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Research

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## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF FREEDOM FLOTILLA CARRYING AID TO GAZA

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### Abstract

*The incidents media portrays are generally accepted by layman blindly. It is important to realize that everything we see is not necessarily true and therefore, truth is not a universal term as it varies from person to person. This paper focuses on the analysis of Intertextuality and Assumption in two news items by two different newspapers (one item per newspaper) covering the same news event. The data are analyzed through CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis). The analyzed data reveal that the realities created by Al Jazeera News and The Haaretz News covering the Freedom Flotilla incident are very different from each other, and the Haaretz news reporting presents political and social bias in favor of Israel/ whereas, Al Jazeera's news report is more authentic and presents a holistic picture of the event.*

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## Introduction

According to Raja (2013, p.154), 'Communication has become one of the markers of social solidarity, social ranking and professional capabilities.' Text within a text from varying sources which may be assimilated, reflected or commented upon can be referred to as *Intertextuality*. According to Fairclough (1992), it is the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth. In simpler terms, Fairclough (2003) defines *Intertextuality* as the presence of actual elements of other texts within a text. This article aimed to show how news texts draw on, echo, and bring together different intertextual resources and how the circulations and combinations of these intertextual relations in different contexts construct their own versions of reality or truth. It analyzed *Intertextuality* and *Assumption* in two news items by two different newspapers (one item per newspaper) covering event of Israel attack on Freedom Flotilla Ship that was carrying humanitarian aid to Palestine. The date of the news is May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010. The study focused on the following two newspapers.

- Al-Jazeera English
- The Haaretz News

### *Research Questions*

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- How do the news reports of Al-Jazeera News and The Haaretz News represent the Flotilla Ship incident?
- Do they reflect upon political and social stance on the event?

### Literature Review

When the speech or writing or thought of another is reported, two different texts, two different voices, are brought into dialogue, and potentially two different perspectives, objectives, interests and so forth (Volosinov, 1973). There is always likely to be a tension between what is going on in reporting text, including work which the reporting of other texts is doing within the text, and what was going on in the reported text. There are different ways of making intertextual references in a text. Fairclough points to four forms:

- (i) Direct reporting,
- (ii) Indirect reporting,
- (iii) Free indirect reporting, and
- (iv) Narrative report of speech acts (NRSA).

Reports which keep a relatively strong and clear boundary between the speech, writing or thought that is reported and the text in which they are reported are more authentic compared to those which do not (Volosinov, 1973). This is the difference between 'direct' and 'indirect' reporting. Direct reporting is comparatively 'authentic' because it can claim to replicate what was actually said or written and indirect reporting can offer more scope for manipulation. Intertextuality brings several different voices in a text which highlights differences and/or to initiate an effort to reduce these differences. However, it is a matter of re-contextualization to fit these voices to a certain agenda (Fairclough, 2003).

Whereas Assumptions is defined as a proposition that is taken for granted. They are generally based upon presupposition without preponderance of the facts. They are generally attributed to specific texts because they bring different types of implicit references in a text. The concept of *Assumption* and *Intertextuality* is linked with social actors in a discourse. Li (2009) explains that analyzing the representation of social actors forms a representational meaning, which gives way to "different aspects of the world in discourse" (p.94). According to Li (2009), analysis of social actors in a news item can lead us to understand various implications of "power relations

constructed between different actors or groups". He further explains that discourse in a news report is reshaped with the selection of different direct and indirect quotes of participants as "news texts redefine the power structure and create meanings about the world that news actors inhabit" (p.95). Therefore, Intertextuality and Assumption in two news items on the same event are used for the analysis.

### **Theoretical framework**

Research on media discourse within the paradigm of CDA in the past 20 years has largely established the media as a social and discursive institution which regulates and organizes social life as well as the production of social knowledge, values, and beliefs through linguistic means (Fowler, 1996). Variations of language use in the media often constitute different representations of the world, social identities, and relations, projecting certain versions of reality depending on the media's institutional purposes, positions and interest (Li, 2009). In this approach to media discourse, Fairclough (1991) suggests that linguistic variations in the representational process at various levels of text production implicate and are implicated by the circulation of different discourses: a discourse as a type of language associated with a particular representation, from a specific point of view, of a social practice. Li (2009) suggests that studying how media texts draw upon, reorganize, and transform different discourses will provide insights into the processes of ideological and 'reality' construction in the media.

This article aimed to uncover the different levels of Intertextuality used in Al-Jazeera News and The Haaretz News. It further aimed to determine the function of Intertextuality, re-contextualization, and assumption. The major aim of this study was to determine the extent of orientation of difference presented in the two different news reports. The five-scenario scale to measure the orientation of difference provided by Fairclough (2003, pp. 41-42) was used in this article. It also endeavored to uncover the ideologies working behind

the reporting on Israel's Attack on Freedom Flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza by The Haaretz News and Al Jazeera.

#### *Analysis of Al Jazeera News Report*

The Al Jazeera news report quoted numerous people both directly and indirectly to present the holistic picture on the event. The Israeli spokesperson is quoted directly twice and the Israeli soldiers, Israeli military, Al Jazeera's Ayman Mohyeldin, the Turkish protestors, the Turkish foreign ministry and the Hamas leader in Gaza are quoted directly once. Similarly, many instances of indirect reporting, free indirect reporting and narrative reporting are present in the news report of Al Jazeera.

#### *Micro Analysis of Al Jazeera News Report*

##### **Intertextuality**

Al Jazeera used various voices in the news report. The analysis of these different voices suggest that the newspaper has made a broad endeavor to bring forward as many views on Israel's Attack on Freedom Flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza as possible. The striking patterns of reporting observed in Al Jazeera are direct and indirect speeches, with a blend of some narrative reporting. Some examples from the Al Jazeera news report are as under;

##### *Direct Reporting*

- AvitalLeibovich, an Israeli military spokesperson, confirmed that the attack took place in international waters, saying: "This happened in waters outside of Israeli territory, but we have the right to defend ourselves."
- The Israeli military said four soldiers had been wounded and claimed troops opened fire after "demonstrators onboard

attacked the IDF Naval personnel with live fire and light weaponry including knives and clubs”.

- “(The interception on the convoy) is unacceptable ... Israel will have to endure the consequences of this behaviour,” the Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement.

#### *Indirect Reporting*

- At least 19 people were killed and dozens injured when troops intercepted the convoy of ships dubbed the Freedom Flotilla early on Monday, Israeli radio reported.
- Al Jazeera’s Jamal Elshayyal, on board the *Mavi Marmara*, said Israeli troops had used live ammunition during the operation.
- Israel said the boats were embarking on “an act of provocation” against the Israeli military, rather than providing aid, and that it had issued warrants to prohibit their entrance to Gaza.

According to Fairclough (2003), direct reporting is relatively faithful because it claims to report what was actually said. However, Al Jazeera in the present news report uses direct reporting for multiple purposes. There are at least three apparent purposes for which Al Jazeera uses direct reporting:

- (i) In terms of Intertextuality, the foremost purpose is to include certain social actors to provide an insider’s account for a relatively accurate reporting.
- (ii) To accurately include voices of the Israeli government, witnesses, political analyst, Flotilla organizers, etc. (To bring forth different voices so as to suggest both accuracy and true representation); and
- (iii) To cover a broad space for reporting that spreads from protesters, local radio coverage to witnesses at the event.

Thus, in the news report of Al Jazeera, Intertextuality is used for a relatively reflective reporting: things, events, views represented

as they 'really are'. However, critical analysis of the direct reporting in terms of re-contextualization gives way to some serious questions that need to be addressed. The first underlying purpose of re-contextualizing different voices through direct reporting is to support the perspective ALJazeera holds that Israel's attack on the Freedom Flotilla was unjustified as it sees the whole situation from its own viewpoint. For instance, it's only the Israeli military people, who are quoted and no high official other than the ones from military or the president of Israel is quoted. The Turkish foreign is quoted directly [*"(The interception on the convoy) is unacceptable ... Israel will have to endure the consequences of this behaviour," the Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement*]to suggest that it is only misrepresentation of facts on part of Israel and what is done by Israel is completely wrong and Israel will have to endure its consequences. Government's voice is reported in indirect speech and narrative reporting. Al Jazeera's Ayman Mohyeldin, reporting from Jerusalem, is quoted "*All the images being shown from the activists on board those ships show clearly that they were civilians and peaceful in nature, with medical supplies on board. So, it will surprise many in the international community to learn what could have possibly led to this type of confrontation,*" to accurately cover the event rather than present any political/ideological views. Other voices that echo heavily in the report are of Flotilla organizers, protesters and various sources. It is this three dimensional input that forms Al Jazeera's underlying purpose: it has more value to how it sees things rather than what is reported by the government or any other source. What Al Jazeeras sees is supported by these voices. As for indirect reporting, it is used mostly for summing up a whole happening and setting up ground for more-detailed reporting mainly from Al Jazeera's.

#### *Assumption*

The assumption held by Al Jazeera is that the sole aim of the Israeli forces was not just to secure themselves from attack as reported [*Avital Leibovich, an Israeli military spokeswoman said, "This happened in waters outside of Israeli territory, but we have*

*the right to defend ourselves.”]* but there is much more to look for. For instance, the organizers of the Flotilla: however, said the troops opened fire as soon as they stormed the convoy whereas *[The Israeli military said four soldiers had been wounded and claimed troops opened fire after “demonstrators onboard attacked the IDF Naval personnel with live fire and light weaponry including knives and clubs”]* whereas An Al Jazeera correspondent said *[that a white surrender flag was raised from the ship and there was no live fire coming from the passengers]*. It suggests that Israel wanted to stamp its authority that what it says, it does. As it earlier had said that it would not let Flotilla anchor in Gaza. These representations support the assumption that things are more complicated than Israel is portraying. Choice of words also suggests that Al Jazeera assumes the government’s stance as open to criticism.

#### **Macro Analysis of Al Jazeera News Report**

##### *Accentuation of Difference*

Critical analysis of Intertextuality and assumptions held by Al Jazeera lead to empirical evidence that the major point of Al Jazeera is to give weight to the representation of truth rather than assuming things as the Israeli media or military officials are trying to portray. Moreover, by the use of assumption, Al Jazeera has successfully suppressed Israel’s voice to again project its own view: higher level of dialogicality is used to open up accentuation of difference for critical interpretation. The ideology that can be understood behind this reporting is that Al Jazeera does not see things from Israeli military’s viewpoint and that there is evidence to support this viewpoint.



*Analysis of The Haaretz News Report*

Unlike Al Jazeera news report, the Haaretz news report only used the voice of few people for direct reporting and therefore failed to present a holistic picture of the event. Israel's commandos are quoted directly five times, IDF is directly reported twice and the Israel's military spokesman is directly quoted once. However, the Turkish protestors, the Turkish foreign ministry, the Hamas leader in Gaza, etc are not directly quoted even once. Similarly, voices that support Israeli stance are indirectly quoted more frequently whereas the organizers of the Freedom Flotilla are quoted thrice and the Al Jazeera is quoted only once.

**Micro Analysis of The Haaretz News Report***Intertextuality and Assumptions*

The Haaretz News does not bring many different voices into the report and highly re-contextualizes them to support its own agenda. It's the *Israeli soldiers who encountered serious physical violence by the protesters, who attacked them with live fire* and they were only trying to prevent Flotilla from going to Gaza as 700 pro-Palestinian activists were suspected in that ship. Israeli military force is assumed as the authority confirming this blockade of the Flotilla. This is the basic assumption used to establish the ground. Throughout the report it remains intact. Out of twenty eight direct, indirect and narrative reporting's, only four indirect reporting's are attributed to Flotilla organizers and Al Jazeera and twenty four are attributed to various Israeli spokesman, soldiers, commandoes, cameramen, IDF, etc. Most of those indirect reporting's attributed to flotilla organizers and Al Jazeera talks about where the Flotilla had started her journey and when she was expected at Gaza and does not talk about what actually happened in the incident. Some examples of direct and indirect reporting from the Haaretz are as under;

*Direct Reporting*

- An Israeli military spokesman said “They had pistols with live ammunition as back-up, to defend themselves,” he said.
- One of the commandos told reporters, “They beat us with metal sticks and knives,” he said. “There was live fire at some point against us.”
- “They jumped me, hit me with clubs and bottles and stole my rifle,” one of the commandos said. “I pulled out my pistol and had no choice but to shoot.”

*Indirect Reporting*

- The IDF confirmed that at least seven Navy commandos had been wounded, two of them seriously, in a fight which apparently broke out after activists tried to seize their weapons.
- A Reuter’s cameraman on the Israel Navy ship, sailing close to the convoy, said IDF commanders monitoring the operation were surprised by the strong resistance put up by the pro-Palestinian activists.
- Al Jazeera reported Monday morning that the Gaza aid flotilla had changed course to avoid a confrontation with Israeli warships.

Analysis of the Haaretz news report indicates that the voices of the Flotilla victims and organizers present in the ship are hushed up as they are not reported directly or indirectly. It also does not include the voices of any international participant such as the Palestinian President, the Turkish Protestors, the Flotilla organizers, etc. It dominantly quotes Israeli officials and commandoes both directly

and indirectly to portray their constructed version of reality and truth. It suggests that the Israeli commandoes were like the little innocent angels who were left with no choice but to defend themselves as it is quoted: *[they had encountered violent resistance from activists armed with sticks and knives. According to the commandos, the activists threw one of the soldiers from the upper deck to the lower after they boarded.]* Another commando was quoted saying, *[he descended by rope from a helicopter onto one of the six ships in the convoy and was immediately attacked by a group of people waiting for them. "They beat us with metal sticks and knives," he said. "There was live fire at some point against us."]* The story highlights section creates an image of Israel to be doing their duty and defending their country whereas the Flotilla violating laws and carrying Palestinian activists to Gaza to work against Israel. The story highlights are;

- Confrontation took place in international waters
- Israel says six-ship flotilla ignored orders to turn back from course to Gaza
- IDF: Activists on board attacked lone commando with iron bars, opened fire

So, the assumption held by the Haaretz News is that the Israeli military did not wish any violence and only wanted Flotilla to change its course. However, the violence shown by the activists on board made them helpless and as a last resort they had to use weapons against them which were not part of their plan. Also, people on board had plans to attack the Israeli commandoes for which they carried with them two pistols, sticks, and iron bars.

### **Macro Analysis of The Haaretz News Report**

#### *Resolution of Difference*

What Fairclough(2003) suggests as “assumptions reduce difference” (p. 46) is quite obvious in the Haaretz News version of reality. Thus, the news report persistently attempts to find a universal ground to decide and conquer difference: the government and The Haaretz News view the whole situation as the same. It is assumptions which have set up a common ground for the Haaretz News viewpoint and that of the government; even it is more likely that the government’s viewpoint is same as that of the Haaretz News. There are no voices included to give way to other possibilities of the attacks. the viewpoint of the newspaper, henceforth, can be interpreted as: The Haaretz News sees things from its own viewpoint and it is that radical elements or activists are more violent against the friendly Israeli commandoes and that Israel will not allow them to cross and violate the blockade and will stem their authority.

#### **Discussion and Implications**

Many useful implications can be drawn through the critical analysis of the two news reports covering the same news. In the radiance of the first research question, it can be an empirically supported assertion that the two newspapers, i.e. Al Jazeera and the Haaretz News, view Israel’s Attack on Freedom Flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza very differently. Al Jazeera’s standpoint is that of difference which is accentuated by making use of higher degree of ‘dialogicality’ which Boje (2007) defines as different voices, styles, and ideas expressing a plurality of logics in different ways, but not always in same place and time. This effort to find different opinions, to let the news coverage be open to diverse interpretations, also gives an underlying ideological message that reality or truth is much more different with Al Jazeera than it is from the viewpoint of the Israeli military officials or government. Al Jazeera does this by precisely making use of direct reporting for more faithfulness of the ideology.

The use of re-contextualization is used effectively by quoting Israeli spokesman and commandoes on different occasions and then quickly counterfeiting it with either the authoritative voice or with the voices of Flotilla organizers present in the ship when the attack took place. For example;

Footage from the flotilla's lead vessel, the *Mavi Marmara*, showed armed Israeli soldiers boarding the ship and helicopters flying overhead.

The Israeli military said four soldiers had been wounded and claimed troops opened fire after "demonstrators onboard attacked the IDF Naval personnel with live fire and light weaponry including knives and clubs".

Free Gaza Movement, the organizers of the flotilla; however, said the troops opened fire as soon as they stormed the convoy.

Our correspondent said that a white surrender flag was raised from the ship and there was no live fire coming from the passengers.

These attacks are seen with contempt and as a cruel butchery by the participants all around the world. The emphasis on difference is used to suggest that other agents (a rival country, group, etc.) can also be making their ends meet in the middle of the disarray caused by military campaign in Flotilla. What is more important in the news report is the higher degree of doubt that Al Jazeera successfully interweaves in reporting the difference between what is being projected as reality and what reality really is! Hence, indications that the attack on Flotilla was a mere effort to prevent her going to Gaza, as it was suspected of carrying activists there, and Israeli commandoes used live ammunitions to save their lives as compulsion sheds doubt on the constructed reality, and so, clearly builds up the case for Al Jazeera's viewpoint. There is more to look for and that only one view (Israeli commandoes only wanted the Flotilla to change its course and not to head to Gaza,

and they did not have any violent intentions) is not practically acceptable.

To sum up, it is highly practical to say that Al Jazeera's reporting is helpful in locating other possibilities for the attack; therefore, it will not be wrong to claim that Al Jazeera's news report can prove to be vital for serious political, social insights not only for the Israeli government but also for all the participants all around the world.

On the other hand the Haaretz News reports the entire event as a mono-directional happening. Enormous use of *Assumption* reduces difference as well as sets up a very well established ground to report what is seen as the case by the Haaretz News. However, the reporting can be held accountable to severe criticism for a number of reasons. The most serious scrutiny is that the newspaper does not attempt to bring different voices other than the Israeli military officials and commandoes. This makes it most likely that Israeli commandoes and officials are to be taken as the highest authority on the accuracy of the news which is practically not acceptable when it comes to reporting a crucial issue like this. Thus, it is right to claim that the legitimacy of the Haaretz News is rather questionable. Another ground on which it can be held liable for weak reporting is that there is no reasonable evidence to suggest that the Flotilla was carrying activists. Actually, it is the use of least dialogical, highly assumed discourse by the Haaretz News that is leading to this straightforward conclusion. What such a news report can warn the reader of is the implication that it can be highly misleading both in terms of the accuracy of the event covered and in terms of what is being suggested as the root cause of the entire happening. The voice of Flotilla organizers is used only for one minute that too in indirect reporting, also makes the reporting suspicious rather than substantial. Here, it is important to point out that it is the use of narrative reporting that has been fine-tuned by the reporter to support his underlying assumptions. One more critical observation can be made here. It is also possible to point out that this

kind of least dialogical reporting by the Haaretz News might be suggestive of its ideology that whatever it says is the word and that there can be little opposition to challenge the stance taken by the Haaretz News. Another is that perhaps the newspaper lacks the required resources which are necessary in making a legitimate report.

The stance that the readership should take on these two different perspectives is that Al Jazeera can be considered as plausible source when it comes to looking for other causes of *Israel's Attack on Freedom Flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza*. However, it is the news coverage by The Haaretz News that must be looked at with high degree of suspicion by the readership. It is because of the fact that the newspaper assumes much more than what is really happening only for the sake of projecting its own agenda and voicing its own concerns which are not favorable for Israel in terms of the distribution of power and legitimacy in the social setup of a global world. However, it can be a very useful source of presenting an Israeli view which demands its own agenda to be implemented although in news report only at this point in time.

### **Conclusion**

Al Jazeera news report is more authentic because it makes use of higher level of dialogicality and presents a holistic picture of the event. It is another matter that re-contextualization is the technique that fits different voices to project Al Jazeera's own viewpoint that something else might be the reason of the attack. Although from the viewpoint of critical discourse analysis this ideology is further open to criticism and serious interpretations, it is clear that the Al Jazeera's version of reality has serious implications for the Israeli military actions against humanitarian aid carrying Flotilla. After reading the Al Jazeera version of reality, I believe that the readers would start thinking along the same lines as suggested by Al Jazeera. Hence, it is a useful resource

(although different in ideology) for critical interpretations of what happened to Flotilla in international waters.

On the other hand, we can criticize the Haaretz News description of reality because it lacks certain technical strengths while reporting Israel's Attack on Freedom Flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza; moreover, it projects one view, and very easily reaches to one conclusion only, which in itself is vulnerable to severe criticism. The analysis of the two news reports on the same event by two different newspapers suggests that further research should be directed to analyze more data not only from these two sources but also from other sources from the same and other countries so that readers can arrive at empirical evidence in understanding different ideologies working either against Israel's actions, in favor of them, or somewhere in between these two extremes.



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