



*A Political Discourse Analysis of the Language Used to Describe the
Ongoing Genocide in Palestine in Arab and Foreign Media Outlets*

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تحليل الخطاب السياسي للغة المستخدمة لوصف الإبادة الجماعية المستمرة في
فلسطين في وسائل الإعلام العربية والأجنبية

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Abstract

The paper will tackle the difference in the language used to describe the current genocide in Palestine that has been ongoing for the past seven months, including the Holy month in Islam; Ramadan. Highlighting the difference and the reasons behind the phrasing of language between Arab based media outlets such as "Quds News Network," "Al Jazeera English," as well as "Times of Gaza," and additionally; relevant online blogs, such as "Eye on Palestine," as well as other Arab media outlets.

On the other side, the foreign media outlets utilize different portrayals to report the ongoing Genocide in Palestine, mainly the western news outlets such as "Fox News," "CNN," "BBC," "The Washington Post," and "The Wall Street Journal," in addition to the Israeli occupation's news outlets, including but not limited to; "The Times of Israel," "Ynet News," "Haaretz", as well as the official media account of Israel on "X" (Formerly known as "Twitter") under the handle "@Israel."

The language used in media outlets to describe what's happening in Palestine can shift greatly, depending on the source and their viewpoint on the war. Some outlets may utilize neutral language to simply report on the events, whereas others may utilize emotive language to persuade the viewer to their own point of view.

As a quick example; when reporting on Israeli military actions in Gaza, some outlets may use terms like "security operation" or "defence action," while others may describe them as "bombing campaigns" or "aggression".

Why do media outlets use varying language to describe events and conflicts in Palestine, and how does this language impact public perception and understanding of the situation?

This research will compare how both the Arab and foreign media

outlets use language and the strategies implemented in dealing with news covering the war crimes committed by the Israeli occupation's army in Palestine, especially Gaza, aiming to shed light on the reason why news headlines use specific descriptions to report on what is happening in Palestine, and the stark distinction between how different media outlets portray the Israeli occupation's actions.

Keywords: Genocide, Arab Media outlets, Foreign Media Outlets, Israeli Occupation, Twitter (X).

المستخلص

سيتناول هذا البحث الإختلافات في اللغة المستخدمة لوصف الإبادة الجماعية الحالية في فلسطين والتي قد دامت طوال الأشهر السبعة الماضية، حتى في شهر رمضان الكريم، الشهر المقدس في الدين الإسلامي.

سيتم تسليط الضوء على الإختلافات والأسباب وراء صياغة اللغة بين وسائل الإعلام العربية مثل "شبكة قدس الإخبارية" و"الجزيرة الإنجليزية"، وكذلك "تايمز أوف غزة" بالإضافة إلى المدونة الإلكترونية آي أون بالستين.

ومن الناحية الأخرى، تستخدم وسائل الإعلام الأجنبية أوصافاً مختلفة لنقل أخبار الإبادة الجماعية المستمرة في فلسطين، ومن أبرزها وسائل الإعلام الغربية مثل "فوكس نيوز" و"سي أن أن" و"بي بي سي" و"واشنطن بوست" و"ذا وول ستريت جورنال" بالإضافة إلى وسائل الإعلام التابعة للكيان الصهيوني المحتل، ومنها "تايمز أوف إسرائيل"، و"اينت نيوز" و"هآرتس"، بالإضافة إلى الحساب الإعلامي الرسمي لإسرائيل على منصة "X" (المعروفة سابقاً باسم المنصة "Twitter") تحت عنوان "@Israel". إن اللغة المستخدمة في وسائل الإعلام لوصف ما يحدث في فلسطين يمكن أن تتغير بشكل كبير، اعتماداً على مصدر وجهة نظر وسيلة الإعلام حول الحرب، وقد تستخدم بعض وسائل الإعلام لغةً محايدة للإبلاغ عن الأحداث، في حين قد يستخدم البعض الآخر لغةً عاطفية لإقناع المشاهد بوجهة نظرهم.

كمثال: قد تستخدم بعض وسائل الإعلام مصطلحات مثل "عملية أمنية" أو "عمل دفاعي"، بينما يصفها البعض الآخر بأنها "حملات قصف" أو "عدوان" عند الإبلاغ عن العمليات العسكرية الإسرائيلية في غزة.

لماذا تستخدم وسائل الإعلام لغةً مختلفة لوصف الأحداث والصراعات في فلسطين؟ وكيف يؤثر استخدام اللغة هذا على إدراك الجمهور وفهمه للوضع؟

يهدف هذا البحث على مقارنة طريقة استخدام وسائل الإعلام العربية والأجنبية للغة، والإستراتيجيات المتبعة في التعامل مع الأخبار التي تغطي جرائم الحرب التي يرتكبها جيش الاحتلال الإسرائيلي في فلسطين وخاصة غزة، والتركيز على سبب استخدام عناوين الأخبار لمصطلحات محددة والتمييز بين كيفية نقل وسائل الإعلام المختلفة لتصرفات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإبادة الجماعية، وسائل الإعلام العربية، وسائل الإعلام الأجنبية، الاحتلال الإسرائيلي، تويتر (X).

Methodology

This paper employs a mixed methods approach to explore the language used in different media outlets. The research design involves both quantitative and qualitative analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of how language is utilized across different media outlets.

For data collection; the first step in this research is to collect a sample of language from different media outlets, including print, broadcast, and digital sources.

Quantitative Analysis: The next step involves conducting a quantitative analysis of the language used in the collected samples, such as repeated use of certain words and phrases to describe different events.

Qualitative Analysis: In addition to the quantitative analysis, a qualitative analysis will be conducted to examine the context and meaning behind the language used in different media outlets for both the foreign and Arab based ones. This will involve close reading of selected texts to identify themes and tones employed by media outlets.

Section 1: Introduction

The ongoing genocide in Palestine has been a continuous subject in all media outlets, which sparked much debate and discussion in the international community. This research aims to compare the language used to describe the genocide in Palestine, examining how different media outlets frame the events that are taking place. By analyzing the words and narratives used to discuss this sensitive topic we can gain insight into the different perspectives and perceptions surrounding this genocide.

Section 1.1: Historical Background

During The Great War, also known as World War I, Britain pledged to establish a state for Jewish people in Palestine after taking control of the land from the Ottoman Empire at the end of October, 1917, under the Balfour Declaration. **

Between 1918 and 1947, A large-scale Jewish migration to Palestine began, the reason behind the migration was Jewish people running away from Nazism rampant in Europe at the time.

*Nakba: Meaning “Catastrophe” in Arabic, the event in which 750,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed.

**The Balfour Declaration: The British Balfour Declaration promised the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine in order to win Jewish support for Britain's First World War Effort In 1917.

Zionists kept pushing for a Jewish state in Palestine until the UN adopted resolution 181, giving Jewish people 55% of Palestinian land.

Even the simple act of changing a sentence from the active voice to the passive voice can change how the audience reacts to news. This research will include examples of news headlines that are handled by different media outlets to showcase how different a sentence may sound depending on the words used to describe the subject in hand. While the Arab news outlets tend use words such as “*murdered, killed, kidnapped, etc.*” foreign media outlets on the other hand will use the words “*found dead, passed away, detained, etc.*” for the same event.

This intriguing use of language can indeed have an impact on how the layman may react to a headline. A person might not think much about reading the headline “*four people detained by the IDF,*” but change that title to “*four Palestinians kidnapped by the IDF,*” *** and it would be a cause for alarm.

Section 1.2: Research Questions

What is the reason behind such elaborate language used to portray the genocide? How the media controls the narrative of an ongoing genocide that's been described similarly to the Holocaust, **** does raise alarm bells. First; they lessen the impact of the events ongoing, or outright deny what is happening.

How is the ongoing genocide in Palestine being framed and discussed in mainstream media outlets?

To what extent does the language used to describe the genocide in Palestine contribute to shaping public perception and understanding of the conflict?

What role does language play in either amplifying or diminishing the voices and experiences of individuals affected by the ongoing genocide in Palestine?

***IDF: Israel Defence Force.

****Holocaust: The horrific systematic murder of six million Jews by Nazi Germany during World War II.

Section 2: Language Comparison

The research will start from this particular repetitive headline “*Israel-Hamas War.*” It is plastered all over the foreign media outlets’ news, such as “AP News,” “CNBC,” “CNN,” and so on.

The research model utilized focuses on a close examination of the language used in the paper, including the specific words, phrases, and syntactical structures employed by the media outlet.

What is happening in Palestine is not labelled as a “Genocide,” but as a “War.” This leads the consumer of the news to conjure up the image of an evenly matched forces fighting a conflict with each other.

Palestine does not have an army, navy, or air force. That is the main reason why a resistance movement was created.

Hamas, which is the acronym of “Harakat Al-Muqawamah Al-Islamiyah” (Islamic Resistance Movement) is painted as a terrorist organization that has the means of fighting on even grounds with the Israeli occupation’s soldiers (which will be referred to by their official name “IDF” from now on throughout the paper).

The current Hamas is not a terrorist organization, but a resistance movement made out of mostly orphaned Palestinian men, who decided to endure the Israeli occupation’s tyranny no more, and take matters into their own hands in an effort to take back their homeland.

The word all Arab news outlets, as well as some western news outlets and online blogs use to describe what is happening in Palestine, without a doubt is the word “*Genocide*,” loud and clear. What is happening in Palestine is the textbook definition of “Genocide” and “Ethnic Cleansing”.

Genocide can be defined as the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a certain nation, with the aim of erasing the group completely, “Ethnic Cleansing” has much of the same meaning as the former, being the eradication of an ethnic group in a specific area.

Which leads us to the next headline example; “*Displaced Gazans wonder where to go as Israel vows to keep pushing south*,” This headline was posted by the New York Times on Feb. 6, 2024 uses an ambiguous style of wording to avoid mentioning the bombardment that was happening in Gaza, calling Palestinians ‘Gazans’ as a way to erase their true nationality, and saying ‘keep pushing south’ instead of what the Israeli Occupation is truly doing, which is carpet bombing the land as they continue on southward.

The next headline yet again uses the label of war; “*Losses in the Israel-Hamas war as Gaza deaths surpass 20,000*.” AP News posted this headline on December 22, 2023, while still using the labelling of “Israel-Hamas War” instead of “Genocide,” the ambiguity of the headline can be up to many interpretations, one

of which may be the idea that the ‘conflict’ from both sides resulted in losses of human lives.

While Al Jazeera News posted the same story two days prior, with the headline “*Gaza death toll surpasses 20,000 as UN Security Council delays vote on aid,*” and English News’ headline “*Palestinian death toll from Israeli attacks in Gaza, West Bank nears 20,000,*” clearly stating that the death toll is a direct result of the Israeli Occupation’s attacks on Gaza, Palestine.

Another headline by the People’s Dispatch News “*Israeli war on Gaza continues for 76th consecutive day, death toll over 20,000*” posted on December 21, 2023 also state that the attacks are all coming from the Israeli Occupation.

The next headline was published by The Washington post; “*The UN says more than 1 in 4 people in Gaza are starving because of war,*” the western media outlet overlooked the fact that the Israeli Occupation’s citizens camped outside the borders as to not let the aid trucks cross the path into Palestine, trucks that carry food, medical supplies, as well as coffins.

There are two more horrific stories from Palestine that the paper will include; the brutal killing of two very young children, Ruqayya, and Hind and her cousin, alongside their entire family.

"A bullet found its way into the van and killed a 3 or 4-year-old young lady." The title is from the western media outlet “Sky News”, the passive voice and the lenient description on how the

crime happened makes it sound as if it were an accident, while in reality, Israeli occupation's Border Police murdered a 4-year-old Palestinian Girl, Then Took 10 Days to Return Her Body; a statement that "Haaretz" posted on their official website. The girl; Ruqayya Jahalin, was shot dead by Israeli occupation's Border Police troops.

The Israeli occupation's Border Police fired what was reported as no fewer than 32 rounds at the taxi in which the child was traveling with her mother and siblings on their way home in the West Bank. The clear discrimination in the language used to describe the event is clear to the readers.

The second horrific murder was portrayed in the following headline as; "*6-year-old Gazan child found dead after days of uncertainty.*"

The headline posted by AA dot com yet again shows the use of the passive voice and ambiguity in wording the crime.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said that the child named Hind Rajab, who was trapped in her family's car after it came under Israeli army in Gaza City, was "*found dead after nearly two weeks of uncertainty.*"

Hind was traveling in a car with her family including her 15-year-old cousin Layan, fleeing the ongoing genocide in northern Gaza, surrounded by the dead bodies of their family, they had called for

help and a Palestinian Red Crescent Society ambulance was dispatched to their location.

According to the humanitarian group, Layan was killed while speaking to the PRCs team by telephone, as gunfire could be heard in the background. When the Red Crescent team called back, it was Hind who answered. Soon after the Red Crescent lost all contact with its team and the child.

The same crime was covered by many media outlets, but with more accurate headlines, such as Al Jazeera's headline "*The Killing of 6-year-old Hind Rajab*," accompanied by their article that's clearly stating, after searching through satellite imagery and in-depth analysis including the phone exchanges between Hind and her cousin to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, She survived long enough to witness the horror of her family's murder by the Israeli Occupation's soldiers before she too, was killed alongside the medics that were sent to save her.

The New Arab media outlet used the headline

"Six-year-old Hind Rajab and relatives 'deliberately killed' by Israel" stating the following:

"A leading human rights organisation has found on Monday that Hind Rajab, a six-year-old Palestinian girl, was deliberately killed by Israeli forces in Gaza City's Tal al-Hawa neighbourhood."

Hind's last words, according to The Guardian were *"I'm so scared, please come."*

Section 3: Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is that, while all Arab news outlets tend to give facts about the ongoing genocide in Gaza, and Palestine as a whole, without sugarcoating nor mudding any evidence, making sure to cite and attach as much evidence, footage, and first-hand retellings of what is happening, most foreign media outlets, especially the western news outlets mentioned throughout the paper, on the other hand tend to gloss over the facts of the Israeli occupation's atrocities and war crimes and use a watered down language to lessen the impact of their actions.

Foreign news outlets are engaged in bias, the western and foreign media channels use the passive voice in their narrative to lift the blame from the Israeli Occupation, rendering the foreign consumer of such news unaware of the true horrors that are being committed, how mistreated and brutalized every citizen in Gaza, Palestine, is. Whenever someone is interviewed on western and foreign media outlets, they are asked time and time again if “they condemn Hamas,” completely ignoring who the true aggressor is.

“Since the current crisis in Israel and Gaza began on October 7, the Western media has claimed a distinctly biased role in favour of Israel, adding significantly to the spread of disinformation and dehumanization.” Sahar Khamis, December 14, 2023.

The death toll of Palestine, according to the latest updates as of this research's conduction; is over 31,000 people, this number includes 94 heroic journalists whom sacrificed their lives in order to broadcast the truth of the genocide to the world, as well as over 136 UNRWA aid workers, whom tried to save as many lives as they could, and ended up martyred as well.

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