Lead, Summary: Palestinians seeking aid attacked by Israeli forces again Lead: 'flour massacre' which killed at least 117 people. Story: Caption on @aljazeera content on 5 March 2024
Microstructure	Semantic	Background, Details, Presupposition, and Intentions	Background: The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the repeated clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians. Details: Israeli forces have once again opened fire on desperate Palestinians seeking aid from a supply convoy entering #Gazy City. Presupposition and Intentions: The news report implicitly condemns the actions of Israeli forces, portraying them as perpetrators of violence against desperate Palestinians.

Syntactic	Tenses, Coherence, Pronouns	The appearance of “once again”, “forces”, “open fire” and “desperate” words.
Stylistic	Lexicon	The media chooses “once again”, “open fire”, “forces” and “desperate” and it mentions as many as one time.
Rhetorical	Graphics, Metaphor, Expression	Graphics: The use of hashtags and apostrophes in the @aljazeeraenglish caption on 5 March 2024 Metaphor: 'flour massacre' Expression: The media factually reported the event and designed it to convey the urgency, also distress situation of the conflict.

The reporter's focus on current events, particularly the ongoing violence against vulnerable Palestinians, is highlighted through language that emphasizes the repeated nature of these attacks, as illustrated by phrases such as “again” and “second such attack since last Thursday's 'flour massacre'.” This choice of wording reflects a deliberate narrative aimed at showcasing the severity of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and eliciting an emotional response from readers. The term “slaughtered” conveys the gravity of the situation, portraying Israeli forces as aggressors perpetrating violence against defenseless civilians and reinforcing a narrative of Palestinian victimhood. The inclusion of hashtags like #IsraelGazaWar and #Palestine further contextualizes the conflict within a broader ideological framework advocating for Palestinian rights and freedom, thereby framing Israeli actions as oppressive and unjust.

Table 3. Analysis on the News of @cnn (29 February 2024)

Caption



Discourse Structure	Observed Matters	Elements	Information
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macrostructure	Thematic	Topic	Israelis killed more than 104 people and hundreds injured while they were waiting for food aid in Gaza.
Superstructure	Schematic	Summary, Lead, Story	Summary: Over 30,000 people killed in Gaza since the conflict began. Lead: "More than 30,000 people have been killed in Gaza since Israel's war with Hamas began in October, the health ministry in the besieged enclave said." Story: Caption on @cnn content on 29 February 2024
Microstructure	Semantic	Background, Details, Presupposition, and Intentions	Background: The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, the humanitarian impact on Gaza's population, and the international community's reaction. Details: The death toll, the nature of the humanitarian crisis (displacement and dire conditions), the demographics of casualties (women and children), and the anticipated offensive in Rafah. Presupposition and Intentions: To inform the scale of the humanitarian crisis, emphasize the plight of civilians, highlight the international call for a ceasefire, and alert readers to the potential for further conflict in Rafah.
	Syntactic	Tenses, Coherence, Pronouns	Appearance of "killed," "bleak milestone," "bombing," "displaced," "dire humanitarian crisis," "offensive," "casualties," "women and children" words.
	Stylistic	Lexicon	The media chooses "killed," "bleak milestone," "bombing," "displaced," "dire humanitarian crisis," "offensive," "casualties," "women and children" and it mentions as many as one at a time.
	Rhetorical	Graphics, Metaphor, Expression	Graphics: The use of hashtags, links, and apostrophes in the @cnn caption on 29 February 2024 Expression: The expression combines factual reporting with emotive language to underscore the gravity of the humanitarian situation and the

urgent need for international intervention.

Table 3 illustrates CNN's portrayal of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, emphasizing the significant death toll in Gaza and the resulting humanitarian crisis. The framing of the narrative highlights the suffering and displacement of Palestinians attributed to Israeli military actions, thereby positioning Israel as the aggressor and Palestinian civilians as victims. The media's choice of terminology—such as "killed," "gloomy milestone," "bombing," "displaced," "terrible humanitarian crisis," "attack," "casualties," and "women and children"—evokes a sense of tragedy and urgency, suggesting the indiscriminate nature of violence affecting civilian populations. Furthermore, the focus on numerical data coupled with emotive language serves to reinforce the severity of the situation in Palestine, making the plight of civilians a focal point in the narrative surrounding the conflict.

Table 4. Analysis on the News of @cnn (1 March 2024)

Caption



Discourse Structure	Observed Matters	Elements	Information
Macrostructure	Thematic	Topic	Israelis killed more than 104 people and hundreds injured while they were waiting for food aid in Gaza.
Superstructure	Schematic	Summary, Lead, Story	Summary: 104 civilians were killed trying to access food aid trucks in Gaza, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza. Lead: The Israel Defense Forces said "the incident is under review." Story: Caption on @cnn content on 5 March 2024
Microstructure	Semantic	Background, Details, Presupposition, and Intentions	Background: Informing the ongoing situation and condition of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the repeated clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians. Details: The use of a specific number of casualties in the caption "At least 104 people have been killed and hundreds injured in Gaza after Israeli

		forces opened fire as they were waiting for food,”
		Presupposition and Intentions: The news report implicitly condemns the actions of Israeli forces, portraying them as perpetrators of violence against desperate Palestinians.
Syntactic	Tenses, Coherence, Pronouns	The appearance of “forces”, “open fire” and “Defense Forces” words.
Stylistic	Lexicon	The media chooses “open fire”, “forces” and “Defense Forces” and it mentions as many as one time.
Rhetorical	Graphics, Metaphor, Expression	Graphics: The use of hashtags and apostrophes in the @cnn caption on 1 March 2024 Expression: The media strives for objectivity without taking sides. Avoiding the use and selection of strong and oppressive language.

Table 4 indicates that the @cnn Instagram account adopts a notably cautious and objective reporting style, emphasizing neutrality in the portrayal of events. Reporters focus on factual information, as evidenced by the precise figure of casualties stated in the caption, “At least 104 people have been killed and hundreds injured in Gaza after Israeli forces opened fire as they were waiting for food...” This choice of language reflects a deliberate avoidance of sensationalism and emotional language, thereby presenting the facts and acknowledging uncertainties within the situation. By using terminology such as “troops opened fire” without assigning blame and referring to the “Israeli Defense Forces,” CNN underscores an ongoing investigation and future assessments with phrases like “this incident is under review.” Additionally, CNN's acknowledgment of its inability to independently confirm casualty figures demonstrates a commitment to journalistic integrity and credibility, further reinforcing the objective tone of the reporting.

Discussion

The framing of the Israel-Palestine conflict by different media outlets illustrates significant ideological divergences that influence public perception. Al Jazeera English has consistently been noted for its pro-Palestinian stance, a particularity highlighted in Van Dijk's framework which emphasizes macro, superstructure, and micro-level analyses in discourse. Al Jazeera English predominantly employs active language and emotionally charged vocabulary that aligns closely with a narrative that emphasizes Palestinian victimhood and Israeli aggression. According to Elmasry et al. (2013) and Suwarno & Sahayu (2020), this framing not only reflects an editorial bias but also serves to actively shape public opinion in favor of Palestine, reinforcing the ideological perspective wherein Al Jazeera positions itself as a voice for marginalized populations in the Middle East. This approach contributes to a comprehensive narrative that portrays the conflict in starkly black-and-white terms, thus potentially engendering negative views toward Israel (Yuhandra et al., 2024). Conversely, CNN's Instagram account (@cnn) adopts a markedly different approach by focusing on impartiality and balanced reporting. Analysis reveals that CNN's framing strategy is characterized by a commitment to factual reporting, often preferring descriptive language that minimizes

emotional bias. Sufficiently, Iqbal (2024) notes that CNN prioritizes the "what" of events over the "how," which may result in a more detached yet informative presentation of the conflict. This dedication to journalistic objectivity is aligned with Bhowmik and Fisher's (2023) observations that CNN emphasizes presenting balanced information and refrains from employing emotionally charged terms that might influence audience perceptions unduly. Therefore, CNN's news delivery reflects a more neutral stance that aims to inform rather than persuade, showcasing significant distinctions in the framing of conflict when placed alongside AJE's more ideologically motivated language. These differences in framing raise important questions about how language, structure, and ideological underpinnings can significantly influence media narratives and public sentiment. Al Jazeera's editorial policies advocate for the representation of diverse voices, particularly those of the oppressed, which historically positions it as a significant player within Middle Eastern discourse (Elmasry et al., 2013). Through selective framing that highlights Palestinian struggles and critiques Israeli policies, Al Jazeera secures its status as a powerful force in shaping regional perspectives on the conflict (Elmasry et al., 2013; Hossain et al., 2022). Meanwhile, CNN's attempts to present a balanced narrative reflect a broader intention to maintain credibility in global journalism. Moreover, the role of digital platforms such as Instagram introduces a new dimension to the dissemination of these narratives, where the framing of news can significantly influence public engagement. The way Al Jazeera English utilizes social media to promulgate its pro-Palestinian discourse suggests that traditional media frameworks are evolving, where platforms can amplify ideologically charged messaging during significant geopolitical events (Zhang and Luther, 2019; Wong et al., 2016). Thus, the contrasting approaches of Al Jazeera and CNN not only underline their editorial philosophies but also illustrate the complex interplay between media, ideology, and public opinion in the context of one of the most contentious conflicts in contemporary history.

CONCLUSION

This research applies CDA to examine how the international news channels Al Jazeera (@aljazeeraenglish) and CNN (@cnn) report on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on Instagram. Using van Dijk's (2001) theoretical framework, the study reveals how each media channel reflects its respective ideology through framing. Al Jazeera tends to use expressive language to implicitly criticize the situation in Palestine, while CNN presents news more factually and neutrally. Differences in word choice, topic selection, and presentation highlight these ideological stances. Despite these differences, both channels provide informative facts and data. The research suggests that media framing varies significantly between the two, guiding public opinion in distinct ways. Further research is needed for a deeper, more comprehensive analysis, including content from different media accounts and more detailed structural analysis.

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