

ازدواجية المعايير في الإعلام الغربي تجاه فلسطين:

تحليل نقدي للخطاب في بعض المقالات المختارة

**The Double Standards of Western Media
Towards Palestine: In some Selected
Articles: A Critical Discourse Analysis**

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المخلص

لطالما شكّل الخطاب وسيلة رئيسية للتواصل عبر التاريخ، إذ إن ظهور وسائل الإعلام في العصر الحديث قد حوّلته إلى أداة للتلاعب والتهميش. لذلك تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى توضيح الكيفية التي استخدم بها الخطاب الإعلامي الغربي آلياته لتهميش الفلسطينيين والتلاعب بصورتهم، بوصفهم "خصوماً" للغرب، من خلال تحليل المقالات الإعلامية والكشف عن ازدواجية المعايير لدى الغرب والتي نُشرت بعد أحداث السابع من أكتوبر. تتناول هذه الدراسة قضية معقدة جداً وهي صورة الفلسطينيين في الإعلام الغربي مقارنة بنظيره الإسرائيلي. وتسعى إلى مساءلة الخطاب الإعلامي الغربي من حيث ازدواجية معاييرهِ في التغطية، فتسبر أغوار التناول الإعلامي للقضية الفلسطينية زمن الحرب، مقابل تصويره للجيش الإسرائيلي. وتهدف خصوصاً إلى معالجة ازدواجية المعايير للإعلام الغربي والإجابة على أسئلة محددة حول كيف يتعامل الإعلام مع القضية الفلسطينية خلال الحرب وبالمقابل كيف يصور الجيش الإسرائيلي. وتسعى الدراسة لحل هذه القضية المعقدة من خلال استخدام تحليل الخطاب النقدي. ولقد تم تحليل المقالات بالاعتماد على منهج الخطاب النقدي لذيوفان لويين. وتم الاعتماد على منهج نوعي إذ تم اختبار ثلاث مجلات واختيارها كمادة للدراسة. وقد تم التحليل بالاعتماد على البنية اللغوية وطريقة تمثيل الأطراف الاجتماعية بحسب منهج فان لويين بالاستعانة بثلاث مبادئ رئيسية توضح آليات تهميش الشعب الفلسطيني. وقد كشفت النتائج عن وجود تمييز صارخ للعناصر غير المفضلة والتي تمثل خصوماً للغرب وإظهارهم بصورة سلبية، في حين يُظهر تعاطف واضح للعناصر المفضلة أولئك الذين يُعدّون حلفاء، مما يوضح ازدواجية المعايير التي تمارسها وسائل الإعلام الغربية.

Abstract

Discourse has historically been a vital means of communication, the advent of media has transformed it into a tool for manipulation and marginalisation in contemporary times. Therefore, this study seeks to demonstrate how discourse was utilised by the West to manipulate and marginalise the Palestinians, who are regarded as foes by the West, through their media. This will be achieved by exposing their double standards through the analysis of the discourse projected in their articles following October 7th incident. The study tackles a very complicated issue: about how Western media portrays Palestinian people in comparison with Israeli people. Specifically, it aims at addressing the double standards of the western media and answer certain questions about how media deals with Palestinian issues during the war, while on the other hand how they depict the Israeli army. It also tries to resolve this complicated issue through using the critical discourse analysis (CDA). Data analysis is done by adopting critical discourse analysis adopting Theo Van Leeuwen's model. The study conducts the qualitative approach, three journals were examined as study material. Data were analysed by observing linguistic structures and representations of social actors from Theo van Leeuwen's adopted critical discourse analysis model. Data were analysed according to three concepts specialized to demonstrate marginalization of Palestinian nation. The findings revealed stark demonisation of unfavored actors, such as those standing as foes to the West, while sympathy for favoured actors, such as those standing as allies to the west, thus obviously exposes double standards.



Introduction

Discourse serves as a fundamental medium of communication, facilitating the exchange of ideas and information. However, this versatile medium can also be weaponized as a tool to shape and manipulate public perceptions. Concepts such as double standards, have the potential to perpetuate social injustice and marginalisation. Therefore, this research paper will aim to analyse specific Western articles to expose the unjust practices employed through discourse. By using Theo Van Leeuwen's critical model of analysis, the analysis will delve into analysing western discourse using critical discourse analysis to uncover double standards prevalent in Western media discourse. By employing three fundamental strategies, the study will shed light on how certain actors will be either excluded, included or impersonalised in the discourse, ultimately shaping narratives and influencing public perception. The first strategy, exclusion, will focus on how specific actors will be deliberately omitted from the discourse through the process of passivisation. Through passive constructions and agent deletion, certain agents will either be highlighted, inviting criticism, or shielded from scrutiny by being removed from the discourse altogether. On the other hand, the second strategy, inclusion, will examine how certain actors will be selectively included while others will not. This will occur through differentiation and indifferentiation, where actors will either be distinguished and given empathy (differentiation) or grouped together and radicalised, depriving them of empathy (indifferentiation). Lastly, the strategy of impersonalization will play a crucial role in the actor's identity, where actors will be depersonalised through the use of concrete nouns to represent them. This will be evident in abstraction, where actors will be attributed generalised qualities that become part of their identity, and objectivation, where certain words will be used to diminish the credibility of evidence or information attributed to the actors. By analysing these strategies within Western media discourse, this study will seek to uncover the underlying mechanisms that perpetuates double standards and influence public perceptions of various actors in the global narrative landscape.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis, as a linguistic field, delves into the hidden meanings of discourse through analysis. It is recognized as a contemporary interdisciplinary field, drawing from various disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, such as linguistics, literary studies, anthropology, semiotics, sociology, psychology, and speech communication (Van Dijk, 1988, 17). The goal of critical discourse analysis is to challenge a system characterized by significant power disparities by analysing influential cultural works, uncovering their effects,



and ultimately aiming for a more equitable social structure. This endeavor involves initiating change, overturning the existing order, and shaping it into a form that is less harmful to specific groups and potentially beneficial to society as a whole (Kress, 2003,15).

3. Theo Van Leeuwen's critical discourse Model

Theo van Leeuwen is a prominent scholar known for his contributions to critical discourse analysis (CDA). His model addresses the social disparities within discourse and explores how marginalisation is enacted and reinforced within discourse, contributing to broader discussions within critical discourse analysis about power, inequality, and social justice. Van Leeuwen categorises the participants within discourse as social actors, and their representation is achieved through numerous strategies, namely inclusion, exclusion, and impersonalisation. He discusses other strategies in his book. However, this paper will only focus on inclusion, exclusion, and impersonalisation (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 28-46)

Firstly, exclusion in critical discourse analysis highlights how language can be used as a tool to control and shape social realities by determining who is excluded and who isn't from discourse. The most notable strategy used for exclusion is passivation-activation (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 29). Passivation is a linguistic strategy where the agent or entity responsible for an action is downplayed or made less explicit in the discourse. It involves linguistic choices that obscure the accountability or intentionality behind certain actions. This is done more commonly by passive agent deletion. The deletion of passive agent contributes to the shift of focus to the victim rather than the perpetrator. As for activation, the opposite occurs where mentioning the actors shifts focus from the victim to the perpetrator (Ibid).

Second is inclusion, which refers to the deliberate selection and representation of actors within the text. This means that certain actors are included while others are excluded from the text accordingly (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 29), and it's done commonly through differentiation and indifferentiation. Differentiation is a discourse strategy that functions as a distinct separation, distinguishing an individual social actor or group from a comparable entity. This delineation establishes a noticeable contrast between the "self" and the "other," or outlines the boundary between "us" and "them". However, in "Indifferentiation," the distinctions between social actors or groups are minimized or obscured. It involves downplaying differences and emphasizing shared characteristics, blurring the boundaries between the "self" and the "other" or "us" and "them." Thus, contrasting with differentiation, aiming to create a narrative of inclusivity and commonality (Van Leeuwen, 2008, 39).



Third is impersonalisation, which occurs when other means, i.e., concrete nouns whose meaning does not include the semantic feature "human," are used to represent social actors in discourse. There are two types of impersonalisation: abstraction and objectivation. According to Van Leeuwen (2008:46), in the context of discourse, abstraction occurs when social actors are depicted by attributing a quality to them within the representation. Essentially, instead of directly representing the individuals, a characteristic or quality is used to convey information about them in the discourse. Van Leeuwen (2008:46) states that "objectivation occurs when social actors are represented by means of reference to a place or thing closely associated either with their person or with the action in which they are represented as being engaged. In other words, objectivation is realized by metonymical reference." There are numerous types of objectivation, but only the utterance autonomization type of objectivation will be adopted. Utterance autonomization type of objectivation occurs when the utterances are used as a means of reference to depict the social actor(s).

4. Methodology

The study investigates the issue of double standards of Western media regarding Palestine and its treatment of opposing and allied social actors within discourse. A qualitative approach was employed for data collection, focusing solely on gathering data for subsequent analysis. The data collection centred around journals categorised as 'Western,' aligning with the research title. Three specific journals were utilised. The first articles, from The Telegraph, a UK-based publication, were selected to examine the element of Exclusion within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This aspect highlights how language can shape social realities by determining who is excluded from discourse through linguistic techniques such as passivation, which downplays the explicitness of the agent carrying out an action, or activation, which deliberately mentions the agent. The second articles, sourced from Fox News, were chosen to explore the element of Inclusion. This involves the deliberate selection and representation of actors within the text. Differentiation, a tactic emphasizing differences between the 'self' and the 'other,' or establishing boundaries between 'us' and 'them,' and Indifferentiation, which obscures disparities between social actors or groups, were examined within this context. Finally, CNN was utilised for the study of impersonalisation. This occurs when concrete nouns, devoid of the semantic feature 'human,' are used to represent social actors in discourse. This phenomenon is achieved through Abstraction, where characteristics or qualities convey information about actors indirectly, or Objectivation, where social actors are represented by reference to a closely associated place or thing.



Generally, the study highlights how Western media reacts to October 7th attack on Israel and how the Western media utilises discourse for political purposes. Therefore, any prior incidents are not included or undertaken for analysis in this study.

Results and Discussion

1. Exclusion

Passivation-Activation

Table 1. Contrastive table showcasing the active and passive form.

Passive	“Too many civilians are being killed due to Hamas embedding itself in civilian communities.” (Sunak, 2023)
Active	“Hamas terrorists butcher civilians as stunned Israel suffers ‘9/11’ moment” (Rothwell & Vasilyeva, 2023)

In the above table, it is observed that 'civilians' are affected by an action of killing in the **passive section**. In the passive construction, the agent that carries out the action on the civilians is not present, and the action is perceived as due to collateral damage rather than intentional action. In the **active section**, however, the actor 'Hamas,' which is carrying out the action of 'butchering' on the actor 'Israel' (labeled as 'civilians'), is present.

2. Inclusion

Differentiation- Indifferentiation

Table 2. Contrastive table showcasing the Indifferentiation and differentiations forms.

Indifferentiation	“Israel has ordered a full evacuation of northern Gaza, telling a million Palestinian civilians [to] leave immediately or become collateral damage.” (Watters, 2023)
Differentiation	“Israeli infantry and armored divisions rolling into the Strip to avenge the slaughter of 1,300 innocent Israeli civilians.” (Watters, 2023)

In the above table, notable differences are evident in the representation of actors through the selection of words. Both actors,



"Palestine" and "Israel," are described as "civilians." However, in the **differentiation** section, the term "innocent" is used to describe "Israel," an adjective which is absent in the **Indifferentiation** section. Additionally, the **Indifferentiation** section employs an infinitive phrase ("to leave") and the descriptive adjective "collateral damage" when addressing "Palestinian civilians," while an infinitive phrase like "to avenge" is used in the context of addressing "Israel" in the **differentiation** section.

3. Impersonalisation

Abstraction- objectivation

Table.3. Contrastive table showcasing the methods of Abstraction and Objectivation.

Abstraction	1. "I saw hundreds of terrorists in full armor, full gear, with all the equipment and all the ability to make a massacre, go from apartment to apartment, from room to room and kill babies, mothers, fathers in their bedrooms," Veruv said" (Tal & Kottasová, 2023). 2. "Maj. Gen. Veruv said his soldiers spent "about 48 hours" fighting "waves and waves of terrorists" on roads and in neighboring communities." (Tal & Kottasová, 2023). 3. "Our commitment to Israel's right to defend itself remains unwavering, and I extend my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in this abhorrent attack on civilians," said Austin" (Liebermann, 2023). 4. " Hamas said it had launched Saturday's "Al-Aqsa Storm" attack on Israel — which targeted hundreds of troops and civilians — in part to defend the holy site." (Raine et al., 2023).
Objectivation	1. "The death toll in Gaza has surpassed 25,000 people since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, according to the Hamas-controlled health ministry in the enclave." (Kennedy & Dahman,2023). 2. "According to the official count, 116 Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldiers have been killed in Gaza combat since the start of the invasion." (Kottasová, 2023).



As can be observed above in the table in the **abstraction** section, the writer impersonalises the social actor “ Hamas” by attributing the quality of “terrorist” in excerpt 1 to represent them using the method of abstraction. This emphasizes the quality of “terrorism” and the imputation of it on the social actor can be used to the extent that it overrules the identity (or nature) of the social actor, hence impersonalising it onto the social actor, and this is done through the generalisation of the concepts attributed to the entity through repetition of the same quality that's used to refer to the actor throughout the discourse, as evident in the article where the word "terrorist" is noticed yet another time somewhere else in the article to refer to the social actor and thereby generalise and impute it upon him/her, as in the second excerpt (2). This repetition of the word “terrorist” leads to the generalisation of the concept "terrorists," and once achieved, the attributed quality becomes synonymous with the actor's identity. and as the word “terrorist” is used in excerpt 1. and 2 to refer to “ Hamas”, the word “ Civilians” is also used in the excerpt 3 and 4 to refer “ Israel”.

Moreover, the excerpt 1 in the section of **objectivation**, the author uses certain utterances (i.e., Hamas-controlled health ministry) that are relevant and associated with the social actor(s) (25,000 people) to refer to them, and such existence or mention of the utterances (the Hamas-controlled health ministry) isn't merely used to give concrete or clear information about the actions associated with the actor alone but to undermine the credibility of these things or actions claimed or corresponded to by the article and unlike in excerpt 1, the utterances in excerpt 2 differ in terms of correspondence. The utterances “according to the official count” is used with Israel and “ Hamas-controlled health ministry” is used with Palestine and these variations of utterances in the article plays a significant role in the meaning accordingly.

Conclusion

By adopting Theo Van Leeuwen's critical discourse model and the three strategies from it, namely: exclusion, inclusion, and impersonalisation, to examine the discourse of articles in western media and probe the existence of double standards, the study come out with several results. These results are as follows: First, in the strategy of exclusion, where certain actors are excluded while others are not, the journal used passive and active construction accordingly in the representation of the actors “ Israel” and “ Palestine” and their actions within the correspondence of the news by deliberately omitting the former and mentioning the latter. It is evident that this deliberate omission of the affected agent aimed to mitigate accountability and shield the affected agent from criticism, strategically downplaying their involvement in the



situation using different forms for the same actions or their results since the action is perceived as immoral, while the deliberate mention of the affected actor serves as motivation for criticism directed at the affected agent carrying out actions against the effected actor.

Second, in the strategy of inclusion and the concepts of indifferentiation and differentiation where , the journal shows different treatment to both actors. The instance of indifferentiation showcases little attention to Palestinian civilians compared to Israeli civilians. In indifferentiation, the forceful and threatening tone indicates a lack of concern for what is supposedly meant for the journal as civilians (i.e., Palestinians), whereas in differentiation, there was much concern for Israeli civilians. The tone addressing "Israeli civilians" is very reassuring and comforting, as the use of the infinitive phrase (to avenge) is used to affirm the intent in the differentiation section. Moreover, the words that further elaborate the distinction between the treatments are the ones that showcase the state of the "civilians." As in the instance of indifferentiation, the absence of the descriptive adjective (i.e., innocent) indicates a lack of sympathy towards the Palestinians in comparison to the differentiation instance, where its use is present, indicating the lack of sympathy.

Third, in the strategy of impersonalisation, which involves the use of concrete nouns to refer to the actor(s) instead of directly mentioning them as in the method of abstraction, or where certain utterances are used to refer to the actor(s) as in the method of objectivation, it is concluded that the journal repeatedly used the word "terrorist" mainly to radicalise the actor "Hamas" using abstraction and using certain utterances such as "the Hamas-controlled health ministry" and "according to the official count" in objectivation particularly to undermine the credibility of the claims for the actor "Hamas" or reinforce them for the actor "Israel".

Overall, double standards are prevalent in the exclusion where the journal aims to protect the actor "Israel" yet marginalise and demonise the actor "Hamas" for the same actions through exposure, mentioning them, or removing them, or using different terminology to undermine the value of one actor or highlight it for another in inclusion and impersonalisation.



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