

A CORPUS-BASED MULTIMODAL STUDY OF TRT WORLD'S INSTAGRAM POSTS ON THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

As digital news platforms become central to news dissemination, Instagram, a visually driven platform, has emerged as a top site for shaping public perceptions. The transition of traditional news to online platforms affects the production of news discourse. Despite its importance in the modern news era, few studies have investigated the interplay between the textual and visual components of Instagram, particularly how these two modalities contribute to shaping public perception. The interplay is crucial when a media agency is covering the Israel-Palestine conflict. Hence, this study aims to explore how and what TRT World chooses to communicate to the public regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict on its Instagram. Using the corpus software AntConc, this study analysed 213 Instagram images with overlay text captions published between October 2023 and October 2024. Findings from transitivity analysis showed that TRT World often applied a material process when writing the overlay-text captions, emphasising Israel as the responsible entity for the mass destruction. However, TRT World paired these captions with images that framed the humanitarian crisis, with most pictures centred on Palestinians' suffering. These findings contribute to media discourse research by demonstrating how non-Western media agencies strategically framed the conflict to challenge Western narratives.

Keywords: multimodal discourse analysis; Israel-Palestine conflict; TRT World; systemic functional linguistics; news discourse

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INTRODUCTION

In the age of digital information, the power of news perception has never been more profound (Van Dijk, 2009; 2013), particularly in the context of complex conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. As media agencies have emerged on social media platforms, there is a shift in how news is produced, disseminated, and consumed (Clement, 2020). Before this, social media was invented as a social networking platform (Miller et al., 2016); however, it has now emerged as a primary channel for sharing news (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

The production of news discourse for an online platform must consider several key aspects. First, the editorial team must consider the dynamic features of digital platforms and adhere their writing to meet the benchmarks of online platforms. Second, online news does not rely solely on text (Rabbani et al., 2021). The inclusion of visual components, such as pictures and videos, is also crucial, primarily because social media serves as a hub for multimodal information. Furthermore, the transition from traditional news to online news may affect news production, particularly in terms of news discourse. The problem with news discourse is that it can "distort the fact, a change of semantic content or meaning, and a structural transformation" (Bell, 1991) to emphasise and de-emphasise a news story. From that, the media agency may have published inaccurate or false stories to increase engagement on their social media accounts (Botha & Pieterse, 2020). If this happens, hidden sentiments may manifest themselves in the news stories (Van Dijk, 2011).

When it comes to news discourse, it was never just about the story or images they shared; it was also about how the story was put together in words (Van Dijk, 2011). The public perceives or understands that news is related to who is shown as predator or victim, as well as the words used to describe those entities (Sarwar et al., 2023). Regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict, some news could be inaccurate or misleading if the media did not use the correct wording to describe each party. For instance, in February 2024, the Guardian reported that the BBC received a massive backlash when their news reporting was inaccurate and allegedly inflated endorsements for Israel's war crimes. The protestors were furious as the BBC describes Palestinians' actions as "terrorist attack" (Sharmeen, 2023), whereas Israel's actions were considered as "self-defence." After the 7 October attacks, this bias became especially apparent in Western media.

Social media has become a crucial yet often contested arena for the dissemination of news, particularly concerning the highly sensitive Israel-Palestine conflict (Hase et al., 2023). That being said, a considerable number of research studies have been conducted specifically on media bias or the political stands of the media agency (Chaudhry & Riaz, 2024; Kareem & Najm, 2024; Sarwar et al., 2023; Panayotova & Rizova, 2021; Shahzad et al., 2023; Sharmeen, 2023). However, only a few studies have focused on the micro-level of linguistics, such as transitivity, sentence structure, and word choice. There must be reasons behind the words and images they chose to publish. Given this concern, TRT World, a new leading international media agency, has been selected as the subject of this study to analyse the authenticity of its news coverage on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Specifically, this study aims to address the following research questions.

1. How does TRT World portray Israelis and Palestinians through images with overlay caption text in their news coverage on Instagram?
2. What are the key themes observed from TRT World's narratives regarding the representation of Israelis and Palestinians?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a geopolitical crisis whose global perception is heavily influenced by media narratives. Media coverage sometimes reveals a complex interplay between ideological and geopolitical influences. According to Sarwar et al. (2023), media bias is evident in the coverage of the BBC, CNN, and The New York Times (NYT), where Israeli perspectives are often highlighted, and Palestinian narratives are either reduced or framed in security-based language (Alharbi, 2021). Several studies have looked into how media agencies construct their narratives of the conflict (Chaudhry & Riaz, 2024; Heni & Chandra, 2022; Kareem & Najm, 2024; Panayotova & Rizova, 2021; Sarwar et al., 2023). This pattern reflects how news organisations may support or object to certain ideologies depending on their political stance.

News Discourse on the Israel-Palestine Conflict

News discourse has evolved from an anecdotal format to a more discursive framework (Van Dijk, 2009). This systematic method enables the media to convey ideological messages, whether intentionally or unintentionally, through deliberate language choices (Rubing & Sandaran, 2023). Bell's (1991) study expanded on this concept by highlighting the hierarchical structure of news, wherein information is prioritised according to relevance, significance, and timeliness. He also emphasised the intricate relationship between news discourse and ideological movements, noting that misreporting, misquoting, and editorial decisions have the potential to skew perceptions of reality. According to Van Dijk (2009), news is created. The editorial team creates news by choosing, deleting, or emphasising specific details. Therefore, what they choose to include or omit affects how the public perceives the news.

As such, Galtung and Ruge (1995 as cited in Harcup & O'Neil, 2001) introduced the concept of 'news schemata,' which suggests that news follows specific patterns, incorporating societal knowledge and influencing how audiences perceive events. This process is linked to Goffman's (1974) framing theory, which explains how news is presented by controlling how the audience perceives events. News framing is a journalism tactic in which reporters guide public perception by highlighting specific aspects of a story. Hence, applying this tactic strategically can bolster particular political, social, or ideological viewpoints of the news agency (Lecheler & De Vreese, 2019). The evidence has been the subject of many studies for the past few years. For example, studies from Panayotova and Rizova (2021) found that Western media framed Palestinians as "militants" or "terrorists," but Israeli troops are framed as committing "self-defence" or "security operations" (Zelizer, 2021).

Similarly, Kareem and Najm's (2024) study evaluated news reports from both Western and Middle Eastern media agencies. They discovered that diplomatic connections to Israel have a significant impact on how the media agency frames the conflict. For instance, the BBC and CNN took into account the US foreign policy when reporting, which has resulted in an emphasis on Israel's perspective. Unlike them, Al Jazeera places greater focus on Palestinian hardships and human rights violations (Sharmeen, 2023). The selective representation of events leads to a fractured perspective on the conflict, with narratives shaped by regional political interests rather than objective reporting.

Religious framing also influences media portrayal of the conflict. According to research, Western media invokes Jewish historical claims, whilst Arab media frames the conflict within an Islamic context (Shahzad et al., 2023). For instance, CNN routinely refers to Israel as the "Promised Land," bolstering its biblical validity, but Al Jazeera frames the conflict as the

"defence of Al-Aqsa Mosque" (Taylor, 2024). These thematic framings alter audience perception by incorporating ideological perspectives into news tales. The systematic use of religious framing can deepen emotional attachment among highly religious fundamentalists, especially between the Jews and Muslims, and such framing will shift the narratives as a sacred duty instead of a political issue.

The same conclusion was made by Setyohadi and Jannah (2024), who found biased coverage in Israeli media headlines that linked to ideological framing to portray Palestinians as aggressors while supporting Israeli military actions despite the number of war casualties. Tasseron (2023) pointed out that the main challenges in reporting the conflict were not from external parties, but rather from internal parties, such as the organisation's management, which must ensure the reporting style adheres to the state's political sentiment. Al Bzour and Anzeh (2021), when studying Donald Trump's speech about Jerusalem, also reached the same conclusion about the power relation between America and Israel, which heavily influences news organisations to be biased towards the favourable parties.

With that being said, the coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict exemplifies the intersection of news framing with ideological pressure. According to Nohrstedt & Ottosen (2014), journalists frequently face pressure from political stakeholders and lobbyists seeking to influence the news with specific agendas, such as political alliances or national interests at the time. In framing theory, news organisations pick, stress, and omit components of a story to influence public perception. The framing tactic, particularly using language, has allowed the public to understand that Palestinians are a threat to society, mainly when that party was described as terrorists without including the whole context of the conflict. This linguistic bias strengthens hegemonic power structures by legitimising Israeli actions and delegitimising Palestinian resistance (Chaudhry & Riaz, 2024).

Despite extensive coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the public remains perplexed about the realities of the situation. Therefore, this study is interested in exploring a new perspective from one of the leading media agencies in Turkey, TRT World. TRT World stated on its official website that its mission is to challenge assumptions and provide different perspectives, unlike other mainstream media (TRT, 2025). In terms of influence, TRT World's Instagram account (@trtworld) has 3.1 million followers worldwide by the time this study was conducted. In exploring their coverage and discourse, the agency has extensively reported on events that are happening across the Middle East, including the Israel-Palestine conflict. Mujani et al. (2015) noted that Turkey shares a history and a deep-seated public interest in the conflict. Overall, TRT World's international audience, social media presence, historical ties, and coverage of Middle East affairs make a case for the strength of its influence; as such, the importance of evaluating the agency's discourse on the Israel-Palestine conflict is evident.

In sum, previous literature on the representation of the Israel-Palestine conflict has generally found evidence for bias in portraying each group. Hidden ideology and political ties were commonly identified as problems in news coverage of the ongoing conflict, resulting in various confusing narratives for readers who sought to contribute to peace-making between the two countries. Furthermore, the majority of the studies examined major news outlets that were known for their propaganda in their news writing, and there is a lack of research on new media outlets, such as TRT World, which utilised their Instagram account to report on the conflict. Considering that almost every media agency has now shifted to social media platforms, it is crucial to explore how TRT World offers its narratives regarding the conflict, specifically on its Instagram.

Systemic Functional Linguistics

This study is guided by Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory, with a particular focus on his ideational metafunction, examining how meaning is constructed through news language by considering specific choices of participants, processes, and circumstances. SFL is a top-down perspective that presumes language is inseparable from the texts, while cultural and social contexts influence linguistic interpretations (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). SFL enables linguists to analyse written or verbal discourses. In SFL, the core element of interpretation is meaning rather than the structure, and every act of language is an act of meaning (Almurashi, 2016). In other words, Halliday introduced the concept of interpreting language as a resource for producing meaning.

Since it is crucial to comprehend language and its consequences, the functional side of language cannot be disregarded. Halliday's work on systems and function in language suggests that function is understood not only in terms of language use, but also as a fundamental property of the language itself, something basic to the evolution of the semantic system (Urban, 1981). Therefore, Halliday (2003) proposed three metafunctions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational function is central to this study, as it explains human experience through the lens of participants, processes, and circumstances. Ideational metafunction is realised through six types of processes. These are:

1. Material Processes are the activities that happen in the human's external world to express 'doing' or 'happening'.
2. Mental Processes are used to express and describe perception, cognition, and affective verbs, such as know, think, feel, hear, see, like, etc.
3. Relational Processes are a means to interpret states of being or relationships, including identification, attribution, or possession.
4. Behavioural Processes involve physiological and psychological behaviour that are intermediate between material and mental processes, such as whispering, dreaming, screaming, and smiling.
5. Verbal Process is defined as a process that reflects the act of communication, including saying, reporting, or any signals of verbal communication.
6. Existential Processes is a process to express the existence of something.

While SFL offers robust tools for analysing lexico-grammatical choices in texts, its scope is expanded for multimodal discourse through frameworks like Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar (Bi, 2019). Their concepts of representational, interactional, and compositional meaning allow the researchers to study the function of gaze, salience, colours, symbols, and vector lines in generating meaning, which is parallel with Halliday's study, where he asserts that language is a system of choices, where meaning is shaped by the interaction between linguistic structures and contextual factors (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Different cognitive, situational, and social contexts influence these choices, resulting in variations in meaning across various discourse settings.

Multimodal discourse analysis is rooted in systemic functional linguistics. Nowadays, people and news organisations have shifted to social media for a better and immediate platform to spread news. Despite rigorous research having been done on traditional news broadcasts, few studies have applied it to social media platforms, especially on coverage of the Israel-Palestine

conflict. This study addresses the gap, as Instagram is a social media platform that combines text, images, and symbols in a single frame, thereby creating “the visual and linguistic elements construct representation and create visual discourse” (Oloko et al., 2024). In addition to what has been stated above, most studies focus on media framing following the media’s ideology. Although ideology has a remarkable influence on shaping and structuring language (Hassan, 2018), there is a need for a shift in focus to study the narratives of the Israel-Palestine conflict from the angle of ideational meaning within the framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) discourse.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the ideational metafunction, to investigate how TRT World portrays Israelis and Palestinians using Instagram as a platform to disseminate Israel-Palestine narratives. Halliday’s SFL introduced a transitivity system, in which it categorises processes into the material, relational, verbal, mental, behavioural, and existential types. Each process makes a crucial contribution to shaping the discourse by assigning the Actor, Process, and Goal (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). To account for the visual data, a multimodal discourse analysis approach was adopted, utilising Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2020) visual grammar as a descriptive tool. Building on the foundation of Halliday’s SFL Theory, Kress and van Leeuwen emphasise the elements of gaze, colour, and composition in visual data as part of the components that convey representational meanings to readers (Bi, 2019). Nevertheless, the visual grammar serves as an analytical aid to support data analysis, demonstrating a more structured interpretation of how images visually reinforce or challenge textual messages.

Data Collection

The data were collected from TRT World’s official account (@trtworld) over a 12-month period, from October 2023 to October 2024. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select images with overlay text captions directly referencing the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly after the tragedy of October 7, 2023. Moreover, this study also excluded any posts that are formatted as infographics, due to their design nature, which presents factual summaries or statistics rather than narrative-driven content. To identify relevant samples, the keywords "Israel", "Palestine", "Gaza", “October 7”, and "Hamas" were utilised. This yielded a corpus of 213 captions, each paired with corresponding images, for multimodal analysis. The data collection was manually screened by scrolling through TRT World’s Instagram account and saving all the screenshot images in a file for coordination. A total of 213 captions with corresponding images met the inclusion criteria and were compiled into a qualitative data management system, namely TRT World Corpus (TWC). Each caption was extracted and compiled into the corpus, which was then subjected to both lexical and thematic analyses. No supplementary text from TRT World’s website or broadcasts was included to maintain the focus on Instagram as a unique modality.

Data Analysis

In this study, the selected Instagram images with overlay caption texts were systematically analysed to identify pertinent information regarding the Israel-Palestine issue. The keyword extraction was performed using AntConc 4.3.0 software, a commonly employed tool for corpus-based concordance analysis, which facilitates the identification of frequently occurring words, concordances, and their collocations (Subtirelu & Baker, 2017). Accordingly, the dominant themes were investigated using NVivo 15 software to utilise the coding features, allowing the study to generate the themes and sub-themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The discourse interpretation encompasses the selection of lexical items and thematic patterns. Furthermore, the findings are examined through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory, which serves as the primary theoretical framework. The visual elements of the images, such as composition, subject, and symbols, were analysed in conjunction with the text to understand how they contributed to the overall message using a visual grammar framework.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

TRT World produced 213 posts covering the conflict during the period of data collection. The overall posts were considered during the process of identifying the theme, which was subsequently analysed based on RQ 1, which asks “How does TRT World portray Israelis and Palestinians through ideational associations in its coverage after the October 7 attacks?”. To answer this question, a transitivity analysis was conducted to gather findings on the representation of both parties through processes. Table 1 below illustrates the findings.

Table 1. Transitivity analysis in TRT World's coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict

Process Types	Coverage (%)
Material	65.63
Relational	16.52
Verbal	8.48

Findings from transitivity analysis on 224 captions revealed TRT World religiously employed material process (65.63% of the overall coverage), followed by relational process (16.52%) and verbal process (8.48%) as part of their discourse strategies in reporting the conflict. Like Raza et al. (2023), TRT World structured its narrative on the conflict through actions, relationships, and reported speech. Note the example below on the details of how TRT World constructs the Actor, Process, and Goal in their sentence.

- a) Israel (Actor) kills (Process) 39 Palestinians (Goal) in Gaza school massacre
- b) Palestinian boy (Goal) killed by (Process) Israeli army gunfire (Actor) in the occupied West Bank

The constant implementation of material processes portrays Israel as the main character performing brutal actions, while Palestinians are positioned as the group impacted by the Israelis' actions. The examples above showed the linguistic structure of the victim-aggressor narrative, where the Israeli is repeatedly positioned as the perpetrator. TRT's narrative contradicts studies on Western media, where news organisations like BBC, CNN, and The New York Times commonly neutralise Israeli actions through discourse such as “Civilians killed in airstrike” (Mahmood & Alvi, 2024; Raza et al., 2023) rather than explicitly mentioning the

doers like TRT. Similarly, Setyohadi & Jannah (2024) found out certain media avoid direct violence attributed to Israel like “Rocket strikes Gaza”, while our findings showed TRT World repeatedly positioned Israel as the vile actor.

Furthermore, the current study found that TRT World employed a relational process to establish a strong narrative of Palestinians’ grievances as a factual condition. While material processes convey a victim-predator narrative, relational processes give more to the oppressor-oppressed dynamic. For instance, phrases like “Nearly 25,000 children in Gaza are now orphans,” or “Children in Gaza are caught in a nightmare.” These results challenge the findings of Kareem and Najm (2024), which suggest that Western media employs relational sentences to shift the narrative from oppression to the security movement.

It was also revealed that TRT World strategically implemented verbal processes from political figures to reinforce their editorial stance. For example, a few captions from selected 224 samples frequently cite statements from Turkish President Erdogan (“Erdogan condemns Israeli attack on Gaza hospital”) and the United States (“US to Israel: Boost Gaza aid in 30 days or risk losing billions”). In contrast, Alharbi (2021) found that US newspapers highlighted Israeli security rhetoric, such as “Netanyahu: Hamas poses an existential threat.” This difference in sourcing reflects a broader ideological difference between TRT World’s narrative and mainstream Western media, which adds to existing evidence that countries with strong political and economic ties with Israel exhibit pro-Israel bias (Kareem & Najm, 2024).

Corpus data, as evidence of language use, enables the observation of what is repeatedly discussed (Mahlberg, 2014). In this sense, quantitative information reveals the repeated occurrence of meanings and the forms in which they are expressed. Links throughout a text are created through the interlocking and overlapping patterns of lexical items. Table 2 illustrates the most commonly used term by TRT World when reporting the Israel-Palestine conflict since the October 7, 2023, attack.

Table 2. Top five keywords in the TWC corpus

No.	Word/Lexical	Frequency
1	Gaza	141
2	Israeli	80
3	Israel	77
4	Palestinians	43
5	Palestinian	37
	Total	378

The results revealed that TRT World preferably incorporates general, broader terminologies like “Israeli” and “Palestinian” in reporting the Israel-Palestine conflict since the October 7 attacks, unlike other media broadcasts that implied more specific terms like “terrorist attack” or “Hamas-Israel war.” As shown in Table 2, a total of 378 geopolitical terminologies are used by TRT World in their official Instagram account. “Gaza” appears most frequently (141 times), followed by “Israeli” (80 times) and “Israel” (77 times). The terms “Palestinians” and “Palestinian” are recorded 43 and 37 times, respectively. The data above suggests that TRT tends to adopt a more generalised framing in its coverage.

People use language to act in a variety of social contexts. The data collected in corpora provides evidence of how language is used, such as how entities are constructed in discourse and how people interact through language (Mahlberg, p. 217). Simple frequency information

can already indicate how aspects of our social reality are reflected by language. Textual analysis requires analysing the language functions used in the texts to examine their meaning in context. These terms may imply negative connotations in the audience's mindsets and carry different interpretations. Figures 1 and 2 depict the occurrences of the words 'Israeli' and 'Palestinians' in the format of a concordance.

Concordance Hits 80	
Hit	KWIC
1	ed Breaking: More than 500 Palestinians killed as Israeli air strike hits hospital in beseiged Gaza -
2	survive Israel's ongoing onslaught When an Israeli air strike hits Palestine's beseiged Gaza,
3	day 13-year-old Palestinian boy injured in Israeli air strike New Israeli settlement plan on
4	them children US-made weapons used in Israeli air strike on Gaza school - CNN Palestinian
5	have been killed in southern Gaza by Israeli air strikes according to officials, amid a
6	children comprise 60% of the injuries caused by Israeli air strikes in Gaza, according to Gaza'
7	I Israeli settlers launch attacks on Palestinians Israeli air strikes kill 13 children from one family
8	also seizes at least 260 since truce Deadly Israeli air strikes resume in Palestine's Gaza
9	kills another journalist as ceasefire ends An Israeli airstrike has killed Anadolu Agency's cameraman
10	on the first day of Eid Breaking: Israeli airstrike kills three sons and several grandchild
11	on Tel Aviv Palestinian boy killed by Israeli army gunfire in occupied West Bank US
12	Gaza 15,000+ children killed by Israel in Gaza Israeli army has detained at least 8,800 Palestinians in
13	ospital Israel destroys 4,000 IVF embryos in Gaza Israeli army plays recorded screams from drones to
14	cities as happened in the Gaza Strip' Israeli army to give more weapons to illegal
15	of fuel left in Rafah's hospitals Israeli army uses Palestinian children as human shields-
16	for Palestinians in Gaza Drone footage documents Israeli atrocities, human rights violations against Pales
17	ng: 10 Palestinians killed, 20 injured in another Israeli attack on a mosque in Shati Camp,
18	za - Palestinian health ministry Erdogan condemns Israeli attack on Gaza hospital. Striking hospital where
19	and leaked sewage at Bureij camp after Israeli attacks destroy superstructure and infrastructure
20	nian students struggle to continue education amid Israeli attacks in Gaza Quarter of Gaza's
21	by Israel since October 7 Over 100 killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza's Rafah Israel killed 126
22	sifies Gaza bombardment 70 Palestinians killed in Israeli attacks on Khan Younis Israel to restrict
23	ael kills 39 Palestinians in Gaza school massacre Israeli attacks on Nuseirat refugee camp kill at
24	ber 7 Detainees describe torture. other abuses by Israeli authorities, including use of stress positions. d

Figure 1. Concordance lines for the term 'Israeli' in the TWC corpus

As depicted in Figure 1, one of the most frequently used terms "Israeli" was used alongside terms like "air strikes," "gunfire," "detained," "atrocities," "blockade," and "human rights violation," indicating a discourse that places a higher priority on military aggression, humanitarian issues, and war casualties. The concordance lines above, such as "Israeli air strike kills 13 children" and "Israeli attacks destroy superstructure and infrastructure," emphasise the number of fatalities and the destruction of infrastructure. This indicates that TRT World portrayed Israelis as aggressive agents by using negative contexts and connotations. Furthermore, statements such as "Israeli forces kidnapped nine doctors" and "Israeli army uses Palestinian children as human shields" raise grave allegations of violations of human rights, which reinforce TRT World's critical position.

Concordance Hits 43	
Hit	KWIC
1	p white flag: official Israeli bulldozers 'buried
2	zone' in south Gaza kills at least 71
3	Bank since Oct 7 Israel kills at least 40
4	Israeli military dog Israeli kills dozens of
4	Mosque preacher Israel just killed at least 100
3	Gaza's Al Shifa Hospital Israel frees 150
4	DRC to take in Gaza's expelled
5	ael systematically uses quadcopter drones to kill
6	of aid trucks stuck at Rafah crossing
7	Israeli soldier recounts running over hundreds of
8	inians Israel sends 88 decomposed bodies to Gaza;
5	of war Medicines for hostages, aid for
6	the weak bodies and pale complexions of
7	ely preventable with sufficient medical supplies.
8	child malnutrition in Gaza Israeli prisons cut
9	Palestinians in Gaza Israeli bombs will kill
10	Mourns Victims of Israeli Church Strike Over 100
11	no anaesthesia for the patients Thousands of
9	even amid Iran's strikes At least 22,500
10	to the trauma of losing a limb,
11	Palestinians One meal daily on average for
12	Nearly 25,000 children in Gaza are now orphans
13	aids in 30 days or risk losing billions 343,000
14	by Israel Israel has killed at least 43 000

Figure 2. Concordance lines for the term 'Palestinians' in the TWC corpus

The discourse pattern for Palestinians is utterly different from that of Israelis, as Figure 2 shows. TRT World portrayed Palestinians as the defenceless victims of Israel's aggression, displacement, and systemic oppression. The analysis indicates that the term "Palestinian" is primarily used in contexts of victimisation. The linguistic choices make this contrast clear, as the term "Palestinian" frequently modifies human-related nouns like "baby," "children," "detainees," "journalists," and "families.". The frequent use of these collocations has portrayed Palestinians as a people who are governed and harmed by outside forces.

Transitivity analysis showed that Israeli was implied as an active Actor in the discourse, whereas Palestinian was put as the Goal. Such discursive choices are not neutral. They actively shape public perception. Similarly, research by Mahmood and Alvi (2021) indicates that such lexical choices reinforce ideological positioning in conflict reporting. However, the contradiction between the Actor and Goal is evident in the visual pattern, as depicted in Figure 3.

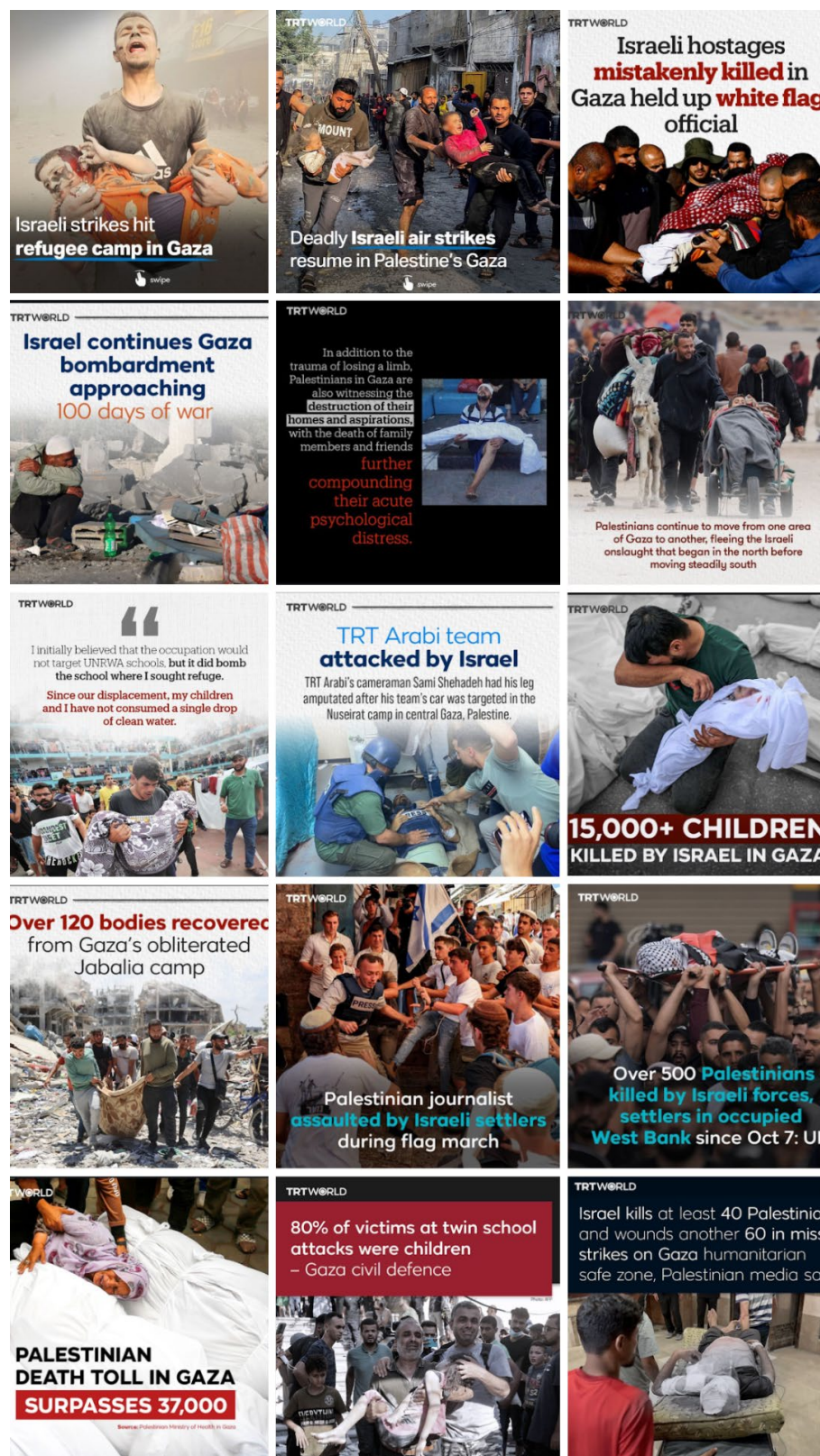


Figure 3. Examples of the news images reported in @trtworld

Figure 3 above are the collection of news images reported in @trtworld that centred on the impact of the Israel-Palestine conflict on Palestinians. Take a look at the first example (image on the top left). The image depicts a distressed man carrying an injured child in Gaza. From the Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar perspective, the image is categorised as a narrative action in which the scene is anchored by an actional process. In this regard, the man is presented as actor, the injured child as the goal, whereas the chaotic environment represents the goal. High salience is achieved through the victim's central placement and contrast with the muted background. Pairing with that image is a caption regarding Israel's actions, aiming to communicate the seriousness of these actions to a global audience. Another image (bottom centre) depicts a group of Palestinians is carrying a wounded body wrapped in cloth, emphasising the human cost of conflict. Such images are accompanied by descriptions like "15,000+ children slaughtered by Israel," which combine evident data with striking graphics. Visual representations, or "representational iconic images," exhibit realism, vividness, and strong emotiveness, which serve to engage the spectator emotionally and evoke "intense emotional responses" (Cross, 2006 as cited in Assaiqeli, 2021). The same findings by Adawiyah et al. (2020) showed that the Middle Eastern press framed Palestinians as victims through the representational function of images to call for international intervention.

The analysis of concordance functions as building blocks for thematic representation that might have shaped the audience's perception of casualties, consequences, and moral responsibility of the conflict. Such meanings play a crucial role in representing particular worldviews or ideologies (Partington, 2010). Hence, RQ 2 asks, "What are the key themes observed from the TRT World's narratives regarding the representation of Israelis and Palestinians?"

Table 3. Thematic patterns of the representation of Israeli and Palestinian

No.	Theme	Coverage (%)
1	Military Aggression	51.15
2	Humanitarian Crisis	22.60

As depicted in Table 3 the most occurring theme in TRT World's coverage of Israeli and Palestinian issues is the Israeli military brutality, which constitutes 51.15% of the selected texts. This suggests that TRT World foregrounds its discourse towards Israeli aggression as the 'driver' of the conflict. The word cloud analysis revealed that the lexical choices within this theme predominantly include violent, negative terms, such as "killed," "forces," "assaults," "raids," "airstrike," and "bombing," which support the image of an army invasion. Furthermore, Entman (1993) and Van Dijk (2013) believed that lexical patterns shape the perception of news consumers, especially when a news discourse emphasises certain aspects and de-emphasises others.

Apart from that, findings from transitivity analysis, which suggest TRT World mainly portrays Israelis as a vile actor in their overlay caption, supported the military aggression theme. Similarly, Najjar (2010) found that non-Western media would frame Palestine's suffering. Najjar's (2010) findings is differ than what is reported in the Western media, where their suffering is highly dismissed or misunderstood (Zelizer, 2021; Panayotova & Rizova, 2021).



Figure 4. Word cloud analysis of terms associated with 'Israeli'

Based on the word cloud analysis of the word “Israeli” in Figure 4, it shows a parallel result with what Najjar (2010) has concluded, where TRT World commonly associates Israeli with violent terms such as “army,” “airstrikes,” “bombs,” “forces,” “kills,” “attacks,” and “settlers.”. According to van Dijk (2009), the word choices used to describe a party is intentional. For instance, if TRT World described Israeli as a fighter group instead of army or forces, their messaging may have conveyed a different meaning to the readers. The words “army” and “forces” carry a negative connotation compared to the word “fighter”. Moreover, the analysis also shows the entities and products that were affected by those actions, like “Palestinian”, “Gaza”, “children”, “mosques”, and “workers”.

However, the representation of Palestinians through their lexical structure has resulted in a theme of humanitarian crisis (22.60%), a distinct category from the previous findings. TRT World completely omitted stories about the Palestinian army or Hamas; instead, it chose to highlight the hardships of the people of Gaza, especially women and children. This argument is evident through words such as “malnutrition,” “shortage,” “displaced,” and “hunger.” Chouliaraki (2008) said that when media outlets tend to focus more on the representation of suffering, it may emphasise passivity to elicit global sympathy and moral urgency.



Figure 5. Word cloud analysis of terms associated with ‘Palestinians’

The emphasis on Israeli military operations and Palestinian hardship, while altogether omitting coverage of Palestinian fighters or the casualties from Israeli attacks, aligns with the studies on media framing and ideational positioning in conflict reporting (Van Dijk, 2013) in which “media discourse is manufactured” (O’Keeffe, 2013).

Another significant theme revealed from the analysis is the statistical references to the Palestinian casualties and the mass destruction of the buildings in Gaza. Phrases that mentioned precise figures like “15,000+ children killed by Israel in Gaza,” “Israel kills at least 40 Palestinians and wounds another 60 in the missile strike on Gaza humanitarian safe zone, Palestine media say,” and “Class of 2024: Gaza’s quiet classrooms 477 out of 564 school buildings damaged/destroyed since October 7” boosts the credibility of TRT World while legitimising moral urgency to their news consumers. Statistical evidence is part of the discursive strategies that Van Dijk (2013) agrees can be a strong rhetorical tool in discourse, and numbers serve their purpose as an empirical foundation for a story. The tendency of journalists to prioritise objective reporting may align with the use of quantitative evidence in news discourse (Jablonka & Bergsten, 2021).

The portrayal of both parties is in a similar direction to past studies, where some news outlets portrayed Israelis as the “driver” of the conflict, Palestinians as the victims of oppression, and vice versa (Riman, 2024). However, while most Western mass media usually frame Israelis positively, such as committing an act of self-defence, TRT World gave the opposite representation that mostly accentuates the people of Gaza have to endure. The persistent use of words like “killed,” “bombing,” and “raid” in conjunction with “Israeli forces” strengthens adversarial aggression and highlights a discourse of state aggression.

The negative connotations related to Israel are related to the choice of words based on the journalists’ prejudices, which could be an influential criterion in the process of news production, considering TRT World’s stance as Turkish government media. Instead of employing terms like “ Hamas-Israel” or “ Hamas resistance,” TRT World employed broad allusions, as if to bring the audience back to the conflict’s origins.

While Chouliaraki (2009) argued the highlight of the grief and trauma could be one of the most critical aspects in war reporting to evoke global sympathy, Edwards (2023) argued that the coverage also objectifies Palestinian’s status as “an urgent humanitarian cause in the immediate present, rather than caught up in a long-term, chronic conflict” (p.2). The most commonly used words in the media to characterise the conflict are “terrorist attack,” “ Hamas terrorist,” and “ Hamas-Israel” (Henri & Chandra, 2022). These words are essential in conflict reporting, as the words used to describe the event are crucial (Halliday, 2013). However, they may distort the audience’s perception of reality (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2010).

CONCLUSION

As social media becomes increasingly central to people’s everyday lives, it is vital to understand how news construction on digital platforms affects their acceptance and understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The findings suggest that TRT World primarily uses material processes, portraying Israel as the active aggressor and Palestinians as helpless victims in their caption. With more than 60% of the processes being material, actors (Israeli) were seen as doing things instead of thinking or feeling, which puts more emphasis on tangible acts. These findings contrast with Western media portrayals, which frequently use passive constructs to negate

Israeli military actions or characterise Israeli policy as defensive. By investigating the multimodal feature of TRT World's Instagram posts such as text and images, this study established that Instagram, a highly visual social media does indeed have a significant effect on evoking emotional narratives of the conflict, with a strong correlation between the construction of overlay caption text and images used to support the statement. This suggests that, while overlay text caption does impact how the audience perceives the news, it is also essential to consider the role of images in supporting the decision.

Furthermore, the findings also demonstrate that TRT World's reporting frames the Israel-Palestine conflict by emphasising the hardships of Palestinians while portraying Israelis as the aggressors. It is crucial to note that TRT World's coverage cannot be separated from its political ties. As a Turkish state-funded source, their sympathetic coverage of Palestine may be caused by its connection to Turkey's foreign policy.

Despite the insights gained, this study has limitations. First, it focuses solely on TRT World's Instagram coverage, which may not accurately reflect the platform's overall reporting across several media channels. Second, while transitivity analysis offers valuable insights into lexical framing, it does not account for audience reception or the impact of such narratives on public perception. Future studies should take a comparative study multimodal strategy that includes audience analysis and sentiment surveys to determine how different media portrayals influence public opinion. Furthermore, additional research could explore other Social Media platforms (such as Al Jazeera, CNN, and BBC) to gain a better understanding of how social media discourse differs from traditional media in constructing conflict narratives. Such research would be crucial in determining the actual impact of these narratives on public opinion and understanding of international conflicts.

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