

Framing Threats and Justifying Actions: A Multitheoretical Analysis of Avichai Adraee's Facebook Discourse

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Abstract: This study uses multilayered theoretical frameworks, including Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Speech Act Theory, and Propaganda Theory, to examine how the rhetorical and linguistic strategies used by Avichai Adraee in Arabic-language Facebook posts shape public opinion and justify Israel's military actions. Using a qualitative approach, 109 posts were collected from Adraee's official Facebook page between September and November 2024. The findings show that Adraee's posts are not randomly constructed or shared; rather, they achieve systematic and strategic objectives. The analysis asserts that sharing these posts aims to depict Israel as a moral actor and peacekeeper while downplaying its adversaries' actions. The findings show that Adraee frequently uses accusation speech acts to delegitimize adversaries, labeling them as terrorists, threats, and sources of instability. Furthermore, Adraee linked Hamas and Hezbollah to Iran, amplifying the perception of external threats. This study concludes that Adraee's posts are crucial digital diplomacy tools that use language to justify Israeli military actions and shape both national and international audiences. It recommends further research on digital media literacy in conflict zones and suggests expanding the analysis to include visual rhetoric.

Keywords: accusation speech acts, critical discourse analysis, digital diplomacy, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Propaganda Theory

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of global communication, social platforms have emerged as a transformative force in international relations, particularly in conflict regions such as Palestine and Israel. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram help users, including individuals, governments, and military groups, to

share stories directly with large audiences (Banikalef et al. 2023). Unlike traditional media, which is often restricted by state control, social media allows real-time communication across borders, shaping public opinion and advancing political agendas (Hamdan and Al-Sayyed 2022). In conflicts, these platforms become arenas for competing narratives, accusations, and counterclaims, influencing domestic and international perceptions (Eng and Lim 2017; Laajalahti 2017). The Israeli-Palestinian conflict exemplifies these dynamics.

Social media plays a crucial role in disseminating information, controlling narratives, and mobilizing support, especially among Arabic-speaking populations with limited access to regional news outlets (Georgia 2024). By bypassing censorship, social media enables governments and military organizations to justify their actions and challenge opposing narratives (Müller and Wiik 2023).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, marked by political tensions and violence, highlights the role of social media in modern warfare. Hamas, formed in 1987, aims to end the Israeli occupation. The 1948 creation of Israel marked a turning point in the conflict, further complicated by Israeli settlement expansion and failed peace efforts, such as the Oslo Accords. After the October 7, 2023, airstrikes in Gaza, which killed approximately 45,000 people, including children, Israeli actions continued to devastate healthcare infrastructure, with over 10,000 victims trapped under rubble (Knell 2024; MAP 2024).

Amidst this turmoil, Avichai Adraee, the Israeli Defense Forces' Arabic-speaking spokesperson, uses Facebook to justify Israeli military actions and shape regional perceptions (Frantzman 2024). His posts frame Israeli operations as defensive and minimize civilian impacts, illustrating how social media influences public opinion in conflict (Alnwihe and Al-Abbas 2023).

However, few studies have analyzed Adraee's rhetorical strategies in Arabic posts (Minawi 2024). His messages construct narratives that depict Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran as aggressors and present a favorable view of Israel (Zanaty 2024). This study examines Adraee's rhetorical and linguistic techniques, categorizing them, identifying frequent terms that label adversaries as threats, and evaluating their broader social and political implications in shaping public opinion. In summary, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What types of rhetorical and linguistic strategies does Adraee use to influence perception and justify Israel's actions?"
2. How does Adraee employ persuasive strategies to frame Israel's adversaries as threats to regional security?
3. How does Adraee's online discourse construct and sustain ideological power?

2. Theoretical background

This study uses a multilayered theoretical framework to examine Adraee's rhetorical and linguistic strategies on Facebook. This framework includes three basic theories: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Speech Act Theory, and Propaganda Theory. These theories enhance our understanding of the interactions between language, power, and public perception.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk were among the first scholars who introduced the concept of critical discourse analysis. This framework determines how social issues and political tensions operate across societies and how CDA uncovers the unseen issues and challenges in various contexts (van Dijk, 1997). Fairclough (2013) asserts that CDA offers an excellent way to explore and understand the various social, political, and personal ideologies embedded in any speech community. van Dijk (1997) added that CDA sheds light on the ideologies of power exercising, dominance, and inequality of language within its sociopolitical contexts to explore and resist social inequality and power misuse. Similarly, Das and Sahoo (2011) corroborate this view, asserting that CDA helps to reveal complex ideological influences and potential tensions in political discourse. Therefore, CDA is an appropriate analytical tool for gaining a deep understanding of political and sociocultural phenomena. By analyzing Adraee's Facebook posts through the lens of CDA, this study explored how language can be used to reconstruct Israel's image as a moral actor while portraying its adversaries as threats.

In short, this study used CDA to examine Adraee's posts, which allowed us to identify how his linguistic practices and rhetorical structures create narratives that are favorable to Israel. This framework highlights the role of online political discourse in shaping public perceptions and maintaining political power dynamics in geopolitics. While CDA uncovers the implicit power embedded in discourse, Speech Act Theory focuses on the performative aspects of Adraee's rhetoric.

2.2 Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory was introduced by J.L. Austin (1962) and then developed by John Searle (1975). This theory claims that people use language not only to deliver information but also to perform actions. Searle (1975) demonstrated five kinds of actions that one can perform in speaking.

- **Directives:** The speaker in this act attempts to get the addressees to do something (e.g., commands or requests)
- **Commissives:** The speaker attempts to do some future course of action (e.g., promising, threatening, offering)
- **Expressives:** The speaker expresses a psychological state (thanking, apologizing, complimenting)
- **Assertives:** This act commits the speaker to the truth of the expected proposition (e.g., asserting, concluding)
- **Declarations:** This act affects immediate change in the institutional state of affairs (e.g., declaring war, christening).

By employing speech act theory to analyze Adraee's posts, the researchers can gain a complete picture of how these posts were used to achieve strategic objectives, such as justifying military actions or influencing Arabic-speaking audiences. By describing Israel's operations as defensive or otherwise justified, Adraee's posts perform persuasions that align Israel's objectives with public perceptions. Thus, Speech Act Theory clarifies how language actively influences attitudes and behaviors rather than being merely descriptive. Propaganda Theory

provides more context to place these performative acts within larger communication strategies.

2.3 Propaganda Theory

Propaganda theory, presented by Herman and Chomsky (2021), is designed to analytically and conceptually explain how propaganda and systemic bias function in corporate media. It aims to understand how people are manipulated and how consent for economic, social, and political practices, both foreign and local, is "manufactured" in the public mind due to propaganda. According to Klaehn (2018), this theory seeks to understand the relationship between ideological and communicative power connected with economic, political, and social power and to explore its consequent effects on media output.

Through this theory, the current study clarifies how Adraee relies heavily on particular linguistic strategies, such as selective framing, repetition, and strategic imagery, in order to justify Israeli military narratives for Arabic-speaking Facebookers. Accordingly, his linguistic practices helped present Israel as a victim or defender, which allowed him to achieve his political goals by supporting some narratives and undermining others.

In short, this study incorporates a multilayered analysis, including CDA, Speech Act Theory, and Propaganda Theory, to examine Adraee's Facebook rhetorical strategies in shaping public perception of Israel's military narratives. In order to situate the current study in the timeline of previous studies, the next section reviews the most relevant recent studies.

2.4. Review of related studies

This section situates the current study within existing research on media discourse, online propaganda, and conflict communication. It covers previous studies focusing on three categories: first, studies on rhetorical strategies in online conflict discourse; second, studies on how language shapes ideological identities; and finally, theoretical and conceptual limitations in previous studies, which the current study attempts to address.

To begin with, the studies focus on digital conflict discourse in general and social media use during war in particular. Awais et al (2022) and Shalash (2023) examined official Israeli Facebook pages in Arabic, which are mainly directed toward the Palestinians in the occupied territories and the Arabs in the Middle East, in general. Qualitative analysis of Facebook posts revealed that these pages adopted several media frames and tactics to positively reshape the image of the occupation among Palestinians, making it a more cultural and civilized entity and normalizing the occupation as a goal. Similarly, Amer (2023) investigated digital discourse and linguistic structures that construct the Self and Other in discourse on Hamas. The data analysis of tweets and retweets by Shehab News Agency (Hamas's agency) revealed that the word occupation is the most frequent word in the data, and it is usually associated with hashtags such as Hamas and Jerusalem, among other words. The researcher concluded his study with the fact that this discursive strategy legitimizes any actions conducted by Israel or any actors against Hamas. In a similar vein, Banikalef and Al-Khawaldeh (2025) explored the accusation strategies used by Abu-Obieda, the military spokesman for Hamas, and Rear Admiral Daniel

Hagari, the military spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The data analysis showed that Abu-Obieda's discourse relies more on emotional and ethical appeals supported by tangible evidence, while Hagari adopts a strategically balanced technique that combines emotional, logical, and ethical arguments to construct public perception. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Saifi (2024), who investigated the rhetorical strategies of Avichai Adraee on TikTok and recognized propaganda tools such as half-truths and demonization. In conclusion, most studies on online political discourse often examine surface-level content or platform-specific strategies without going deeper to discover the linguistic strategies embedded in discourse.

Other studies have used discourse-oriented theoretical frameworks to examine conflict communication. Alminawi (2024), for example, employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conceptual Metaphor Theory to the representation of the Aqsa Flood War (2023-2024) within the authorized discourse by the Hamas spokesman, Abu-Obaidah. The findings revealed that many war themes were highlighted within the official remarks of Hamas, such as war rhetorical statements, war achievements, jihadist glorifications, implied/direct threats to the enemy, war justifications, and ongoing actions. Amori and Ukka (2024) examined how the war in the Gaza Strip, namely, the Al-Aqsa flood operation, was justified in the speeches of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Joe Biden (the American President).

Despite the growing body of literature on political discourse, two major research gaps exist. Recent studies have not focused on individual spokespersons such as Avichai Adraee, who always tries to rhetorically demonize any resistance movement against Israel across the region. Furthermore, little attention has been paid to comprehensive and multi-layered theoretical framework research on how such discourse functions at the intersection of ideology, performative speech, and propaganda. Therefore, the current study attempts to fill these gaps by examining 109 Arabic-language Facebook posts by Adraee during the 2024 Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah conflict. This study employs three theoretical frameworks: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Speech Act Theory, and Propaganda theory. Thus, this study attempts to enrich the ongoing literature on the rhetorical construction of digital warfare and the role of language in shaping public perceptions during Arab Israeli conflicts.

4. Methodology

A qualitative research design is used in the current study. This design enables a deep understanding of textual data, revealing linguistic strategies and insights aligned with the theoretical framework (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Zhang and Wildemuth 2016). This Theoretical framework involves using a multilayered data analysis, including Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Speech Act Theory, and Propaganda Theory. It provides different levels of data analysis to explore the linguistic and rhetorical strategies Adraee used on his Arabic-language Facebook page. This analysis aims to examine how Adraee constructs narratives,

frames accusations, and influences public perceptions through his Facebook posts during the Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah conflict. To achieve the goals of this study, 109 written posts were collected from Adraee's official Facebook page between September 1 and November 1, 2024. The three theoretical frameworks are as follows:

1. **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA):** This framework helps identify the linguistic patterns of positive self-representation for Israel and negative other-representation for adversaries such as Hamas and Hezbollah. This approach enabled the current study to determine the ideological power dynamics in Adraee's posts (Alminawi 2024).
2. **Speech Act Theory:** This theory classifies language into different acts, such as assertives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declarations (Austin 1962; Searle 1975). This framework allows us to classify Adraee's performative acts, such as accusations and justifications for military actions, illustrating how his posts are crafted to shape and influence audience perceptions and behaviors (Banikalef et al. 2023).
3. **Propaganda Theory:** This theory helps identify rhetorical techniques used by Adraee in his posts to reshape public perception in line with Israeli political agendas. These techniques include, for example, repetition, euphemisms, and name-calling. By using these multifaceted theoretical frameworks, this study can achieve a holistic view of Adraee's rhetorical strategies and their sociopolitical implications.

5. Findings

The current study examined 109 Arabic-language Facebook posts shared by Avichai Adraee between September 1 and November 1, 2024. The study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Speech Act Theory, and Propaganda Theory to achieve three key objectives: (1) identifying Adraee's rhetorical strategies, (2) identifying the key words that Adraee employs to construct Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas as threats, and (3) evaluating the social and political significance of Adraee's rhetorical strategies on social media. The current study analyzes these posts to illustrate how language shapes meaning, as well as how the texts support Israeli state objectives. The analysis of discourse through CDA reveals how Adraee notionally constructs Israel's global image as a moral actor and simultaneously constructs adversaries as threats. By applying van Dijk's ideological square to Adraee's texts, the analysis identifies how Adraee represents Israel positively while portraying Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran negatively. Adraee simplifies complex political issues into moral binaries in order to legitimize actions taken by Israel while delegitimising its adversaries. These rhetorical strategies reinforce the power relations between state and non-state actors and further Israel's political and geopolitical goals.

Example 1

"حزب الله يستخدم المدنيين كدروع بشرية ويخزن الأسلحة تحت مستشفيات المدنيين".

Translation:

"Hezbollah uses civilians as human shields and stores weapons under civilian hospitals."

Analysis:

This post exemplifies the negative representation of others. Hezbollah is portrayed as morally corrupt for endangering civilians, with the term "human shields" invoking a violation of international law. The positive self-representation of Israel is implied, positioning Israel as a defender of international law and civilian lives. The accusation that Hezbollah's actions justify Israeli military operations as necessary reinforces Israel's image as a responsible actor on the world stage (van Dijk 1997).

Example 2

"حماس تضع المدنيين في خطر باستخدام المستشفيات كأماكن لتخزين الأسلحة".

Translation:

"Hamas puts civilians at risk by using hospitals as places to store weapons."

Analysis:

This post also employs negative other-representation. Hamas is accused of recklessly endangering civilians for military advantage. By framing Hamas as the aggressor, the post implicitly casts Israel as a defender acting within the bounds of international law. This dichotomy simplifies the conflict and justifies the Israeli military force as a necessary response to Hamas's actions (Al-Hindawi and Al-Juwaid 2018).

Example 3

"الجيش الإسرائيلي لا يستهدف المدنيين، بل يستهدف فقط الإرهابيين الذين يشكلون تهديدًا للأمن"
"الإسرائيلي"

Translation

"The Israeli army does not target civilians; it only targets terrorists who pose a threat to Israeli security."

This post is a clear example of positive self-representation. By emphasizing that Israel targets only terrorists, it portrays Israeli military actions as precise and ethical. The implicit negative representation of Hamas and other adversaries as "terrorists" frames them as the sole source of violence and instability, further justifying Israeli actions as defensive rather than aggressive (Fairclough 2013).

Example 4

"منطقة الجنوب اللبناني مليئة بالأسلحة التابعة لحزب الله، وعليكم الابتعاد عن هذه المناطق لضمان سلامتكم".

Translation

"The southern region of Lebanon is filled with Hezbollah's weapons, and you must avoid these areas to ensure your safety."

Analysis:

This post portrayed Hezbollah as an armed group operating within civilian areas, implicating them in any harm that might occur to civilians. The emphasis on weapons in civilian spaces positions Hezbollah as a direct threat to both Israeli and civilian safety, justifying the Israeli military action as a protective measure. The post distances Israel from blame for potential harm, instead framing Hezbollah as the instigator of danger (Chilton 2004).

Example 5

"نحن في الجيش الإسرائيلي نلتزم بالقيم الإنسانية، ونحرص على تجنب إلحاق الأذى بالمدنيين قدر
الإمكان"

Translation

"We in the Israeli army are committed to humanitarian values and strive to avoid harm to civilians as much as possible."

This post reinforces Israel's positive self-representation by framing its military actions as ethical, controlled, and focused on minimizing civilian harm, aligning with international war norms that prioritize civilian safety. While not directly attacking adversaries, it implicitly contrasts Israel's conduct with groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, often accused of using civilians as shields. This rhetorical strategy seeks to undermine claims of indiscriminate violence by positioning Israel as morally responsible.

Example 6

"حين يفيض كلام الحب من قائد #حماس تجاه أسياده الإيرانيين.. يفيض نبض #الفوضى المخطط لها على
وقع مصالح الإرهابين.. ألم نقل لكم أن حماس قزم #إيران وحماس وإيران بالفساد متفنيين؟
#مسيرة_الفوضى ليست شعبية وإنما حمساوية-إيرانية بامتياز"

Translation

"When love-filled words overflow from the leader of #Hammas toward his Iranian masters, the pulse of planned chaos begins to beat in rhythm with the interests of the terrorists. Didn't we tell you that Hamas is merely a pawn of #Iran, and that both Hamas and Iran are deeply skilled in corruption? The #March_of_Chaos is not a popular movement but a distinctly Hamas-Iranian creation."

This post is a clear instance of politically charged ideological discourse. It aims to delegitimize Hamas by presenting its ties with Iran as subordinate and threatening to the Palestinian people. The language itself is purposeful, emotionally charged, and operates at multiple discursive levels. This illustrates how social media can be strategically used in conflict discourse. It does not simply inform; it seeks to persuade, mobilize, and ultimately delegitimize. The speaker situates Hamas and Iran together while labeling them both as corrupt terrorists, thereby constructing a narrative in which Israeli responses to dealing with such groups can be produced as necessary, acceptable, and morally valid. A post is not simply a single utterance but part of a larger discursive project to control public perception and obtain and maintain an ideological monopoly during conflict.

Example 7

"نصر الله يخوض الحرب دعماً لدواعش حماس ولخدمة مصالح خامنائي، فيما يعاني الشعب اللبناني من أضرار جسيمة في مجالات السياحة والزراعة والتعليم والبنية التحتية وغيرها، وذلك بالتزامن مع وجود أكثر من 100,000 نازح من جنوب لبنان".

Translation

Nasrallah is rather waging war in the support of Daesh-like Hamas militants and for Khamenei's interests, while the Lebanese are absorbing heavy losses in tourism, agriculture, education, infrastructure, and so on, and southern Lebanon has had over 100,000 displaced from their lands with noteworthy dispersal.

This post combines moral accusation, delegitimization, and victim inversion, thus portraying Hassan Nasrallah and Hezbollah as agents of foreign powers working against the interests of the Lebanese people. Both the structure and tone of the post remain emotionally charged to direct the perception and sympathy of the masses either away from Hezbollah or onto the Lebanese civilians. It is indeed an ideologically loaded argument substantiated by emotion: through accusation, victim inversion, and loaded associations (linking Hamas to Daesh), Adraee depicts Hezbollah as an irresponsible entity working against Lebanese interests. Iran is made to look like an orchestrator of violence, whereas the Lebanese population is portrayed as innocent and betrayed by Hezbollah's actions. The post acts not only as a borderline-disruptive political message but also as a discursive weapon aimed at dissolving support for Hezbollah by appealing to concepts of national identity, civilian suffering, and regional skepticism of Iran's role in the Arab world.

Example 8

"حماس وحزب الله اليوم يدفعون ثمن ولائهم لولاية الفقيه ومحور الشر الإيراني"

Translation

" Hamas and Hezbollah today are paying the price for their loyalty to the Wilayat al-Faqih and the Iranian Axis of Evil."

This post conveyed a heavy ideological message. This message was built using three strategies: delegitimizing opponents through ideological guilt, dividing sides along moral lines, and shifting responsibility. Hamas and Hezbollah are considered loyal to Wilayat al-Faqih (the "Guardianship of the Jurist"), meaning that these groups adhere to a specific model of Shia governance in Iran. The word choice sharply separates them from the rest of the Arab population, which is predominantly Sunni. Needless to say, the famous "Axis of Evil" label, which co-opted the phrase from the American president, Iran, and its allies, are seen as evil. Therefore, Iran's neighboring states' regimes, which are aligned with it, must also be evil. The ultimate goal of this post is to reinterpret the concept of victimhood in a manner that delegitimizes and erodes the status of Hamas and Hezbollah while refocusing it on Iran's 'evil machinations' against the Arab world.

6. Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the posts indicates how Adraee's language constructs Israel as a defender of civilians and international law while delegitimizing its adversaries. Adraee implicitly portrayed Hamas and Hezbollah

as terrorists, violators of international law, and direct threats to civilians, creating a dichotomized, moral structure of the conflict. Adjectives such as "defensive," "humanitarian," and "protection" use Israel's framing as a responsible actor, while "strength" and "resolve" build Israel's determined identity as a protector of civilians.

Conversely, negative labels, such as "terrorist," "human shields," and "reckless," are utilized to discredit Hamas and Hezbollah as copious actors who are devoid of morality and are dangerous. This framing provides justifications for Israel's actions by portraying its adversaries as sources of violence and instability, which rationalizes Israel's actions as beneficial and justified. One of the techniques Adraee uses frequently is related to his comments associating Hamas and Hezbollah with Iran or Shiism ("شيعة"). This association has two functions about negative other-representation. By constantly linking the terms Hamas and Hezbollah to Iran or Shiite ideology, Adraee offers his audience an extension of the threat related to the clash of civilizations and undermines the status of the organization locally without discrediting it entirely. He is able to separate the two groups from each other as militant organizations, thus rendering them within a broader Iranian-backed threat (a network of other Iranian-backed militant groups in the region). The term "Shiite" works in a loaded political and sectarian way by rendering Hamas and Hezbollah as proxies for Iran and foreboding the existing structurally established regional destabilizing counter-state other-representation of the Iranian state.

The frequent mention of Iran and Shiism serves as a way to amplify the threat to an Arab audience (Luomi 2008). In the Arab world, Iran's regional influence and its perceived role in sectarian conflicts, especially in Sunni-majority countries, are highly sensitive topics. By invoking Iran, Adraee not only associates Hamas and Hezbollah with a non-Arab, non-Sunni power but also signals to Arab audiences that these groups are part of a broader Iranian agenda that threatens regional stability (Almohammad 2024). This serves to rally Arab sentiment against Iran, framing the struggle as not just an Israeli fight against terrorism, but also as a defense of Arab sovereignty and unity against foreign interference.

Data analysis also revealed that the term 'Iran' appeared 23 times, while references to Shiite identity occurred 27 times. These references do not always appear in the same form. Instead, they include a various range of expressions such as Wilayat al-Faqih, Khamenei, al-Mullā (الملاي), Revolutionary Guard (الحرس الثوري), Quds Force (قوات القدس), Tehran's proxies (وكلاء طهران), and clerical regime (نظام الكهنة). Each term contributes to the construction of a broader ideological frame that links Shiism with Iranian influence and regional violence. These frequent mentions emphasize Iran's central role in shaping the perceived threats posed by Hamas and Hezbollah. Each mention of Iran or Shiite ideology further aligns the groups with Iran's agenda, making them seem less like indigenous movements and more like extensions of Iran's influence in the region.

Adraee reduces the legitimacy of Hamas and Hezbollah through their association with Iran, which many people in the West and Arab world view as a major source of geopolitical instability (Almohammad 2024; Luomi 2008). The depiction of Iran as the "puppet master" controlling Hamas and Hezbollah enables the presentation of these organizations as instruments of foreign goals rather than

native resistance movements aligned with Iran's regional goals. This strategy supports Israel's diplomatic isolation of Iran by justifying Israeli military actions against local militant groups and Iranian regional influence and framing the conflict as a fundamental battle for regional stability and security.

According to Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (1998), Critical Discourse Analysis enables the analysis of ideological elements that Adraee delivers through his discourse. His discourse functions beyond political commentary because it legitimizes Israeli military actions while discrediting Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. Multiple references to Shiite ideology and Iranian figures are a part of the systematic strategy. The conflict receives a new perspective through these references because Israel positions itself as protecting regional security against foreign threats. Through this ideological framework, Israel presents itself as an intelligent protector of security, whereas its enemies appear as destructive forces of disorder.

Through the application of Speech Act Theory (Searle 1969; Banikalef 2015; Banikalef and Bataineh 2017), this study analyzes how Adraee's posts perform rhetorical functions beyond informational content, which affect audience responses. Speech Act Theory examines how specific utterances produce communicative impact, while CDA detects power dynamics in language structures. Through this framework, researchers can determine how Adraee's statements function as assertive acts that place blame while generating feelings of guilt. These statements function as intentional communicative moves that aim to direct audience understanding while providing reasons for taking specific actions. According to Al-Hindawi and Al-Juwaid (2018) and Nozadi et al. (2015), accusations function to persuade by establishing the speaker as morally right and portraying the opponent as illegitimate or criminal.

Using speech act theory and CDA in the current analysis serves different analytical purposes. The analysis of discourse through CDA enables an understanding of power structures and identity narratives, while Speech Act Theory examines how particular utterances function to persuade and legitimize. Adraee's posts become fully understandable when analyzed through multiple layers that examine their textual and social functions. The following examples analyze how assertive speech acts function to describe adversaries while supporting moral binaries and achieving discursive goals that match Israeli policy and military strategy.

Example 9

"حزب الله يهدد الاستقرار الإقليمي ويخزن الأسلحة في مناطق سكنية."

Translation

"Hezbollah threatens regional stability and stores weapons in inhabited areas."

This is an assertive statement that accuses Hezbollah of destabilizing the region. The use of the word "threatens" depicts Hezbollah as a destabilizing element, charging it with the negative other-representation strategy. By asserting that Hezbollah stores weapons in civilian areas, Hezbollah is represented as endangering civilians and, thus, justifying Israeli military acts as the needed action.

The illocutionary force involved in this statement is to depict Hezbollah as a direct threat to local and regional peace and security.

Example 10

"حزب الله لا يبالي بحياة اللبنانيين. حزب الله هو عدو الشعب اللبناني".

Translation

"Hezbollah does not care about the lives of Lebanese people. Hezbollah is the enemy of the Lebanese."

This is an explicit statement accusing Hezbollah of presenting itself as an enemy of its own people. The combination of "doesn't care" and "enemy" frames Hezbollah as morally deficient, pitting it against Lebanese civilians. The negative other-representation of Hezbollah as a reckless and destructive power is juxtaposed with Israel's image as a protector of civilian life. Through the illocutionary force of this statement, Adraee reinforces the narrative that Israel acts in response to hostile Hezbollah actions and appeals to our human sense of justice and concern for preserving human life.

Example 11

"حماس الملاهي تدمر غزة وتقتل الأبرياء، بينما نحن نقوم بحماية المدنيين".

Translation

"The mullahs' Hamas is destroying Gaza and killing innocent people, while we are protecting civilians."

This statement contains two assertive speech acts that work together as a compound unit. The first part of the statement makes accusations against the other party, while the second part establishes moral authority. The first part of the statement, "Hamas is destroying Gaza and killing innocent people," functions as an assertive speech act, which explicitly accuses, according to Searle's (1969) classification. This statement links violent and disorderly conduct to Hamas' activities. This description uses the loaded term "Hamas of the mullahs" to establish a direct ideological and political connection between Hamas and Iran's theocratic government. The post presents Hamas as an aggressor and portrays its actions as criminal and immoral. The second part of the statement, "we are protecting civilians," functions as a counter-assertive speech act that establishes moral superiority. Adraee's statement declared that the group he represents (Israel or IDF) protects civilians. He uses this legitimizing move to present himself as ethical and responsible, while Hamas appears to endanger lives. The speech act creates a political and ethical framework that justifies one side and condemns the other side. This post creates public opinion while pushing people to support the speaker's position. This demonstrates how assertive speech acts play a vital role in the rhetorical approach used by Adraee. The utterance serves dual purposes of condemnation and justification through its direct accusations and moral comparisons.

Example 12

"إيران هي المسؤولة عن تمويل حزب الله وتوفير الأسلحة له لزعزعة استقرار المنطقة".

Translation

"Iran is responsible for funding Hezbollah and providing weapons to destabilize the region."

Here, Iran is directly accused of fueling regional instability by supporting Hezbollah. This statement extended the accusation from Hezbollah to its Iranian backers, further delegitimizing Hezbollah by portraying it as a mere extension of Iran's geopolitical ambitions. By invoking Iran, Adraee seeks to widen the scope of the threat, associating local militant groups with foreign, non-Arab powers. This negative other-representation of Iran and Hezbollah creates an image of a coordinated, external threat that justifies Israeli actions not only against Hezbollah but also against Iran's regional influence.

Example 13

"إيران وحزب الله وحماس هم من يهددون أمن المنطقة. لا يمكن للسلام أن يتحقق إلا إذا تم القضاء على هؤلاء الإرهابيين".

Translation

"Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas are the ones threatening the security of the region. Peace can only be achieved if these terrorists are eliminated."

This statement consolidates the accusation of threat by linking Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas in Speech Act Theory, which involves asserting that someone is responsible for a specific action, typically a harmful one. Adraee's post directly accused Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas of being the key parties responsible for threatening regional security. By stating that these groups "are the ones threatening the security of the region," Adraee is not merely describing the situation but accusing them of instigating harm and unrest.

The structure of the accusation implies that these groups are delegitimized as actors and their actions are presented as indefensible. In this case, "threatening" is not simply a description of an action; it additionally places the blame on these groups for the region's instability (Al-Hindawi and Al-Juwaid 2018). In other words, the accusation is not simply a statement; it claims that these actors are responsible for the violence and chaos, which establishes the need for Israel to intervene based on direct threats.

Additionally, the second part of the post, "Peace cannot be achieved unless these terrorists are removed," takes the accusation to the next level by inferring that peace is impossible with these groups' existence and violence. The use of the term "terrorists" amplifies accusations against these groups of immoral behavior, which reinforces their bad image, reinforcing the audience's decision to remove them (Banikalef 2025).

The illocutionary force of this accusation is not only to engage in argument but to persuade the audience to align with Israel's perception that these groups are the source of regional instability. Thus, the accusation speech act serves a dual goal: blaming these groups for violence and legitimizing Israeli military action as necessary to restore peace.

Data analysis showed that accusation speech acts play a major role in justifying Israel's military actions. By using assertive language, Adraee represents Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran as the main sources of chaos in the Middle East. These assertive acts are crafted to shape the audience's image. This image depicts Israel's military responses as morally justified and essential for regional stability. Thus, these speech acts of accusation serve two purposes: they assign blame and responsibility to adversaries and justify Israel's military actions. By framing the narrative in binary terms, Israel as a defender and its adversaries as aggressors, Adraee attempts to shape public opinion in favor of Israel's political and military goals. This discourse used in these speech acts successfully constructs a moral narrative where Israeli actions are framed as responses to external and internal threats, which allows Israel to position itself as a force for peace and stability.

To fully understand the rhetorical strategies Adraee employs to shape Israel's image among Arab audiences, this study introduces Propaganda Theory as an additional analytical lens alongside Critical Discourse Analysis and Speech Act Theory. While CDA uncovers the ideological structure of the discourse and Speech Act Theory explains its communicative force, Propaganda Theory helps explain how persuasive tactics are systematically deployed to frame Israel as a moral actor and cast its adversaries as existential threats (Hall and Xing 2015; Herman and Chomsky 2021). Collectively, these frameworks offer a more complete picture of how language functions as a tool of political influence in digital conflict discourse.

Example 14

"وثائق حماس التي تم العثور عليها في غزة... تكشف تورط صحفيين من قناة الجزيرة في أنشطة عسكرية مع حماس والجهاد الإسلامي بدعم إيرانية".

Translation

"Hamis documents found in Gaza... reveal Al Jazeera journalists' involvement in military activities with Hamas and Islamic Jihad with Iranian support"

This post shows that the reference to Iran was intentional and not merely incidental or factual. It aims to contextualize the conflict in regional terms. By constantly repeating the names of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Iran, Adraee establishes a conscious connection between the three and asks his audience to think of them as part of one whole bloc of enemies. This technique does not serve an ornamental purpose, but rather operates to conflate suspicion with proximity and solidify the common purpose between Palestinian groups and a foreign state. The use of name-calling also creates the effect of embedding the Al Jazeera journalists as colluders in "military activity—a vague term that contains loaded meaning to take away neutrality from the journalists' professional stance and align them with Israel's enemies. For Arab readers, the mention of Iran encourages them to think of Hamas not as a national resistance but as a regional Iranian proxy. Once Hamas is perceived as a proxy in the regional struggle between Iran and Israel, the discussion shifts from one about justice and occupation to one about betrayal and sectarian allegiance, thereby radically reorganizing how the conflict is perceived.

Example 15

"حماس تستخدم المستشفيات كمقرات إرهابية وتهدد حياة المدنيين".

Translation

"*Hamas uses hospitals as terrorist headquarters and threatens the lives of civilians.*"

This post employs the demonization technique, a key element of propaganda, by portraying Hamas as exploiting humanitarian spaces, such as hospitals, for military purposes. The use of the emotionally loaded term "terrorist headquarters" evokes a strong moral condemnation of Hamas, simplifying the issue into a good-versus-evil narrative. By associating Hamas with such egregious behavior, the post seeks to dehumanize Hamas and paint its actions as morally unacceptable. This tactic is designed to provoke an emotional response from the audience, framing Hamas as a group willing to sacrifice civilian safety for its agenda, which, in turn, justifies the Israeli military's actions. The overall goal is to manipulate the audience into believing that Israeli intervention is both ethically and legally required to protect civilian lives.

Example 16

"إيران هي المسؤولة عن تمويل حزب الله وحماس لزراعة استقرار المنطقة".

Translation

"*Iran is responsible for funding Hezbollah and Hamas to destabilize the region.*"

This post utilizes the scapegoating technique, associating Iran with Hezbollah and Hamas to amplify the threat posed by these groups. By labeling Iran as the puppet master behind both groups, Adrae frames the conflict not just as an isolated issue but as part of a larger Iranian plot to destabilize the region. This association simplifies the conflict by making Iran the central enemy, creating an us versus them mentality. The propaganda strategy here is to use emotional appeal to generate fear of Iranian influence, portraying it as a threat to regional peace and security. By positioning Israel as a counterforce to Iran's regional ambitions, the post seeks to rally support for Israeli actions as a necessary defense of regional sovereignty and security.

Example 17

"حزب الله وحماس يستهدفون المدنيين، بينما الجيش الإسرائيلي يحرص على حماية الأبرياء".

Translation

"*Hezbollah and Hamas target civilians, while the Israeli army ensures the protection of the innocent.*"

This post uses two propaganda techniques to present Israel as a peacekeeper. On the one hand, the justification technique framed Hamas as aggressors who deliberately targeted civilians. On the other hand, the victimization technique framed Israel as a guardian of innocent lives that fights morally against terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah, which commit violent acts against civilians. This framing uses emotional discourse ("target civilians," "protecting the innocent") to evoke readers' moral sensibilities and justify Israel's military operations. The post divides the conflict into a clear-cut binary of good (Israel) vs.

evil (Hamas and Hezbollah), which helps to obtain public support for Israel by portraying its deeds as an integral part of a noble struggle. The use of such rhetorical strategies makes people reevaluate the military actions of Israel as justified, thus mobilizing public support and aligning the international community's perception of Israel's geopolitical agenda

7. Discussion

This section examines Avichai Adraee's linguistic and rhetorical strategies used in his Facebook posts. This examination sheds light on three issues: how his linguistic choices shape public perception, justify Israeli actions, and delegitimize adversaries. To achieve these aims, three theoretical frameworks were used: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Speech Act Theory, and Propaganda Theory.

Data analysis shows that Adraee's posts act as systematic tools for reinforcing ideological classification and the power dynamics. CDA revealed that the Israel-others conflict is framed as a moral binary. It was found that linguistic choices of positive self-representation were used for Israel, while negative other-representation was used for Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. According to the CDA, Israel is depicted as a protector of peace and stability, whereas its adversaries, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, are presented as a source of violence and instability. This means that Adraee's discourse functions beyond political commentary as it legitimizes Israeli military actions while discrediting Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran.

Using speech act theory, the researchers classified and analyzed Adraee's rhetorical and linguistic strategies. The analysis showed that accusative assertions were frequent in the dataset, where Adraee consistently blamed Israel's adversaries for regional violence and chaos. For example, phrases such as Hamas puts civilians at risk by using hospitals for weapon storage and Hezbollah uses civilians as human shields negatively depict Hamas and Hezbollah as morally corrupt. By framing them as the source of chaos, Adraee not only assigns responsibility to them but also justifies the Israeli military operations. The use of terms such as "terrorists" and "threats" reinforces the negative image of these groups, which reduces the conflict to a simple moral struggle between good (Israel) and evil (Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran). This evidence emerges through the repetition of terms in Adraee's posts, such as terrorists, threats, instability, human shields, and aggressors. This repetition strengthens the image of Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas as existential threats to the region's peace and stability.

Furthermore, analysis through propaganda theory showed that by linking Iran to Hezbollah and Hamas, Adraee encourages his audience to think of Hamas and Hezbollah not as national resistance movements but as a regional Iranian proxy, describing Israel as the defender of not only its security but also of broader regional peace and stability. This description shifts the image of Hamas and Hezbollah from one of justice and occupation to one of betrayal and sectarian allegiance (Luomi 2008). Through these tactics, Adraee attempts to justify Israel's military operations as a defense of Arab sovereignty against foreign interference in general and Iranian ideology in particular, thus aligning with regional political concerns.

In conclusion, this study used a multi-layered theoretical framework to explore rhetorical strategies in Adraee's Facebook posts from different analytical perspectives. This means that each post was explored through different lenses, with each theory applied where it offered the most relevant insights. Critical Discourse Analysis was utilized to discover how Adraee's language influences ideological boundaries and shapes power imbalances. Speech Act Theory provides a lens to obtain a complete picture of the role of accusations as speech acts, highlighting how they not only assign blame but also shape audience perceptions and moral judgments. Propaganda Theory, on the other hand, helped recognize the emotional and persuasive methods rooted in recurring phrases, particularly those involving Iran. Although each theory was applied to specific parts of the data, together they offer a broader understanding of the patterns in Adraee's linguistic choices. Across his posts, themes of accusation, repetition, and ideological contrast were used to portray Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran as destabilizing actors. Through this rhetorical framing, Israeli military operations were depicted as being justified and necessary. Finally, the results show how language can be manipulated to shape public opinion, assert moral legitimacy, and influence broader narratives surrounding conflicts and power in the region.

8. Conclusion

In this study, the researchers analyzed the linguistic and rhetorical strategies used by Adraee in Arabic Facebook posts. This study employed different levels of data analysis, including Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Speech Act Theory, and Propaganda Theory. Each level of analysis confirms that Adraee's posts are not randomly constructed or shared; rather, they achieve systematic and strategic objectives. Data analysis across these frameworks asserts that sharing these posts aims to depict Israel as a moral actor and peacekeeper while downplaying its other adversaries.

Overall, the analysis revealed that Adraee employed accusation speech acts to cast Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran as responsible for violence and instability, justifying Israeli military intervention. The most frequent terms found in Adraee's posts (terrorists, threat, and human shields) create an understanding of the conflict in a binary of good versus evil. Second, these posts presented Israel's adversaries as proxies of a destabilizing foreign power that utilized violence and instability, with a pointed mention of Iran serving to amplify the threat perceived by the followers. These techniques support the Propaganda Theory's concept of emotional manipulation to construct a justification for Israeli action as morally necessary.

Ultimately, the significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding how tactical framing can impact perceptions, contextualize adversary actions to discredit them, and call forth support for military action. However, this study has some limitations. It intentionally excluded multimedia content produced by Adraee because identifying and analyzing visual imagery requires different considerations than language-based analysis. This potentially adds layers of context to Adraee's strategic language choices in his posts. Future

research could analyze Adraee's Arabic-language content and consider the various strategies he employs across new media sites.

In conclusion, this study explores the effects of linguistic and rhetorical strategies, such as scapegoating, demonization, and emotional appeals, on public understanding and audience perceptions. It highlights how these approaches frame conflicts as a dichotomy between good and evil rather than as complex social relations. By depicting the adversaries as terrorists and classifying Iran as the main regional threat, Adraee aims to garner both national and international support for Israel's military operations. This study contributes to understanding how strategic linguistic choices can shape perceptions and justify actions in contested environments.

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