

The Representation of Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in Online News Articles: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse how Palestinian-Israeli conflicts are reported by two different news media, in this case *Fox News* (American) and *Detik.Com* (Indonesian). The data in this study were words and sentences which represent how Palestinian-Israeli conflict is reported by the two media. The data were taken from 4 news articles of *Fox News* and *Detik.com* which were reported from May 15 to May 31, 2021. The data were collected by using participant non-observation method with note-taking techniques. Then, the data were analyzed based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory proposed by Fairclough (1995). The results of the research indicate that there are differences in the representation of Palestinian and Israeli conflicts in the two media. In *Fox News* articles, Palestine, especially Hamas, is represented as a terrorist and there is an element of the American government's alignment with Israel. Meanwhile, in *Detik.com* articles, Israel is represented as the perpetrator of the attack while Palestine is represented as the victim.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, detik.com, fox news, palestinian-israeli conflict

INTRODUCTION

Lately, it is undeniable that media plays an important role in people's lives. Almost everyone relies on the media for information, especially in a pandemic situation like as of now. Media acts as the main source for getting information. With the ability to control the flow of information, media not only has the ability to influence the readers or listeners, but also to shape their knowledge of the information provided. One of the media that is widely used by public to obtain information is online media, such as online newspapers. Considering the dependency of the public on the information available in online media nowadays, it can be seen that online media have power over the information being reported. According to Fowler in (Sivandi & Dowlatabadi, 2016:92), a newspaper is a report which is reported from a certain point of view so it is not necessarily neutral. As stated by Kabgani, to conceal an ideology, news can be said as “the best shelter” (Kabgani, 2013:58). This means that media can be biased by reporting information from their point of view to form an understanding in the community about an issue based on their beliefs. To understand what is reported in the media, it is necessary to have the ability to understand how a social event is reported by media. One of the ways to uncover the truth of the news provided by media is by using critical discourse analysis (CDA). Ullinnuha state that CDA can be used to mediate between language and social as it cannot be analyzed adequately unless the two approaches are combined (Ullinnuha et al., 2013:274). In addition, mass media is crucial in increasing the study of CDA in order to explore the relationship between ideology and language (Anwar et al., 2020:35). From those statement we can see that CDA can be used to explore how a social issue is portrayed in a media, especially in online news.

One of the topics that often becomes headlines in online news media is the conflict between Israel and Palestine. As we can see, the conflict between Israel and Palestine is the longest conflict in Middle East that is widely known all over the world. As a result, this conflict gets the world's attention and become discussion material in many events. One of which is by using this topic as news headlines in various news media, either in printed media or online media. One of the factors that make this topic becomes the media's attention is the news value contained in this topic such as; 1) unusualness, in which the effect of this conflict cause many victims, 2) the conflict which caught many people's interest, and 3) proximity, in which psychologically the people who view or read this news feels emotional attachment toward the object of the topic discussed. In addition, each media

has their own point of view in conveying the news about this topic to the viewers or readers which is worthy to be explored further. This is also in line with the research's objectives which is to uncover how a social issue is portrayed in different online news media.

There are some researchers who have tried to explore how a social event portrayed in an online news and they found that some of the media are biased to one side such as the one conducted by Setiawan (Setiawan, 2011) who found that there is a gender bias in the delivery of news related to violence against women. This can be seen from the delivery of news that places women as objects of suffering and implicitly shows that men are superior to women. Another research conducted by Putra et al., (Putra et al, 2015) who examined the analysis of cases of tapping Indonesian elite telephones by Australian agents in online media found that there are differences in discourse between Indonesian and Australian online media in delivering news related to the wiretapping issue. Furthermore, Putra & Triyono (H. P. Putra & Triyono, 2018) examined the analysis of the #2019ChangePresident movement in *Kompas.com*. In the result, he found that the movement is considered as an element of rebellion because it was supported by political interest in the government at that time. The results of this study also indicate that *Kompas.com* is a pro-government media. Another research regarding this topic is conducted by Azwar et al., (Azwar et al, 2021) who examined the elements of partiality to online media regarding campaign reporting on *Kumparan.com*. The results of his research show that the news on *Kumparan.com* sided with one of the candidate pairs, which is Jokowi-Ma'aruf.

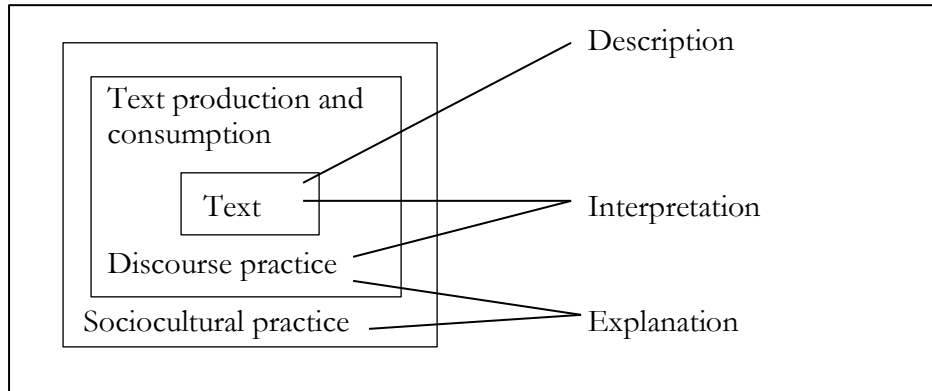
From the previous researches above we can see how an online media portrayed a social issue and found that they tend to be biased to one party. And from the studies above we can also find that it will be interesting if we try to compare how two different media portrayed the same issue since we can clearly see how different the media covered the issue. The issue related to Palestine and Israel conflict has been studied by some previous researchers such as Hilda (Hilda, 2015) who analyze how it is represented in *Harian Republika* and Reski et al., (Reski et al, 2020) who analyze how it is represented in *Al-Jazeera*. Based on the related studies, I found that most of the researchers are only focusing on one media and rarely compared two different media. For this reason, I tried to explore this issue by comparing how it is covered by two different media, *Fox News* (American media) and *Detik.Com* (Indonesian media). I choose these two media for some factors; 1) each media has their own way of portraying the issue related to the topic chosen, 2) the two media represent two different beliefs, 3) *Fox News* and *Detik.Com* can be

categorized into one of the most visited online media in America and Indonesia which means that they can influence the public opinions. To analyze the representation of a social issue in the media, I use a critical discourse analysis approach and analyze the data based on Fairclough's theory. In analysing the data, I used three main dimensions of CDA proposed by Fairclough; micro structured, mesostructured (discourse aspects), and macro structured which is related to socio-cultural practice. These three dimensions are suitable in analysing how a social issue is represented in media because they gave thorough analysis from micro-structure (linguistic aspects such as grammar, lexical choice, cohesion and coherence) to macro-structure which explains the relations between the text and the context or discourse.

METHOD

This research is a descriptive research. According to (Kuntjojo, 2009:42), a descriptive research is a research which is aimed to describe or explain phenomena based on the facts. In this research, I tried to explain how two different online media reported the same issue. This research is a qualitative research using CDA approach. Descriptive qualitative is relevant to CDA theory in which this theory describes and explains thoroughly the content of the texts, including the relationship between the texts and the contexts or discourse. In this study, the data were words and sentences which represent how Palestinian-Israeli conflict are reported by *Fox News* and *Detik.Com*. The source of data for this research were taken from online news articles related to Palestinian-Israeli conflicts, on *Fox News* and *Detik.Com* which is reported from middle to the end of May 2021 (May 15th till May 31st 2021) which is the time where this issue occurs and massively reported by news media. From many news headlines reported on the news media, I chose 4 news article which have similar topic, which is about the cease fire between the two countries. The data were collected using participant non-observation method by using note taking techniques. After browsing the web of *Fox News* and *Detik.com*, I searched the articles which reported the topic related to Palestine and Israeli's ceasefire which is published from middle to the end of May 2021. After reading the related articles, I wrote the headlines of the articles chosen and then note the contents of the articles. Then, the data were analysed by using CDA's theory proposed by (Fairclough, 1995). There are three steps of analysis based on Fairclough's theory which can be seen in the figure below.

Graphic 1:
 Fairclough's three-dimensional framework



The first step is analysing the text (micro-structure). This step describes linguistic aspects of the texts. This includes lexical choice, cohesive and coherence, the use of conjunction and other linguistic aspects (Dahl et al., 2013). The second step is discourse practice analysis (meso-structure). In this step, the analysis is done by interpreting the relations between texts and discourse aspects (who produced the news, the media used to spread the news and the background of the media (*Fox News* and *detikCom*)). The last step is socio-cultural analysis (macro-structure). This step explains the relationship between discourse practice and sociocultural aspects, such as how the background of the news media influences the content of the news produced. After analysing the content of the news articles, I compared the result analysis of the news article in the two media and analyse the differences between the news articles from *Fox News* and *Detik.Com*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, I used 4 news articles, 2 articles were taken from *Fox News* and 2 articles were taken from *Detik.Com*. All of the articles taken have related topic which is about the conflict of Palestine and Israel. The headlines of the news articles chosen can be seen as follows.

Table 1:
 Headlines of the news articles in two news articles

No	Titles	Media
1.	Israel Officials Approve Cease-fire with Hamas Following 11 Days of Gaza Violence	Fox News
2.	Israel-Palestinian Conflict: Whitehouse Defends not Publicly Calling for Cease-fire, Says Approach is 'Quiet'	Fox News
3.	Israel Sebut Penyelidikan PBB Soal Serangan ke Gaza Memalukan	Detik.com
4.	Tak Henti Jatuh Korban Nyawa Meski Israel-Palestina Gencatan Senjata	Detik.com

Fairclough's theory of critical discourse analysis includes 3 points of analysis; 1. Microstructural aspects related to linguistics such as grammar, cohesion and coherence, and diction. 2. Discourse aspects (mesostructural), and 3. Dimensions of socio-cultural practice (macrostructural). Based on those three points, further analysis of the 4 news articles can be seen as follows.

1. Micro-structural Analysis

a. Actor Representation

Based on the results of data analysis, I found some differences in the representation of actors in the two online news media. The representation of actors highlighted by the two media can be seen as follows.

Table 2

Representation of the actors in *Fox news* and *Detik.com*

No.	Actors	Fox News	Detik.com
1.	White House / United States	5	-
2.	Joe Biden / Biden's administration / U.S leader	10	-
3.	Benjamin Netanyahu	2	3
4.	Israel	-	3
5.	Hamas	3	2

From the table above, it can be seen that online media *Fox News* tends to prioritize the United States government as actors/agents when reporting the news. This shows that *Fox News* prioritizes the role of US government in discussing the issue of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. One of the actor's roles that is often repeated in the news is support for Israel as shown in the following data.

Data 2

"The United States fully **supports Israel's right** to defend itself against indiscriminate rocket attacks from Hamas and other Gaza based terrorist groups that have taken the lives of innocent civilians in Israel," he said.
 (Fox News, May 17th 2021)

Pronoun 'he' in the data above refers to the US' president, Joe Biden. In this direct quotation, it can be seen that Biden is more supportive of Israel by stating that Israeli's attack on Palestine is a form of self-defense against Hamas attacks. In addition to prioritizing the United States government, the online media *Fox news* also put Hamas as an active actor in attacks against Israel while attacks on Israel are described as a form of self-protection.

This is completely different to the representation of actors on *Detik.com*. In *Detik.com* news, Israel, both the prime minister and its soldiers, are represented as actors responsible for attacks on Palestine and also cases for gun shooting. In the news on *Detik.com*, Israel is represented as the perpetrator while Palestine as the victim. This can be seen in the following data.

Data 4

*Misalnya pada hari ini, AFP mengabarkan **Tentara Israel** menembak mati pria Palestina di Tepi Barat. Pria itu bernama Zakaria Hamayel (28) ...*

‘For example, AFP today reported that **Israeli’s Troops** shot and killed Palestinian man in the west bank. The man’s name is Zakaria Hamayel (28)...’

*...Kementerian Kesehatan Gaza menyatakan, serangan Israel di Gaza sejak 10 Mei telah menewaskan 232 **warga Palestina**, termasuk 65 anak-anak, dan telah melukai 1.900 lainnya.*

‘...Gaza’s health ministry stated that Israeli’s attack since May 10th have killed 232 **Palestinians**, including 65 children and 1.900 others are injured.’

(Detiknews, May 29th 2021)

As can be seen in the data above, Israeli’s soldiers are represented as perpetrators of attacks while Palestinians are depicted as the victims. From this data, it is implied that on the news in *Detik.com*, Israel is represented as having a great power since they can kill and injured many people while Palestine is a victim who has no power.

b. The Use of Active-Passive Voice

In the news on *Fox News*, I found that active sentences tend to be used to represent attacks. The use of active voice is used to foreground the subject / actor in an activity. In *Fox News*, the use of this active sentence implicitly puts Hamas as the perpetrator of the attack as it is seen in the following data.

Data 2

Hamas, the Palestinian militant group, **has launched** a sustained rocket campaign targeting civilian areas in Israel; in response, Israel directed heavy artillery and airstrikes into Gaza, killing at least 180 people, including 55 children and 33 women.

(Fox News, May 17th 2021)

On the contrary, the news in *Detik.com* media used active sentences to put Israel as the perpetrator of the attack, while Palestine is the object of attack as can be seen in data 4 above. In addition to the use of active voice, *Detik.com* media also uses passive voice to foreground the objects as shown in the following data.

Data 4

***Seorang pemuda Palestina** bernama Ahmad Jameel Fabad tewas **ditembak pasukan Israel** di kamp pengungsi Al-Amari, dekat Ramallah. Lebih dari 25 warga Palestina tewas dalam bentrokan di Tepi Barat.*

‘A Palestinian young man, Ahmad Jameel Fahad, **was shot dead** by Israeli’s army in Al-Amari refugee camp, near Ramallah. More than 25 Palestinians have been killed in clashes in the West Bank.’

(Detiknews, May 29th 2021)

As can be seen from the data above, the Israeli's Army, as the perpetrators of the shooting, were backgrounded while the object/victim who was shot was foregrounded. The passive voice here is used to convey that Palestine is a victim of Israeli's crimes. The passive voice is also used to promote the object so that it becomes the main focus in the sentence.

c. The Use of Contradictory Conjunction

In the news on *Fox News*, I rarely found the use of contradictory conjunctions while in the news on *Detik.com*, there are some contradictory conjunctions used by the author which contain an implicit meaning as shown in the following data.

Data 4

*Israel dan Hamas resmi melakukan gencatan senjata untuk mengakhiri pertempuran selama kurang lebih 11 hari pada minggu lalu. **Namun**, meski keduanya menyepakati itu korban meninggal warga Palestina terus menerus terjadi seakan-akan tidak ada kesepakatan...*

'Last week, Israel and Hamas formally signed a ceasefire to end roughly 11 days of the battle last week. **However**, despite both agreeing the ceasefire, the death toll of Palestinians continued to occur as if there was no agreement...'

*...Militer Israel mengatakan Hamas dan kelompok bersenjata Islam lainnya di Gaza telah menembakkan lebih dari 4.300 roket ke Israel selama konflik. **Namun**, sebagian besar dari roket-roket yang menuju ke daerah berpenduduk itu berhasil dicegat oleh sistem pertahanan udara Iron Dome.*

'...The Israeli's military says Hamas and other armed Islamist groups in Gaza have fired more than 4,300 rockets at Israel during the conflict. However, most of the rockets heading towards the populated area were intercepted by the Iron Dome air defense system.'
(Detiknews, May 29th 2021)

From the data, the use of conjunction 'however' is used to express the opposite meaning. In sample data in the first paragraph, the conjunction is used to convey that Israel continues to carry out attacks even though it has entered into a ceasefire. From this example, it can be seen that Israel is represented as a country who does not comply with the agreement and Palestine is depicted as a victim of injustice. In the second paragraph of the sample above, conjunction 'however' is used to represent that Palestine is still defeated / is not as strong as Israel. This can be seen from the relationship between the two sentences which states that although Palestine has fired many rockets at Israel, the country is able to overcome it with its air defense system. From the two examples above, it can be implied that Palestine is described as a weak state and is a victim of Israeli injustice.

d. The Use of Direct Quotation

The news report in *Fox News* and *Detik.com* there are a lot of use of direct quotation, especially from important figures such as Biden and Netanyahu (Israeli's Prime Minister). Of the four news articles, direct quotations from these two figures are the most frequently used direct quotations. This direct quotation is used to strengthen the argument given by the news writer to convince the readers.

e. Lexical Choice

From the four articles chosen, I found there are several lexical choices which state the partiality of a news media. A more detailed explanation can be seen as follows.

i. The Word 'violence'

In *Fox News*, the conflict between Palestine and Israel is often represented by the word 'violence'. The word violence here refers to the attack by Hamas as a Palestinian military group. The sample of the data can be seen in the following data.

Data 2

Biden has condemned **the violence** and asserted Israel's right to **defend itself**. (Fox News, May 17th 2021)

From the data above, the word 'self-defense' refers to Israel because it has been explained in the sentence so that the word 'violence' refers to Palestinian attacks as it is the state which is in conflict with Israel. The data above also shows the partiality of the United States government towards a party. This can be seen from the use of word 'condemned' or denounce which refers to the attack on Hamas and the word 'asserted' that support Israel's counterattack and consider it as a form of self-defense.

ii. The Word 'Terrorist'

In the news on *Fox news*, the Palestinian military group, Hamas, is represented by the word terrorist which has a negative meaning. In the news, it can be implied that US government put Hamas as perpetrator of the attack and Israel as the victim. This can be seen from the data as follows.

Data 2

President Biden conveyed "the need for Hamas to cease firing rockets into Israel and affirmed Israel's right to defend itself against **terrorist attacks**," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said during the press briefing Monday... (Fox News, May 17th 2021)

iii. The Word 'Brother'

In the news on *Fox News*, there is the word 'brother' which is directed at the Egyptian government. The use of the word 'brother' indicates the close relationship between the United States government and the Egyptian government. The closeness of these two states can be implied from the use of the word 'brother' which is usually used for someone who really has a close relationship or a relative in a family. For more details can be seen in the following data.

Data 1

"We were informed by **our brothers in Egypt** that an agreement had been reached for a mutual and simultaneous ceasefire... President Biden **thanked Israeli and Egyptian leaders for their roles in stopping the violence** during a national address Thursday evening. (Fox News, May 20th 2021b)

From these data, it can be seen that America, Israel, and Egypt are on the same side, as the party who is trying to stop the violence, while Palestine (Hamas) is considered as the party that commits violence.

iv. The Word 'Support'

Of the 2 news articles on Fox News, the word 'support' is one of the words that is often repeated. The word 'support' is used for the Israeli's government. This indicates the United States government's alignment with one party, namely Israel.

v. The Word 'Shoot' and 'Kill'

From 2 articles in the *Detik.com*, the words 'shooting' and 'kill' are used to denote the acts of violence of Israel. If it is on *Fox News*, the word violence is represented to Palestine (Hamas), then on *Detik.com* news media, the word violence is represented to Israel, by using the words 'shooting' and 'killing', while Palestine is represented as a victim by using the word 'killed'. The representation of Israel as perpetrators of violence and Palestine as victims can be seen from the following data.

Data 3

Tidak hanya itu, pada Selasa (25/5) setelah adanya kesepakatan gencatan senjata, pembunuhan terhadap warga Palestina terus berlanjut. Seorang pemuda Palestina tewas ditembak pasukan Israel ... Lebih dari 25 warga Palestina tewas dalam bentrokan di Tepi Barat. (Detiknews, May 28th 2021a)

'Not only that, on Tuesday (25/5) after the ceasefire agreement, **the killings** of Palestinians continued. A Palestinian youth was **shot dead** by Israeli forces ... More than 25 Palestinians *were killed* in clashes in West Bank.'

2. Discourse Aspect Analysis (Mesostructural Analysis)

a. *Fox News*

Fox News or Fox News Channel (FNC) is an American multinational conservative cable news television channel based in New York. It was launched on October 9, 1996 and is managed by Fox Corporation. In 2018, according to Nielsen, *Fox News* was rated as the most-visited cable network in America with an average record of 2.4 million viewers during prime time. During the 2020 pandemic, there was an increase in viewership so that in the first quarter of January-March 2020, *Fox News* was at the top rank in the history of the network in America with a total audience of 3.387 million viewers (Wikipedia, 2021b). From the explanation above, it can be seen that *Fox News* is one of the most famous online media in America, so it is very likely that the news conveyed can influence public opinion. In addition to being one of the most viewed media, *Fox News* is also rumored to be a pro-government media and researchers/scholars refer to Fox News as a government media (Wikipedia, 2021b).

b. *DetikNews or Detik.Com*

Detik.com is an Indonesian digital media company owned by CT Corp's subsidiary, Trans Media. *Detik.com* is an online news portal that publishes the latest news. This online media is consistently among the top 10 most visited websites in Indonesia and is among the top 250 in the world receiving around 180 million visits per day. This online media was founded in 1998, precisely on July 9, 1998 and is owned by Chairul Tanjung (Wikipedia, 2021a). From the description above, it can be seen that *Detik.com* is one of the media which is most frequently visited by Indonesian, so that, similar to the *Fox News* above, the news delivered by the media can influence the public opinion.

3. Analysis of Socio-cultural Practice (Macro-structural)

Socio-cultural practice analysis is an analysis of the microstructural and mesostructural aspects and their relationship to the social context. This analysis is also closely related to the microstructural and mesostructural aspects that have been analyzed previously. One of the macrostructural aspects that can be analyzed based on the results of the data analysis above is to take a look at the partiality of a media in representing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. From the two online news media chosen, it was found that there were some differences in how to represent the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In *Fox News* media, Palestine, especially Hamas, is represented as terrorist where Israel is represented as a victim and an ally of America. In reporting on this issue, *Fox News* also tends to put forward the topic of the role of the United States government in overcoming the conflict and also openly sided with Israel by stating that Israeli's attack is a form of self-protection.

Meanwhile, on *Detik.com*, the representation of this conflict is very different. In the reported news, Israel is represented as the perpetrator of the attack while Palestine is the victim. This can be seen from many uses of offensive words such as 'shooting', and 'murder' which refer to Israel as the perpetrator of the attack, where the representation of Palestine as a victim is expressed by using the words 'victim', and 'killed'. If we relate this representation to the mesostructural aspect, it can be concluded that the news on *Fox News* which foreground the topic of the the United States government's role in dealing with Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the representation of Palestine as a terrorist is intentional because *Fox News* is one of the pro-government's media. Therefore, the news reported supports the government's opinion. Meanwhile on *Detik.com*, the representation of Israel as the perpetrator and Palestine as the victim is influenced by Indonesia's position as one of the countries that opposes Israel and as one of the countries that fights for the freedom of Palestine.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the data analysis, it can be concluded that there are differences in the way of representing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict between *Fox News* and *Detik.com* online news media. In *Fox News*, the focus of the news is the United States government's role in overcoming the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In addition, in *Fox News*, Palestine, especially Hamas, is represented as terrorist where Israel is represented as the victim and an ally of America and there is an element of the American government's partiality with Israel. The news that favors the United States government is a form of *Fox News* media's support for the government because *Fox News* is one of the pro-government's media. Meanwhile, on *Detik.com*, Israel is represented as the perpetrator of the attack while Palestine is the victim. This can be seen from many uses of words such as the word 'shooting' and 'kill' which refer to Israel as the perpetrator of the attack, where the representation of Palestine as a victim is expressed through the words 'victim' and 'killed'. The representation of Israel as the perpetrator and Palestine as the victim is influenced by Indonesia's position as one of the countries that opposes Israel and as one of the countries that fights for the freedom of Palestine.

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