

Original Article

Analysis of Media Discourse on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Critical Linguistic Analytical Study of UN Data

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Abstract - This study critically analyses media discourse in United Nations statements and reports concerning the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from 2015 to 2025. The aim is to uncover the linguistic strategies used to frame the conflict and shape the international reader's understanding. The research adopts the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine UN reports' linguistic and semantic features, focusing on the extent of neutrality or bias in their treatment of the Palestinian issue. The findings reveal subtle linguistic shifts that suggest a tendency to support Palestinian rights despite efforts to balance the discourse and maintain a semblance of neutrality. The study also identifies rhetorical strategies such as repetition, positive framing of Palestinian rights, and portrayal of Israeli violations as breaches of human rights and international law. It highlights the role of language in constructing international discourse and its influence on public opinion and global policies related to the conflict. The study concludes with a call for further research to enhance transparency and accuracy in the media discourse of international institutions.

Keywords - Critical Discourse Analysis, Palestinian-Israeli conflict, media discourse, United Nations, Linguistic bias.

1. Introduction

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is regarded as one of the most prolonged and complex political conflicts in modern history, extending over seventy years and burdened with historical, religious, cultural, and geographical entanglements that have profoundly impacted the Middle East and the world at large. Over time, this conflict has transcended its original dimensions as a struggle over land and authority, evolving into a symbolic battle that embodies issues of justice, national rights, and identity. This transformation makes it imperative to study the conflict through the lens of media and international institutions to grasp its intricate dynamics and interactions. Within this context, the United Nations plays a vital role through its official reports and statements, documenting events, shaping international stances, and influencing global public opinion regarding the Palestinian issue.

Analyzing the media discourse of the United Nations is not merely a linguistic exercise but rather an investigative process aimed at revealing how language is employed as a political tool to represent the conflict and guide the

orientations of the international audience. Despite their formal and objective nature, the texts issued by this international organization are not devoid of ideological and political influences shaped by international interests and alliances. This raises important questions regarding the neutrality and transparency of international media discourse on the Palestinian issue.

In Arabic scholarship, researchers have shown significant interest in studying international media discourse, particularly concerning sensitive political conflicts. They have emphasized that language is a tool for reproducing power relations through concealment, emphasis, or strategic framing of events. Studies such as Darajat (2025) have highlighted the importance of analyzing international reports to understand how Palestinians and Israelis are represented in official discourse. These studies noted a deliberate and nuanced use of vocabulary that tends to portray Palestinians as rightful victims while framing Israelis as violators of human rights and international law. Arab scholars assert that critical discourse analysis extends beyond textual examination to include the social and political structures that produce such discourse, reflecting the interplay between



language and politics in shaping the positions of states and international organizations. In this regard, Egyptian researcher McTigue (2011) pointed out that international media discourse surrounding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict mirrors global power struggles, necessitating critically reading such texts to uncover their hidden dimensions.

Recent Arabic studies, such as Lakshmi Priya (2024), stress the importance of employing critical discourse analysis to understand how the United Nations constructs its media discourse on human rights issues and international conflicts. The Palestinian cause is a model to examine how this discourse adheres to international principles or leans toward particular political stances.

This study aims to shed light on how the media discourse in UN reports related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was shaped from 2015 to 2025 to uncover the linguistic strategies that reflect a tendency to support Palestinian rights while identifying any attempts to maintain diplomatic balance in official rhetoric. Additionally, it seeks to enrich media and linguistic studies in the Arab world by offering a critical perspective that aids researchers and decision-makers in gaining a deeper understanding of the role of language in international politics.

To focus on this topic, the gap in this research can be identified as there are not enough studies analyzing the official discourses used by the UN in its current operations, especially regarding Gaza. There is a problem in diagnosing the situation and using neutrality, as these organizations are drawn to implications and discourses that favor one party over another at a time when these entities should be committed to strict neutrality in conveying the situation.

The problem with this matter is that the issue as a whole targets a lack of neutrality in the linguistic and political statements used by these organizations. If the statements and declarations were neutral, matters would have taken a different course, and the orientations of these organizations would have been truly humanitarian. The researchers do not explicitly state a complete lack of neutrality, but some inclinations toward one party over another undermine this system's neutrality, even if slight. This study contains a significant gap, namely the UN's lack of neutrality regarding the Palestinian crisis and the political, military, economic, and social transgressions perpetrated by Israel.

2. Research Problem

Discussing the ambiguity and reserve employed by the UN in its official discourse. While the UN is supposed to be neutral as an impartial international entity, its statements highlight certain aspects while concealing others. This creates international bias through these statements, in which the UN uses a specific language, highlighting the bias in its language that influences public opinion when these speeches are analyzed linguistically and critically.

3. Research Objectives

- To analyze the media discourse in United Nations statements and reports related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, focusing on linguistic and semantic features.
- To identify the linguistic, syntactic, and rhetorical strategies used to convey political messages within the discourse.
- To provide a critical linguistic reading that reveals the mechanisms of constructing international media discourse and examines its bias or neutrality toward the Palestinian issue.

4. Research Questions

- What are the main linguistic and semantic features of the United Nations' discourse in its reports on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?
- How is a language used in UN reports to guide opinions or to show support for one side of the conflict?

5. Importance of the Study

The importance of this study comes from the need to deeply understand how international media talks about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, especially since United Nations statements are official sources used by decision-makers and the global community.

This research contributes to media and linguistic studies by applying critical discourse analysis to international texts. It also helps researchers and human rights organizations identify possible biases or hidden messages in official media language, encouraging more balanced and transparent international communication.

6. Theoretical Framework

6.1. Definition of Media Discourse and Linguistic Criticism

Media discourse is a form of communication that uses language and media tools to deliver news, share information, and influence public opinion. It includes texts, images, and sounds designed to impact audiences and serve political or social goals (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, media discourse is not just about neutral reporting.

It is about shaping meanings and knowledge within social and political contexts. Linguistic criticism, also known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), is a research method that examines how language helps create and reinforce social and political relationships, especially those involving power and control.

In Arabic scholarship, linguistic criticism involves analyzing spoken or written texts in terms of their language structure, meaning, style, and effect on the reader or listener. It relies on grammar, rhetoric, and interpretive principles to identify strengths or weaknesses in a text and assess its clarity, eloquence, and communicative impact. For example,

the scholar Ibn Jinni (1982) defines language as “sounds used by a people to express their intentions, emphasizing its role as a vocal tool for communication. In his famous dictionary, *Lisan al-Arab*, Ibn Manzur offers multiple definitions of language, describing it as “speech agreed upon by a group”, which shows that social and cultural norms shape language.

In *Sir al-Fasaha (The Secret of Eloquence)*, Ibn Sinan al-Khafaji (1782, p. 42) discusses eloquence and rhetoric, highlighting that eloquence means using words that perfectly match the intended meaning and influence the audience.

In Mukhtar al-Sihah, Al-Razi describes language as sounds used by each group to express their purposes,” focusing on its vocal and communicative aspects (p. 499).

Ibn Khaldun, in his famous *Muqaddimah (Introduction)*, defines language as “the speaker’s expression of their intent”, viewing it as a deliberate action performed by the tongue (p. 43).

Thus, Arabic scholars viewed linguistic criticism as a scientific method to refine language, improve discourse, and deeply understand texts, especially the Qur’an and poetry, by blending grammar, rhetoric, and aesthetic judgment.

Van Dijk (1998) explains that discourse is a key tool for exercising power and control and must be analyzed to uncover how language legitimizes certain views and marginalizes others. Norman Fairclough (1995) also notes that CDA aims to reveal the hidden ideologies in texts by analyzing the linguistic structures that shape meaning.

In the Arab context, Abu Rumman (2024) highlights the importance of linguistic criticism for uncovering hidden meanings and power structures in media and political texts.

Several key theories in CDA emphasize that language is not neutral; it reflects and shapes societal power relations (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The main models used to analyze media discourse include:

- Van Dijk’s Model (1998): Focuses on the connection between discourse, knowledge, and power. It analyzes how discourse uses linguistic strategies to influence society and reinforce dominant ideologies. This includes studying word choice, grammar, repetition, and framing.
- Fairclough’s Model (1995): Sees discourse as a social practice shaped by and shaping social structures. It includes analyzing texts’ linguistic features and their social and political context.
- Wodak’s Model (2001): Emphasizes the importance of understanding a text’s historical and political context. It combines linguistic analysis with contextual interpretation to explain how texts help reproduce political narratives.

7. Review of Previous Studies

Cherkaou (2025) pointed out that Western media often engages in “biased coverage”, tending to portray Palestinians as security threats while justifying Israeli actions as acts of self-defence. Gregory (2004) examined international discourse, focusing on how the United Nations uses diplomatic language to appear neutral yet increasingly highlights Israeli violations.

In a study, Assaiqeli (2019) provided a critical analysis of UN discourse, noting that the language used often supports Palestinian rights but is framed in ways that soften certain political stances. Arab researchers have also emphasized the importance of using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to decode international political discourse. For example, Rizka Sulisyana showed that official statements often use linguistic strategies like passive voice, agent deletion, and repetition to convey messages indirectly without clearly naming specific parties.

7.1. Common Discourse Analysis Models Used in Similar Studies Include

- Linguistic structure of the text: Analyzing vocabulary, sentence structure, and text organization to reveal patterns that reflect political attitudes.
- Rhetorical strategies: These include repetition, framing, metaphors, and linguistic forms like the passive voice.
- Political and social context: Understanding how texts interact with the political environment and uncovering the underlying messages they convey.
- Representation and imagery: Investigate how different parties in the conflict are portrayed as victims or violators.

8. Research Methodology

This study uses a descriptive, analytical, and critical linguistic approach to examine official United Nations reports issued between 2015 and 2025. These reports were selected based on how extensively they addressed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The analysis tool is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), following Van Dijk’s Model (1998), which focuses on examining the texts’ linguistic structures and rhetorical techniques. Data was collected from the selected reports and analyzed through repetition, framing, vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and symbolic language.

9. Data Analysis

The purpose of data analysis in this study is to deconstruct media discourse in UN reports related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This is achieved through a detailed examination of the texts to uncover the linguistic features, rhetorical strategies, and cumulative methods used to frame events and guide international reader perceptions.

The analysis is grounded in the CDA framework Van Dijk (1998) outlined, which explores how language reflects and reproduces power relations in official texts.

9.1. Rhetorical and Verbal Strategies

UN reports frequently employ specific rhetorical strategies emphasising particular perspectives while softening others. For instance, terms like "illegal settlements" and "human rights violations" are repeatedly used when referring to Israeli actions in Palestinian territories. These terms underscore the legal and human rights dimensions of such actions and depict Israel as a violating party. In contrast, references to Palestinian actions tend to use milder language, such as "hostile acts" or "rising tensions", which come across as neutral or even softened expressions. This discrepancy in word choice reveals a tendency in the discourse to highlight Israeli violations more explicitly while downplaying or neutralizing references to Palestinian resistance.

9.2. Repetition and Framing

Discourse often relies on repetition strategies to reinforce specific positions in the reader's mind. For example, UN reports frequently repeat phrases such as:

- The need to protect Palestinian civilians.
- The commitment of all parties to international law.

These repeated expressions emphasize Palestinian rights and frame the issue within a humanitarian and legal context. Framing is also evident in how Israeli violations are presented as significant obstacles to peace. This type of framing places the responsibility for the situation's complexity on the Israeli side and encourages international support for fair solutions. At the same time, the Palestinian side is often framed within the context of "security challenges", a framing that highlights the complexity of the conflict and blurs the responsibility for escalation.

9.3. Semantic and Grammatical Usage

Grammatically, the passive voice is frequently used when describing Israeli violations, with phrases like "homes were destroyed" or "civilians were arrested" rather than directly naming the responsible party. This use reflects a diplomatic style standard in international discourse, aiming to assign blame without directly accusing, thereby maintaining an appearance of neutrality. In contrast, the active voice is sometimes used when referring to Palestinian actions, such as "Palestinians launched attacks", which presents them as responsible actors. This imbalance in linguistic choices reflects an unequal narrative that can influence how readers perceive each side.

9.4. Analysis of Linguistic Imagery and Symbols

Linguistic imagery is used in texts to embody the conflict in a way that evokes empathy or encourages taking a specific stance. For example, metaphors that describe the Israeli

occupation as a "racial wall" or a "chain of restraints" enhance the sense of oppression and injustice faced by Palestinians. In contrast, reports sometimes use more restrained or objective expressions when referring to resistance or armed operations. Human rights-related symbols, such as "right to housing" and "freedom", frequently recur, framing the Palestinian issue within the context of civil and legal rights and presenting it as a matter with global humanitarian dimensions.

9.5. Analysis of Context and the Political Dimension of the Texts

Discourse cannot be separated from its international political context, as United Nations reports are drafted within a sensitive diplomatic environment that attempts to balance multiple pressures. This is evident in the repeated calls for dialogue and peace and the absence of explicitly escalatory language, reflecting the organization's care to maintain its role as a neutral mediator. Nevertheless, the texts contain clear signals supporting Palestinian rights and condemning violations, which appear through word choice, repetition, and framing.

9.6. Interaction between Discourse and the Reader

The analysis shows that the discourse targets a diverse international audience, prompting the use of relatively precise and neutral language yet carrying clear political messages. The discourse aims to highlight Palestinian suffering and call for international support without crossing diplomatic boundaries, creating a careful rhetoric that balances endorsement and neutrality.

The analysis concludes that the media discourse in UN reports on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is characterized by the use of precise linguistic strategies to guide international public opinion toward supporting Palestinian rights while attempting to maintain a form of diplomatic neutrality. This is reflected in the selective repetition of terms, framing that emphasizes Israeli violations, and the use of grammatical constructions that sometimes soften the tone. This linguistic balance mirrors the political complexities of the conflict and the sensitivity of the UN role, yet also reveals an apparent inclination in favor of the Palestinian cause.

10. Expected Outcomes

10.1. Detection of Subtle Linguistic Bias Favoring the Palestinian Cause

The data is expected to reveal texts exhibiting subtle linguistic bias supporting Palestinian rights. Reports frequently repeat legal and humanitarian terms highlighting Israeli violations as breaches of international law and human rights. This tendency reflects an increasing UN awareness of the injustice faced by Palestinians and shows implicit or explicit support for their cause despite efforts to maintain formal neutrality in the texts.

10.2. Rhetorical Strategies for Humanitarian and Political Framing

The analysis is likely to uncover the use of rhetorical strategies such as repetition and emphasis on vocabulary related to human suffering terms like “protection of civilians”, “refugees”, and “legitimate rights”. These strategies frame the conflict within the context of human rights and justice, strengthening the position of Palestinians as victims deserving international support and exerting political pressure on the global community to act.

10.3. Use of Grammatical and Diplomatic Formulations to Soften Positions

Expected findings include using grammatical structures such as the passive voice to avoid direct attribution of responsibility in specific passages. This is interpreted as a diplomatic effort to maintain the balance between parties and reflects the UN's caution in addressing highly contested issues. However, these formulations do not prevent condemnation of violations but achieve a balanced diplomatic framing.

10.4. Framing the Palestinian Side Positively or Neutrally

The discourse is expected to show a certain balance in representing the Palestinian side, often portraying it as a society suffering under occupation and struggling for national rights. References to armed actions or resistance operations are neutralized or softened using less harsh expressions or providing contextual background for these acts. This framing reinforces the image of Palestinians as victims demanding their legitimate rights.

10.5. The Role of Discourse in Shaping International Awareness and Public Opinion

The media discourse in UN reports is anticipated to have a tangible impact on shaping international public opinion by constructing a particular perception of the conflict focused on rights and justice, depicting the Israeli side as the violator of the law. This influence strengthens international pressure on the concerned parties and contributes to advancing political and humanitarian agendas related to the issue.

10.6. Recommendations for Developing International Media Discourse

Based on the findings, recommendations are expected to be made to improve the transparency and accuracy of international media discourse through:

- Enhancing clear and explicit language that directly assigns responsibilities without compromising institutional neutrality.
- Adopting ongoing critical analytical methods to monitor balance in official discourse.
- Developing mechanisms for accountability and transparency in drafting official media texts to ensure fair and balanced representation of all parties.

11. Conclusion

This critical analytical study of the media discourse in UN reports on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict shows that the language used is a way to share information and an important tool to shape meanings and send political and social messages. The study found that, despite the UN efforts to maintain neutrality and diplomacy, the discourse tends to support Palestinian rights through careful and complex language strategies. This language bias reflects political and media changes worldwide and shows growing international pressure and awareness of Palestinian rights and violations.

The study also revealed frequent use of rhetorical strategies such as repetition, humanitarian framing, and grammatical forms that soften some positions without denying or ignoring violations. This shows the difficult balance the UN tries to keep as an international mediator. Often, the Palestinian side is represented as a victim suffering under occupation and fighting for legitimate rights, while Israeli violations are described with strong legal and humanitarian terms.

This study highlights the importance of critical discourse analysis in understanding how political and media messages are created, especially in complex conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian one. Language is a simple expression and a key factor in reproducing power and control or supporting justice and rights.

The results add valuable insight to media and linguistic studies in the Arab world and emphasize the need to continue researching how international media discourse is created and improved to ensure more transparency and neutrality. It also stresses the importance of researchers and civil society monitoring official texts that influence international politics. Therefore, the study recommends expanding future research to compare media discourse across different international organizations and how these discourses affect political decision-making and international support for the Palestinian cause. It also highlights the need to develop critical discourse analysis methods using modern tools that combine computational linguistics and political analysis to improve accuracy and objectivity.

In this way, media discourse, especially in international organizations, remains a vital field where language, politics, and society intersect and requires careful study to understand how international positions are built and how images that affect history, law, and politics are shaped. By reviewing these statements in newspapers, on television and on social media, which are Rima's statements, it becomes clear that many points must be focused on, as we mentioned previously, because they deviate in one direction rather than another, and this causes a problem in textual and linguistic expressions and their analysis. From the practical side, the UN loses its credibility in front of the public. If we review the texts

practically and graphically, we find that many loopholes lead to this organization losing its audience in front of the Arab community and neutrals in the Western community and other peoples. This matter is not represented in the Palestinian-

Israeli conflict but rather extends to other conflicts in other regions, as the matter has become a politicized framework in which some signs cannot be ignored.

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