



# Reframing Narratives: Intertextuality and Discursive Practices in Al-Jazeera English and the New York Times' Coverage of the Zionist–Palestinian Conflict

Nisreen Sadeq Mahmood Mahmood<sup>1</sup> , Nafiseh Hosseinpour<sup>1,\*</sup> ,  
Salih Mahdi Adday Al-Mamoori<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English, Isf.C., Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran.

<sup>2</sup>English Department at the University of Babylon, Iraq.

\*Corresponding author: [n.hosseinpour@iau.ac.ir](mailto:n.hosseinpour@iau.ac.ir)

## Original Research

Received:  
3 March 2025  
Revised:  
23 April 2025  
Accepted:  
1 July 2025  
Published online:  
18 July 2025

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by the OICC Press under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## Abstract:

This study examines how Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) employ intertextual references and implicit language strategies to cover the Zionist-Palestinian conflict from October 2023 to October 2024. Through a mixed-methods approach combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with corpus-based techniques, the research analyzed 200 articles (100 from each outlet) to investigate how these media organizations use intertextuality and implicitness to shape narratives and reinforce ideological stances. The findings reveal distinct patterns: AJE consistently employs intertextual references and implicit language to emphasize Palestinian suffering and resistance against historical injustices, while the NYT, despite appearing neutral, subtly favors a Zionist perspective through careful linguistic choices and strategic omissions. The study demonstrates how AJE challenges dominant Western narratives by centering Palestinian voices, while the NYT's coverage inadvertently reinforces existing power structures by minimizing Palestinian suffering and justifying Zionist actions through implicit bias. The research contributes to understanding how media discourse shapes public perception of complex geopolitical conflicts through subtle linguistic and discursive strategies. The findings highlight the importance of critical media literacy in navigating different representations of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict in global news coverage.

**Keywords:** Al Jazeera English; Critical discourse analysis; Implicitness; Intertextuality; Media discourse; The New York Times; Zionist-Palestinian conflict

## Introduction

The study of media discourse in shaping public perceptions and narratives surrounding complex geopolitical conflicts has become increasingly crucial in our interconnected world. The Zionist-Palestinian conflict, as one of the most protracted and contentious issues in modern history, presents a particularly rich case for examining how different media outlets employ various discursive strategies in their coverage. As Bell (1991) noted, “the language of media dominates society,” highlighting the pervasive influence of media discourse on our daily lives and understanding of global events.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), developed by scholars such as van Dijk, Wodak, and Fairclough, has emerged as a powerful tool for examining the intricate relationships between language, ideology, and power in social contexts. This approach goes beyond mere description of linguistic features to uncover how discourse contributes to the reproduction of social structures, with a particular focus on issues of power, hegemony, and resistance. The integration of corpus-based approaches with CDA has enhanced the rigor and objectivity of discourse analysis, allowing for the examination of large-scale textual data and revealing patterns that might otherwise be overlooked (Fairclough, 1992).

The concepts of implicitness and intertextuality play crucial roles in understanding media discourse, particularly in the context of international conflicts. Implicitness refers to meanings that are communicated without being explicitly stated, often through strategies such as presupposition and entailment, while intertextuality examines how texts reference and respond to other texts, creating complex webs of meaning across different discourses (Kristeva, 1969; Fairclough, 1992).

The portrayal of Arabs in Western media has been a subject of particular concern, especially following the September 11, 2001 attacks. Even before these events, Arabs were often depicted negatively in the media, and in the aftermath of the attacks, they became the focus of intensified media coverage (Shousha, 2010). This historical context makes the comparative analysis of different media outlets' coverage of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict particularly relevant.

Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) present interesting case studies due to their distinct cultural and ideological contexts, which can influence their discursive practices and representations of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict (Kraidy, 2022; Zayani, 2023). Both outlets have global reach and influence, shaping public perceptions and discourses surrounding the conflict on an international scale (Eslen-Ziya and Şçç, 2012; Hess, 2020).

While previous research has explored the use of implicitness and intertextuality in media discourse (Amer, 2017; Fairclough, 1995; Izadi and Saghaye-Biria, 2017), there remains a significant gap in the systematic, comparative analysis of how AJE and the NYT specifically leverage these subtle linguistic and discursive strategies over an extended period (one year during a heightened conflict phase) to construct contrasting narratives of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. The rationale for this study lies in the critical need to understand how two globally influential news outlets, representing vastly different geopolitical and cultural standpoints (AJE rooted in the Arab world, NYT in the US), utilize nuanced language to shape perceptions of this highly sensitive and enduring conflict. The role of cultural references, historical allusions, and implicit assumptions in shaping these narratives remains understudied, particularly in direct, large-scale comparative contexts focusing on both intertextuality and implicitness simultaneously.

This study aimed to address this gap by examining how AJE and the NYT use intertextual references to historical events, religious texts, and cultural narratives in their coverage of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, as well as how their discursive practices of implicitness reflect and reinforce particular narratives and ideological stances. Through this analysis, the researchers sought to contribute to a better understanding of how media discourse shapes public perception of complex geopolitical conflicts.

## Literature review

The analysis of media discourse in conflict coverage requires understanding both intertextuality and implicitness as crucial elements that shape narrative construction and ideological positioning. Intertextuality, as conceptualized by Kristeva (1969), emphasizes that no text exists in isolation

but is inherently connected to other texts through various forms of references and dialogues. This interconnectedness is particularly relevant in news media coverage, where texts often draw upon historical, cultural, and political contexts to construct meaning (Fairclough, 1992; Jenny, 1976).

In the context of conflict coverage, media outlets employ different types of intertextual references that can significantly influence public perception. Li (2009) demonstrated how newspapers use various intertextual resources to establish national identities and ideologies in their coverage of international conflicts. Similarly, Gong et al. (2023) revealed how news media utilize intertextual strategies such as impersonalization and genericization to convey official narratives while maintaining an appearance of objectivity. The use of implicitness in news discourse, as outlined by Larson (1984), can be categorized into referential, regulatory, and situational implied meanings. These forms of implicit meaning serve various functions, including adherence to politeness principles and adaptation to pragmatic parameters (Chen, 2010).

Recent studies have particularly focused on how media outlets employ implicit meaning in conflict coverage. Amer (2022, 2017) identified patterns in international newspapers' coverage of the Gaza conflicts, revealing how implicit assumptions and presuppositions can attribute agency differently to various actors in the conflict. Alhossary and Abdullah (2014) further demonstrated how different news outlets employ varying linguistic strategies to justify their respective perspectives, often through implicit meaning-making processes.

Media discourse in coverage of international conflicts involves complex interplays of intertextual references and implicit meanings that shape narrative construction and ideological positioning. As Fairclough (1992) explains, discourse representation, presupposition, negation, metadiscourse, and irony are key forms of intertextuality that contribute to meaning-making in news texts. These elements are particularly significant in coverage of long-standing conflicts where historical, religious, and cultural narratives play crucial roles in framing events.

The concept of intertextuality, as developed by Kristeva (1969) building on Bakhtin's work, emphasizes that no text exists in isolation but is always inherently connected to other texts through various forms of reference and dialogue (Hawkes, 1977; McGuire, 1980). In news media coverage, these connections manifest through quotations, allusions, and structural borrowing that link current events to historical precedents and cultural narratives. The relationship between texts can be categorized into text-text, text-genre, and text-reality relations, each contributing to the overall meaning construction (Jenny, 1976; Genette, 1997; Nycz, 2000).

Studies have shown that news media employ various levels of intertextual markers, ranging from elementary to covert forms, as categorized by Majkiewicz (2008). These markers serve to connect current events to broader historical and cultural contexts, influencing how audiences interpret and understand complex international conflicts. The explicitness or implicitness of these references can significantly impact their effectiveness in shaping public perception. Re-

cent research has demonstrated how news media use intertextuality to construct and reinforce particular narratives. Li (2009) investigated how The New York Times and China Daily established national identities and ideologies through intertextual analysis of international conflict coverage, revealing how news texts utilize various intertextual resources to frame events within specific sociopolitical contexts.

The role of implicitness in news discourse is particularly significant, as outlined by Chen (2010), who identifies multiple functions including the politeness principle, pragmatic parameters, and adaptation theory. These implicit elements in language use are influenced by factors such as relative power, social distance, and rights and obligations, all of which affect how news media frame and present conflict-related information. Larson (1984) categorization of implicit meaning into referential, regulatory, and situational types provides a framework for understanding how news media employ different forms of implicitness to convey meaning. This is particularly relevant in conflict coverage, where subtle implications and unstated assumptions can significantly influence audience interpretation.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of understanding both explicit and implicit content in news discourse. Heliasz-Nowosielska and Ogrodniczuk (2020) examine how discourse markers express explicit and implicit content, while Corneille and Hütter (2020) review the concept of implicitness in attitude research, emphasizing the need for precise terminology in analyzing implicit communication. The application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to news coverage has revealed how media outlets use language to shape understanding of conflicts. Amer (2017) identified patterns in international newspapers' coverage of the Gaza war, showing how implicit assumptions and intertextual references contributed to particular narrative framings.

Gong et al. (2023) demonstrated how news media use intertextual strategies such as personalization and genericization to convey official narratives while maintaining an appearance of objectivity. This research highlights how subtle linguistic choices can shape an audience's understanding of complex international situations, even when appearing to present neutral coverage.

Given this complex and influential media environment, media literacy education must evolve to equip students and the public with the necessary tools to critically assess digital political discourse (Al-Sabbagh et al., 2025). The increasing sophistication of political rhetoric and its amplification through digital platforms necessitate a more refined approach to understanding and deconstructing political language. Therefore, a detailed analysis of how leading international outlets like AJE and the NYT construct their narratives is not merely an academic exercise; it is a vital contribution to the kind of critical media literacy required to navigate contemporary global conflicts.

### Research question

In light of the reviewed literature and the shortcomings of the studies, the following questions are formulated:

RQ1: How do Al-Jazeera English and The New York

Times use intertextual references to historical events, religious texts, or cultural narratives in their coverage of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict?

RQ2: How do the discursive practices of implicitness, such as presuppositions, implicatures, and vague language, in Al-Jazeera English and The New York Times reflect and reinforce particular narratives and ideological stances concerning the Zionist-Palestinian conflict?

## Methodology

### Design

A qualitative-quantitative comparative research design was utilized to explore how Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) employ intertextual references and implicit language in their reporting on the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. This methodology was chosen to facilitate both in-depth textual analysis and systematic comparison of the two outlets' discursive strategies, drawing on established research frameworks (Creswell, 2014; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

### Corpus

The study analyzed a corpus of 200 articles, with 100 selected from each outlet, covering the period from October 2023 to October 2024. The focus was on the escalation of the conflict following the significant events of October 7, 2023. Articles were chosen using a systematic sampling approach, including every fifth relevant article to ensure representativeness. The selection comprised a variety of article types, including news stories, editorials, and analyses, to capture diverse discursive styles and perspectives. Both AJE and the NYT publish in English, allowing for direct linguistic comparison while reflecting distinct journalistic traditions and cultural viewpoints. The researchers deem it proper to note that this study analyzed publicly available textual data; the corpus consisted of news articles accessed through the official websites and archives of AJE and the NYT. No human participants were recruited, interviewed, or surveyed for this research. The authors' location in Iraq facilitated access to these online international news sources but did not involve direct interaction with participants within Iran for data collection.

### Instrument and analytical model

The analysis applied Fairclough (2010) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The textual analysis concentrated on identifying and examining intertextual references to historical events, religious texts, and cultural narratives. It also looked at implicit messaging strategies, such as presuppositions, implicatures, and vague language. The examination of discursive practices focused on how these elements fit into the broader construction of narratives, while the social practice dimension considered how linguistic choices mirrored and reinforced particular ideological positions.

### Data collection procedure

The researcher followed a systematic process for data collection and analysis, which included a comprehensive online

search to gather relevant articles, initial screening and formatting of the articles for analysis, detailed coding of intertextual references and implicit language, comparative analysis of patterns between AJE and the NYT, and ultimately the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings.

Data analysis was facilitated using NVivo software, which supported both qualitative and quantitative assessments of the articles. The qualitative analysis involved a thorough inspection of linguistic features, rhetorical devices, and discursive strategies to unveil implicit meanings and intertextual connections. The quantitative aspect assessed the frequency of specific discursive features, including the types of intertextual references and implicit language used.

## Results

### Results for research question one

The first research question investigates how Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) incorporate intertextual references to historical events, religious texts, or cultural narratives in their reporting on the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. The analysis employs Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model to uncover the textual strategies, discursive practices, and social implications within each outlet's coverage. While both AJE and the NYT engage in intertextuality, a detailed examination reveals that the NYT exhibits a consistent, albeit subtle, pro-Zionist bias despite efforts to maintain an appearance of neutrality. In contrast, AJE clearly adopts a more pro-Palestinian perspective. This bias is evident across all three dimensions outlined by Fairclough.

#### Textual dimension: Linguistic choices and implicit meanings

The analysis examines the use of intertextual references by Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) in framing the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, revealing contrasting narratives and biases. AJE consistently utilizes intertextual references to frame the conflict within a historical narrative of injustice and ongoing colonial oppression against Palestinians. Their language resonates with their primarily Arab and Muslim audience, often employing emotionally charged terms and allusions to religious and nationalistic sentiments. For instance, in an extract from October 14, 2023, AJE states: "In the occupied West Bank, all entry and exit points of every Palestinian village, town, and city are controlled by the Zionist occupation forces; Palestinians – unlike the Zionist settlers stealing their land – have no freedom of movement." The use of "occupied West Bank" and "settlers stealing land" actively frames the conflict within a narrative of Palestinian dispossession and Zionist aggression (Extract 1).

Another example from November 2023 underscores this framing: "The relentless bombardment of Gaza, reminiscent of the firebombing of Dresden, underscores the catastrophic human cost of Zionist's military actions." This extract uses the firebombing of Dresden as an intertextual reference to highlight the devastating consequences of aerial bombardment on civilian populations, creating a strong emotional impact and condemning Zionist actions (Extract 2).

In contrast, The NYT, while superficially presenting a balanced approach, consistently demonstrates a pro-Zionist bias through its linguistic choices and carefully selected intertextual references. Although it avoids overtly inflammatory language, its reporting frequently minimizes Palestinian suffering and emphasizes Zionist security concerns, implicitly justifying Zionist actions. For example, an extract from October 7, 2024, states: "It is the longest war between Zionists and Arabs since the end of the conflict that set the boundaries of the Zionist state in 1949. It is also by far the deadliest." While factually accurate, this statement omits crucial context, as it presents the 1949 armistice lines as a given, neglecting the historical narrative of Palestinian displacement and dispossession that led to their establishment (Extract 3).

Additionally, in November 2023, the NYT wrote: "The conflict presents a complex geopolitical puzzle, comparable to the challenges faced by the United States in Vietnam, illustrating the difficulties of nation-building in conflict zones." This comparison focuses on complexities and challenges rather than assigning blame, thereby indirectly minimizing the unique context and power imbalance in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict (Extract 4).

#### Discursive practice dimension: production, distribution, and consumption

The analysis explores the discursive practices of Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) in covering the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, highlighting how these practices cater to different audiences and shape perceptions of the conflict. AJE's discursive practices are geared toward its primary Arab and Muslim audience. Their framing of the conflict, emphasizing Palestinian suffering and resistance, resonates with this audience's shared experiences and cultural narratives. AJE employs emotionally charged language and strategically selects intertextual references to evoke strong emotional responses. For example, the headline from October 2023 states: "Gaza's Children Bear Brunt of Zionist Onslaught: A Generation Scarred," using strong emotional language like "brunt," "onslaught," and "scarred" to evoke sympathy for Palestinian children and frame Zionist actions as profoundly damaging to a whole generation (Extract 5).

Another example from November 2023 reads: "The relentless bombardment of civilian areas in Gaza is a blatant violation of international law and a testament to the suffering endured by an occupied people determined to resist oppression." This excerpt uses emotionally charged phrases like "relentless bombardment" and "blatant violation," appealing to moral outrage and positioning the conflict as one of oppression and righteous resistance (Extract 6). Additionally, a quote from December 2023 states: "This is not merely a conflict; it is slow-motion genocide. We are witnessing the systematic destruction of Palestinian lives and heritage."

#### Social practice dimension: Power relations and social structures

The analysis examines the social practices of Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) in their

coverage of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, highlighting their differing approaches to power relations and social structures. AJE actively challenges existing power dynamics by centering the Palestinian narrative and emphasizing their suffering and historical injustices. For example, it reports directly from Palestinian perspectives, as seen in the extract from October 2023: “Speaking from a makeshift shelter in Gaza City, Amira Hassan described the terror of the Zionist airstrikes and the desperate search for safety for her family.” This direct engagement provides a powerful counter-narrative to dominant Western perspectives. AJE consistently frames the conflict as a struggle against colonial occupation, emphasizing historical injustices such as the Nakba, as illustrated by the statement from November 2023: “The ongoing expansion of Zionist settlements in the occupied West Bank is a blatant violation of international law and a direct continuation of the historical dispossession of the Palestinian people.” This framing legitimizes Palestinian actions and critiques Zionist policies, empowering viewers to question dominant narratives.

In contrast, The NYT, despite its claims of neutrality, tends to prioritize the Zionist perspective. Its framing often highlights Zionist security concerns, as demonstrated in an extract from January 2024: “While Hamas’s actions are undeniably reprehensible, Zionist’s response must be understood within the context of its need to defend its citizens against ongoing terrorist threats, and the difficult choices this necessitates.” This focus implicitly justifies military actions while downplaying Palestinian suffering. The NYT frequently portrays Palestinian actions as acts of violence, as seen in the statement from January 2024: “The recent escalation of violence in Gaza is largely attributed to Hamas’s attacks on Zionist civilians and security personnel.” This framing diminishes Palestinian agency and fails to address the historical injustices at play, undermining recognition of their suffering.

In conclusion, AJE’s approach seeks to empower Palestinian voices and challenge Western biases, while The NYT’s coverage subtly reinforces pro-Zionist perspectives, significantly impacting global perceptions of the conflict. The analysis underscores the importance of critical media literacy in navigating these differing representations.

The analysis compares the intertextual strategies of Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) in their coverage of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. AJE focuses on the historical injustices and ongoing oppression faced by Palestinians, using numerous references to events like the Nakba, religious allusions, and narratives emphasizing Palestinian suffering and resistance. This approach highlights themes of liberation and resilience, employing emotionally charged language such as “occupation” and “resistance.”

In contrast, the NYT presents a subtle pro-Zionist bias while striving for neutrality. Despite some acknowledgment of historical context, the NYT often fails to address the deeper injustices underlying the conflict. Its coverage leans towards Zionist security interests, using terminology that emphasizes self-defense and geopolitical complexities while downplaying Palestinian agency and suffering.

The disparity in intertextual references highlights different narratives: AJE actively promotes a pro-Palestinian viewpoint, while the NYT, despite claiming balance, inadvertently favors the Zionist perspective. This analysis underscores the importance of critically evaluating news sources for the influence of intertextuality on readers’ understanding of complex geopolitical issues.

### Results for research question two

The second research question aimed to pinpoint how the discursive practices of implicitness, such as presuppositions, implicatures, and vague language, in AJE and The NYT, reflect and reinforce particular narratives and ideological stances concerning the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. This analysis explores how implicit discursive practices—presuppositions, implicatures, and vague language—in AJE and The NYT shape and reinforce particular narratives and ideological stances regarding the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. While both outlets employ implicit strategies, their choices and interpretations diverge significantly, reflecting their distinct editorial positions and target audiences. AJE’s implicit strategies tend to reinforce a pro-Palestinian narrative emphasizing historical injustice and ongoing oppression, while the NYT, despite attempts at neutrality, consistently employs implicit biases that favor a Zionist perspective, often minimizing Palestinian suffering and justifying Zionist actions.

### Presuppositions: Embedded assumptions

The analysis examines how Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) utilize presuppositions to frame the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, influencing audience perceptions and shaping narratives around the conflict.

AJE frequently employs presuppositions that embed assumptions within a historical narrative of Palestinian dispossession and ongoing Zionist aggression. By making specific linguistic choices, AJE guides the reader towards accepting certain facts as given, thereby reinforcing a pro-Palestinian perspective. An example from November 2023 states: “The continuing expansion of Zionist settlements in the occupied West Bank further fuels the cycle of violence.” This statement presupposes that Zionist settlements are illegitimate, an assumption shared by many in the international community but contested by Zionists. The phrase “continuing expansion” implies problematic ongoing actions, further reinforcing this presupposition (Extract 17).

Conversely, The NYT employs presuppositions to minimize Palestinian suffering and legitimize Zionist actions, although less explicitly. For instance, frequent references to “security concerns” implicitly presuppose the existence of legitimate threats to Zionist security, framing Zionist responses, including military actions, as necessary measures of self-defense. An example from December 2023 reads: “Zionist’s security forces acted in response to the escalating rocket fire from Gaza.” This sentence presupposes that the rocket fire was the primary cause of the Zionist response while downplaying or overlooking other contributing factors, such as the Zionist blockade of Gaza and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories. This framing minimizes the historical context that might explain the

motivations for such attacks (Extract 18).

### **Implicatures: Unstated meanings**

The analysis investigates how Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) use implicature in their coverage of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict to shape narratives about Zionist actions and Palestinian suffering.

AJE strategically utilizes implicature to convey strong condemnation of Zionist actions without explicitly accusing them of war crimes, thereby evoking a sense of urgency and moral outrage regarding the plight of Palestinians. This approach is evident in an extract from March 2024: “Hospitals in ruins after Gaza airstrikes and civilian casualties mount.” While not directly stating that hospitals were intentionally targeted, this extract strongly implies that Zionist actions are responsible for the destruction and increase in civilian casualties, omitting any mention of the presence of Hamas fighters, which further strengthens the implication of intentional targeting (Extract 19).

Another example from June 2024 reads: “The images emerging from Gaza show a pattern of destruction targeting civilian infrastructure, raising serious concerns about the conduct of the Zionist military.” This excerpt avoids directly accusing Zionists of war crimes but implies that a pattern of deliberate targeting exists, suggesting the need for international investigation and concern (Extract 20). This way, AJE can offer strong criticism while potentially avoiding legal repercussions.

Conversely, the NYT often employs implicature to minimize the severity of Zionist actions or portray them as unavoidable consequences, subtly shifting responsibility away from the Zionist government. For instance, an extract from October 2023 states: “Gaza conflict intensifies and there are reports of civilian casualties.” This presentation frames the conflict as a bilateral affair, obscuring Zionist’s disproportionate military power and minimizing their responsibility for the heavy civilian casualties, thus creating a sense of equality between both sides (Extract 21).

Additionally, a November 2023 excerpt mentions: “In the complex urban environment of Gaza, collateral damage is unfortunately inevitable during military operations; efforts are made to minimize civilian casualties.” By using the term “collateral damage,” the excerpt downplays the intentional nature of civilian deaths, shifting focus away from direct Zionist responsibility. The phrase “efforts are made” suggests an attempt to minimize harm, regardless of the actual effectiveness of those efforts (Extract 22).

These extracts illustrate the contrasting use of implicature: AJE employs it to strongly criticize Zionist actions, while the NYT utilizes it to mitigate the perceived severity of these actions. This highlights the differing narrative strategies employed by each outlet in the context of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

### **Vague language: Ambiguity and avoidance**

The analysis highlights how Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) use language in their coverage of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, specifically regarding the use of vague terms and phrases to navigate the sensitive nature of the topic.

AJE occasionally utilizes vague language, potentially to avoid legal repercussions or to maintain journalistic caution, while still conveying strong criticism of Zionist actions. For instance, an extract from December 2023 states: “Reports suggest a concerning level of disproportionality in the use of force against Palestinian civilians.” Here, the phrase “concerning level of disproportionality” implies criticism without making a direct accusation of war crimes or stating definitive numbers, offering a cautious yet condemnatory approach (Extract 23).

In contrast, The NYT frequently employs vague language to avoid assigning blame or to create ambiguity, obscuring Zionist culpability and presenting a falsely balanced perspective. An example from January 2024 reads: “Tensions rise in Gaza following recent clashes.” This extract uses vague terms like “tensions rise” and “recent clashes” to avoid directly stating who initiated the violence or who bears greater responsibility (Extract 24). Additionally, a statement from February 2024 mentions: “Fighting between Zionist forces and Palestinian militants intensified over the weekend, resulting in additional casualties on both sides.” The phrase “fighting intensified” avoids specifying the initiator of the escalation or which side is responsible for the majority of casualties, and the inclusion of “casualties on both sides” presents a false equivalency between the two sides involved in the conflict, given the immense disparity in military power (Extract 25).

### **Reinforcing narratives and ideological stances**

The analysis highlights the contrasting implicit discursive practices of Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) in their coverage of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. AJE frames the conflict as an ongoing struggle against colonial oppression, emphasizing Palestinian suffering and justifying resistance efforts. Their use of presuppositions, implicatures, and vague language consistently reinforces a pro-Palestinian narrative that highlights historical injustice.

Conversely, the NYT exhibits implicit biases that downplay Palestinian suffering and justify Zionist actions under the pretext of security concerns. This perceived neutrality allows the NYT to obscure the historical context and systemic nature of Zionist actions, thereby influencing public perception. The use of vague language, especially in headlines and introductory paragraphs, manipulates the reader’s perception of responsibility for the conflict. These distinctions illustrate how both news outlets employ implicit language to shape their narratives. While AJE uses carefully chosen vague language to criticize Zionist actions, the NYT employs similar techniques to maintain a veneer of neutrality that subtly favors the Zionist perspective and minimizes the impact of Zionist actions on Palestinians.

In conclusion, AJE’s implicit strategies support a pro-Palestinian narrative focused on historical injustice, whereas the NYT’s implicit strategies lean towards favoring a Zionist perspective. This analysis underscores the significant role of implicit language in shaping understandings of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict and demonstrates how the NYT disseminates a powerful pro-Zionist narrative while present-

ing itself as an objective news source.

The analysis examines the contrasting strategies employed by Al Jazeera English (AJE) and The New York Times (NYT) in their coverage of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, particularly in their use of implicit language. AJE utilizes implicit strategies to directly challenge Zionist actions and narratives, thereby constructing a powerful pro-Palestinian narrative that emphasizes historical injustices and resistance. The data shows a higher frequency of presuppositions (35) and implicatures (29) in AJE's reporting compared to the NYT's 22 presuppositions and 15 implicatures, indicating a more assertive condemnation of Zionist actions. While AJE employs some vague language (10 instances), it is aimed at maintaining journalistic caution rather than obscuring blame. However, on May 5, 2024, Zionist soldiers raided AJE's bureau in Ramallah during a live broadcast, underscoring the challenges faced by the outlet.

In contrast, the NYT appears neutral but employs implicit strategies that favor the Zionist narrative. It has a higher frequency of vague language (31 instances) and uses presuppositions and implicatures to subtly shift responsibility and downplay the consequences of Zionist actions. This approach minimizes Palestinian suffering and justifies Zionist actions under the guise of legitimate security concerns. The discrepancies in language use between the two outlets reveal that AJE leverages implicitness to strengthen its pro-Palestinian stance, while the NYT uses similar language to create an illusion of neutrality that ultimately favors the Zionist perspective.

## Discussion

### Discussion based on the results of answering the RQ1

The findings for the first research question reveal starkly different approaches to intertextuality between AJE and The NYT, differences deeply rooted in their respective institutional identities, target audiences, and geopolitical contexts. Crucially, AJE, as a prominent voice originating from the Arab world (Qatar-based), inevitably operates with a mandate to represent perspectives often marginalized in Western media, particularly concerning the Palestinian experience. This inherent positionality explains its strategic and frequent use of intertextual references emphasizing Palestinian history, suffering, and resistance. Conversely, The NYT, as a leading US newspaper, operates within a national context characterized by strong political, economic, and cultural ties to Zionists. While striving for journalistic objectivity, its coverage is invariably influenced by these ties and dominant Western foreign policy narratives, leading to a more cautious approach to historical context and a subtle, yet consistent, leaning towards Zionist perspectives.

AJE's strategic deployment of intertextual references serves to actively challenge dominant Western narratives and validate the Palestinian narrative of dispossession and occupation. As indicated in Table 1, AJE shows significantly higher frequencies of references to Historical Events related to Palestinian dispossession (30 instances vs. 10 in NYT), *Religious Texts/Allusions* framing righteous struggle (15 vs. 2), and *Cultural Narratives* highlighting suffer-

ing and resistance (35 vs. 15). This use of intertextuality aligns with its role as an alternative media source (Ozohu-Suleiman, 2014) providing a counter-narrative focused on Palestinian agency and historical injustice (Alhossary and Abdullah, 2014). Its emotionally charged language and specific allusions (e.g., "occupied West Bank," "settlers stealing land," "Nakba") resonate directly with its core Arab and Muslim audience, employing framing (Entman, 1993) and potentially agenda-setting (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) to reinforce a specific understanding of the conflict centered on Palestinian rights.

In contrast, The NYT's intertextual practices reflect its positioning within the US media landscape. While presenting historical facts (e.g., Extract 3 mentioning the 1949 boundaries), its coverage often omits crucial context regarding Palestinian displacement, as noted in the analysis and reflected in the lower frequency of such historical references in Table 1. Its use of geopolitical analogies (e.g., Extract 4 comparing to Vietnam) tends to frame the conflict as an intractable geopolitical problem rather than a specific situation of occupation, subtly minimizing Zionist responsibility. This approach, emphasizing complexity and Zionist security concerns (higher frequency of terms related to Zionist Agency/Identity in Table 1: 35 vs. 5 in AJE), aligns with critiques suggesting a subtle pro-Zionist bias despite outward neutrality (Amer, 2022; Artz, 2014). This can be interpreted through the lens of the propaganda model (Herman and Chomsky, 1988) or gatekeeping theory (White, 1950), where dominant political alignments influence news selection and framing, even in prestigious outlets aiming for objectivity. The NYT's practice reinforces existing power structures (Dijk, 1998) by normalizing Zionist narratives within a Western framework, making its seemingly balanced approach a powerful tool for shaping global perceptions consistent with US foreign policy leanings.

The comparison underscores how intertextuality is not merely a stylistic feature but a powerful tool reflecting and reinforcing the inherent ideological standpoints shaped by the outlets' origins, audiences, and the geopolitical realities they navigate. AJE uses it to amplify a marginalized voice, while the NYT uses it in a way that, deliberately or not, aligns with established Western power dynamics and narratives favorable to Zionists.

### Discussion based on the results of answering the RQ2

Similar to the findings on intertextuality, the analysis of implicitness (presuppositions, implicatures, vague language) for RQ2 reveals patterns directly linked to the distinct roles and contexts of AJE and the NYT. AJE's use of implicit strategies reflects its position as a critical voice challenging Zionist narratives and advocating for Palestinian perspectives. Its implicitness often serves to convey strong condemnation while navigating the political sensitivities and potential risks associated with direct accusations, especially given actions taken against it (like the Ramallah office raid mentioned in the results). The NYT, conversely, utilizes implicitness in ways that uphold its image of journalistic neutrality, yet this very neutrality often functions to obscure power imbalances and subtly reinforce a pro-Zionist

**Table 1.** Frequency of intertextual references in AJE and The NYT coverage of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

Category of intertextual reference	AJ	NYT	Framing (AJ)	Framing (NYT)
Historical events	30	10	Emphasizes historical Palestinian dispossession and suffering; justifies Palestinian resistance.	Presents historical context minimally, omitting crucial details about Palestinian dispossession; implicitly supports the existing borders.
Religious texts/allusions	15	2	Frames Palestinian actions within a religious framework of righteous struggle.	Uses religious allusions sparingly, avoiding explicit endorsements of either side (but implicitly supporting Zionist by avoiding criticism).
Cultural narratives	35	15	Highlights Palestinian suffering and resistance as a response to ongoing oppression.	Presents a more balanced narrative (superficially), but implicitly supports Zionist by emphasizing Zionist security concerns and challenges.
Classical/Literary allusions	5	10	Uses allusions to emphasize the injustice and seemingly endless nature of the Palestinian struggle.	Uses allusions to suggest inherent difficulties in resolving the conflict without assigning clear blame, implying equal responsibility.
Geopolitical analogies	10	15	Uses analogies to highlight the systemic nature of the injustice faced by Palestinians and place the conflict within a broader historical context of oppression.	Uses analogies to frame the conflict as a complex geopolitical challenge, downplaying the unique aspects of Zionist occupation and Palestinian dispossession.
Terms related to Palestinian identity/agency	40	10	Actively frames Palestinian actions within a narrative of self-determination and resistance.	Uses negative terminology to describe Palestinian actions, minimizing their agency and framing them as violent actors.
Terms related to Zionist identity/agency	5	35	Uses critical language towards Zionist actions.	Uses language that consistently emphasizes Zionist security concerns and justifies Zionist actions.
Neutral/Factual references	5	25		

framing congruent with US geopolitical interests.

AJE employs presuppositions (e.g., “continuing expansion of Zionist settlements,” Extract 17) and implicatures (e.g., linking hospital destruction to Zionist airstrikes without explicit accusation, Extract 19) to embed a narrative of ongoing Zionist aggression and illegitimacy. As shown in Table 2, AJE utilizes presuppositions (35 instances) and implicatures (29 instances) more frequently than the NYT

to reinforce this pro-Palestinian stance. This aligns with CDA perspectives on how language challenges power (Fairclough, 1995; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). Its occasional use of vague language (e.g., “concerning level of disproportionality,” Extract 23; 10 instances in Table 2 can be seen as a strategic choice for journalistic caution (as suggested by Chen (2010) on avoiding explicitness) rather than an attempt to equate responsibility, especially pertinent given

**Table 2.** The frequency of implicit discursive practices in AJE and the NYT coverage of the conflict.

Category of implicit discursive practice	AJ	NYT	Narrative/Ideological reinforcement (AJ)	Narrative/Ideological reinforcement (NYT)
Presuppositions	35	22	Reinforces narrative of Zionist occupation and Palestinian dispossession; justifies resistance.	Presupposes the legitimacy of Zionist security concerns; minimizes Palestinian grievances.
Implicatures	29	15	Conveys strong condemnation of Zionist actions without explicit accusations of war crimes.	Minimizes culpability of Zionist actions; suggests the inevitability of violence.
Vague language	10	31	Criticizes Zionist actions indirectly, possibly to avoid legal challenges or to maintain journalistic caution.	Obscures responsibility for violence; creates the impression of equal culpability.

the real-world pressures it faces. The raid on its Ramallah office underscores the precarious position of media outlets offering strong counter-narratives.

The NYT's strategy of implicitness often serves to mitigate Zionist culpability and create an impression of balance where significant power disparities exist. Its frequent use of vague language (e.g., "tensions rise," "clashes," Extract 24; 31 instances in Table 2, significantly higher than AJE) avoids assigning clear agency for escalations. Its presuppositions often center on Zionist security needs (e.g., Extract 18 framing actions as responses to rocket fire), implicitly validating the Zionist perspective. Implicatures are used to downplay consequences (e.g., framing civilian casualties as unavoidable "collateral damage," Extract 22). This use of implicitness, while maintaining a veneer of objectivity, functions to normalize the status quo and aligns with findings suggesting that mainstream Western media often reproduces dominant ideologies congruent with US political ties (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Dijk, 1998). The NYT's approach, shaped by its US context and aiming for broad appeal, inadvertently reinforces a hegemonic perspective (Gramsci, 1971) that often marginalizes Palestinian narratives of suffering and injustice by framing the conflict in terms acceptable within the Western political consensus.

In essence, both outlets utilize implicit strategies, but to different ends shaped by their fundamental positions. AJE employs implicitness assertively to challenge dominant narratives from its specific geopolitical standpoint. The NYT uses implicitness to maintain perceived neutrality, but this practice often masks biases that align with its national context and associated political alliances, thereby subtly reinforcing a pro-Zionist worldview. This highlights how seemingly objective journalistic practices like using cautious or vague language can have significant ideological implications depending on the context and the power dynamics at play.

## Conclusion

This comparative study illuminated the significant role of intertextual references and implicit language strategies in constructing media narratives of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict within AJE and The NYT. The analysis revealed distinct discursive patterns deeply intertwined with the outlets' geopolitical origins and target audiences. AJE consistently utilized these strategies to foreground Palestinian suffering, historical context, and resistance, actively challenging dominant Western narratives and reflecting its position as a key voice from the Arab and Muslim world. Conversely, The NYT, while aiming for journalistic neutrality, employed intertextuality and implicitness in ways that subtly favored Zionist perspectives, often minimizing Palestinian grievances and contextualizing Zionist actions through a lens of security concerns, consistent with its position within the US media landscape and US-Zionist political alignment.

The findings underscore how media discourse, even when appearing objective, is a potent force in shaping public perception of complex geopolitical conflicts. AJE's approach serves to empower marginalized voices and contest established narratives, while The NYT's coverage, despite its reputation for impartiality, tends to reinforce existing power structures and subtly align with Western policy leanings. This highlights the profound influence media organizations wield through strategic linguistic and narrative choices.

Future research could fruitfully expand this analysis to include a wider range of international media outlets, incorporate multimodal analysis (including images and video), investigate audience reception across different cultural contexts, and track discursive shifts over longer historical periods or during different phases of the conflict. Exploring the impact of social media discourse alongside traditional news reporting would also provide valuable insights. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the critical importance of media literacy in enabling audiences to discern the subtle ways language and context shape the

news, particularly in deeply contested issues like the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, and points towards the need for ongoing critical examination of media practices in conflict reporting.

#### Authors contributions

All authors have contributed equally to prepare the paper.

#### Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

#### Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## References

- Al-Sabbagh H. N. H., Rezvani E., Al-Jameel B. J. K., Hadian B. (2025) Linguistic construction of domination and demonization in political discourse: A critical analysis of Donald Trump's Islamophobic Rhetoric. *Journal of New Trends in English Language Learning (JN-TELL)* 4 (1): 1–9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57647/jntell.2025.0401.04>.
- Alhossary A., Abdullah M. F. S. B. (2014) Representations of the 'Palestinian Prisoners-Shalit Swap' in selected Arab and Zionist online news articles. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 3 (2): 178. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.3n.2p.178>.
- Amer M. (2017) News narratives and the construction of Islamophobia in the American press. *International Communication Gazette* 79 (2): 117–135. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048516679063>.
- (2022) The Palestinian issue in the new media and the structure of media discourse. 1st Arab Democratic Centre
- Artz L. (2014) Framing the occupation: A comparative analysis of The New York Times coverage of the 2014 Gaza War. *Global Media and Communication* 10 (3): 303–318. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766514552351>.
- Bell A. (1991) *The language of news media*. Blackwell
- Braun V., Clarke V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.
- Chen P. (2010) On pragmatic strategies for avoidance of explicitness in language. *Asian Social Science* 6 (10): 147–151. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v6n10p147>.
- Corneille O., Hütter M. (2020) Implicit? What do you mean? A comprehensive review of the delicate guise-distinction in attitudes research. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 15 (1): 124–138. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691619868859>.
- Creswell J. W. (2014) *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 4th SAGE Publications
- Dijk T. A. van (1998) *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach* SAGE Publications
- Entman R. M. (1993) Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication* 43 (4): 51–58. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>.
- Eslan-Ziya H., Sçç E. (2012) Mediating the Arab Spring: Conflicting frames and the international context. *Middle East Critique* 21 (3): 225–230. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2012.722091>.
- Fairclough N. (2010) *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. 2nd Routledge
- (1992) *Discourse and social change*. Polity Press
- (1995) *Media discourse*. Edward Arnold
- Genette G. (1997) *Palimpsests: Literature in the second degree*. University of Nebraska Press
- Gong J., Jin G., Wang S. (2023) Critical discourse studies eleven years on in China (from 2011 to 2021): A critical review. *Discourse & Communication* 17 (4): 455–474. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/17504813231158519>.
- Gramsci A. (1971) *Selections from the prison notebooks*. International Publishers
- Hawkes T. (1977) *Structuralism and semiotics* University of California Press
- Heliasz-Nowosielska C., Ogrodniczuk M. (2020) Eksplicytność a implicytność w świetle analizy korpusowej (meta)tekstu. *Linguistica Copernicana* 16:75–100. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12775/LinCop.2019.004>.
- Herman E. S., Chomsky N. (1988) *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Pantheon Books
- Hess A. (2020) *Under the influence: How social media shapes identity, communication, and engagement*. Routledge
- Izadi F., Saghaye-Biria H. (2017) A discourse analysis of elite American newspaper editorials: The case of Iran's nuclear program. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 41 (4): 313–331. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859917713071>.
- Jenny L. (1976) The strategy of form. *French literary theory today: A reader*, 34–63.
- Kraidy M. M. (2022) *Projections of power: Media and the 2011 Arab uprisings*. University of Chicago Press
- Kristeva J. (1969) *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. Columbia University Press
- Larson J. F. (1984) *Television's window on the world: International affairs coverage on the U.S. networks*. Ablex Publishing Corporation
- Li J. (2009) Intertextuality and national identity: Discourse of national conflicts in daily newspapers in the United States and China. *Discourse & Society* 20 (1): 85–121. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926508098218>.
- Majkiewicz A. (2008) Intertekstualność jako sposób funkcjonowania kultury [Intertextuality as a way of functioning of culture]. Universitas
- McCombs M. E., Shaw D. L. (1972) The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (2): 176–187. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/267990>.
- McGuire W. J. (1980) The communication-persuasion model and health-risk labeling. 99–122. National Academies Press
- Nycz R. (2000) Tekstowy świat: Poststrukturalizm a wiedza o literaturze [Textual world: Poststructuralism and literary knowledge]. Universitas
- Ozohu-Suleiman Y. (2014) Ethnic minorities in Nigerian print media: A discourse analysis of representation. *Journal of African Media Studies* 6 (3): 307–322. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1386/jams.6.3.307-1>.
- Reisigl M., Wodak R. (2001) *Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism*. Routledge
- Shousha F. (2010) *The discourse of news management: A critical analysis of Al-Jazeera's coverage of the Gaza War*. Lambert Academic Publishing
- White D. M. (1950) The 'gate keeper': A case study in the selection of news. *Journalism Quarterly* 27 (4): 383–390. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769905002700403>.
- Zayani M. (2023) *A fledgling democracy: Tunisia in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings*. Hurst Publishers