CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF BASSEM YOUSAF AND MORGAN'S DISCUSSION ON THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MEDIA FRAMING AND CULTURAL VIEWPOINTS

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Abstract
The media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception of geopolitical conflicts, often reflecting underlying cultural ideologies and political agendas. This study conducts a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the televised discussion between Egyptian satirist Bassem Youssef and British journalist Piers Morgan on the Israel-Hamas conflict, aiming to explore the contrasting media framings and embedded cultural viewpoints expressed during the exchange. The objective is to uncover how language, power, and ideology interact within media discourse to influence audience understanding of complex international issues. The primary data consists of the full transcript and video footage of Youssef and Morgan's interview, which gained significant global attention for its contentious and emotionally charged content. Purposeful sampling was employed to select this discourse due to its viral reach and clear representation of divergent cultural and political stances on the Israel-Palestine conflict. The analysis is grounded in Van Dijk's approach of CDA. The findings reveal that Youssef strategically employs satire, irony, and intertextuality to challenge dominant Western narratives, while Morgan adopts a journalistic framing rooted in liberal humanism and Western moral assumptions. The discursive tension illustrates how media framing can either reinforce or subvert hegemonic ideologies, depending on the speaker's cultural positioning and rhetorical approach. This study contributes to the broader field of media studies by highlighting how cross-cultural dialogue in news media can both expose and reproduce global power asymmetries.
Keywords: media discourse, van Dijk, critical discourse analysis, socio-cognitive

1.Introduction

In recent years, news discourse has emerged as one of the most important research fields in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is an effort or process of explaining a text examined by a person or a dominant group whose inclination has a specific objective of obtaining something sought. As a result, CDA presents a challenge for readers to comprehend a document that reaches a high degree of comprehension and gives a clear explanation of the reasons and purpose for which the text was created (Hidayah & Hidayat, 2019). However, whether we recognize it or not, the discourse analysis created in the mass media is impacted by journalists or authors from a variety of sources. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that behind the discourse in the mainstream media is the desired meaning and image, as well as the competing interests. According to Helfer (2016), the media has a key role in political issues and shaping the political agenda. As a result,

the media has a significant role in how politics is created, and media considerations are an important part of determining what topics will be highlighted.

Media is believed to be useful for learning sources, particularly in language acquisition, because learning must always link to real life and society. Students benefit from authentic language learning materials provided by the media. Furthermore, learning media is a tool for conveying knowledge from the author to the reader, so the information can be well-conveyed (Setiawan, 2016). When using media information as language learning resources, language learners, as media users, must comprehend how journalists technically build the text in the news to reflect specific attitudes, whether political or personal. As a result, understanding the journalists' attitudes toward certain texts is critical for second language learners because they may lack the background to evaluate the text in its historical context. The first thing that media users must consider while thinking about a particular attitude is to understand how journalists technically construct the texts. CDA aims to evaluate the language conveyed in the context of social or political dimensions, and it investigates the links of power encoded in the language. CDA is distinguished by five principles: action, setting, history, power, and ideology. Observing speech has two repercussions on the qualities of action. For starters, discourse is viewed as anything that seeks to influence, deny, argue, react, and persuade. Second, discourse is defined as something that is knowingly or deliberately expressed (Eriyanto, 2001; Fairclough, 1995b; Fitriana et al., 2019).

There are always serious and intense debates and discussions in the media about the power group. Journalists and politicians use tactics like the use of dominating language to convey their opinions to viewers and demand authority through language. However, it is assumed that language is an essential component of identity construction; it is crucial to address the importance of English language use in media about the people of Gaza, particularly for people who have been marginalized.

This view is reinforced by Piers Morgan Cunningham (2024), a famous journalist and media figure who attracted controversy for his aggressive tactics in breaking stories. His show "Piers Morgan Uncensored" is famous for controversial debates on the media. The recent conflict between Hamas and Israel has led to many heated and controversial debates on this show. Social actors like Niall Ferguson comment on Israel's actions as 'fighting for survival' and carpet bombing of Gaza as the only way to evacuate Hamas, by the Israeli Ambassador suggesting the People of Gaza move to the southwest of Gaza for protection.

Jewish actress, writer, and activist also comments for the Arabs to speak up, and the Israeli government is trying level best to limit the casualties. However, during these heated debates, Piers Morgan invited the Egyptian Comedian Bassem Youssef, the host of the popular TV show Al-Bernameg, on his show on October 17, 2023. Bassem is famous for his use of wits, and he did exactly that in the debate by using satire as a powerful tool to criticize Israel for its justification of Genocide in Gaza. The episode was a sensation after it was released, and people admired the comedian for his effort to convey the other side of the story using a humorous way.

This present research employed van Dijk's theory to explore the structure of the debate of that episode, which was transcribed on Admin (2023) about the historical treatment of Palestine during their conflict with Israel. Van Dijk (2008) categorized the analytical technique into three areas of analysis: social cognition, text structure, and social analysis. A person scheme, self-scheme, role scheme, and event schema are all part of social cognition. The text's structure includes macrostructure (thematic), superstructure (schematic), and microstructure (semantic, syntactic,

stylistic, and rhetorical). The sociological analysis involves the exercise of power and the ability to shape speech. Based on the foregoing, the current study examined macrostructure analysis, superstructure analysis, and microstructure analysis in the collected data from Admin (2023).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict has been widely covered in global media, often revealing stark differences in narrative framing and cultural perspectives. Public figures such as Bassem Youssef and Piers Morgan have engaged in prominent televised debates that reflect not only contrasting political stances but also deep-rooted cultural ideologies. While Bassem Youssef adopts a satirical, critical lens rooted in Middle Eastern sensibilities, Piers Morgan often represents a Western journalistic tradition. These differences influence how audiences perceive the conflict, potentially reinforcing stereotypes, ideological biases, or geopolitical narratives. However, there is limited scholarly work that critically analyzes such dialogues through a discourse analytical lens, particularly in terms of how language, power, and ideology interact in cross-cultural media debates. This research seeks to fill this gap by comparing their discourse to uncover the underlying framing strategies and cultural assumptions.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the discourse strategies used by Bassem Youssef and Piers Morgan during their discussion of the Israel-Hamas conflict, focusing on language, tone, and framing.
2. To examine how cultural and ideological viewpoints shape the representation of the conflict in Western and Middle Eastern media discourse through this specific media encounter.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What linguistic and rhetorical strategies are employed by Bassem Youssef and Piers Morgan in their discussion of the Israel-Hamas conflict?
2. How do cultural and ideological differences influence the framing of the conflict in their discourse, and what implications does this have for audience perception?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the field of media studies, discourse analysis, and intercultural communication by offering insights into how media framing and cultural narratives interact in shaping public opinion on international conflicts. By applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to a high-profile media dialogue, this study highlights the power of language in reinforcing or challenging dominant ideologies. It will also shed light on the dynamics of East-West media interactions, the role of satire and journalism in conflict narratives, and how discourse can either bridge or deepen cultural divides.

2.Literature Review

Public opinion is greatly influenced by the media, particularly when it comes to long-running and divisive geopolitical crises like the Israel-Palestine conflict. An effective lens for examining these media representations is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which exposes the underlying power structures, ideologies, and cultural prejudices ingrained in language.

Hashish (2023) analyzed the BBC coverage of the 2021 *Israeli aggression on Gaza,* by conducting a critical discourse analysis (CDA). Main focus was on Arabic and English version. While English version of BBC frame Israeli actions more factual or sympathetically, often giving facts for their actions as reaction for people killing. On the other hand, the Arabic version uses more explicit language blaming them for civilian casualties. The main focus was on media biasness through language barriers.

Damanhoury (2025) conducted a comparative study of Israel-Palestine conflict through two major International outlets- *Al Jazeera English* and *the BBC* covering the initial phase of the 2023 Gaza war, main findings through CDA highlights how the discursive choices of these outlets shape public perception. AJE's pattern of covering the news was more towards Palestinians sufferings and critical stance towards Israel. While the language of BBC was more cautious and focuses on humanitarian impact of the conflict.

Hassan (2023) demonstrated British broadsheets using distinct stylistic strategies, labels, linguistic choices, even qualifiers play a powerful role for construction of ideological meaning. It explores that how the stylistic techniques made Israel framed often by authority of military action, or Gaza is depicted as victim through human cost.

Sedouga (2024) explored the public discourse through media framing, the case study was mainly focused on transcribed verbal and non-verbal cues and coded conversation of the British journalist Piers Morgan and Egyptian satirist Bassem Youssef on *Piers Morgan Uncensored.* The nature of study was both CDA and multimodal interaction analysis which creates a gap for the current study. The argument was mainly on the privileged moral narratives of media framing which condemn Hamas before Palestinian suffering.

Al-Bazour (2018) discussed how CNN and BBC framed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict following President Trump's 2017 declaration of Israel's capital. The move was widely criticized by Arab and Muslim world. Language use, lexical choice, and source selection used by news reports and headlines often portrays Israel as peaceful, democratic state. Conversely, Palestinian were largely framed with the term "violence" frequently associated with them.

3.Research Methodology:

The descriptive Qualitative research method is employed in this study. It aimed to describe the structures of the text entitled "*Israel-Hamas War: Piers Morgan vs Bassem Youssef on Palestine's Treatment| The Full Interview*" in Piers Morgan Uncensored, published on October 17, 2023, by adapting van Dijk's (2008) approach. Data collected in the form of words, pictures, and not numbers is known as descriptive data. Therefore, the study report includes data quotations to highlight the impact of the report on people's speech and actions. The description becomes essential to obtain a clear description and an appreciation of the subject under discussion. In addition, as part of the research, the task of interpretation is carried out to analyze the data to reveal its meaning. The data were collected in the form of written texts of the talk show.

Four steps were adapted from O'Connor and Gibson (2017) to collect the data. First, on the website "*Scrap from the loft.com*", the researcher read over the written text. The researcher further marked the underlying characteristics of the text structure in the data. The researcher then marked the underlying characteristics of the text structure in the data. Fourth, the data was interpreted by the researcher. A CDA model proposed by van Dijk on text structure was used to determine the talk show's macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. Finally, the findings of this study are intended to provide an academic contribution to online media research. It is also believed that the findings of this study would be useful for information, references, and comparison of CDA studies on media with various issues within the framework of online media reporting.

4.Results and Discussion

The researcher classified the text on Admin (2023) into the following categories using van Dijk's (2008) classification of structural text and social context.

The Structure of the Text

Macrostructure

The text analysis structure within the macrostructure or theme looked precisely at the common backdrop or fundamental idea, or issue in media. The macrostructure of Admin (2023) is shown in the table below:

Table 3. Macrostructure (Thematic)

Theme/Topic	Sub-theme	Findings
Historical treatment of Palestine during its conflict with Israel.	Examining the agenda behind the genocide of Palestine and Israel	• The media should not support Israel, especially the USA, in the bombing of Gaza on October 7, for the evacuation of Hamas. • The treatment of Israel has been Spontaneous throughout history, from the Balfour Declaration or the establishment of Israel in 1948.

According to van Dijk's theory, the theme is the universal meaning of discourse. The theme is a common description of what was the treatment of Israel by Palestine throughout history. Based on the data in the above table, the researcher found that the main theme was "Historical treatment of Palestine during its conflict with Israel". The selection of the title or topic from Admin (2023) represents the information on indications to examine the agenda behind the genocide in Gaza by Israel. To prove its main topic, the guest used Satire in Paragraph 1 to convey his message. In the whole interview, the guest, Bassem Yousef, used the previous interviews conducted on the same topic to prove his point.

Superstructure

The superstructure, also known as the schematic, stresses which element comes first and is a technique for hiding vital information afterward. Discourse often follows a structure from beginning to end. The following Table shows the steps of the schematic:

Table 2. Superstructure (Schematic)

Title	Lead	Story
Historical treatment of Palestine during its conflict with Israel.	Bombing Gaza and killing children and women taking shelter in hospitals is not the solution for evacuating Hamas, but it is related to terrorism, in which people are terrorized by killing.	• The first flow that Admin (2023) gave was in Paragraph One, where the guest used satire by using his wife and children, referring to them as human shields, to pinpoint that the Palestinian people are only gaining sympathy votes, but are very difficult to kill. • Then, the guest later gave reference to the host's interview with Ben Shapiro and Ron DeSantis about the negative and hateful comments about the Palestinian bombing and the ethics of the Israeli military in a mocking way.

		• In the paragraph about the guest talking about the USA supporting Israel, he uses mockery to say that Joe Biden that it's a bad investment to support a state who are killing people in the name of peace by becoming oppressed while giving all the signs of being the oppressor.

According to van Dijk's theory, the schematic meaning in the person's strategy to support certain topics conveyed in a certain flow illustrates how a part of a text is made and arranged. From the data shown in the above table, it is shown that as the starting point in the first paragraph, the guest used satire to illustrate how Israel and foreign media have made people believe that Palestinians are sympathizing by using women and children as shields against bombing by the Israeli Military. Throughout the interview, the Guest used a satirical tone to give away his opinion, by giving references from previous interviews with Israeli media or politicians. Later, he said that terrorizing people is the agenda of the terrorist community, like ISIS. The guest also demonstrated through the proportions of death rates of both states through the graph how the death ratio of the oppressed state (Israel) is less than Oppressor state (Palestine). The attack on the English Media was deliberately suggested as a bad investment by the guest, as the wrong facts were shown, and the majority of the population knew the truth.

Microstructure

The variety of words made by the Guest in his sentences is related to microstructure, such as the use of sentence forms, pronouns, and coherence.

Table 3. Microstructure analysis

Semantics	Findings
Background	Bassem mentioned that the media is portraying the Palestinians as sympathy holders who are using their women and children as human shields to save Hamas.
Details	Guest Bassem uses mockery as a tool to give the facts and the reasons for the genocide in Gaza.
Aim	The content of the show can be seen clearly on Admin (2023), where the Egyptian comedian builds up facts and reasons to demonstrate the real oppressor and oppressed state.
Presupposition	As a supreme power USA should not show bias towards any state.
Syntactic	**Findings**
Sentence Forms	Deductive form (the paragraph in which the general topics are started at the beginning and then lead to a specific or main topic). In other words, the primary reason for the interview was described later and not in the beginning.
Coherence	I agree with him. The thing is, the question is, what is a proportionate response? Because it has been different from one year to another. So, if you look at this graph, for example, this is the death of Israelis and Palestinians, and it's changing from year

Pronouns	to year. It's like fluctuating like crypto. So, my question is, today, what is the going rate for human lives? I mean, 2014 was a great year for Ben Shapiro. 88 Israelis died, and there were 2,329 Palestinians killed on the other side. That is one Israeli for 27 Palestinians. That is a very good exchange rate. What I'm saying is, what is the exchange rate for today? (Admin, 2023) My response to that would be this, Bassem, *I* thought carefully about this because *I* think it's very tricky for people like *me* to immerse ourselves in a conflict where we're not directly involved. And *I* thought carefully about what *I* felt about this. *I* feel that the scale of what Hamas did on October 7th supersedes anything else I've seen in this conflict, really ever. (Admin, 2023)
Stylistic	**Findings**
Lexicon	Title: Historical treatment of Palestine during its conflict with Israel Carpet bombing Gaza is not a good solution for the Palestine-Israel conflicts, as it never disputed the issues before, and as a supreme power USA should avoid biases towards any state regarding this issue.
Rhetorical	**Findings**
Graphic	In the interview, graphs of the proportions of the death rate and images of bombed houses in Gaza were shown.
Metaphor	The title was designed to be average, and the content was.

Based on the element of semantics in Table 3, it appears that the debate about the Palestine-Israel conflict was consistent with the topic "Historical Treatment of Palestine during its conflict with Israel," where the content of the debate built the opinion of the public about the real oppressor and the oppressed state. In syntactic elements, the guest used transition words like "and" to describe the events happening in Gaza and the role of media in describing the Genocide. In terms of pronouns, the host used "I" in his debate often, which demonstrates the supreme power of the US state over other countries. In terms of style, the guest used the phrase "I agree" in every paragraph, which elaborates the mockery of the guest towards their opinion. In terms of graphics, the editors showed Host Piers Morgan and Guest Bassem on the screen to give it a debate style. In terms of metaphor, the editors used bold letters for the title, which means the editors wanted to remind the viewers of the urgency of the condition.

This study delves into the structure of the debate from "Piers Morgan uncensored" with Bassem Yousef analyzed based on van Dijk's theory of three levels of text structure: macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. The macrostructure used to understand the global meaning of the debate was a description and argumentation that invited the viewers not to believe the biased report of foreign media toward Israel. In favor of this study, a previous study by Kressel (1987) also demonstrated how media made biased content during the Arab-Israeli dispute rest upon three socio-psychological processes: a general cognitive confirmatory bias in judging evidence, a tendency for deeply involved partisans to have a wide latitude of rejection and a

tendency for partisans to perceive media stimuli following their overall views & media criticism can sometimes be viewed as biased, political stance.

The superstructure level was constructed with a descriptive style. The chronological pattern of the debate was not coherent and gave an abrupt sequence. As a starting paragraph, the guest debater, Bassem Yousef, used Satirical comments on his wife and children to mock the statement about Palestinians using their women and children as human shields. He then references back to the previous debate on a similar topic with Ben Shapiro and mocks him about his statement on death proportions.

Moving on, Bassem describes how Israel is an oppressor state and vice versa, and the Media should support the states based on facts in the ending paragraph. he again uses satire to convey his wife's family home in Gaza and describes it as an antique for looking deserted. In the microstructure, the study investigated the different discourses, like semantics, syntactic, stylistics, and graphics, in the given data. Similar to this research, previous studies by Neureiter (2016) suggest that coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is distorted, yet this prejudice varies greatly within and between states. Much of the diversity in media bias within a country can be explained by Ideological differences among media outlets. Diversity in media bias appears to be influenced by *public opinion, demographics, and interstate relations.* It stands to reason that all three of these factors were found to be significant, given that the broader literature shows a possible interaction between them.

Different from other studies, this study is conducted in the light of Van Dijk's model of CDA to demonstrate the level of discourse at macro and micro levels, depicting what were the social factors as well as the language and style used in this study. Meanwhile, the influence of power and access is demonstrated in this study.

However, to understand the critical paradigm of mass media, it is necessary to put together a meaningful definition. The mass media are mainly concerned with the fact that text or discourse in the media affects humans. According to Eryanto (2001), the dominant group can control the media. It is because the media is not a neutral entity. As a result, owning media allows the dominant group to exert influence over non-dominant groups, even marginalizing them. As a result, the critical paradigm held by academics in mass media studies is a factor that influences the conduct of CDA research, particularly in analyzing media language (Fitri & Manaf, 2019).

According to Van Dijk (2008), the power and ideology of the media can be used to control people or members of a group. This is supported by the evidence from the findings that the power and ideology of US media platforms persuade the viewers or readers to sympathize with the Israeli state and create a negative image of Hamas by making their decision of Genocide in Gaza look justifiable.

Finally, the importance of this CDA was to enhance reader awareness of the fact that media and politics are inseparable. In this sense, politicians communicate with the public through the news media, over which they have no authority because the news media acts as a barrier between politicians and the people. To determine how the media and politicians assisted one another, the findings of a more in-depth investigation must be revealed. The accessibility of mass media is eventually beneficial in assisting readers and learners in understanding the notion of CDA.

5.Conclusion

Associate within CDA, this present study provided information about the structure of the data. The finding suggested that the conflict between the Palestine-Israel media has portrayed the wrong impression of the submissive group (Palestine). Despite having public support, Palestine

had no power over the dominant group, Israel, which got support from the United States of America. The talk shows like "Piers Morgan Uncensored" the host, as well as the guests from Israeli social actors, were producing the negative impact of the Carpet bombing in Gaza by justifying their act. This study is significant in this regard because Bassem Yousef uses intense satire to mock the media's approval of the powerful state and does not show the positive ideology of the Arab state. In the end, the study will lead the community to sharpen its sensitivity to society, culture, and politics.

Texts created by media practitioners should be scrutinized since they include discourses that may have an impact on society. The creation of media texts should be meticulous. This could result in social transformation to encourage clean and honest democratic behaviors. The debate should not just be critical but also propose solutions so that the media can become a driving force and effect constructive change. Furthermore, future scholars can conduct better research on additional CDA studies and broaden their research emphasis.

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