

AGENCY AND ATTRIBUTION IN REPORTING THE ISRAEL–PALESTINE CONFLICT: A COMPARATIVE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF BBC, AL JAZEERA, AND CNN

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Abstract

Linguistic representations are a key part of the building of social reality, especially in the context of media discourse, in which linguistic decisions affect how people view political processes, institutional power, and social agents. This paper examines the linguistic construction of agency and attribution in international news of the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over South Africa application against Israel issued on 26 January 2024 under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The study works with an online news report corpus comprising of three reports per newspaper (BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera) and a total of nine news reports (nine news URLs/texts) through an analysis conducted with the Fairclough (1995) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis applied with Halliday (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics, specifically the transitivity framework. The analysis is centered on the agency construction, roles of participants, transitivity, active and passive voice, reporting verbs, source attribution, quotation practices, and lexical choices to explore how the responsibility, legitimacy, and institutional power are discursively expressed. The results indicate that despite the fact that all three news organizations covered the same judicial event, they used different language strategies that gave different meanings of responsibility and accountability. BBC mostly focused on institutional neutrality by focusing on balanced attribution, procedural framing, CNN focused more on legal coverage with explanatory contextualization and expert interpretation, and Al Jazeera foregrounded humanitarian issues and state responsibility by being more explicit about legal obligation. Differences in patterns of transitivity, the structure of participants, attribution, and the use of lexicon indicate that ideological representation is built based on nuanced linguistic decisions and not an editorial point of view. Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics, the paper becomes a contribution to Applied Linguistics and Media Discourse Analysis as it shows how grammatical constructions and discursive practices construct competing discourses of international conflict. The results also indicate the need to critically evaluate linguistic representation in international journalism and offer an analytical replicable framework that can be used in future research that explores the issue of media discourse, ideology, and international conflict reporting.

Keywords: Applied Linguistics; Critical Discourse Analysis; Media Discourse Analysis; Systemic Functional Linguistics; Agency; Attribution; Transitivity; International Court of Justice; IsraelPalestine conflict; BBC; CNN; Al Jazeera.

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1. Introduction

The language is a social activity in which meanings, identities and social realities are negotiated and constructed (Al Safi et al., 2025). In Applied Linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) considers language as something inextricably linked to power, ideology, and institutional practices and focuses on the fact that discourse is not only the reflection of reality but also the influence on the perception of political and social events (Fairclough, 2013). The news media are some of the modern institutions that are central to the construction of a common knowledge by selecting, organizing and presenting information using specific linguistic decisions (Opdahl et al., 2022). These decisions have an effect on the way the audiences perceive responsibility, legitimacy, authority, and victimhood particularly in coverage of international conflicts.

Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most widely covered and politicized matters in world journalism (Ashraf et al., 2025). The news agencies often present the same events with varying lexical options, grammatical patterns, reporting verbs, and attributing source techniques that lead to conflicting explanations of political and humanitarian facts. The provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 26 January 2024 in response to the application submitted by South Africa against Israel under the Genocide Convention resulted in a lot of international media attention, creating an excellent chance to analyse how language creates depictions of a single legal event in the coverage of a variety of news outlets.

There are two linguistic concepts, which are especially relevant in this regard, agency and attribution (Nuritdinovna & Satarovna, 2026). Based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday, the system of transitivity makes agency possible, as it defines the way in which participants, actions, and responsibilities are manifested in the discourse. Active and passive voice, omission of participants and nominalization are grammatical options that determine the foregrounding or backgrounding of responsibility. Meanwhile, attribution deals with the linguistic attribution of information to specific sources by means of reporting verbs, quotation patterns and choice of sources. Agency and attribution, together, dictate who is represented as an actor, whose voices are legitimized and how institutional power is created in the news coverage.

Despite the fact that media framing, ideological representation and bias in their coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict have been explored in previous studies, relatively few of them have explored agency and attribution as two interrelated linguistic processes within an integrated Critical Discourse Analysis framework. Furthermore, there is scanty literature that has comparatively examined the coverage of the same internationally important legal event by BBC, CNN and the Al Jazeera by integrating the Three-Dimensional Model of Fairclough and transitivity framework of Halliday. Such a (linguistic) gap shows the necessity of a comparative, linguistically informed approach to modern international news discourse.

Based on this, this paper examines how agency and attribution in nine purposively sampled online news stories (three sources each about the ICJ provisional measures of 26 January 2024) are linguistically constructed. The study utilizes the Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995) and the Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday) to study patterns of transitivity, roles of the participants, use of reporting verbs, use of quotations, source attribution, and lexical options in order to understand how responsibility, legitimacy and institutional power are discursively constructed. Combining these complementary frameworks, the study adds to Applied Linguistics and Media Discourse Analysis, showing how subtle grammatical and discursive decisions influence competing narratives in the international conflict reporting and offers a systematic approach to the analysis of ideology in the news discourse today.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Media Discourse Analysis

Media discourse analysis has become an eminent field of study in Applied Linguistics, communication studies, and discourse studies and explores the role of language in creating, spreading, and interpreting media texts (Gee, 2025). Media discourse analysis, in contrast to the traditional perspectives on news as an objective reflection of reality, views news as a socially produced product influenced by institutional practices, ideological orientations, and larger socio-political contexts. News reports can thus not be given a simple interpretation as merely neutral reports of events but rather discursive statements that produce social reality by making linguistic decisions.

Discourse-oriented approaches that view language as constitutive of social life as opposed to being descriptive have played a strong role in the development of media discourse analysis (Erdem, 2025). In this sense, journalists actively construct what happens as they choose the sources to use, structure accounts, use words, and decide who and what actions are given prominence. Such choices shape the way viewers of these shows perceive the political events, humanitarian disasters, and international conflicts. Media discourse analysis has therefore emerged as a valuable paradigm to explore the connection between language, ideology and power in modern societies.

Conflict reporting is one of the most well-researched areas of media discourse due to armed conflicts being a part of conflicting narratives, identities, and different politics (Meyer et al., 2018). In these situations, the linguistic options are particularly important, as they determine the views of responsibility, legitimacy, victimhood, and justice. Research has revealed that news outlets tend to use varying discursive approaches to the same conflict, which demonstrates the differences in the institutional values, editorial policies, and geopolitical circumstances. This has made comparative studies of international news media increasingly useful in understanding the role of discourse in building up of a shared knowledge on international conflicts.

In Applied Linguistics, media discourse analysis offers a methodological way of analyzing the interaction of grammatical structures, lexical patterns and textual organization with the wider social practices. This point of view is especially pertinent to explore the international conflict reporting, where the language has ideological roles that go beyond the delivery of the factual information.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers the most powerful theoretical perspective to analyze the correlation of language, ideology, and power (Fairclough, 2013). CDA is an offshoot of critical linguistics in the late twentieth century, which does not assume discourse to be apolitical, but instead argues that texts reflect and replicate unequal social relations. In lieu of the emphasis on linguistic form, CDA examines the role of discourse in the reproduction, negotiation and challenge of power in particular historical and institutional settings.

One of the most important researchers in this tradition, Norman Fairclough, views discourse in terms of a multidimensional social practice that includes the textual characteristics, processes of production and interpretation, and the larger socio-cultural frameworks (Fairclough, 2013). His Three-Dimensional Model helps researchers to go beyond the textual description by relating linguistic options to institutional practices and ideological formations. The framework has been extensively employed in the analysis of political communication, media discourse, education and international relations due to the fact that it can be used to study language at several different analytical levels.

On the same note, Teun A. van Dijk points out the socio-cognitive aspects of discourse by stating that ideology works by the existence of shared mental models that affect the creation

and meaning of texts. His media discourse illustrates how the linguistic strategies play a role in polarizing social groups using the ideological square, whereby the in-group representations are made positive and the out-group representations are made negative through systematic reproduction. The Discourse-Historical Approach of Ruth Wodak is another perspective that adds to these views, by stressing historical context and intertextuality in interpreting political and media discourse.

2.3 Framing Theory

The framing theory describes the manner in which the media houses manipulate the perceptions of the media audience through focusing on specific attributes of reality and understating others (D'Angelo et al., 2019). News reports systematize events on the basis of interpretive systems that construct problems, determine causation, attribute blame and propose ethical judgments instead of merely relaying information. Such frames affect the way the audiences construct their thoughts about as well as the way they interpret issues, which are complex both politically and socially.

Framing has been extensively used in the study of international conflict to explore war and terrorism representations, diplomacy, and humanitarian crises. The recurring frames as identified by scholars include conflict, human interest, morality, responsibility and economic consequences and this indicates the fact that various media organizations often form opposing narratives of the same events. These differences are made in headline formulation, choice of lexicon, choice of source, visual presentation, and sequencing.

2.4 Agency and Attribution in News Reporting

Two of the most important linguistic resources through which news organizations create representations of events, social actors and institutional responsibility are agency and attribution. In Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), agency is analyzed mostly under the context of transitivity system by Halliday, which describes how language constitutes experience by attributing roles to participants, processes and circumstances (Aghaei, 2025). Instead of seeing grammar as a structurally neutral system, Halliday asserts that grammar selections are a way of speakers and writers trying to make sense of reality. Therefore, the choice of specific patterns of transitivity also affects the responsibility, causality, and social relations that the readers may have in a given text.

Agency can often be achieved in news discourse by making decisions between active and passive voice, nominalization, and inclusion or omission of participants (Lingle, 2018). Active constructions are usually about foregrounding actors, indicating who does what, thus making the responsibility more apparent. However, passive constructions tend to redirect the focus to the affected actors or the act itself and hide the identity of the actor. In the same manner, nominalization converts actions into abstract nouns, diminishing the presence of human agency and showing events as independent events. These types of grammatical tactics are especially consequential in conflict reporting, where agency assignment or concealment can have an effect on perceptions of accountability, legitimacy and victimhood.

The transitivity framework proposed by Halliday has thus emerged as a powerful analytic tool in Critical Discourse Analysis since it allows people to determine how language can create social reality by means of grammatical expression (Hong, 2025). Investigations utilizing transitivity analysis have shown that news organizations often assign various roles of participants to the same actors when it comes to institutional views, which creates opposite descriptions of responsibility and power. Such results imply that grammatical options are highly related to more general ideological stances, and not necessarily stylistic preferences.

2.5 Previous Studies on the Israel–Palestine Conflict

The Israel-Palestine crisis has gained a significant amount of academic focus in media and discourse studies due to the political nature, humanitarianism, and international media coverage

(Jalkanen, 2025). It has been repeatedly shown that news outlets vary significantly in their coverage of the conflict, usually being indicative of institutional interests, geopolitical realities, and ideological leanings. Lexical differences, thematic focus, choice of sources, and framing patterns have been found to vary in comparative analysis, which points to media discourse as a key factor in the formation of popular attitudes on the conflict.

The framing of violence, civilian death tolls, military campaigns, and diplomatic affairs have been studied in a substantial amount of literature (Maryam et al., 2025). The general finding of these studies is that media outlets have different narrative structures in the reporting of the same event, and the resulting effect is that audiences perceive issues of responsibility, legitimacy, and humanitarian issues differently. Studies of the differences between Western and Middle Eastern news organizations have also revealed that institutional location contributes to the saliency assigned to specific actors, political views and humanitarian discourses. As a result, the war is often covered in media in a way that is more representative of larger geopolitical agendas, as opposed to a consistent portrait of the war.

The adoption of Critical Discourse Analysis has also been extensively used to examine ideological representation in news coverage of the Israel Palestine conflict (Degaf et al., 2025). Past research has been done on lexicalization, metaphor, nomination, predication, intertextuality, and framing to reveal the implicit ideological significance of journalistic language discourse. Through these inquiries, it is continually implied that language decisions are part of the creation of competing discourses on occupation, resistance, terrorism, security, and humanitarian crises. However, a lot of this research has concerned more general ideological trends, but not the interaction between agency and attribution and its complementary nature as a linguistic process.

In addition, comparative studies that have been conducted to date focus on a single or two media organizations or a particular political event and fail to offer a systematic linguistic analysis of media organizations with global impact. Studies that combine the Halliday transitivity framework with the Three-Dimensional Model of Fairclough are relatively few and far between especially in comparative studies of BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera (Aljoundi, 2024). This methodological shortcoming limits the comprehension of the joint role of grammatical constructions and attribution practices in representing ideology in conflict coverage.

In line with this, the current research aims at building on existing literature to investigate the concept of agency and attribution in parallel during a comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera. By employing this combined analytical approach, the paper seeks to give a deeper explanation of how a linguistic choice influences the version of responsibility, legitimacy, and victimhood in international news talk.

2.6 Summary of the Literature Review

The discussed literature indicates that media discourse is a socially constructed phenomenon with the help of which language creates the images of political events and international conflicts. Critical Discourse Analysis is also a good approach to analyzing the connection between the linguistic choices, ideology and the institutional power, whereas Halliday Systemic Functional Linguistics could be the useful tools of analyzing the agency by using the concept of transitivity. The current literature has already proven that media companies tend to use various framing assumptions when they report the war between Israel and Palestine, but relatively little has been done to analyze the agency and attribution together in three media companies, such as BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera. Moreover, there is not much research that combines the Three-Dimensional Model of Fairclough with the transitivity system of Halliday in explaining how the practices of grammar structure and attribution are mutually constructed to build ideological meanings. To fill this gap, the current research paper will utilize a comprehensive CDA approach to investigate the issue of agency and attribution in representing

responsibility, legitimacy, and victimhood through international news coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

3. Theoretical Framework

It is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) where the main analytical tool is the Three-Dimensional Model that was developed by Norman Fairclough, though it also relies on the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) of Halliday, specifically, the transitivity system. It is through the combination of these complementary frameworks that the study is able to explore both the micro-level linguistic aspects of news discourse, and the larger socio-political contexts, within which these linguistic decisions are formed, understood and reproduced. Collectively, these strategies contribute to a holistic analytic approach to the study of the representation of the Israel–Palestine conflict in language by international news organizations.

3.1 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis

One of the most influential models in the Critical Discourse Analysis is the Three-Dimensional Model by Norman Fairclough, which provides the systematic approach to the analysis of the connection between the language, discourse and the society (Fairclough, 2013). Fairclough views discourse as a social practice and asserts that texts are both a mirror and a shaper of social structures, institutional relationships and ideological formations. As a result, discourse analysis must go beyond the linguistic qualities of texts and encompass the activities of how texts are created, distributed, read and integrated into broader social situations.

The initial one is textual analysis which considers the formal linguistic aspects of a text, such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax, cohesion, modality, and textual structure. In the framework of this research, the textual analysis is conducted to consider the use of lexical choices, transitivity patterns, active and passive constructions, reporting verbs, quotation structures, and source attribution used by BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera. The linguistic features are examined to establish how the responsibility, legitimacy, and victimhood are expressed in news reports.

The second dimension, discursive practice, explores the way texts are created, distributed and received through institutional frameworks (Fairclough, 2013). The construction of news discourse is not done in a vacuum but it is formed as a result of editorial choices, journalistic practices, institutional values and professional prescriptions. This dimension thus takes into account the effects of institutional practices on the choice of sources, quotation styles, methods of attribution, and narrative formation. The analysis of discursive practice will allow the study to see how various news institutions strategize to emphasize specific voices and viewpoints and ignore others.

Social practice is the third dimension which puts discourse into the wider ideological, political and cultural contexts. Fairclough believes that discourse not only mirrors the existing power relations, but also serves to reproduce or change them. Geopolitical interests, institutional ideologies, and historical narratives are closely related to linguistic representations of actors, actions, and events in international conflict reporting. In this light, the current research will explain the textual and discursive results in the greater context of the international media, international politics communication and competing narratives to the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

The three dimensions of analysis combined in the framework by Fairclough allows the study to go beyond descriptive linguistic analysis to a critical explanation of the role of language in the creation of ideological meaning in international news discourse.

3.2 Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics and the Transitivity System

Although the Fairclough framework describes the connection between the discourse and the society, the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) of Halliday gives the linguistic instruments required to investigate the encoding of meaning in individual texts (Tahira et al., 2025). Halliday theorizes language as a meaning-making resource as opposed to a system of

grammatical rules. SFL asserts that all linguistic decisions are metafunctions that concurrently carry out the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. Of special interest to the study is the ideational metafunction where language depicts experiences, events and social relations.

The transitivity system constitutes the heart of the ideational metafunction as it explains the organization of processes, participants and circumstances within clauses. With transitivity, speakers and writers model actions, mental states, verbal processes, and relationships and attribute certain participant roles to persons or groups. Such grammatical decisions define who does what, who is the target of the actions, and who has the least level of involvement or is left out. Transitivity analysis, therefore, offers us a systematic approach to the analysis of the linguistic construction of agency in news discourse.

Agency in conflict reporting is often played around with active and passive constructions, nominalization and omission of participants (Dawood, 2026). Active forms tend to place responsibility in foreground, by clearly stating who the actors are, whereas passive forms tend to background or obscure responsibility by moving the focus onto the affected parties or the act itself. Similarly, nominalization objectifies dynamic actions, and thus minimizes the presence of human actors. The grammatical tactics are particularly important in coverage of military actions, civilian loss of life, and political violence, where agency is attributed or obfuscated, having effects on how the audience views responsibility.

The transitivity framework by Halliday will therefore be the main linguistic tool used to determine the patterns of agency, on BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera news reports.

3.3 Agency and Attribution as Analytical Categories

This work expands on Fairclough and Halliday by finding agency, and attribution to be the two main categories of analysis.

Agency is defined as the language depiction of actors and actions in news (Weller & Lock, 2025). It is analyzed in terms of transitivity, participant roles, active and passive voice, nominalization and the inclusion or omission of actors. Special emphasis is put on the manner in which the responsibility of military actions, civilian victims, political choices, and humanitarian incidents are distributed, alleviated or hidden.

Attribution can be defined as the linguistic processes by which information is made to appear credible or authoritative. It includes reporting verbs, choice of sources, quotation format, expressions of evidentiality and forms of attributions. The analysis takes into account whose voices are quoted verbatim, indirectly or omitted and the evaluative senses which are communicated using reporting verbs like said, claimed, stated, alleged, insisted, confirmed and accused. Such linguistic decisions determine the extent to which the readers will evaluate the validity and authenticity of rival assertions.

By looking at agency and attribution in conjunction, it is possible to gain a better insight into the simultaneous construction of responsibility and authority in conflict reporting. Where agency considers the person who acts as the agent; attribution considers whose explanation of those acts is accepted as valid. Their joint analysis thus shows ideological mechanisms of how news institutions formulate how people think about conflict.

3.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The analytical paradigm that has been used in this paper is a combination of Fairclough Three-Dimensional Model and the transitivity system by Halliday to explore the linguistic expression of the Israel-Palestine conflict. On the textual level, the analysis will concentrate on lexical use, grammatical organization and transitivity, reporting verbs, quotation, and source attribution. The research at the discursive practice level focuses on the impact of institutional practices and editorial judgment in the creation and distribution of news discourse. Lastly, on the social practice level, the results are explained within the framework of larger ideological, political, and geopolitical factors that influence the international reporting of conflicts.

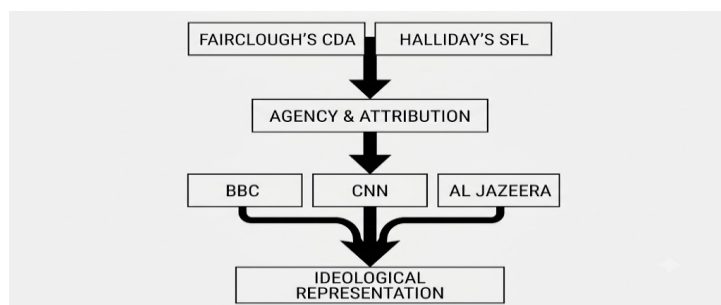


Figure: Conceptual Diagram of Framework

This combined framework helps the study to develop a clear association among micro-level linguistic decisions and macro-level ideological portrayals, which offers a complete explanation of the agency and attribution roles in international news discourse.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This paper adopted the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based qualitative comparative research design to understand how agency and attribution are constructed linguistically in reporting of international news. The qualitative methodology was deemed suitable due to the fact that the research aimed at investigating how language forms social meanings and positions of ideology and representations of institutions as opposed to statistical measurements of linguistic frequencies. Critical Discourse Analysis allows the researcher to examine how linguistic decisions relate to an institutional practice and the wider socio-political framework, which is why it is best suited to analyse media discourse concerning conflict (Fairclough, 1995).

The research utilized a comparative case-study design that involved three English-language globally influential news outlets; BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera. They have been chosen as these organizations have a large global readership, varied editorial traditions, and they have a great impact on global political communication. By comparing several media institutions that covered the same event, the study was able to arrive at similarities and differences in linguistic representation but reduced variation brought about by differences in news events.

4.2 Research Approach

The research is framed in the context of Applied Linguistics relying on discourse-based methods of language analysis. In particular, it combines the Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis developed by Norman Fairclough (1995) with the Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by M.A.K. Halliday (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). These are the complementary frameworks which give the theoretical and analytical basis of the study of the ways in which linguistic decisions play a role in representing ideology through the media discourse.

The model by Fairclough organizes the concept of discourse around three dimensions, which are interrelated:

- **Textual Analysis**, emphasizing vocabulary, grammar, transitivity, modality and text structure.
- **Discursive Practice**, which focuses on news making, the choice of sources, use of quotations and the use of attributions.
- **Social Practice**, studying how discourse is a reflection and reproduction of wider ideological, political, and institutional forms.

The linguistic analysis was reinforced by using the framework of Fairclough with the Systemic Functional Linguistics of Halliday, specifically the transitivity system. Transitivity analysis facilitated the determination of roles of the participants (Actor, Goal, Beneficiary, Recipient), types of processes (material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioural and existential) and grammatical options that condition the framing of agency and responsibility in news discourse.

The combination of these two frameworks enabled the research to transcend the textual analysis of the data in a descriptive way by relating grammatical structures to the institutional practice and a wider ideological interpretation.

4.3 Corpus Selection

The corpus consisted of nine purposely chosen online news articles, three articles with each report being written by BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera. All the articles have mentioned the provisional measures that were issued on 26 January 2024 by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the application of South Africa against Israel in the context of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Table: Corpus Selection

News Organization	Search Term Used	Selected News Report
BBC	BBC ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling Gaza	<i>ICJ says Israel must prevent genocide in Gaza</i>
BBC	BBC ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling Gaza	<i>ICJ ruling: UN top court orders Israel to prevent genocidal acts in Gaza but not to end war</i>
BBC	BBC ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling Gaza	<i>ICJ orders Israel to take all measures to prevent genocidal acts</i>
CNN	CNN ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling	<i>Top UN court says Israel must take 'all measures' to prevent genocide in Gaza but stops short of calling for ceasefire</i>
CNN	CNN ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling	<i>Why both South Africa and Israel are welcoming the UN court's ruling in a landmark genocide case</i>
CNN	CNN ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling	<i>Israel is facing a genocide case in international court. Could it halt the war in Gaza?</i>
Al Jazeera	Al Jazeera ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling	<i>Israel's war on Gaza updates: Israel must prevent genocide in Gaza – ICJ</i>

Al Jazeera	Al Jazeera ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling	<i>ICJ orders Israel to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza</i>
Al Jazeera	Al Jazeera ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling	<i>ICJ updates: Court orders Israel to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza</i>

The decision of the ICJ was chosen as it was a legally important event in the world which was covered by the major international news agencies. The emphasis on one judicial event meant that all news companies covered substantially the same event, which in turn meant that any observed linguistic variations could be explained by editorial and discursive decisions and not by newsworthy decisions and dates.

The choice of purposive sampling was based on the fact that Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on information-rich texts that could provide insights into underlying ideological patterns and not the statistically representative samples (Patton, 2015). The chosen reports were breaking news reports, explanatory reports, and legal analyses which were published just before and just after the provisional measures of the Court, ensuring that there was enough textual diversity, and yet the thematic consistency.

4.4 Data Collection

The data were gathered using the manual retrieval of the news published by BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera based on their official websites in English language. Articles were found with specific search terms, such as:

- *BBC ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling*
- *CNN ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling*
- *Al Jazeera ICJ January 26 2024 Israel genocide ruling*

The chosen articles concentrated more on the provisional measures of the ICJ, the response to the ruling, as well as the legal, political, and humanitarian reactions. The articles were then selected and thoroughly read multiple times, to make sure they were familiar with the language structure, the representation of the participants, and the discursive structure.

Instead of the blind analysis of the whole articles, the study isolated linguistically important textual passages, such as headlines, lead paragraphs, verbatim quotes, reporting clauses, institutional statements, and critical narrative passages. These extracts were the main unit of analysis since they comprised the main linguistic elements over which agency, attribution and ideological positioning was achieved.

4.5 Analytical Framework

The discussion was carried out in several steps and combined Faircloughs Critical Discourse Analysis theory with the transitivity model of Halliday.

Stage One: Familiarization

Each of the nine articles was read multiple times to discover some common linguistic trends, thematic closures, and editorial disparities. The preliminary notes were made on the participant representation, reporting style, and the framing of the institutions.

Stage Two: Textual Coding

The coded texts were manually coded based on pre-established linguistic categories based on Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. Specific consideration was put on:

- Transitivity patterns

- Material, mental, verbal, and relational processes
- Participant roles (Actor, Goal, Beneficiary, Recipient)
- Active and passive constructions
- Nominalization
- Reporting verbs
- Source attribution
- Direct and indirect quotation
- Lexical choices
- Modality and evaluative language

These linguistic categories were analytical codes as opposed to statistical variables.

Stage Three: Comparative Analysis

After coding, the individual news organizations were analysed and then cross-case comparison was done. Differences and similarities were noted in regards to:

- construction of agency;
- representation of responsibility;
- attribution strategies;
- institutional authority;
- humanitarian representation; and
- ideological positioning.

The comparative design allowed finding the recurring patterns of discourse peculiar to each news agency and pointing out the points of intersection within the corpus.

Stage Four: Interpretation

Lastly, the patterns of language identified were deciphered with the aid of the Three-Dimensional Model by Fairclough. Textual features were related to newsroom practices and general socio-political settings to elucidate the role of language in the creation of ideological meaning in international reporting of conflicts.

4.6 Analytical Categories

The four major linguistic dimensions were analyzed.

Agency

The agency was analyzed based on the Halliday transitivity system to see how participant roles and types of processes reflected responsibility. Special focus was on the grammatical expression of Actors, Goals, Beneficiaries and Recipients and differentiation between active and passive construction.

Attribution

The attribution was studied in terms of verbs of reporting, quotes constructions, signs of evidence, and source choice. The discussion covered the effect of journalistic attribution on the credibility, authority and legitimacy of other political and institutional voices in opposition.

Lexical Representation

Lexical decisions were examined to explore the ways in which certain words and phrases reflected the military activities, humanitarian interests, legal accountability, institutional power and political figures. Differences in vocabulary were viewed as signals of more general discursive orientation and not specific stylistic tendencies.

Ideological Representation

Based on the framework of Fairclough, the paper has analyzed how the agencies, attribution, lexical choice, and participant representation interrelations were used to establish larger ideological meanings about the issues of legality, accountability, victimhood, and humanitarian responsibility.

4.7 Trustworthiness and Analytical Rigor

Since qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis is an interpretive method, a number of strategies were embraced to improve the credibility of the analysis. First, no analyses were based on inferences based on a headline or secondary sources but explicit textual evidence that was directly taken out of the news reports that were selected. Second, a combination of the Halliday linguistic model with Fairclough social-discursive model offered a methodological triangulation by enabling the grammatical analysis to be viewed within context wider institutional frameworks. Third, the comparative analysis of three internationally known news organizations that covered the same judicial event minimized the chances that differences that were observed were caused by differences in the underlying news event itself.

The purpose of the study was not statistical generalization, but to give analytical depth and theoretical understanding of the linguistic construction of agency and attribution in the international news discourse. It can be concluded that the results can be understood as situationalized accounts of the role of language in the portrayal of responsibility and legitimacy when reporting on a large international legal event.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

The research was based solely on publicly available news stories posted on the official websites of BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera. There were no human subjects, and no personal or confidential data was collected. The analysis was done purely in scholarly terms and all the interpretations were made out of published textual data. Attention was paid to depict the chosen news sources as realistically as possible and to objective analysis of linguistic patterns and not the political stance or editorial intentions of particular journalists or news media institutions.

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1 Construction of Agency through Transitivity

The comparative analysis of the chosen news reports shows that the agency is built differently in BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera by using the strategic implementation of the transitivity patterns and the roles of participants. Though the three organizations shared the same International Court of Justice (ICJ) provisional measures issued on 26 January 2024, their language use varied in regards to who was presented as the main Actor, responsibility was assigned, and which institutional voices they predicted. In the view of Halliday (2014), as a Systemic Functional Linguist, these variations show that transitivity is not just a grammatical phenomenon but a discursive resource, based on which rival interpretations of international events are built.

The reporting of the BBC mainly prefigures the International Court of Justice as the main institutional actor and puts clear legal responsibilities on Israel at the same time. The first sentence, *The UN top court has ordered Israel to do everything to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza, but did not order it to stop the war*, makes the top court of the UN the grammatical Actor with the order to execute the material process, and Israel the Recipient with the duty to execute the material process. This stratification spreads agency between the courts and the state to be examined. Instead of starting with military actions by Israel or the accusations made by South Africa, BBC foreshadows the legitimacy of the ICJ, thus putting the event into a framework of an international court ruling. This kind of organization is an indication of what Fairclough (1995) refers to as the textualization of institutional authority in which discourse favours the official legal course of action as opposed to political confrontation.

Interestingly, BBC strikes a balance by using this institutional framing incorporating several opposing voices using the direct attribution feature. South African statements, Palestinian Foreign Minister, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and Hamas statements are presented one after another and diverse actors are able to react to the ruling. Nevertheless, as several points of view are covered, the personal account of

the journalist is rooted not in the political arguments of the involved parties but in the legal measures of the Court. This is an expression of a discourse of procedural neutrality, in which institutional developments are the organizing principle of the report.

CNN also previews the institutional authority, but relies on more material processes to highlight the force of the law of the ruling. The terms like The UN top court ordered Israel to prevent genocide and Israel must take all measures place obvious agency on the Court as the Actor and the Israel as the entity that is bound by the decision. In contrast to BBC, CNN adds such legal instructions with subjective commentary, terming the ruling a blow to Israel, thus contributing an interpretive language to the reporting of judicial views. This is not just a lexical option, but a lexical option, which has political implications on the basis of the decision made by the Court. In the views of Fairclough, this is the interplay between textual qualities and the discursive practice whereby journalistic interpretation follows the institutional reporting unobtrusively.

Procedural chronology is another interesting aspect of the discourse of CNN. The report reiterates several times that emergency actions of the Court are not the genocide judgment to be, but rather the tentative action, as the substantive case may take years. By this temporal framing, CNN places the ICJ decision within a continuum of legal action, and not a conclusive legal decision. There is therefore an agency between the Court, South Africa as the applicant and Israel as the responding state and therefore a discourse is created that anticipates international legal process rather than immediate political decision.

Al Jazeera, on the contrary, exhibits a more direct form of building the state agency. In various reports, the material processes always make Israel the main Actor who needs to take tangible steps. Statements like The International Court of Justice has ordered Israel to take action to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza and provide humanitarian aid to Palestinians and ones like Israel must also prevent its troops from committing acts of genocide and report, all the time place responsibility on the material processes of taking, preventing, providing and reporting. The repetition of these obligation-oriented verbs previews the legal obligations of Israel in a more explicit way than both BBC and CNN.

Moreover, Al Jazeera goes beyond the legal institution to focus on the humanitarian implications of the decision. Mentions of humanitarian aid, the protection groups, the evidence preservation, and the civilian assistance are intertwined with the description of the legal orders of the Court. These clauses can be interpreted as showing Palestinians as the main beneficiaries of material processes of protection and humanitarian assistance through the transitivity framework of Halliday. Although Palestinians are still grammatically speech-affected, but not Actors, the grammar is always used to focus the attention of the readers on the legal protection of the Palestinians, according to the Convention of Genocide. On the plane of social practice, this is correlated with Al Jazeera-wide focus on humanitarian aspects of the conflict, which combines the legal discourse with the discourse of civilian vulnerability.

The three outlets have been compared and it can be seen that there has been convergence and divergence in the way agency has been constructed. The ICJ is universally recognized by all organizations as the authoritative body that gives out legal binding provisional measures. However, they assign discursive prominence in various ways. The primary foregrounding of institutional legality and procedural balance in BBC is a combination of the authority of the Court and various official responses. CNN also lays a strong stress on judicial power, but adds to the legal coverage judgemental accounts that make the decision appear politically consequential. In covering the identical judicial ruling, Al Jazeera predicts the role of Israel to be performed by undergoing the identical material process on multiple occasions and laying more emphasis on humanitarian duties.

The other important discovery is the grammatical expression of Palestinians. In the corpus, Palestinians are not very often independent actors in material processes. Rather, they are manifested mostly as the Objectives or the Beneficiaries of acts undertaken by states, courts, or international bodies. To take just one example, humanitarian aid is always presented as such that should be extended to Palestinians, whereas legal safeguards are presented as those aimed at protecting them. This repeated player structure is indicative of the institutional-type of the ICJ proceedings; but it also serves to create a discourse where international organizations and state actors are still primary agents, and the civilian populations are presented primarily through their sense of vulnerability and protection.

According to the Three-Dimensional Model of Fairclough, these linguistic options demonstrate how the text features, institutional discourse, and the wider ideological contexts are interrelated. On the textual level, transitivity patterns define who is shown to be acting and who is the victim of the actions. On the discursive practice level, editorial choices affect the prominence of legal institutions, governments or humanitarian issues. On the social practice level, these images add to competing global discourses about responsibility, accountability and legitimacy of legal intervention in armed conflict.

In general, the results show that agency is not neutrally represented but it is distributed strategically. Even though the BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera covered the same court decision, each source had its own transitivity patterns which influenced the interpretations of legal authority and the role of the state in its readers in a subtle manner. These results confirm what Halliday has claimed as grammatical structures being meaningful choices as opposed to neutral forms and reinforce what Fairclough has argued that discourse is involved in the construction and circulation of ideological meaning in the field of contemporary international journalism.

5.2 Passive Voice and the Concealment of Responsibility

The strategic application of passive voice and other similar grammatical forms with either foreground or background responsibility is one of the most revealing linguistic features that have been identified in the corpus. In Halliday Systemic Functional Linguistics, active and passive constructions are not just a stylistic choice but a grammatical choice that has a significant impact on the perception of agency. Though active clauses directly specify the Actor who performs some action, passive constructions often do not or reduce the role the Actor plays in the sentence, thus moving the reader's focus onto the action itself or its implications. Such decisions are especially important in the context of conflict reporting since they give an impression of accountability, legitimacy, and victimhood.

The comparative analysis shows that all BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera use passive constructions, but the purpose of their use varies. The most frequent one is a foregrounding of the judicial activities of the International Court of Justice accompanied by a backgrounding of the institutional processes by which such decisions were made. To illustrate, BBC depicts that *the court did not demand that Israel be stopped with its military action* and later reports that *it is being construed as a win by those who are in support of the South African case*. In the second part, the passive form of the interpretation makes the particular interpreters out of the sentence. The readers get informed that there is a specific way of interpretation, but the functions of such an interpretation are not stated, who are the ones who do it or the institutions who do it. The use of this grammar produces an illusion of a wide consensus without ascribing it to a specific actor.

Passive structures are also used by the BBC to describe the legal process itself. The fact that it is stated that *the verdict on the main claim of genocide is likely to take a significantly longer time*, backgrounds those institutional or judicial agents who are likely to be in charge of the projected timescale. The clause does not provide the person(s) anticipating the lengthy procedure, but instead introduces the delay as a subjective feature of international law. The

concept of textual naturalization developed by Fairclough comes in very handy in this case because the passive structure turns what, in the final analysis, is a procedural choice into a seemingly self-evident fact, thus minimizing the occurrence of the agency of institutions.

Passive constructions are also used in CNN, but they are mostly used to highlight the legal process, not to evade responsibility. As an example, the article mentions that Israel was also instructed to keep evidence and subsequently mentions that the ruling is a blow to Israel. In the former, the legal obligation to Israel was put in the passive form and the backgrounded the judicial organ which issued the order although the ICJ was interpreted in the context of the previous example. This omission is not deceptive, but a sign of a discourse where institutional authority has been already constituted, with subsequent clauses being able to focus on the legal obligations *per se*.

The explanatory article published by CNN also has some passive forms explaining the judicial procedure as legal procedures that have been in place. The fact that the case may take years and the description that Israel is being prosecuted under the United Nations Genocide Convention shows a legal evolution as a continued procedure realities and not actions taken by recognizable judicial agents. These constructions add to the institutionalization of discourse processes, in which legal processes are seen to be independent and objective and disconnected to institutional agents who administer them.

By contrast, Al Jazeera is more inclined to use active constructions in laying out what Israel should do under the decision of the Court. Causes like The International Court of Justice has ordered Israel to take measures to prevent acts of genocide and Israel must also prevent its troops to engage in acts of genocide will always give the body of initiation and the body to be obligated. The active voice is also used repeatedly, which enhances the responsibility as it makes clear who gives orders and who has to follow the orders. Such linguistic pattern is very different to the more procedural one that is typical of BBC and CNN where passive constructions often pre-empt legal results more than the agent(s) of those results.

However, the passive voice is also used selectively in Al Jazeera. The fact that the court did not at this point decide on the substance of the case, and the fact that emergency actions were to be taken, draw the readers attention to judicial decisions as opposed to the institutional discussions that precede them. As with BBC and CNN, such passive constructions help to construct the image of the ICJ as a powerful legal body whose rulings are delivered as formal legal judgments, as opposed to institutional processes.

The other significant finding is about the application of nominalization in the three news organizations. Rather than explaining dynamic processes again and again by concrete actions, journalists often reduce them to abstract legal formations like the ruling, the case, the decision, the measures and the allegations. Nominalization depersonalizes complex legal actions and makes them a subject of discussion, making less visible the person to start, debate, or enforce these actions. Halliday believes that nominalization allows discourse to show social actions as fixed things as opposed to disputed processes. In conflict reporting, this linguistic strategy is a part of a formal legal register which underlines institutional procedure rather than political conflict.

The comparison also shows that there is an uneven distribution of passive voice among various participants. The decisions of the International Court of Justice are usually denoted by the active constructions, which stress on the institutional power. In comparison, ideas of the legal implementation, humanitarian duties, and procedural developments often use passive forms that minimize the focus on the institutional agents engaged in the enforcement. This difference demonstrates that passive voice is not merely a way to avoid responsibility; it is simply a way to redistribute attention to selective priorities of communicative interests of a particular news organization.

In the view of Fairclough, these grammatical formations go beyond the textual structure to represent the wider institutional practices. At the discourse practice level, journalists utilize passive constructions to uphold traditional practices of legal reporting, prevent unwarranted redundancy and posit procedural dispassion. On the social practice level, however, these language options help create specific conceptualizations of the understanding of accountability as they either explicitly assign responsibility, implicitly comprehend it, or grammatical background it. This selective passive voice usage thus affects the way the audiences understand the legal authority, state duty and humanitarian responsibility in the greater context of the Israel and Palestine conflict.

Comprehensively, the results suggest that passive constructions in BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera are less about the deletion of agency but are used as the devices of discursive focus. Although BBC and CNN also often use passive structures in order to foreground the judicial procedure and institutional neutrality, the Al Jazeera is more inclined to use explicit agency in their descriptions of the legal obligations of Israel. These grammatical options support the ideological inclinations found in the preceding part, and how even minor differences in the syntactic makeup influence the senses of responsibility and accountability among the readers in international conflict coverage.

5.3 Attribution Strategies: Reporting Verbs, Source Selection, and Discursive Legitimacy

In addition to grammatical construction of agency, attribution is one of the most powerful discursive processes by which news organizations build credibility, allocate power and develop rival accounts of conflict. Attribution is defined as the linguistic process of attributing information, opinion or assessment to specific speakers by use of reporting verbs, quotation structures and choice of source. In the Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough (1995), the process of attribution is at the level of discursive practice since the journalists choose whose voices are to be heard, whose opinions are to be given priority, and the way these voices are linguistically constructed. The current analysis shows that though BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera all use attribution to ensure journalistic objectivity they vary significantly in their selection of sources used, the type of reporting verbs used, and the discursive power accorded to rival actors.

One of the most remarkable aspects of reporting at BBC is the intentional diversification of voices attributed. Instead of relying mostly on a single perspective of the institutions, BBC has added the responses of South African officials, Palestinian representatives, Israeli political leaders, Hamas spokespersons, and even the International Court of Justice itself. Indicatively, South Africa termed the adjudication as a historic move and an important step towards seeking justice to the Palestinian people, whereas the Palestinian Foreign Minister claimed that the adjudication showed that no state is superior to the law. On the other hand, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted that Israel was not going to breach its commitment to international law, and that the accusations of genocide were false and outrageous. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant also claimed that Israel did not need to be taught about morality, but a Hamas spokesperson described the ruling as a significant one.

The verbs of reporting which are used by BBC, said, called, dismissed, adding, and reported are mostly descriptive and hardly evaluative. These lexical options demonstrate that the broadcaster is interested in procedural neutrality in that they do not presume how the institutional actors should speak but leave them to express themselves without any journalistic interpretation. Verbal processes set forth by Halliday are especially pertinent in this case, because the repetition of neutral reporting verbs foregrounds speech acts, instead of supporting their propositional meaning. As a result, BBC creates an impression of an objective coverage by using symmetrical attribution, offering numerous opposing views and minimal overt assessing interference of the journalist.

CNN also uses a variety of institutional voices but varies in the structure and role of attribution. Instead of showing reactions one right after the other, CNN incorporates attributed speech into a bigger explanatory story that puts the legal consequences of the decision into context. South Africa is always portrayed as the petitioner who brought genocide-related charges against Israel, and Israel is reported to have denied the alleged charges with Netanyahu terming it as a false indictment. The accused, rejected and called reporting verbs form a dialogic relationship between conflicting legal claims instead of making one side of the argument appear authoritative.

There is also a significant power given to legal and policy experts by CNN. As an example, the South African Foreign Minister, Naledi Pandor, is quoted as saying she was disappointed that no ceasefire had been declared but at the same time she was pleased with the overall decision. Likewise, Israeli commentators on laws and governmental spokespersons see the verdict as a relative court victory since the Court refused to order an immediate stop of hostilities. The fact that the commentary is provided by experts broadens the discursive sphere of the official political actors and adds interpretive voices which comment on the actual outcomes of the ruling. In the mind of Fairclough, this is a discursive practice whereby journalistic authority is solidified by integrating expert knowledge, thus pushing the reader to view the ruling as instead being part of an international legal context as opposed to being a political conflict.

The other unique attribute of CNN attribution strategy is that it is more likely to use the expressions of evidence like according to the *Hamas-run health ministry when reporting the number of people killed*. Such attribution both gives the information source and indicates journalistic detachment of the statement. The broadcaster also does not provide casualty figures as factual information as it clearly states the source of the numbers in an institution, thus enabling the reader to analyze the information in the political context. The practice demonstrates the role of attribution in identifying speakers as well as negotiating credibility during conflict reporting.

Al Jazeera exhibits a contrasting attributional orientation as it prefigures legal establishments and humanitarian speech as well as involving utterances by international agencies and courts. The Court itself is the main discursive authority all over the reports. The phrase the court ordered, the court said and Delivering the judgment, Court President Joan Donoghue said are used regularly throughout the corpus, placing the ICJ in the position of the epistemic authority. In contrast to BBC, where the political response is given a lot of space in text, Al Jazeera pays more attention to the description of the legal rationale of the Court and the particular provisional steps taken.

Verbs used by Al Jazeera to report are ordered, ruled, delivered, called and urged, which have more institutional force compared to the mostly neutral verbs that are seen in BBC. These are verbs of legal compulsion and legal authority, as opposed to political dispute. Indicatively, the report mentions several times that Israel should do everything, should also preclude its soldiers as well as should report to the court. Even though these modal constructions are the creation of the very decision of the ICJ, their repetition puts the power of the Court in law and predicts adherence as the key line of the report.

The selection of sources varies also significantly in the three organizations. BBC offers the most diverse portrayal of political actors, such as South African officials, Israeli leaders, Palestinian representatives, Hamas, as well as humanitarian organizations, and thus creates a discourse of multiple institutional voices. The CNN, with its explanatory style of journalism, incorporates official political players with legal analysts, experts and institutional commentary. Al Jazeera, in turn, is more inclined to give more importance to judicial agencies, international organizations, and human rights, whereas the role of political responses has comparatively fewer texts. Such variations demonstrate how institutional routines are employed by Fairclough

to argue that not only what is reported but also whose voices gain legitimacy in the public discourse are shaped by institutional routines.

These priorities of the editors are also established by quotation patterns. BBC also uses direct quotes of the conflicting political actors often, which stimulates the readers to compare opposing interpretations of the ruling. CNN balances reporting with analysis of circumstances through direct quotation and wide indirect reporting and explanation. Al Jazeera has a stronger dependence on the indirect coverage of the decisions made by the Court, which is enhanced by well-chosen direct quotes of the judicial authorities, which makes the discourse more biased to the legal interpretation, rather than the political debate. This difference proves that quotation is not just a reporting practice but a significant process whereby journalists build power and instruct audiences on how to interpret.

In the three-dimensional view by Fairclough, attribution strategies are not limited to the textual organization but also to wider institutional ideologies. On the textual level, verbs of reporting and the form of quotation weaken the credibility of conflicting statements. On discursive practice, the editorial choice is made to ensure that this or that actor is given discursive legitimacy and the voice of others is pushed to the periphery. On the social practice level, such linguistic decisions are part of broader global discourses about the legality, responsibility and humanitarian duty around the IsraelPalestine war.

Altogether, the comparative results have shown the attribution as a central ideological resource, instead of an indifferent journalistic method. Where BBC insists on equal political representation by the use of the neutral reporting verbs, CNN integrates institutional attribution with explanatory expert discourse and Al Jazeera prefigures judicial authority by the use of reporting structures that are legally focused. Such variations indicate that credibility building in international news discourse is not limited to the content of information presented but rather by the voices that are chosen, how they are framed, and the language resources by which they are validated.

5.4 Comparative Discussion and Ideological Representation

The above analyses show that despite BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera covering the same International Court of Justice (ICJ) provisional measures involving the Israel and Palestine conflict, the language usage shows the different discursive strategies in the formation of agency, attribution, and institutional legitimacy. Although the factual premise of the reports is mostly similar, the differences in transitivity patterns, passive constructions, reporting verbs and choice of source lead to the difference in how responsibility and authority is represented. In line with the conception of discourse as a socially situated practice that was proposed by Fairclough (1995), these results suggest that news presentation does not involve a dispassionate presentation of events but a discursive practice that involves the enactment of institutional ideologies using language.

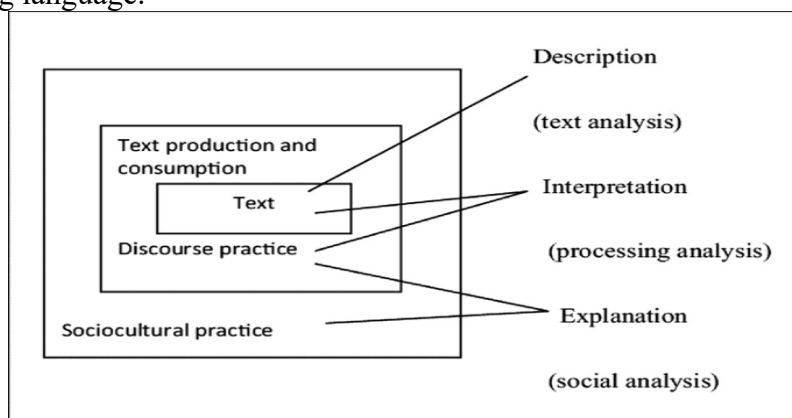


Figure: Discourse & Social Practice By Norman Fairclough (Alhassan & Alkadash, 2024).

The construction of agency is differentially constructed as one of the most important findings. In all the three news organizations, the International Court of Justice serves as the main institutional power, but the degree to which Israel is specifically represented as the Actor of executing the orders of the Court varies significantly. BBC tends to structure its coverage in terms of judicial process, anticipating the legal power of the Court but in a relatively neutral manner, displaying opposing political reactions. This institutional orientation is typical of traditional public-service journalism, in which procedural neutrality and symmetrical attribution are the ways to state the legal developments. Therefore, accountability is conveyed by the legal directives of the Court overtly as opposed to journalistic scrutiny.

The same applies to CNN, which also favors the institutional power of the ICJ, though it is more extensive in terms of contextual elaboration of the legal and political consequences of the decision. Instead of just stating the decisions of the Court, CNN constantly puts the judgment into the context of the global humanitarian law, focusing on its symbolic meaning and its limitations in terms of procedures. The use of law experts, diplomatic responses and commentary takes the discussion more into interpretive journalism than factual reporting. This indicates an editorial approach, which does not only aim at informing the readers about the decision of the Court but also laying out its practical implications in the sphere of international politics.

In comparison, Al Jazeera emphasizes humanitarian responsibility and state responsibility. In the corpus, Israel is several times portrayed as the Actor who should take some tangible legal measures, such as genocidal acts prevention, humanitarian aid, evidence preservation, and compliance reporting to the Court. The repeatedness of the obligatory material processes leads to a discourse where legal responsibility assumes the organizing principle. At the same time, more textual focus is placed on the humanitarian issues and protection of the civilians than the procedural legal clarification. The result confirms earlier studies of Critical Discourse Analysis that the institutional priorities affect not only the choice of topics, but also the linguistic expression of responsibility.

There are also crucial differences in the strategies of attribution which can be identified in the comparative analysis. BBC has the most examples of ascribed political opinions, with Israeli officials, Palestinian leaders, South African leaders, Hamas, and international organizations all included in the same story. This kind of diversity leads to a discourse of institutional balance whereby alternative views are in existence without any significant evaluation of the author. Although CNN also involves various actors, it gives more discursive power to lawyers and policy analysts who explain the meaning behind the decision of the Court. Such approach is a hybrid discourse of objective reporting and explanatory journalism where institutional expertise can moderate the understanding of the complex legal developments by the readers.

Al Jazeera, on its turn, entrusts more epistemic power to the International Court of Justice per se. The main sources of information in the entire corpus are judicial words, legal commitments and official decisions, whereas political responses take relatively less space. This trend strengthens the legitimacy of the Court as the core interpreter of the law and also puts the conflict into an international legal and humanitarian framework instead of a competition of competing political histories.

The other interesting observation is the role of active and passive constructions in the construction of ideological representation. Whereas all the three organizations use passive voice to present procedural progress, the BBC and CNN more often refer to passive constructions when it comes to the presentation of legal proceedings, the expected verdict, and the decisions of institutions. These constructions anticipate judicial procedure and defer the actors performing administrative or procedural acts. Al Jazeera however, shows a greater

tendency to active constructions in outlining the legal duties of Israel, thus maintaining clear agency and increasing the role of responsibility. These syntactic variations demonstrate how Halliday argues that the selection of syntax is necessarily meaningful in the sense that it will affect which participants will be foregrounded in the discourse, and which will be grammatically in the background.

The results also indicate that the portrayal of Palestinians is fairly a stable grammatical form in the three organizations. Palestinians are mostly actualized as Objectives or beneficiaries of material processes involving humanitarian protection, legal aid or military intervention as opposed to being Actors that trigger events. This description is more or less the institutional emphasis of the ICJ proceedings, which is about the state obligations in accordance with international law. However, the recurrent placement of Palestinians as victimized actors, as opposed to actors themselves, is part of a larger humanitarian discourse, where the vulnerable people are largely defined by vulnerability and protection. The following participant arrangements demonstrate that transitivity records both the experiential meaning and social relationships at the same time (Halliday).

Based on the findings of Fairclough in his Three-Dimensional Model, meaningful interactions at the textual, discursive, and social levels can be identified. At the textual level, differences in transitivity, reporting verbs, structures of quotations, and lexical choices influence the understanding of responsibility and legitimacy by the readers. At the discursive practice level, editorial practices shape the voices of institutions in terms of prominence, contextualizing legal developments, and negotiating opposing claims. Lastly, when applied to the level of social practice, these linguistic options add to larger ideological discourses about international law, humanitarian intervention, state responsibility, and legitimacy of political authority in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Notably, the results do not imply that any of the three news outlets distorted facts or essentially misrepresented the ICJ decision. Rather, it is shown in the analysis that the various organizations chose the various linguistic resources to arrange the same legal event in the way they each had institutional priorities and the journalistic conventions. The observation is consistent with the argument by Fairclough that ideology is frequently reproduced by means of subtle patterns of language, as opposed to blatant editorial bias. The various forms of agency, attribution and participant representation thus have the emphasis of discursive and not the contradiction of fact.

On the whole, the research proves that the agency and attribution are effective ideological tools of the discourse of international news. BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera create different, but internally consistent versions of the same judicial event through differences in the patterns of transitivity, passive constructions, reporting verbs, and the choice of sources. These results provide a response to the research questions of the study by showing that the linguistic decisions play a major role in the portrayal of responsibility, authority and legitimacy in conflict reporting. In a broader sense, they support the importance of considering both Halliday Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis proposed by Fairclough as the means of studying how language mediates international politics and how it influences the perception of people about world conflicts.

6. Conclusion

This paper analyzed the linguistic constructions of agency and attribution in the reporting of the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the conflict between Israel and Palestine by three major international news outlets: BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera. Utilizing Faircloughs (1995) Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis and Hallidays (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics, the research examined the role of

transitivity, passive, reporting, quotation, and source attribution in the discursive expression of responsibility, legitimacy and institutional authority in international news discourse.

The results show that despite the fact that all three institutions discussed the same court incident, they used various linguistic elements that resulted in different discursive presentations of the dispute. The main focus in BBC was the procedural neutrality, which presupposed the foregrounding authority of the International Court of Justice, but included the wide scope of the contradictory political views by balancing attribution. CNN has also given greater importance to the institutional relevance of the Court but factual reporting was complemented with legal and political interpretation to help the readers understand the wider implications of the decision in the context of international law. By contrast, the Al Jazeera anticipated the humanitarian issue and state responsibility by consistently underscoring Israeli legal responsibility via overt material procedures and obligation-based linguistic frameworks. These differences show that news language is not only influenced by the factual nature of events but also by the language that is used to express the said events.

The analysis also indicated that agency is a distributed resource and not an objectively reflected resource. Transitivity patterns across the corpus identified the participants that acted as Actors, Goals or Beneficiaries and, thus, affected how the readers perceived the responsibility and accountability. The International Court of Justice always became the main institutional Actor delivering legal orders whereas Israel had different levels of explicit agency in accordance with editorial direction of each news organization. Palestinians on the other hand were largely only actualized as influenced subjects or beneficiaries of humanitarian and legal practices but not as subjects of action. These configurations of participants illustrate the ideas of Halliday that grammatical structures carry ideological meanings and experiences.

Attribution strategies also took center stage in building rival accounts of legitimate. The use of reporting verbs, patterns of quotes, and institutional sources influenced the perceived credibility of information and at the same time dictated who gained discursive authority. BBC focused on balance by addressing a variety of political actors, CNN mixed official sources with legal and policy elites to offer interpretive framing, and Al Jazeera prioritized the role of the Court and humanitarian discourse by preempting the Court in its legal argumentation. These results justify the argument by Fairclough that institutional practices are involved in the production of discourse by regulating the flow of information and the allocation of power in the process of communicating publicly.

Notably, the study does not imply that any of the three organizations were involved in distortion of facts or disregard of facts, which is intentional misinformation. Instead, it shows that journalistic objectivity is lingo-mediated with editorial choices made about agency, attribution, lexical choice, and representation of participants. News organizations can create discursive realities differently even in the reporting of the same legal developments by focusing on the specific agents of institutions, pre-empting certain types of evidence and prioritizing their editorial goals in the structuring of narratives. As a result, ideology of news discourse does not work directly as opinion, but subtly through grammatical and discursive decisions, which shape the audience in the perception of responsibility, legitimacy, and justice.

In terms of Applied Linguistics, the paper can be viewed as a part of the ever-increasing amount of literature that implements Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis to modern media discourse. The research combines two analytical frameworks (transitivity of Halliday and three-dimensional analysis of Fairclough) to show the complementary usefulness of the linguistic perspective and the socio-discursive perspective in studying the ideological roles of international journalism. Unlike earlier works that have often focused on the framing theory or approached media bias in general, this paper demonstrates the working of individual

linguistic resources, such as transitivity, passive constructions, reporting verbs, and attribution strategies to create ideological meaning in conflict reporting.

The paper is also relevant to the field of the Media Discourse Analysis in the sense that it offers a comparative analysis of three news organizations that are influential on the international arena and which represent various institutional and geopolitical backgrounds. Instead of assessing the factual dimensions of their reporting, the analysis points out to the different editorial traditions that give rise to linguistic representation but are the same underlying legal event. Such a comparative approach can add value to existing literature by showing that the differences in media accounts can be revealed with a range of micro-discursive decisions, as opposed to direct ideological utterances.

The results have significant practical value in journalism, media literacy and communication to the general population. In the case of journalists, the research highlights the importance of the linguistic decision in forming societal views of conflict, despite their attempts to be professional and objective. To teachers and scholars of Applied Linguistics, it illustrates the usefulness of Critical Discourse Analysis as an instrument of research in the study of media texts in contemporary times. Lastly, the findings serve to remind the news audience the significance of critical interaction with the international news through the recognition that agency, attribution and lexical choice are not neutral linguistic characteristics but valuable discursive assets, which shape the understanding of political and humanitarian events.

To sum up, this paper confirms that language is a potent tool in creating the narratives of international conflicts. BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera had different but consistent interpretations of the ICJ ruling in the IsraelPalestine conflict due to the differences in agency, attribution and the representation of participants. These results support the main assumption of the Critical Discourse Analysis that discourse is an expression and a construction of social reality, demonstrating how grammatical and discursive decisions are involved in the negotiation of responsibility, legitimacy, and justice that continue to be negotiated in the context of the modern global media.

7. Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

7.1 Limitations of the Study

Although this study has the significance of providing valuable information on the linguistic construction of agency and attribution in the international news discourse, it has various limitations that are worth noting. To begin with, the study utilized a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of a purposely chosen set of nine online news articles (three of each BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera). Although such a sampling method allowed the researcher to study the linguistic aspects in depth, the sample size was rather small, which restricts the possibility of generalizing the results to the whole set of international media reports on the IsraelPalestine conflict.

Second, the research considered only English-language publications of three global news outlets. As much as these outlets are representative of powerful international media houses with varying editorial leanings, the omission of regional, non-English, and other media houses limits the comparative analysis. The news organizations that exist in various linguistic, cultural as well as political settings might use various discourse strategies that were out of the boundaries of the current study.

Third, the search focused on a single court incident, the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice that was issued on 26 January 2024. The media discourse of the Israeli-Palestine conflict is dynamic and ever changing to reflect the political, military and humanitarian developments. In turn, the linguistic patterns found in the present study are to be understood as exemplary of reporting around this particular judicial incident but not the whole array of international media reporting.

Lastly, despite the fact that the Three-Dimensional Model by Fairclough and the Systemic Functional Linguistics by Halliday offer a solid analytical system to study the ideological representation, there are always some elements of interpretive judgement in discourse analysis. In order to increase the level of analytical rigor, the interpretations were based on clear linguistic evidence and were systematically related to the theoretical framework. However, other interpretations of specific textual aspects are still open to interpretation, which is inherently a qualitative research of discourse.

7.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The current research project places a number of possibilities in terms of future research projects in Applied Linguistics and Media Discourse Analysis. Future research may increase the corpus by exploring a significantly more ranged set of news reports at various stages of the Israel Palestine conflict. The inclusion of longitudinal data would allow the researchers to investigate the dynamics of the representations of agency, attribution, and legitimacy over time under varying political and humanitarian conditions.

The comparative research can also be enhanced by using other international and regional news agencies, including Reuters, Associated Press, The New York Times, The Guardian, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, Middle East Eye, and the Arab media outlets, which are written in Arab. These comparisons would give a wider picture on how institutional affiliations, geopolitical settings and editorial policies play out in the construction of discourse in a variety of media settings.

Other possible directions of future research include applying qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis to corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADS), corpus linguistics, or computational linguistic analysis. By using larger digital corpora, the researchers would be able to discover the recurrence of patterns of transitivity, reporting verbs, lexical collocations, and attribution structures with the help of quantitative evidence and the interpretive richness of qualitative analysis. An integrative method would thus enhance the reliability and the generalizability of results.

The other prospective direction is to look at the reception of the audience. Although the current research examined the aspects of discourse production, the future research might examine interpretation of competing narratives by the readers via surveys, interviews, focus groups, or experimentation. This kind of work would add to more detailed consideration of the relation between the linguistic representation and audience perception in conflict communication.

Lastly, the theoretical framework can be expanded with further theoretical approaches in the future by incorporating Fairclough Critical Discourse Analysis with other relevant views like Socio-Cognitive Approach by van Dijk, Discourse-Historical Approach by Wodak, Appraisal Theory, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, or Multimodal Discourse Analysis. These methods would help develop a deeper comprehension of the interaction between verbal, visual, historical, and cognitive resources in the formation of the images of international conflicts in modern digital news sources.

All in all, further studies on media discourse are imperative to the intricate relationship of language and ideology in international communication. With the growing popularity of digital news media as a way of interpreting political crises among global audiences, linguistic studies of agency, attribution and representation will remain an important contribution to critical media literacy, responsible journalism and a further appreciation of how the formation of discourse of conflict is constructed discursively.

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