Newspapers and Opposing Ideologies
The Case of Killing a Jordanian Judge by Israeli Soldiers

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Abstract

This study employs van Dijk's concept of ideology within the framework of semantic discourse analysis to analyse two newspapers' editorial coverage of the killing of the Jordanian judge Raed Zueter on March 10, 2014 at King Hussein Bridge by Israeli soldiers. A semantic discourse analysis of the coverage of the incident in the Jordanian English daily newspaper the *Jordan Times* and the Israeli-English newspaper *Haaretz* has revealed that the different discourses presented in the articles published in both newspapers embody different ideologically-governed opinions and attitudes towards the incident. The analysis has found out the underlying opposing ideological attitudes and views of both newspapers towards the incident are articulated and manifested by different semantic discourse structures such as topic, backgrounding, foregrounding, propositional structures, and lexicalization. The study has emphasized the role of newspaper ideology in labelling, presenting, and identifying the event and actors involved in it in a way that promotes particular opinions, ideas, and views according to the ideology of each newspaper.

Keywords: ideology; discourse structures; attitudes; the language of newspapers.

1. Introduction

1.1. Language and Ideology; different ideologies, different news texts

News discourse has been the subject of great interest in so many studies over the past years (van Dijk, 1991, 1995, 2015; Bell, 1991; Fowler, 1991; Reah, 2002, Cotter, 2010). Such studies pointed out that news texts cannot be free from subjective views or perspectives on an event. They tend to describe and comment on events in a way that reflect particular ideologies. In short, ideologies are inherent in reporting news and are reflected by language.

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This study follows the guidelines set out by van Dijk (1995) on semantic discourse analysis for uncovering the underlying ideologies in news reporting. Within this approach, the main focus is on those semantic structures used to promote a particular perspective on events and the players or agents involved. This brings into light the more general notion of language and ideology. No doubt, the relationship between language and ideology is so ingrained that it would be very difficult to look at them as two separable things. However, to understand this notion, it is necessary to define first the concept of ideology. In fact, the notion of ideology itself is a complex one. In the great body of literature on the notion of ideology, one can hardly find one definite agreed-upon definition of the concept of ideology. However, in this study the term ideology is defined as "the mental frameworks, i.e., the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation" (Hall, 1996, p. 26) that different groups use to understand and explain "the workings of society." Put it differently, ideologies refer to those socially shared opinions, values, and attitudes developed by social groups. Accordingly, language as a mean of articulating views and opinions is considered an inseparable part of ideology. The upcoming parts give a more comprehensible view on the interplay between language and ideology in news discourse.

1.2. Van Dijk's Approach: Ideological Discourse Structures

Van Dijk (1991, 1995) identified several semantic structures which he called "Ideological Discourse Structures." Such structures can express underlying ideologies that monitor and shape opinions and attitudes.

Among these structures is **topic** or **grounding** that provides the first clue of the ideological position of the writer. This can be uncovered by considering what aspects or themes the writer is focusing on (van Dijk, 2011, p. 2011). In light of this, topics play an important role in activating a specific kind of knowledge. In a particular discourse certain information or propositions may be in or out of focus. Put another way, they may be foregrounded or backgrounded. According to van Dijk (1995), the writer might highlight particular information whereas another one is left out on purpose (p.262).

Another structure that has an ideological function in discourse mentioned and discussed by van Dijk is **lexicalization**. The choice of particular lexical items may also reveal the ideology of an author (van Dijk, 1998). The way an incident or event is described by the selection of particular words may produce a positive or a negative view of it. This will happen when using loaded words that may evoke certain feelings in the readers and direct their opinions (van Dijk, 2005, p.25;). In short, lexical choice can act as a strong tool for establishing an ideological stance. Choice of words may evoke certain feelings in the readers and so direct their opinions. Lexical choices indicate or imply the journalist's attitudes towards the events, actions, or actors involved in it. Wolf and Polzenhagen (2012) supported van Dijk's view on the ideological function of lexical choice by stating that "the expression of ideology is a matter of the selection of lexical items rather than an aspect of word meaning in itself" (p. 252).

Proposition is another discourse semantic structure that may reveal Ideologies of an author. Meanings of sentences and discourse are usually represented in terms of propositions. Propositional structures (predicate and argument) may be ideologically controlled. This takes place when semantic roles of propositional arguments, such as agent and patient, are assigned depending on the ideological point of view of the writer. Thus, individuals or social

groups may be assigned different types or degrees of responsibility or involvement in positive or negative actions. Hence, propositions are constructed on the base of a particular perspective, point of view or position (van Dijk, 1995, p. 258; van Dijk, 2006, p. 127).

1.3. The Language of Newspapers and Ideology

The earlier discussion on semantic discourse structures provides a more insightful understanding of how the language of newspapers works. In reporting and describing facts and events, newspapers reconstruct reality in a way that corresponds to the underlying ideological attitudes of the writers and intended readers. Consequently, the same news event will be reported differently depending on the underlying ideology of the newspaper (Wang, 1993; Fang, 2001). Many scholars emphasized the subjective aspect in news reporting. Beard (2000) stated that "there is no such thing as an unbiased report, no such thing as neutral language" (p.18) while Fowler (1991) claimed that news "is not a value-free reflection of facts." "[T]he structure of a news text," he continued, "embodies values and beliefs" (Fowler 1991, p.4). Accordingly, one can claim that objective and impartial news reporting is impossible. By selecting certain information and emphasizing and hiding others, newspapers present their readers with stories about events reflecting a particular ideological view, not the real thing. As Reah (2002) put it, readers are "recipients of selected information on recent events" not "recipients of new information on recent events." (p.10). In light of this, a critical analytical reading of the reporting of different newspapers about a particular event will uncover different conscious or unconscious ideological views, ideas, and beliefs. Such ideological views will articulate themselves at the level of discourse meaning or the discourse semantic structures mentioned earlier in the discussion of van Dijk's approach of ideology.

1.4. Literature Review

A considerable number of studies focused on newspapers coverage of political events considering mainly the way discursive discourse structures in news texts uncover the ideological views underlying them. Such studies followed different models and frameworks in their analysis.

Lee and Craig (1992) carried out a study on the news representations of the labor strikes in South Korea and Poland by three US mainstream newspapers (the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*). The study integrated three kinds of analysis; (1) a content analysis highlighting the amount of coverage of the two strikes in the US press, (2) an analytical reading of the news coverage considering the hypothesis proposed in the study and (3) a discourse analysis of the news stories on the two strikes. In comparing the news coverage of the South Korean labor strikes with that of the Polish labor strikes, the study detected distinct ideological news frameworks constructing the Us vs Them dichotomy and the US anti-Communist sentiments. The coverage reflected two opposed ideological attitudes towards the actors involved in the strikes. Being a Communist country, Poland was depicted as being responsible of the labor problems. The strikers in Poland, were depicted as victims calling for their human rights. In contrast, because South Korea had a capitalist system then and so had a similar ideology to the US, the Korean strikes were portrayed as "deviant" and "violent".

Other similar cross-cultural studies had followed a narrower scope of analysis following a single model for analysis. Wang (1993) compared the news coverage of the failed 1991 Soviet coup by the American and Chinese press. Two newspapers were selected for the analysis: the

American newspaper *New York Times* and the Chinese newspaper *Renmin Riba*. The researcher conducted both a quantitative content analysis including frequency analysis of the number of related news items, number of front-page news items, number of photographs etc. and a qualitative discourse analysis. The researcher found out that the two newspapers represented the event differently. While the *New York Times'* coverage was more complete and complex covering more topics, actors, background information and news stories on the event, the *Renmin Riba*'s coverage was "very distanced, neutral and cautious" and omitted all background and context information on the event. The researcher related such differences to ideological and political interests.

In the same line of research, Ulum (2016) conducted a critical discourse analysis on headlines representing Syrian refugees in some English, German and Turkish newspapers. His study aimed at uncovering ideologies underlying the newspaper headlines. The study concluded that while the Western media represented by the English and German newspapers represented the issue of the Syrian refugees in terms of the risks that Syrian may carry to Europe, the Turkish media represented the issue focusing on the hard conditions the Syrian refugees suffer from on the way to Europe.

Sajid et al. (2019) analysed the headlines which appeared in the Pakistani English newspapers, *The Daily Dawn* and *The Daily Nation*. The study highlighted the different discursive techniques adopted in the coinage and phrasing of the headlines in each newspaper to represent the same political event in a way that serves the ideological standpoint of each newspaper. The findings of the study revealed that the use of discursivity in the headlines is ideologically governed as the headlines by each newspaper represent certain groups of people as "in-group" and others as "out-group".

Some other studies analysed newspapers coverage of political events related to Middle Eastern issues. Youssef (2012) compared the news coverage of the 2011 Egyptian protest by two national Egyptian newspapers (*Al-Ahram* and *Al-Masry Al-Youm*), one British newspaper (*The Telegraph*) and one US newspaper (*The Washington Post*). The researcher examined how the four newspapers attempted to depict the protesters according to their ideology. From the analysis, it was found that the two national newspapers *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Masry Al-Youm* adhered to "war reporting" focusing on the negative consequences of the protests and exaggerating the threats posed by the protesters. On the other hand, *The Telegraph* and *The Washington Post* adhered to peace-reporting and depicted the protestors positively.
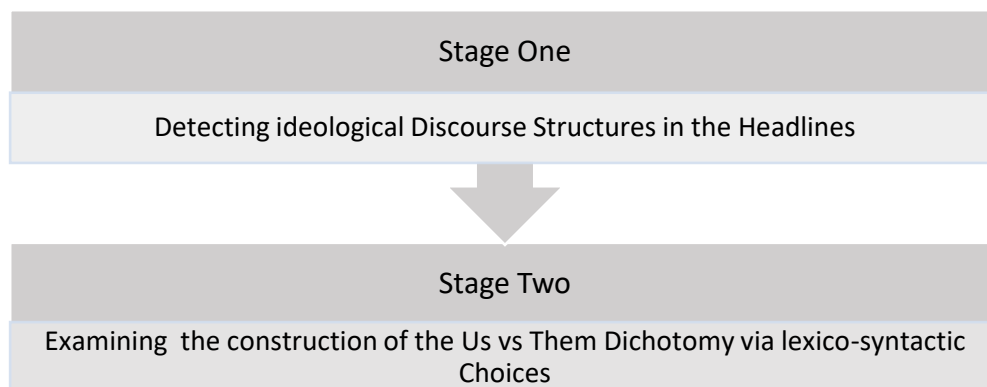
2. Objectives

The main aim of this study is to present a semantic discourse analysis on the news coverage of the killing of the Jordanian judge Raed Zuaiter on March 10, 2014 by Israeli soldiers in two ideologically opposing newspapers: the Jordanian English daily newspaper the *Jordan Times* and the Israeli-English newspaper *Haaretz*. In doing so, the study tries to identify and examine the semantic structures embedded in the news text of both newspapers to uncover the different underlying ideological attitudes and views on the incident in both newspapers. The study focuses mainly on how the details of the killing, the actors involved, and the public reaction towards it are portrayed and how each portrayal displays different attitudes toward the incident.

3. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative method to examine the semantic structures in the news text dealing with the killing of the Jordanian judge in both the *Jordan Times* and *Haaretz*. The period

of coverage was from March 11 to 12, 2014 which was the peak of the news event of the incident. These newspapers were selected for study because they represent two opposing ideological views on events: the Arab-Jordanian and the Israeli ones. One article which was published in the internet version of the *Jordan Times* and two other articles which were published in *Haaretz* were selected for study. The articles selected were approximately of the same length and mainly the same topic which was the reporting of the killing of the Jordanian judge.

A contrastive analysis of the articles headlines is conducted to detect which ideological discourse structures (topic, lexicalization, propositions) are employed by each newspaper to construct a particular ideologically driven narrative of the event. Further analysis of the **actors** description is provided. As van Dijk (2000) stated **actor** representation is ideologically controlled. Assigning actors (arguments of a proposition) particular roles as agents, patients or beneficiary of an action can reflect underlying ideologies. In an ideological discourse, actors may thus be represented as in-group (we) or out-group members (they) (p. 51). Accordingly, the analysis is meant to show how the ideological standpoints of the two newspapers are manifest in the representation of the in-group and the out-group member (s) (the Jordanian judge/ the Israeli soldiers). The analysis, thus, proceeds from the discourse micro-structures focusing on lexico-syntactic elements to the macro-structures of discourse highlighting the construction of the Us vs Them dichotomy. The analysis, hence, operates at two levels: a lexico-grammatical level and a discourse-semantic level. In other words, the analysis shows how certain grammatical patterns and structures displayed in the identified discourse structures contribute to the establishment of the Us vs Them dichotomy in the discourse of the headlines. The following chart presents and summarizes the stages of the analysis.

Stage One
Detecting ideological Discourse Structures in the Headlines

Stage Two
Examining the construction of the Us vs Them Dichotomy via lexico-syntactic Choices

Figure 1 Stages of the Analysis

4. Analysis of the Texts of Newspaper Articles

This part presents an illustrative sample of three articles published in the *Jordan Times* and *Haaretz* dealing with the incident of the killing of the Jordanian judge Raed Zuaiter. An analysis of the different ways of describing this event will be presented.

4.1. The Killing of the Jordanian Judge on March 10, 2014

4.1.1 The Jordan Times and Haaretz March 10, 2014

On the same day of the killing of the judge one article appeared in the *Jordan Times* and the other two in *Haaretz* reporting and describing in detail the event. Interestingly, the underlying opposing views and attitudes towards the event are right from the beginning displayed in the headlines of these articles. These headlines are quoted below and given identifying numbers in Table 1 and 2 below:

Table 1. *The Jordan Times*

Headline No	Headline
(1)	**"Israeli soldiers kill Jordanian judge on crossing bridge"**

Table 2. *Haaretz*

Headline No	Headline
(2)	**"Israeli soldier shoots Jordanian judge dead at border crossing"** *"Man, identified as a judge working in Jordan, was passing at the Allenby border between West Bank and Jordan when he reportedly tried to attack the soldier and steal his rifle."*
(3)	**"Jordan sends a strongly-worded message to Israel after shooting death of judge"** "Raed Zueter, 38, a judge from Amman, shot and killed after reportedly trying to snatch a weapon from an Israeli soldier at Allenby crossing."

 A close look at the three headlines can show that the two opposing views on the incident (the Jordanian and the Israeli view) are manifested and displayed in terms of two semantic discourse structures: **topic/ grounding** and **lexicalization**.

As far as the semantic structure of **topic** is concerned, it seems that the ideological points of view are revealed by the attribution of importance via topic or grounding to particular information. Thus, identifying which information or what type of information is put into focus in these headlines can provide the first clue of the ideological position of each newspaper. As van Dijk (1995: 262) indicated "since topics express what is found to be the most important information of a discourse, this makes the assignment of topics by speakers liable to ideological control." For instance, in headline 1 no summaries about the event are given. The headline focuses only on the killing and more particularly the agent (the Israeli soldiers) rather than the patient of the action and nothing else unlike the other two headlines that provide summaries of details of the events and thereby give more prominence to them. The main emphasis is then on the semantic role of agency (the responsible agent of the negative action of killing). Such an emphasis is put into play by the choice of the active voice rather the passive one for introducing this proposition of killing.

In contrast, headline 3 presents a different propositional structure where the only present semantic role of agency in the headline is assigned to Jordan which "sends a strongly-worded message to Israel." It is the strongly worded message sent to Israel (the theme) that is put into focus and grounded in the headline whereas the shooting of the judge is backgrounded and given less focus and prominence. The backgrounding of this information is further enhanced by the use of the structure of nominalization whereby the act or the process of shooting takes on the function and the form of a noun ("after shooting death of judge") and endowed with agentivity. In this way, the semantic role of agency in the proposition of the shooting is obscured by positioning the process of shooting rather the animate agents (the Israeli soldiers) as the performer of the action. This act of hiding the role of agency which is supposed to be assigned to Israeli soldiers reveals the underlying biased standpoint towards the incident. This discourse tool of nominalization, however, is not adopted in the first proposition where Jordan is the agent of sending that "strongly-worded" message and Israel is the patient or the recipient of the action, a thing which leads to the attribution of importance to this act in which it is Israel that is involved rather the Jordanian judge. Hence, the two different propositional structures in both headlines embody the two opposing ideological attitudes towards the incident: the Jordanian view and the Israeli one. In short, the **backgrounding** and the **foregrounding** of the same incident of the killing reveal the different ideological views embedded in the discourse of the text news.

It is worth noting that headline 2 shows a similar propositional structure to the one given in headline 1, where the shooting death of the Jordanian judge by an Israeli soldier is put into focus. However, it is important to note that the ideological view on the incident in this headline reveals itself by providing a summary of certain details on the events and assigning them more importance. This summary seems to parallel the one given in headline 3. Unlike headline 1, where the attention is only directed towards and focused on the incident of the killing itself, these two headlines direct the attention toward some summarized details on the events reported by Reuters. However, it is essential to indicate at this point that these exact reported details are provided in the body text of the article of headline 1 and thereby not assigned as much prominence and importance as in headlines 2 and 3. This shows that the semantic structures of foregrounding and backgrounding are at play once gain in these headlines. The summary in both headlines presents the Israeli military's account on the incident in which it is reported that the judge tried to attack an Israeli soldier and get his gun. This information is assigned more importance by being presented as the main topic and theme within the news text discourse in the two headlines articles published in *Haaretz* for they narrate the event from an Israeli perspective.

Apart from the semantic structures of topic or backgrounding and foregrounding in the given headlines where the ideological standpoint of each newspaper is reflected, the semantic structure of **lexicalization** is also at play in reporting the details about the incident of the killing both in the headlines 2 and 3 published in *Haaretz* and the body news text in the article published in the *Jordan Times*. One can note that in the three articles the act of getting the gun is described by three different selected lexicons. Whereas in the headlines 2 and 3 the verbs "steal" and "snatch" are adopted respectively, the verb "seize" is used to denote the act of getting the gun in the article of headline 1. This is shown the following quote:

"Reuters reported that the Israeli military said the man had tried to seize a soldier's gun at the King Hussein Bridge — known to Israelis as Allenby Bridge — which spans the Jordan River, and that troops had then shot him."

(Jordan Times)

Interestingly, in a quote of the exact words of a Palestinian eyewitness at the scene of the event that appeared in another article published in the *Jordan Times* one day after the incident, the verb "take" is adopted. Upon being asked whether Zuaiter attempted to get the gun the witness said, "It is not true that he tried to take the soldier's gun."

These different lexical choices imply different attitudes towards the action. Though the three selected verbs denote or describe the same act of getting the gun, each of them evokes different connotations that cast different levels or degrees of aggressiveness or aggressive behavior on behalf of the **actor** in this event (the judge). For instance, both of the verbs "snatch" and "steal" carry more negative connotations as they denote the act of taking something quickly "often rudely and roughly or by force" (Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary). The adoption of these verbs, then, seems to cast a more tensed atmosphere of aggression over the scene in this scenario. In fact, this is further enhanced by employing the verb "attack" in the headline 2. The other verbs "seize" and "take," on the other hand, are not loaded with such negative connotations of force, rudeness, or toughness. Hence, their adoption can reveal underlying attitudes of sympathy towards the judge. Thus, the differences in the lexical choice in narrating this event promote certain ideological views. The different degrees of tension and aggression with which this same incident is reported reflect the different ideological standpoints embedded in the narrative. For instance, although the Israeli soldiers are presented as the agents of "responding" and "killing," the description of the action of attacking and taking the gun with a high level of tension and aggressiveness promotes and activates a form of agency that is both "reactive" and "unavoidable" and so less responsible. Moreover, this less responsible role of agency is further obscured in the proposition of killing in headline 3 via the use of the reduced clause in the passive voice "Raed Zuaiter …. shot and killed after reportedly trying to snatch a weapon from an Israeli soldier." The role of agency (performed by the judge) of attacking and getting the gun, on the other hand, is put into focus or foregrounded and presented in the active voice, where the Israeli soldier this time is the patient rather than the agent in this action. Unlike the case, in the first proposition where the role of agency is presented as less responsible, the role of agency in this action is also given or assigned more responsibility by being presented as the main topic or theme in the proposition on the one hand and by describing the action in which it is involved with an intense atmosphere of violence and aggression on the other hand.

5. Conclusion

This study has conducted a semantic discourse analysis of some news texts published in the *Jordan Times* and *Haaretz* in the coverage of the killing of the Jordanian judge Raed Zuaiter by Israeli soldiers. The analysis has focused mainly on the different ways of reporting this incident in both newspapers. The analysis has examined in particular how discourse semantic structures such as topic, focus, lexicalization, and propositional structures are monitored by underlying ideologies in both newspapers. From the analysis, it has been found out that the two opposing views on the incident (the Jordanian and the Israeli view) are mainly manifested and displayed in terms of the two semantic discourse structures: topic/ grounding and lexicalization. By foregrounding certain propositions and backgrounding others each newspaper constructs a particular ideologically driven narrative of the incident where the in-group actor(s) (the Jordanian judge / the Israeli soldiers) is assigned different semantic roles and hence different degrees of responsibility or involvement in the action of the attack and killing.

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