
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Linguistic Investigation of (De)Legitimization Strategies Used in News Topics

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ABSTRACT

Media is an important part of our daily lives, and it has many elements, such as cinema, news, etc. The goal of news agencies is to provide news to fulfill public needs in various fields, such as political ones. Political news should be based on a comprehensive analysis of facts, historical context, and the potential implications for different stakeholders. Understanding political news requires critical thinking and awareness of various perspectives. The data are eight selected topics from two news agencies (CNN and INA). Based on the qualitative approach, the study is conducted through the critical discourse analysis approach (CDA), in which the model is Van Leeuwen's legitimization strategy (2007). The article aims to identify the legitimization strategies used in the topics by investigating: a- which strategy is used mainly? What does it refer to? b- can ideologies/biases/power be revealed through topics only without the whole article? The article concludes that the authorization strategy is used more than rationalization. Authorization is connected to the political figures, and rationalization is connected more to the way the topics are formed. The article shows that power can be revealed mostly in the topics more than ideology or bias, as the last two need more information to be shaped.

KEYWORDS

Linguistics, legitimization strategies, news, INA, CNN.

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1. Introduction

From a theoretical framework in linguistics, more precisely Critical Discourse Analysis, this article accounts for a crucial use of language in media: the legitimization strategies. This article explains the linguistic way of introducing the news topics in the Iraqi News Agency INA and CNN. The paper highlights topics about the Israeli-Palestinian war as a case study as both INA and CNN dealt with it as the media has an important role in shaping public opinion. The article investigates the following: legitimization strategies, exploring bias (political, social.....etc.), would the analysis reveal a relation to identity or ideology?

The article follows Van Leeuwen's (2008) legitimization strategies, which are done using the qualitative method. This paper intends to explore how these strategies are used in the news topics and what ideologies are presented from the topics.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Media

Media's importance cannot be denied in our daily lives since it is considered a source of information and entertainment for viewers on the one hand and a source of political power on the other hand (Alison & Hanson,1999; Ali & Batool,2015:692). Media is a term that refers to the means of communication that accumulates/ transports data and information. BrPain (2019) states: "Media as a term refers to elements of mass media communications such as print media, news media, photography, cinema, broadcasting (radio and television), digital media, and advertising.". According to Alison and Hanson (1999), media is considered a source of

both information and entertainment for the audience, a source of transmitting information and values for society, and profit and political power for the owners.

2.2. Television

Television, as a powerful form of media, has various genres. According to McQueen (2003), genre refers to classifications of media products such as series, quiz shows, and news programs. Genre is the selection of elements helping to classify genres involving character types, narrative, setting, and style. It is a bridge between producers and addressees (Neale, 2008). Forman (2003) said, "TV has been made as both an industry and a cultural force. Producers' efforts meet their desire to set standards to realize the genres". The audience usually knows what happens in a certain genre since they know the conventions that connect the producer and viewers (McQueen, 2003). TV genres include: "drama, news, game shows, talk shows and other various shows" (Butler, 2007). Also, they could be classified according to the structure of the narration. Turner mentioned non-narrative genres, like sports programs, newscasts, and scientific programs (Turner, 2008). This article tackles news topics, specifically Gaza-related topics, and explores the difference between the INA and CNN in introducing the topics.

2.2.1. Cable News Network (CNN)

Cable News Network (CNN) is a multinational news channel and website from the U.S.A. Founded in 1980 as a 24-hour cable news channel. CNN was the first television channel to provide 24-hour news coverage and the first all-news television channel in the U.S.A. (Kiesewetter,2000), (Charles,2000), (Stelter,2020). CNN was often the subject of communication research from the moment it started as the first 24-hour television news channel. As one of the most important tools in information broadcasting, the news channel plays an influential role in society. This paper highlights the channel's news focus (including ideologies bias through linguistic strategies), taking into consideration time, event, issue, the target audience) based on a news topics analysis. Thus, this article analyses four news topics from CNN for further understanding.

2.2.2. Iraqi News Agencies (INA)

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) was established in March 1959 in Baghdad (Al-Dulaimi &Yacoub, 2022). INA is the second news agency in the region among Arab countries. In April 1999, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) launched an Arabic and English site, and leading world news agencies such as AFP, DPA, and EFE were subscribed to INA. (Allan & Zelizer,2004). To determine the role and influence of Iraqi news agencies on public opinion formation, this paper aims to understand the ideologies of news agencies to address various issues that the INA tackles by investigating four news topics.

2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

The critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach addresses power issues in linguistic interactions between individuals/ groups. CDA examines how it is created, reproduced, questioned, or deconstructed (Giorgis, 2015). CDA is used to analyze the discourse-social practice relations, especially how power is expressed in discourse. Blommaert and Bulcaen (2002) believe that discourse consists of a powerful entity that becomes more observable by the CDA approach. Accordingly, it has become a significant research tool that takes us beyond the surface structure of speech to the hidden deep structure that links power and society with utterances. According to Fairclough, CDA indicates "to systematically explore often relationships of causality and determination between:

- (a) discursive practices, events, and texts.
- (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes.

To investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony" (1993: 135). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) set many principles of CDA:

- A-CDA addresses social problems,
- B-power relation is discursive,
- C- discourse is about culture and society.

2.4 Van Leeuwen's Legitimization Strategies (2008)

Legitimation is seen as the important objective of a political actor who needs to justify a series of actions intended to be achieved within the range of interests of the target (Cap, 2006). Legitimation presupposes values implicitly and explicitly and states that some actions or decisions are acceptable within a given legal/political system (van Dijk, 1998). The most noticeable performance of legitimation is to discursively construct and justify certain facts /orders/values (Fairclough, 2003b; van Dijk, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007). Legitimization is a discourse process that involves the conscious use of language to justify a decision, an idea, an action, a process, or a behaviour while seeking approval or support from the audience (Cap, 2008; Reyes, 2011). The legitimation process is achieved through argumentation, whereby a powerful person or group presents an argument to explain their actions or seek

approval for their actions (Rojo & van Dijk: 1997). Through Discursive Construction of Legitimation, Van Leeuwen (2008) explains that legitimation is a linguistic model that investigates how speakers construct their discourses, specifically arguments, to 'explain why social practices exist, and why they take the forms they do.' In contrast, legitimation sanctions speakers' actions or behaviour as credible, logical, and acceptable to an audience. On the other hand, De-legitimation analyses the supposed opponent's actions/social practice through authorization, moralization, rationalization, and Mythopoesis strategies (van Leeuwen, 2008). Legitimization answers the "why?" questions in many different ways: why does X do this? Why is this strategy followed? In sum, these strategies play a very important role in exploring news topics and how they use different legitimation strategies to reveal different goals.

2.5 Types of Legitimization Strategies

2.5.1 Authorization

Authorization here could be defined as the authority stated by law and society (traditions and customs), and this involves the persons with the institutional authority. This discursive strategy is subdivided into sub-categories. According to Van Leeuwen, the sub-categories are authority (includes the personal and impersonal types), commendation (involves the expert and the role model authorities), And custom (involves tradition authority and conformity authority) (Van der Houwen,2015).

A- personal authority is a kind of authority granted to a person(s) with a role in an institution or their role in a certain context. For example, "That's what the mother says" can reveal personal authority (Van Leeuwen,2008).

B- impersonal authority comes under the impersonality of things, matters, or even ideas. This strategy involves laws, traditions, rules, or regulations. Thus, the answer to "why?" is "because the rules say so." Often, this type makes use of adjectives such as obligatory.

C- expert authority is defined by one's expertise and not by status. Also, it could be stated explicitly by providing qualifications, for instance, or implicitly if the individual was well-known.

D- role model authority involves many individuals who establish trends, such as celebrities and political leaders. In some cases, it requires more justification, such as positive descriptions.

E- the authority of tradition implies the relationship with tradition, habits, practice, and customs. The answer to the "why" question is constructed on what we always do, not because of an obligatory thing.

F- conformity authority does not deal with why something emerges but simply because that is what is always done and everyone does (Van Leeuwen: 2007). It provides an answer to why? As "most people are doing it, and so should you." This type can also be revealed through a comparison form.

2.5.2 Rationalization

Rationalization provides purposes to social and traditional practices. Like the previous strategy, this one has sub-categories that can be found. They are instrumental and theoretical. The first sub-category is instrumental rationalization, which involves goal-, effect-, means- orientation. Such as:

a- Goal-Oriented can be expressed through intentions, motives, or goals. The following form can be as " I do X to do/be/have Y".

b- Mean-Oriented can be realized through reaching higher goals. It follows the form of " I achieve doing/being/having Y through X-ing."

c- Effect-Oriented can be realized by concentrating on accomplished activities/practices results.

The second sub-category is theoretical rationalization; Van der Houwen (2015) states that legitimation is formed on a kind of reality usually subordinated with meaning; it is instituted on a kind of truth rather than on purpose. Theoretical rationalization comes in three types: explanation, definition, and prediction. As:

a- The definition is described in terms of another moralized practice. These practices usually can be expressed through significative "mean" or attributive "is".

b- Explanation: the following form here can be expressed as suitable for these actors. The actors are characterized in this type instead of the practices.

c- Prediction: this type is constructed on experience, and opposing practice/ action can prove it wrong.

2.5.3 Moralization

Moralization is defined as a kind of evaluation that highlights a moral outline. It contains the following: evaluation, abstraction, and analogies. According to Davies, **evaluation** deals with contrasting values centered on concrete qualities for mentioning entities. For example, "It was surprising to me that you dared to ask her for the return of money" (2014). It can be expressed through adjectives such as "good", "bad", "natural" and "normal" (Van Leeuwen, 2007).

Abstracting, this sort of legitimation indicates abstract ways 'moralize' practices, such as showing going to school by students as an independence matter: "the child goes to school for the first time". This type links the practice to discourse as it refers to the practice in an abstract way to moralize it by a quality that links it to the discourse of moral value (Van Leeuwen, 2008).

The third is **comparison**, which has a relation with comparisons in discourse (Davies, 2014) and is a sample of analogy. The underlying statement of moral legitimation is not the cause of something that needs to be completed or needs a function in particular ways, but the reason is it is like another activity that is associated with positive and negative values. It answers the why? Question by "it is similar to X that is considered a practice with moral value, positive one".

2.5.4 Mythopoesis

The last strategy is Mythopoesis, which stresses legitimation achieved through narrative or by relating the investigated practice to the past or future through storytelling. This strategy has main categories under the following titles (moral and cautionary tales):

a-moral tales, where main characters are rewarded for engaging in legitimate practices.

b-cautionary tales, kinds of readings that inform the consequences of not obeying social practices' norms. In other words, it is related to reward and punishment beliefs.

3. Methodology

The study employs a qualitative design in analyzing data that consists of eight news topics that have been collected from CNN and INA respectively (four news topics from each news agency). The topics deal with the Israeli-Palestinians war. The analysis of the data is carried out through Van Leeuwen's (2008) model of legitimation strategies.

3.1 Analysis

The news topics are analyzed according to Van Leeuwen's (2008) legitimation strategies, including authorization, moralization, rationalization, and mythopoesis. Eight topics are chosen from CNN and INA to explore the strategies used. A topic may reveal the use of a single strategy or a combination of more than one strategy; in such a case, the study highlights the main strategy used. The study investigates the CNN topics first, followed by the INA topics (as the channels are chosen alphabetically).

Topic (1)



In this CNN topic, the prominent theme is the Israeli attacks on the Palestinians. There is no direct authority of any kind utilized here. Actually, it presents a factual statement, which implies reliance on the credibility of news sources or reports. On the other hand, the topic involves this case in terms of right or wrong; thus, Moralization appears clearly.

The insertion of "including children" could be seen as a moral evaluation tactic, highlighting the gravity of the situation and evoking a moral response from the audience. It implicitly raises questions about the morality of the attacks, suggesting they are severe or unjustifiable due to the involvement of children.

Generally, the topic primarily utilizes a moralization strategy use by highlighting the impact on civilians, particularly children, which could influence readers to de-legitimize the attacks.

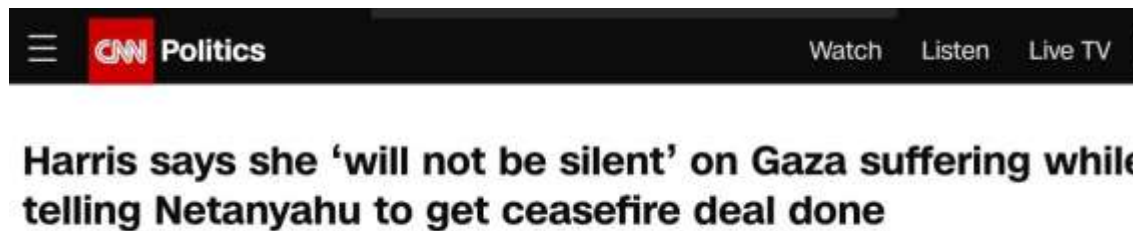
Topic(2)



The theme of this topic is the American hostages. The American president Biden clearly used authority as a role model authority. He is using his position as a high-profile authority figure to legitimize the meeting. The involvement of a prominent political leader like Biden lends credibility and importance to the event. By reporting that the president will meet with the families, the topic implies that this is an official action, which helps to legitimize the importance and appropriateness of the meeting. This is seen as a gesture of support and solidarity with the families, which can be seen as a morally positive action. It reflects a commitment to addressing the needs and concerns of those affected by the hostage situation. Aside from the authority strategy, such an announcement can also be considered a rationalization strategy. It suggests that meeting with the families is a logical and justified response to the situation, emphasizing that it is a necessary step in addressing the crisis involving American hostages, and it implies that it is part of his responsibility to address and resolve such issues. Meanwhile, the phrase "families of American hostages in Gaza" shows that Gaza is not safe for American individuals.

To summarize, the topic mainly employs strong authorization by citing Biden's authority. Moralization is revealed by focusing on the humanitarian aspect of "families of the American hostages", and rationalization by presenting the meeting as a justified and necessary response to the situation.

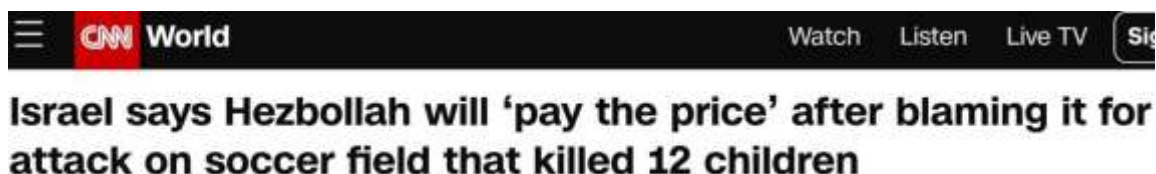
Topic (3)



This topic tackles the suffering of people in Gaza (Palestinians). The topic attributes the statement to Harris (the American vice president), who uses her authority as a political figure (role model authority). The phrase "will not be silent" indicates legitimacy to her commitment and her call for action based on her political authority. The phrase "Gaza suffering" emphasizes the humanitarian aspect of the situation, which is a form of moralization as it implies that addressing this suffering is an ethical imperative.

Overall, the sentence employs authorization strategy by citing Harris's authority, moralization strategy by mentioning "Gaza suffering," and lastly, rationalization strategy by this topic due to her political position as she demands a ceasefire deal to be done.

Topic (4)



The theme of this topic, "Israel says Hezbollah will 'pay the price' after blaming it for an attack on the soccer field that killed 12 children," shades the lights on 12 killed children. Israel may draw on historical conflicts with Hezbollah to contextualize its response. By referencing past attacks, ongoing tensions, or previous instances of violence attributed to Hezbollah, Israel could argue that its response is part of a broader historical struggle, thus providing a historical basis for its actions.

The phrase "Israel says" uses the authority of Israel to support the statement, implying that the assertion comes from a credible and authoritative source. Highlighting that the attack resulted in the death of 12 children serves as a moralization strategy. It implicitly frames the event in a negative light by focusing on the tragic outcome, potentially evoking sympathy and condemnation from the audience. The phrase "pay the price" is a threat that suggests a form of punishment, which can be interpreted as a moral stance that certain actions (like the attack) warrant consequences. Blaming Hezbollah for the attack is a form of rationalization; it is rational for Israel's threatened response, positioning it as a justified reaction to the alleged actions.

Overall, the topic utilizes an authorization strategy by showing Israel's authority, a moralization strategy by emphasizing the tragic death of children, and rationalization by presenting a cause-and-effect relationship between the alleged attack and the anticipated consequences.

Topic (5)



The prominent theme in this topic from INA is "new massacre"; the Iraqi government condemns the massacre in Gaza. By using the adjective "new," the topic sheds light on the fact that there were previous massacres that happened in Gaza. There is a clear use of authorization strategy by mentioning and starting the topic with "Iraq" as it uses the authority of the government. The whole of Iraq's condemnation can be framed as a moralization strategy by emphasizing the humanitarian crisis and the need to uphold human rights. This strategy appeals to shared values of human dignity and justice and right and wrong deeds that can be investigated under the moralization strategy. Iraq might justify its condemnation by highlighting the practical implications of the massacre. This could involve arguing that condemning the violence is crucial for regional stability, international peace, or the effectiveness of diplomatic efforts. By focusing on the practical benefits of its stance, Iraq aims to demonstrate that condemnation serves a useful and constructive purpose. Thus, it is rational to condemn such an action by all standards.

In summary, Iraq's condemnation of the massacre in the Gaza Strip can be analyzed through Van Leeuwen's legitimation strategies by exploring how it uses authority, moral arguments, rational explanations, narrative contexts, and practical considerations to justify its position and garner support.

Topic (6)



The prominent theme of this topic is demanding ceasefire. The topic presents the "UN General Assembly," which lends authority to the demand for a ceasefire. Citing such a respected international institution gains legitimacy through the endorsement of a global institution recognized for its role in addressing international conflicts and humanitarian issues. The topic also implies the use of a moralization strategy as it highlights that the conflict has reached a point where a ceasefire is a moral necessity to prevent further harm. The use of the word "overwhelmingly" emphasizes broad support for this position, appealing to a sense of moral urgency and consensus within the international community.

The statement rationalizes the call for a ceasefire by presenting it as a response to the situation in Gaza, implying that the action is reasonable given the circumstances. It suggests that the General Assembly's vote is a logical outcome of the ongoing conflict and the need to address it through international consensus. The topic implicitly suggests that the UN General Assembly's call for

a ceasefire is a practical step towards resolving the crisis in Gaza. It implies that the vote reflects a way to address the humanitarian crisis and managing international relations, particularly in light of the divisions between Israel and the US.

In summary, the topic "UN General Assembly overwhelmingly votes to demand a ceasefire in Gaza as Israel, US show increasing divisions" utilizes Van Leeuwen's legitimation strategies by drawing on the authority of the UN (authorization strategy), framing the action as morally necessary (moralization strategy), presenting it as a rational response (rationalization strategy), contributing to a narrative of the international division, and suggesting practical benefits of the vote.

Topic (7)



The statement is attributed to a "government spokesman," which serves to authorize the claim. This attribution lends credibility and authority to the topic, suggesting that it reflects a political position or viewpoint. Positioning the speaker as a representative of the government legitimizes this official statement.

The phrase "dangerous precedent in human history" presents a strong moral evaluation. It frames the aggression not only as a current issue but also as a significant and troubling event with historical implications. This moralization strategy appeals to moral and ethical concerns by suggesting that the aggression sets a harmful and alarming standard for future actions.

The topic rationalizes the condemnation by emphasizing the notion of a "dangerous precedent". This implies that the action is not only a moral or ethical issue but also a rational concern about the potential long-term consequences of such aggression. It argues that the historical significance of the event warrants serious attention and condemnation.

By referring to the aggression as a "dangerous precedent in human history," the statement constructs a narrative that positions the aggression within a broader historical and ethical context. This narrative suggests that the aggression is part of a larger pattern of significant and troubling historical events, thus reinforcing the gravity of the situation. Thus, the phrase "dangerous precedent in human history" employs a Metaphor strategy use.

In conclusion, this topic employs the four strategies of Leeuwen's legitimation strategies by presenting role model authority, moralization, and rationalization to justify and support its condemnation of aggression.

Topic (8)



This topic by INA tackles the theme of ceasing fire in Gaza. The first strategy utilized here is authorization by the Iraqi government, followed by the presentation of the UN authority. Iraq justifies its call by invoking government authority and referencing international legal institutions, such as the UN, to support its position. The call for a ceasefire can be framed as a moral imperative.

This involves appealing to humanitarian concerns, such as the need to protect civilian lives and prevent further suffering. By emphasizing the ethical dimension of their request, Iraq seeks to align its position with widely accepted moral values and norms. As for the rationalization, Iraq used logical arguments to justify the need for a ceasefire. Iraq aims to make its call appear as a rational and well-supported action by providing reasoned explanations for why a ceasefire is necessary.

In summary, Iraq's call for a ceasefire at the UN Security Council session can be analyzed through Van Leeuwen's legitimation strategies by examining how the topic uses authority, moral arguments, and rational explanations that justify the statement and gain legitimation.

4. Discussion

The topics of the selected data are analyzed according to Van Leeuwen's model (2008) of legitimization strategies. The article explored legitimization strategies used to achieve political purposes and investigated the reflected ideologies. CNN and INA employed a variety of discursive legitimization strategies. Basically, the topics shed light on discursive strategies of role model authority as the speakers are political figures. Through role model authority, de-legitimatization becomes easier and clearer.

According to CNN's topics, the analysis shows a noticeable use of authorization strategy (role model authority). The topics start with authorization, and moralization and rationalization come second. No bias to any side, logical and short statements. Besides, CNN topics mention (Biden Harris) and the time mentions Biden was about American hostages in Gaza.

As for INA's topics, the authorization strategy (role model authority) is used first, followed by the rationalization strategy (the instrumental rationalization that is addressed mostly). The topics of INA come from different sources (Iraq, the government spokesman, the UN general assembly), and all against Israeli aggression. Accordingly, the topics are biased toward the Palestinians' side. Both (CNN and INA) topics delegitimize the Israeli attacks and demand a ceasefire in Gaza (Palestinians).

5. Conclusion

Understanding political news requires critical thinking and awareness of various perspectives. It's essential to consider the sources of information, potential biases, and the broader context in which events occur. Informed conclusions about political news should be based on a comprehensive analysis of facts, historical context, and the potential implications for different stakeholders. The goal of news agencies is to provide news that fulfills public needs in various fields. News agencies played an important role in shaping public opinion.

This article concludes that CNN and INA tend to use various sources in the topics to legitimize the demands. Additionally, they provide moral descriptions and explanations of the events. Further, they de-legitimize and use negative descriptions by showing the moral evaluation of the practices. The use of the names (Iraq, UN, Biden, Harris) indicates role model authority.

This article concludes that the types of legitimization strategies that are used involve the authorization and rationalization strategies. The most frequent strategies are the role model authority (for authorization strategy) and the goal-orientation and explanation types (for rationalization strategy). These strategies reflect their ideologies of the political position and power they have, which explains why the topics rely on authorization. As far as the ideological perspectives are concerned, the topics presented a clear de-legitimation against the attacks as the sense of right and wrong can not be ignored, so there must be a use of moral evaluation.

The analysis indicates that CNN and INA rely on the same methods as they first start with political power to support the statement, present the topic in a sympathetic way by mentioning casualties and demanding a ceasefire, forming it rationally, and last but not least, keeping the topic short. In other words, the strategies are used: authorization strategy that is rationalized through instrumental rationalization with a hidden use of moralization. It can be noticed that there is no use of Mythopoesis and no mention of moral or cautionary tales.

The study also concluded that the news topics are too short to reveal clear ideologies or biases. To speak comprehensively about ideologies, the whole news article should be analyzed, as the topics could be manipulated politically. Analyzing news topics tends to reveal technicality more than ideology.

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