BETWEEN LEGITIMIZING AND CRIMINALIZING BOMBING CIVILIANS DURING WARS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF WESTERN AND EASTERN MEDIA

SAVAŞ SIRASINDA SİVİLLERİ BOMBALAMANIN MEŞRULAŞTIRILMASI VE KRİMİNALLEŞTİRİLMESİ ARASINDA: BATI VE DOĞU MEDYASININ ELEŞTİREL BİR SÖYLEM ANALİZİ

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ÖZET

Eleştirel Söylem Analizi (CDA), dili ve onun toplumsal bağlamını inceleyen disiplinlerarası bir yaklaşımdır. Söylemde güç, ideoloji ve eşitsizliğin nasıl yansıdığına odaklanır. CDA, dilin kamuoyunu etkileme ve kontrol mekanizmalarında oynadığı rolü inceler. Bu çalışma açısından, Batı ve Doğu medyasının haber verme tarzlarında farklılıklar bulunmaktadır. Batı ve Doğu medyasının birbirlerine kıyasla belirli bir görüşe sahip olma eğiliminde olduklarına inanıyoruz. Aralarındaki haber verme farklılıklarını ortaya koymak için CNN, BBC, Middle East Eye ve Al Jazeera English olmak üzere dört haber ajansını seçtik. Çalışmamızda ana vurgu, Gazze Şeridi'nde öldürülen sivillerle ilgili haber başlıklarına yapılmıştır. Olay, İsrail güçlerinin emriyle Güney'deki güvenli bölgelere gitmek zorunda bırakılan Filistinlilerin bulunduğu kampta gerçekleşmiştir. Batı ve Doğu medyasının aynı olayı aynı şekilde bildirmediğini gördük. Ajansların kamuoyunu etkilemek ve bir taraf seçmeye teşvik etmek amacıyla belirli söylemler kullandıklarına inanıyoruz.

ABSTRACT
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach that studies language and its social context. It focuses on the reflection of power, ideology and inequality in discourse. CDA examines the role of language in contexts such as influencing public opinions and exerting control. As far as this study is concerned, Western and Eastern media have their differences in reporting news. We believe that they tend to hold a certain view over the other. In order to reveal the differences in reporting between them, we chose four news agencies which are CNN, BBC, Middle East Eye and Al Jazeera English. The main emphasis is on their titles on the civilians being killed in Gaza Strip. The incident happened in a camp of Palestinians who moved to the safe zones in the South as ordered by the Israeli forces. We found out that Western and Eastern media do not report the same incident in the same way. We believe that they use their discourse in order to influence the public opinion and encourage them to pick a side

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Introduction

Many people in today's world are becoming a little bit more familiar with the contentious politics in the Middle East. The kind of attention received is not related to what is going on in many countries of the region, however there is a slight coverage on issues of human rights violation, freedom of press and revolutions in Arab countries in the Middle East. What is more interesting is the huge amount of light shed by the media and press on any issue related to Israel. This kind of attention affects many people worldwide and at the same time gets a lot of people's attention to the issue. Recent studies show that social media and news coverage have significantly increased people's familiarity with political issues. According to the Pew Research Center (2023) half of the adults in the United States "sometimes" get news from social media. Another study by the Reuters Institute found out that participants between the ages of 18 and 24 depend on social media as their main source of news that also include political issues (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism 2023). This highlights the fact that social media is playing a major role in the news consumption.

The impact on the public is dangerous when the news presented through newspapers, websites and magazines is biased to a certain side, as highlighted by McChesney (2004) who states that the US media is biased towards corporate interests which shifts public opinions and global perception. In this paper we focus on the western and eastern press and we mainly focus on how the conflict between Israel and Palestine represented in the wars on Gaza is addressed in terms of news reporting and titles.

In doing so we provide a critical discourse analysis which has a political agenda that is of great interest to our subject matter discussed in this paper (Kress 1990). Discourse is related to other social elements such as power relations, ideologies, economic and political strategies and policies (Fairclough 2014). In Critical Discourse

Analysis (CDA) there are some frameworks and the focus of this paper is on Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model (Fairclough 1995) and Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday 1994). We focus on the language used in war reporting between the west and east, in doing so, we reveal specific attitudes addressed implicitly through the kind of language used.

While people see things differently and tend to pick a side over the other, news agencies and press tend to do the same in a professional manner. The primary goal of the paper is to discuss how both the eastern and western press see the escalating conflict between Hamas and Israel. The importance

of how they see and present certain issues rely on the fact that they affect and get into the heads of the readers as a means of persuasion. The paper is not interested in showing who is right or wrong but rather show how language plays a crucial role in shaping the realities which might be consistent or inconsistent with what is happening. This paper begins with a Literature Review to provide context to Critical Discourse Analysis, Israel and Palestine issue and ends the chapter with the Motivation of the Study which explains the research's significance. The next chapter discusses Methodology which covers the research questions, predictions, materials, and procedure. Later on we present Results and Discussion chapter that presents and interprets the findings. Finally, the Conclusion chapter summarizes the main insights and offers suggestions for future research.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is the approach that is interested in analyzing written, vocal, or sign language use or any semiotic event. The critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a broader approach than discourse analysis because it is a multidisciplinary field with different methodologies, theories and research issues. (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). In this field of study, a special focus is drawn over the way individuals and institutions use language. The field is also specialized in analyzing the language used by these actors. In this respect, CDA makes a connection between the language use and social power. Moreover, CDA provides the researchers with the ability to interpret the meanings implied in a text speech. The research in this discipline is more into the constructivist standpoint. The reason it is constructive is due to the fact that meaning of the texts is a construct of interaction between the producer, text and consumers (Richardson 2007). In CDA, researchers describe language features and they investigate why language is used in a particular way. For instance, if a news headline portrays protests as "riots," it may suggest chaos or criminality, affectin readers to view the event negatively. Researchers ask critical questions to understand the purpose behind such language choices, examining how they influence readers' views and support certain power structures.

According to KhosraviNik (2008) CDA considers a systematic description of a discourse. This includes description of the characteristics of the language in a text which is important for further analysis in the way of explaining why and with what objects were the text delivered and how their linguistic choices affect the text. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), (CDA) operates on some foundational principles that reinforce the relationship between social structure and language. CDA engages with social issues by examining how power relations are constructed via discourse, viewing language as reflective of and influential in society and culture (Fairclough & Wodak,

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1997). It recognizes that discourse does ideological work, serving to perpetuate or challenge dominant ideas, while also being historically situated and shaped by specific certain social contexts. Moreover, CDA interprets the connection between text and society as mediated, requiring an analysis that is both interpretive and explanatory to uncover underlying meanings (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Ultimately, discourse is understood as a form of social action, actively contributing to societal dynamics.

Norman Fairclough's (1992) Three-Dimensional Model is a foundational framework in CDA that provides a comprehensive approach to analyzing the relationship between language and social power. The model consists of three interrelated dimensions:

1. Text (Description): Here the subject matter is the language structure such as the linguistic features, vocabulary and cohesion.

2. Discursive Practice (Interpretation): Here text production distribution and production within particular contexts is examined. Also how audiences could interpret the text. In other words text and audience relationship is examined.

3. Social Practice (Explanation): The last dimension is there to provide wider social and cultural context. This involves looking at social structures, power relations and ideological orientations in which discourse shapes and shaped by.

Akhter (2017) used these dimensions in order to examine the portrayal of Muslims in news outlets. Language could reveal how the image of Muslims is displayed and associated with terrorism and violence. The research findings stress the need for more balanced and fair portrayal of Muslims in media discourse.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in Discourse Analysis

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language that is seen as a social semiotic system. It aims at showing how language functions within the social contexts in order to deliver meanings and ease communication (Halliday, 1978; Eggins, 2004). It is important for discourse analysis as it gives a framework to understand the connection between language and social functions of language. The linguistic choices made are affected by social structures (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

SFL is important because it provides tools of analysis to the texts that bear a meaning and have certain purposes in communication. The outcome is uncovered ideologies, power relations and social structures (Eggins 2004). The provided tools are valuable to CDA which aims at revealing social inequalities and assumptions hidden in the texts (Fairclough 1992). In SFL there are three

metafunctions which are ideational, interpersonal and textual (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

I. Ideational Metafunction

This function deals with content and meaning. It gives a way to the speakers to convey information about the world which contains actions, events and the involved entities (Halliday 1978). Within the ideational metafunction, transitivity analysis can be found. It helps in analyzing how different types of processes (material, mental, verbal, relational etc.) are represented in language (Eggins, 2004).

II. Interpersonal Metafunction

It deals with relationships and social roles between participants. It includes aspects of mood, modality and appraisal that help in expressing social roles, judgements and attitudes of both the speaker and listener (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Within discourse, interpersonal metafunction is important as it shapes the interactional dynamics and power relations (Martin & White 2005).

III. Textual Metafunction

This metafunction is related to the organization of information in a text as cohesion and coherence are in line. It has some mechanisms such as information flow that help in structuring the discourse in a meaningful way that is accessible to the audience (Halliday, 1978; Eggins, 2004).

Transitivity Analysis in the Ideational Metafunction

Transitivity analysis is a prominent item in the ideational metafunction which is responsible for examining types of processes and participants in a clause. The categories of processes are material (physical actions), mental (thoughts perceptions),

relational (states of being), verbal (the process of saying), behavioral (physiological and psychological) and existential (indicating the existence of things). They all involve certain kinds of participants and circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This analysis is significant for revealing how choices made through language reflect and construct reality, emphasizing the roles and relationships assigned to different entities in discourse (Thompson 2014). For example transitivity analysis within political discourse can show how actions are put in a way to support certain power structures or political ideologies. As actor, goal, or beneficiary in clauses are spotted, researchers can identify and reveal biases in discourse (Fairclough 1992).

Israel and Palestine

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a complex geopolitical issue in modern history. Here, we aim to provide an overview of the history of the conflict, examining key events, underlying causes, and the perspectives of both sides. This section of the paper will give a background which helps

understanding the goal of the paper.

The beginning of the Israel-Palestine conflict can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during a period of rising nationalist movements. The Zionist movement, advocating for a Jewish homeland, gained momentum in Europe in response to widespread anti-Semitism and pogroms (Gelvin 2014). Concurrently Arab nationalism was also on the rise fueled by opposition to Ottoman rule and later European colonialism (Khalidi, 2006). A crucial turning point started with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which the British government expressed support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine (Schneer, 2010). This declaration set the stage for increased Jewish immigration to the region, which led to tensions between Jewish and Arab communities. During the British Mandate period (1920-1948) these tensions developed to violence. Both Jewish and Arab communities sought to assert their claims to the land resulting in a series of conflicts including the Arab riots of 1929 and the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 (Porath, 1977). The British attempted to mediate but ultimately struggled to maintain control. This led to the British withdrawal and the subsequent partition plan proposed by the United Nations.

The UN Partition Plan of 1947 proposed the division of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem under international control. While the Jewish community accepted the plan the Arab community rejected it leading to the outbreak of violence (Morris 2008). On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was declared, prompting immediate military intervention by neighboring Arab states (Shlaim, 2000). The 1948 Arab-Israeli War also known as the War of Independence or Nakba (catastrophe) by Palestinians resulted in a significant reshaping of the region. Israel emerged victorious expanding its territory beyond the UN-proposed borders while hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced creating a long-lasting refugee crisis (Pappé, 2006).

Another critical level in the conflict occurred during the Six-Day War of 1967. Israel began a preemptive strike against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria capturing the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights (Oren 2002). This war significantly altered the geopolitical landscape bringing the Palestinian territories under Israeli control and igniting further tensions. The aftermath of the 1967 war saw the emergence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as a major political and militant force advocating for Palestinian self-determination (Sayigh 1997). Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories further complicated efforts toward peace leading to cycles of violence and uprisings notably the First Intifada (1987-1993) (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). The Oslo Accords of the 1990s marked a significant,

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however fragile step toward peace. These agreements established a framework for Palestinian self-governance in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and envisioned a two-state solution (Rabinovich, 2004). However, the peace process faced numerous setbacks, including ongoing settlement expansion, violence from both sides, and political divisions within the Palestinian leadership.

In the 21st century the conflict has continued to evolve with major events such as the Second Intifada (2000-2005), Israeli disengagement from Gaza in 2005 and recurring conflicts between Israel and Hamas (Smith 2010). Efforts to revive the peace process have faced significant challenges including mutual distrust, shifting regional dynamics and international interventions (Ross 2004). Conflicts never ended and on the 7th of October 2023 the resistance movements headed by Hamas launched an attack on the nearby Israeli settlements which led to an ongoing war to date.

Methodology

In this chapter of the article we are to provide detailed information about the methodology we are going to use in order to arrive at some answers regarding our research questions that we shall list in the upcoming section of the study. First of all, we start with the motivations of the study. Thereafter, we show the materials we used in the study and finally we end this chapter with the procedure.

Motivation of the Study

There are too many sources of information around us. Wherever a person directs his head, multiple news stories can be seen. People are easily exposed to such news whether as they are walking down the street and glance at a market TV or scrolling through short videos on social media platforms such as Instagram or Facebook. What

is important at this stage is that people tend to spend a very short time reading news before they get distracted by different types of content. For example, Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2021) report highlights how news consumption on social media is often characterized by brief engagement with users frequently skimming headlines rather than reading full articles (Newman et al. 2021). Moreover, Pew Research Center (2016) found that a significant portion of social media users tend to only read the headlines of news stories without clicking through to read the full articles (Pew Research Center 2016). Chartbeat Research Analysis from Chartbeat, a content intelligence company, shows that the majority of readers on social media platforms spend less than 15 seconds actively reading an article (Chartbeat, n.d.). In the same line, American Press Institute (2015) reported that news consumption on social media is often quick and superficial with many users preferring to scroll through their feeds rather than to engage deeply with content (American Press

Institute 2015). Due to the short time people spend in reading news through their social media or TV, we decided to only examine the titles of news rather than the whole story articles presented in the news. We believe that the message is successfully delivered through the title itself, even if the whole article could reveal more information, framing and accusation can be taken for granted.

Moreover, the different sources of news means different perspectives and different ideologies presented. For instance, right-oriented news agencies tend to present news in a different way than left-oriented ones. In the same line, news agencies from the west and east can also have different perspectives in showing news. The goal of our study is to see whether they actually give us the news as they are, or they manipulate the news in order to pick a side. "There are three sides to every story: Yours, Mine. What really happened: the truth" (Robert Evans, 1994). (Robert Evans, 1994) Our duty in this paper is to find out which side these news agencies behold.

Finally, it is important to mention the fame and universality that is given to the conflict these days. After what happened on the 7th of October, 2023, the scale of violence reached large extents and we can see people clearly holding a certain view as if it is a football match and you support one team over another. However, the politics of the Israeli and Palestinian case is far more complicated. The Palestinian groups attacked the borders nearby Gaza Strip resulting in the killing of 1200 (The Times of Israel 2023). As a counter attack Israel has killed more than 39000 (Reuters 2024). The large number of casualties drives people to sympathize with one part over the other despite the huge difference between the destruction and death toll between both sides and this can be because of the news people see here and there. So how can people sympathize with the killing of 12 thousands when the other side has lost 39 thousand lives or vice versa? We believe that one important factor that makes people support a side over the other one is the way news is given.

Research question

The paper is designed to give answers to the following research questions:

1 . How do Western and Eastern media establish narratives about responsibility and circumstances in reporting incidents concerning civilian casualties in Gaza?

2. By what means do CNN, BBC, Middle East Eye, and Al Jazeera English deviate in their illustration of the same event, particularly in relation to the civilians affected by violence in "safe zones"?

3. How do these media platforms implicitly or explicitly support one perspective, and what linguistic or discursive strategies are used to convey this preference?

4. Which media outlet reporting indicates a more neutral stance, and how is neutrality or

bias presented through language choices in the headlines?

In order to answer these questions, the news titles in the material section are examined through CDA and transitivity analysis. We expect to find differences between the news agencies and the way they report about the same issue. Moreover, we think that they do pick a side in order to affect the public opinion, however, we believe that at least one could be more realistic and neutral in shaping the reality rather than covering it up.

Materials

Since we are dealing with news reporting from the Middle East and the West, we decided to pick two news agencies from each side. The news agencies report in English and that is the first common ground among all participants. The second one is the precise focus on one accident being reported which the bomb is falling on a displaced people camp in the southern part of Gaza Strip on the 1th of July, 2024. The four news agencies which are CNN, BBC, Middle East Eye and Al Jazeera English. From each of the news agencies above, we have picked one story title presented in Table 1 and for to review the sources of the news titles, check Appendix 1. The incident we focus on is the targeting of a prominent Hamas figure in an overcrowded Palestinians camp. The incident happened on the 13th of July 2024 and left more than 70 people dead. According to the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), there are several principles to be taken into consideration which are as follows:

o Principle of Distinction: Under IHL parties to a conflict must distinguish between combatants and civilians. Combatants and military objectives can be targeted but civilians and civilian objects must be spared from direct attack (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC] 1949).

o Principle of Proportionality: Even if a target is a lawful military objective, an attack must not cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects that would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated (ICRC 1977a).

o Principle of Necessity: This principle requires that any military action must be necessary to achieve a legitimate military objective and must be a last resort (ICRC 1977b).

Given these principles, the legality of targeting a terrorist in a crowded area where civilian casualties are expected would generally be prohibited if the expected civilian harm is excessive compared to the anticipated military advantage. This is supported by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, which explicitly protect civilians and outline the conditions under which military force may be used.

For instance Article 51(5)(b) of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions states that "An

attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects or a combination thereof which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated is prohibited" (ICRC 1977a).

In practical terms, this means that military commanders must carefully weigh the expected civilian harm against the military advantage of the operation. If the anticipated civilian casualties are disproportionate, the attack would be illegal under international law.

CNN	BBC	Middle east eye	Al Jazeera English
Israel targets Hamas military chief in strike Palestinian officials say killed at least 70 people	Hamas-run health ministry says 71 killed in Israeli strike targeting military chief	**Dozens killed and wounded in Israeli 'massacre' at displaced people camp in Khan Younis**	**Over 70 killed in Israeli attack on al-Mawasi 'safe zone' in south Gaza**

Table 1. Headlines Reporting the Camp Targeting

Procedure

The paper here follows stages that lead and facilitate our way to find out the answers for the pre-discussed research questions and the procedure here shall show the stages.

The first step is deciding on the materials to be used. The titles are chosen to serve the discussion we put forward. They are news titles concerning currently prevalent issues. We decided on news titles that receive considerable attention from the international news agencies which have two distinct orientations: Western and Middle Eastern. Detailed information regarding the news titles and agencies are provided in the Materials section.

The analysis of the news titles will be conducted at two levels. The first one is analyzing the text in line with the transitivity analysis (Halliday, Matthiessen 2014).

Subsequently each news title will be interpreted through the three-dimension approach of Fairclough (1992). The outcome of the analysis is to be provided in the results section.

Results

Transitivity Analysis:

CNN reported as follows:

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(1) Israel targets Hamas military chief in strike Palestinian officials say killed at least 70 people

A. Material process

The title used two material processes to represent actions that involve physical actions which are "targets" and "killed". As for the verb targets the word indicates aiming and directing. The second verb is killed that shows the outcome of the action with no reference to the participant (the strike). The result of this is 70 deaths.

B. Verbal Process

"Say" represents the verbal process and it belongs to the sayer "Palestinian officials". It brings the reader to the material process "killed" to indicate that it is a claim or a report by the sayer. The verbiage in the verbal process is "killed at least 70 people" is the content of what is being said.

C. Participants

"Israel" is the actor in the first material process while "Hamas military chief" is the goal affected (or must be affected) by the action of the actor. Another actor is introduced which is "Palestinian officials" that is the sayer in the verbal process. "At least 70 people" is the goal of the "killed" material process.

D. Circumstances

"In strike" circumstance of manner to specify how targeting took place. "At least 70 people" provides additional information as to the extent of impact.

BBC title:

(2) Hamas-run health ministry says 71 killed in Israeli strike targeting military chief A.

Material process

"Killed" represents the action that led to the given outcome while "targeting" indicates that the action was directed and aimed purposefully at a "military chief", however, the actor is implied.

B. Verbal process

"Says" is the verbal process and the sayer "Hamas-run health ministry" is responsible for giving the number of the killed people. "71 killed in Israeli strike targeting military chief" is the clause that functions as the verbiage in the verbal process.

C. Participants

"Hamas-run health ministry" is the sayer making the claim. "71" is the material process goal undergone by the action of killing. "Israeli strike" is the actor responsible for the killing action. The goal for the material process of targeting is "military chief".

D. Circumstances

"In Israeli strike" functions as a circumstance of cause that led to the killing and how it happened.

Middle East Eye title:

(3) Dozens killed and wounded in Israeli 'massacre' at displaced people camp in Khan Younis"

A. Material process

There are two material process verbs used in the title in which the action is described and they are "killed" and "wounded". Both describe either death or physical injuries. Another noun used in the title which is not a verb but still describes a material process of action is "massacre".

B. Participants

The people affected by the two verbs in the material process "killed and wounded" are the goals, and they are referred to using "Dozens". The actor in the title who is responsible for death and injury is "Israel" and the responsible for the "massacre". Finally, "massacre" in this context plays as an actor performing an action leading to death and injury.

C. Circumstances

"At displaced people camp" is a circumstance of location to highlight the importance of the place where the massacre took place. "In Khan Younis" is more geographical information in another circumstance of location. "Israeli massacre" presents an interpretation of the event since it is in a quote. This adds to its brutality.

Al Jazeera English reported as follow:

(4) Over 70 killed in Israeli attack on al-Mawasi 'safe zone' in south Gaza" A.

Material process

"Killed" is the first verb used to describe the action that resulted in the loss of lives among people. "Strikes" is used as a noun here but it implies actions of force that led to the death.

B. Participants

"Over 70" is the participant and the goal that is directly affected by the material process "killed". The second participant is the implied actor "Israeli" that is responsible for the action formed "strike".

C. Circumstances

"On al-Mawasi 'safe zone'" a circumstance of location to specify where the action took place. 'Safe zone' indicates a contradiction between safety and violence. "In south Gaza" a broader geographical information indicated in the circumstance of location.

Norman Fairclough's (1992) Three Dimensional Framework for CDA

After providing transitivity analysis of the 4 titles now we focus on displaying how Norman Fairclough's (1992) Three Dimensional Framework for CDA would explain each title. Here we provide textual analysis, discursive practice and social practice since they serve as the three dimensions.

(1) Israel targets Hamas military chief in strike Palestinian officials say killed at least 70 people

A. Textual analysis

The title uses the material actions of targeting and killing with the participants being Israel, Hamas military chief and Palestinian officials. The word target is

associated with the active agent, Israel. It implies accuracy. The same title, later on provides the consequence which is death as in the verb "killed". The latter information belongs to the Palestinian officials who "say "which introduces a claim that is different from absolute facts.

B. Discursive practice

CNN here reports the conflict between Israel and Hamas. In order to dramatize the event, they used the verb "target" which indicates direction, precision and deliberateness. As the media here reports; precision directly attributes it to the participant of "Israel" and it distances itself from the consequences of the event as it links the source of information to "Palestinian officials" in a manner of claims as the verbal process used is "says". Interpretation of the text by the audience is affected by the type of the participant and its associated material or verbal processes.

C. Social practice

The title is designed to give a context of the conflict that began on the 7th of October, 2023. The conflict is between Israel and Hamas which is a militant group in Palestine, Gaza Strip. The title indicates a difference between the included actors which somehow legitimize one and delegitimize the other by portraying Israel as a state actor and Hamas as a militant group. This is evident from the use of counter-narrative from the side of Palestinians. The number of civilian deaths can challenge the legitimacy of the military action, however; this view is disregarded or weak since the CNN distances itself from the report and attributes it to the Palestinian officials who are the source of the information rather than the CNN itself.

The difference between "target" and "say" holds a lot of implications. Although the results of the attack are heavy, the source does not seem reliable to the reporting media platform. Moreover, using

the word "target" indicates precision in going after a military chief by a state actor which somehow goes against the death toll or justifies it.

(2) Hamas-run health ministry says 71 killed in Israeli strike targeting military chief

A. Textual Analysis

The perceived credibility of the title is totally affected by the way it is structured as "Hamas-run" modifies "health ministry". The information given belongs to Hamas which is a military group that runs the ministry makes the reader doubt the information given. Just as the previous title, two material processes are used that are "targeting" and "killing". However, verbal process is used to indicate the number of the deaths. Using "says" which again makes the reader question the credibility since it works as a claim.

B. Discursive practice

Bias is introduced in the title since they link Hamas and the Ministry of Health together. The title serves as a catalyst that impacts the mind of the audience. The title implies the work hand in hand between the Ministry of Health and Hamas military group. Also, using the verbal process "says" indicates a claim.

C. Social practice

The context of the title reflects the conflict between Israel and Hamas. The title takes the Hamas-run ministry of health as the main source of information. Following title (1) there is a question of credibility arising in the mind of the reader but it is much more obvious in title (2) due to the direct attribution and linking of Hamas to the source of information. Legitimacy of the Palestinian institutions is in question here. The title suggests skepticism and reliability issues sparked since the reports of the people killed comes from Gaza and Hamas-related sources which mean or indicate their political motive.

(3) Dozens killed and wounded in Israeli 'massacre' at displaced people camp in Khan Younis

A. Textual analysis

The event in the title is described through the word 'massacre' to give the title an emotive language. It is marked with scare quotes to show a perspective. The action and its consequences are portrayed in the usage of the two material processes "killed and wounded" while the location emphasis "displaced people camp in Khan Younis" provides more information about the weakness and vulnerability of the victims.

B. Discursive practice

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Using the word massacre reflects a suggestion to describe the severity of the action. Indeed it is not a universally accepted view of the event, however audiences' opinions of the matter can be influenced since it affects the way they would interpret such a deadly event. The aim of the title is to reflect the harshness of the attack.

C. Social practice

The title focuses on giving specific information about the action in which the location is also given. The event is also described by the word "massacre" to give an emotional load on the information. Moreover, the term "massacre" describes power

relations or more precisely, power imbalance since the participant actor "Israel" is committing a massacre against vulnerable people in a camp. The title, then, must influence the public perception of the event since the image is unjust. Two sides are in the image, the powerful committing an atrocity and the powerless being massacred. This helps the audience sympathize with the victims who are in fact displaced people in a camp. At the same time, it sheds light and brings the audience into thinking about the actions of the Israeli army within the ethical domain.

(4) Over 70 killed in Israeli attack on al-Mawasi 'safe zone' in south Gaza A.

Textual analysis

By referring to the death toll in the form of "over 70", the title reports a large and significant action. What makes it more interesting here is the reference to the location as a safe zone which highlights and raises questions among the audience of how such a large number of people get killed in a safe zone.

B. Discursive practice

The title reinforces the death toll and how big of a number it is with special focus on the location where the action took place. The legitimacy of such an action is questioned as the title emphasizes the nature of the place where it happened in a scare quote. Moreover, there is a view put forward in the relationship between the safe zone and death.

C. Social practice

Killing of civilians in a safe zone is under the spotlight here. It makes the reader question the safety of these zones. As the title raises the issue of safe zones and the killing that happened among their borders, it questions the legitimacy of the Israeli actions and spots international law for civilian protection under the microscope.

Discussion

In order to discuss the results we showed above, it is important to list two important points that

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would help understanding the results. First of all, the two sides that are involved in the paper are Hamas and Israel.

The first side is Hamas, which is an Islamist militant group that spun off from the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1980s. It took control of the Gaza Strip after defeating its rival political party Fatah in the 2006 elections (Council on Foreign Relations 2023). Hamas is designated as a terrorist organization by the United States and the United Kingdom. The U.S. government officially designated

Hamas as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in 1997 due to its involvement in violent attacks against Israeli civilians (U.S. Department of State 1997). Similarly the United Kingdom has listed Hamas as a terrorist organization since 2001, a designation that was expanded in 2021 to cover its entire political wing (UK Home Office 2021).

In contrast, China does not consider Hamas a terrorist organization. Instead China engages with Hamas as a legitimate political entity and has facilitated diplomatic efforts involving Hamas such as the 2024 Beijing Declaration aimed at Palestinian unity (Chatham House 2024). Russia also does not label Hamas as a terrorist group and has maintained diplomatic contacts with its representatives recognizing it as a significant political force within Palestine (Russian International Affairs Council 2021). Türkiye, historically, has not designated Hamas as a terrorist organization either. Instead, Türkiye maintains diplomatic relations with Hamas, viewing it as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and engaging with it in political discussions (Middle East Institute 2021). By having this information in mind, we can clearly see how reporting is affecting the presentation of Hamas. Since the news agencies in our study belong to two different orientations, differences in reporting had been expected.

The other side involved in the news is Israel. Israel is a nation-state located in the Middle East, established in 1948 following the end of the British Mandate in Palestine. It was created as a homeland for the Jewish people in response to centuries of persecution, culminating in the Holocaust during World War II. The State of Israel was founded based on the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan, which proposed the division of British Mandate Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem as an international city. Israel's creation was met with immediate conflict from neighboring Arab countries, leading to the Arab-Israeli War of 1948-1949. Since then, Israel has developed into a highly advanced and industrialized country, known for its strong economy, advanced technology sector, and robust military capabilities (Council on Foreign Relations 2023).

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Israel is an officially recognized country however, it has been criticized specifically during the war we are reporting. The president of the Republic of Türkiye gave a speech in the Grand Palestine Rally on the 28th of October 2023 saying "Surely, every country has the right to defend itself. However, in Gaza, there is no defense, but an obvious and despicable massacre. They seek the mass destruction of the people of Gaza through starvation, thirst, lack of fuel, collapse of health services, which they use as a weapon." and "The massacre in Gaza is the work of the West as a whole" (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye 2023).(Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2023).

Second, the ongoing war (the one that started in October 2023) between the sides has its roots back to 1948. Indeed the direct cause of the war that started on the 7th of October, 2023 was Hamas' attack on Israeli territories from Gaza Strip. However, Israel has been controlling all sources of life in Gaza despite its physical absence on the ground. While the attack on the 7th of October is a crime, besieging a whole group of people is also a crime. So, while many people mark the beginning of the war in 2023, the reality on the ground marks the beginning in 1948. The event we are putting before you is the Israeli strike on Palestinian tents that led to the death of many Palestinians among which are children. Israel said that the reason behind the attack is the presence of a military chief of Hamas. However, Hamas neither confirmed nor denied the information saying that he is dead. Hamas leader Izzat al-Rishq stated that "The confirmation or denial of the death of Qassam Brigades' commander Mohammed Deif is solely the responsibility of the brigades' leadership" (Anadolu Agency, 2024). Israel asked the Palestinians from different areas in Gaza Strip to evacuate and relocate in the safe zone which is the same place where the killing happened in the end. By referring to the two important points mentioned here, and the results section as a whole, we can answer the research questions as follows:

 A. How do Western and Eastern media establish narratives about responsibility and circumstances in reporting incidents concerning civilian casualties in Gaza?

Building upon the results we presented in the results section, we can see that Western and Eastern media differ in terms of showing or framing the doer of the action. In other words, Western and Eastern news agencies do not show who did what, to who and under what circumstances in the same way. To simplify the discussion, we shall provide the answer in table 2 below.

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Title Source	Who did	What	To who	Under what circumstances
CNN	Israel	Targeted	Hamas military chief	according to Palestinian officials, at least 70 killed as a result of the strike
BBC	Israel	Targeted	Military chief	According to Hamas-run health ministry, 71 were killed
Middle East Eye	Israel	Killed and Wounded	Dozens of people	The incident happened in displaced people camp and it is described as a massacre
Al Jazeera English	Israel	Killed	Over 70	The incident happened in a zone designated as a safe area

Table 2. Presentation of who did what, to whom and under what circumstances.

According to table 2, there is an agreement between all the sources about the initiator of the action which is Israel. However, the disagreement begins in the second phase that associates the actor with

the action. Western media describe the action as a precise military intervention while the Eastern media describe the action as a violent attack of killing. The description of what is done is related to the third part of the question which is to whom. For CNN and BBC, "targeting" is related to the military chief in order to minimize the damage and highlight the importance of the military intervention which is precise. On the contrary, Middle East Eye and Al Jazeera focus on the fact that "dozens" and "over 70" are killed which totally contradicts with precision stated by CNN and BBC. Eastern media drives the reader to look at the outcome of what is done while Eastern media focus on the intentions. Finally, the circumstances and the extra information given are totally different between Western and Eastern reports. On one hand, CNN and BBC indicate that the source of the information is the Palestinian side which suggests bias in reporting because one cannot expect "Hamas-run health ministry to be objective. Western media seems to favor injecting such ideas to shift attention where they want. On the other hand, Middle East Eye and Al Jazeera English spot the attention on the location of the attack that is a camp of displaced people and a safe zone according to the Israeli Defense Forces. So, even targeting a military chief in such an area goes against the principles of International Humanitarian Law.

   B. By what means do CNN, BBC, Middle East Eye, and Al Jazeera English deviate in their illustration of the same event, particularly in relation to the civilians affected by violence in "safe zones"?

Yes. News agencies in this paper have different ways of reporting the same story as clearly shown in the results section. While the Middle East Eye and Al Jazeera English focus more on the deadly event itself as they give numbers of the dead people and take responsibility and credibility of the information, CNN and BBC relinquish responsibility of the information and link it to Hamas directly. The reason why the information is linked to Hamas is clearly to impact the way the audience think and somehow justify the killing since the target was a chief of Hamas military wing. It is worth noting that Hamas does not confirm his death while Israel says that he is dead. If we assume the death of the chief member, the way it has been carried out goes against the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols that strictly prohibits direct attacks on civilians and requires that all feasible precautions be taken to avoid or minimize civilian casualties (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC] 1977).

Moreover, both BBC and CNN used the verbal process "say" which indicates a claim since the information is attributed to a certain source other than the reporting agency itself. This introduces a perspective and could also initiate bias as the reader goes through such a title. In other words, the

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CNN and BBC are telling the reader that they are not responsible for this information, Hamas is. And as a party that is entitled a terror group in the west, the reader is persuaded to support the attack. On the other hand, Al Jazeera and the Middle East Eye did not use verbal processes at all. They only used material processes to focus more on the event that led to the death of over 70 people. More information was also provided such as the circumstance of location which is another important aspect that makes the reader sympathize with the killed and wounded.

Another difference in reporting is seen in the scope of concentration. While CNN and BBC focus more on Hamas' chief being targeted, Al Jazeera and the Middle East Eye focus more on describing the event that led to the death of the people using referents such as "massacre", "displaced people", "safe zone" and "killed and wounded".

C. How do these media platforms implicitly or explicitly support one perspective, and what linguistic or discursive strategies are used to convey this preference?

The second research question is related to the explanation and the answer given in the first question. Since we found differences in the language used in the titles among the different news agencies, we can conclude that Western and Middle Eastern news agencies tend to pick a side as they report events. Depending on the results we provided, the CNN and BBC are more likely to report in favor of Israel as they insert justification of the attack. As for Al Jazeera and the Middle East Eye, despite using emotive language, they provide no justification for the action taken by Israel, they rather give facts and statistics while describing the event.

D. Which media outlet reporting indicates a more neutral stance, and how is neutrality or bias presented through language choices in the headlines?

Al Jazeera and the Middle East Eye are more neutral in reporting the event. What exactly happened has been reported as explained in the previous two research questions and the results section. As for the CNN and BBC, they focus on the reason for the attack. According to Israel, the reason is going after a military chief. For the CNN and BBC, reporting the reason is more dominant to the extent that it makes the killing of the people justifiable since it is linked to targeting a "terrorist". It could be the fault of Israel but when the verb "target" is put into the title, "strike" remains useless and less important since targeting a military chief requires the army's involvement.

Conclusion

The present study used the Critical Discourse Analysis and Transitivity Analysis approach on specific news titles by famous news agencies from the West and East. The aim of the paper is to find out whether reporting the same event is the same or different depending on the location and

orientation of the news agency. Four news titles were used, one each from CNN, BBC, the Middle East Eye and Al Jazeera English. Titles are preferred over full stories since people pay more attention to short and quick news. People do not prefer to spend a long time reading news which minimizes their exposure to news which makes the impact of the titles more significant. All titles were published in English language and were focusing on one event only: bombing of Palestinians tents in July, 2024. The finding of the paper indicates a significant difference between the Western and Eastern media. On one extreme, Western media tend to legitimize the death of dozens of people as they spot the attention on the legitimate target, the Palestinian military chief. Eastern media, on the other extreme, spot their focus on the reality that civilians were killed in a safe area and inside their tents, this opens the door for criminalizing the act.

Appendix

Appendix 1: the original sources for the materials we used in the study:

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https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/13/at-least-50-killed-in-israeli-strike-on-al-m awasi-safe-zone-in-south-gaza

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