

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Bias through Modality in Arabic and English News Reports

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Abstract

Under the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this paper attempts to analyse the interpersonal function of news texts through investigating the function of modality in the expression of bias in Arabic and English news reports. This paper deals with news reports from ideologically diverse newspapers, addressing various news events in order to come up with results as comprehensive as possible about bias through modality. This paper also aims to compare how Arabic and English news reports exploit modal expressions to interact with their readers. It has been found that while English news reports mainly use epistemic modal expressions to predict possible consequences of and describe unreal situations related to the incident reported, Arabic news reports interact with the audience through corroboration and emphasis of some aspects of the news event instead of offering possibilities and evaluations.

1. What is Critical Discourse Analysis?

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the type of Discourse Analysis that is concerned with revealing how ideology and power are discursively manifested. Van Dijk (2001) defines CDA as

A type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political context (p. 352).

CDA is dubbed ‘critical’ particularly because its task is to disclose the meanings and assumptions that are *hidden* in the discourse “according to which people interact linguistically, and of which people are generally not consciously aware” (Fairclough, 1989, p.2). The need for a critical perspective to linguistic analysis emanated from the orthodoxy of linguistics as a “*descriptive* discipline which has no business passing comments on materials which it analyses; neither *prescribing* usage nor negatively evaluating the substance of its enquiries” (Fowler, 1991, p. 5).

Therefore, adopting critical goals in language study is an attempt to interpret all implicit power relations and ideologies implanted in discourse and consequently “increase consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 1). This by no means falls in line with the misunderstanding that ‘critical’ means ‘negative.’ Simply stated, ‘critical’ means that any “social phenomenon lends itself to critical investigation, to be challenged and not taken for granted” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 2). To critically analyze something entails

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“the practical linking of ‘social and political engagement’ with ‘a sociologically informed construction of society’” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 7). By the same token, Fairclough (1995a) argues that a critical approach to language study is theoretically underpinned in

views of the relationship between ‘micro’ events (including verbal events) and ‘macro’ structures which see the latter as both the conditions for and the products of the former, and which therefore reject rigid barriers between the study of the ‘micro’ ... and the study of the ‘macro.’ (p. 28)

It is, therefore, of great importance in CDA not to analyze data as solely representative of their local situations, but rather analyze them as a part of the global situation in which they are embedded. That is why critical linguistics is considered a type of instrumental linguistics which is “the study of language for understanding something else ... an analysis designed to get at the ideology coded implicitly behind overt propositions, to examine it particularly in the context of social formation” (Fowler, 1996, p.3).

Hence, the micro communicative events must be analyzed in relation to the macro social structures of which they are simultaneously a producer and a product. CDA entails “investigating verbal interactions with an eye to their determination by, and effects on, social structures” (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 36) because the way a certain discourse is structured is connected with its place in the socioeconomic system (Fowler et al., 1979).

CDA views discourse as “a form of social practice” (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 54). Fairclough (1995b, pp. 54-5) further argues that regarding language use as a social practice means, first, that people can actually ‘do’ things with language (e.g. imposing their power and ideology). Most importantly, however,

[...] Describing discourse as social practice implies a *dialectical* [or] a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them. (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 55; emphasis added, as cited in Richardson, 2007, p. 28).

Discourse is socially constitutive because it is a field for exercising power and imposing ideology by dominant groups, hence, helping sustain and perpetuate their status in society. However, those upon which power is exercised may also resist through discourse. For example, this might result in what “Michael Halliday calls...the *anti-language*. Anti-languages are set up and used as conscious alternatives to the dominant or established discourse types” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 91). In that sense, discourse can contribute to changing the current social situation instead of reserving it.

The notion of ideology is central to the critical study of language. *Ideology* is an arguable term when it comes to definition. However, Simpson (1993) states that “from a critical linguistic perspective, the term normally describes the ways in which what

we say and think interacts with society” (p. 5). Fairclough (1989) further states that ideology is commonsensical in character and that is why it is

Most effective when its workings are at least visible... [and this] invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background assumptions which ... lead the text producer to ‘textualize’ the world in a particular way. (p.85)

Hence, to “denaturalize’ them [ideologies] is the objective of a discourse analysis which adopts ‘critical’ goals.” (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 27).

2. Modality in Arabic and English

Modality is regarded as the attitudinal feature of language that reveals the speakers/writers’ attitude, judgement or comment on the proposition. It also signals the text producer’s involvement and his degree of commitment to the truth of what he is reporting. It refers to “aspects of meaning which cause sentences to be about the non-factual, that is, about the alternative possibilities for how things could be” (Fasold & Connor-Linton, 2006, p. 153). Additionally, since it is an embodiment of the interpersonal function of the text, modality “may be used as a linguistic tool to direct and control the behaviour of the people” (Bonyadi, 2011, p. 2). Modality is also a cue for oral models in the press and its use, according to Fowler (1991),

suggests the presence of an individual subjectivity behind the printed text, who is qualified with knowledge required to pass judgment...If modal expressions are frequent and highlighted, subjectivity is enhanced, the illusion of a ‘person’ with a voice and opinion. (p. 64)

According to Halliday (2004), modality “represents the speaker’s angle, either on the validity of the assertion or on the rights and wrongs of the proposal; in its congruent form, it is an adjunct to a proposition rather than a proposition in its own right” (p. 624). As such, modality is expressed in two principal forms. *Epistemic modality* is the knowledge-based type which involves “‘possibility’, ‘necessity’, and ‘prediction’ ... [that] typically involve human judgment of what is or is not likely to happen” and *Deontic modality* which is action-based or socially-based and typically include “‘permission’, ‘obligation’, and ‘volition’ which involve some kind of intrinsic human control over events” (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 219). Additionally, according to Halliday (2004) modalities are further classified according to their orientation, i.e. whether they are subjective (e.g. I think Mary is here) or objective (e.g. It is probable that Mary is here).

A further point to be made is that modality is not only a matter of explicit modal expressions. As a matter of fact, declarative sentences and their negations (categorical assertions) express a categorical commitment on part of text or utterance producer to the truth of the proposition (or its negation) (Fairclough, 1989). Thus, as

Fowler (1991) puts it, “[a] straightforward truth claim does not, in fact, need any explicit modal verb; this is not to say that there is no modality, but that in the normal case, it does not need to be expressed” (p. 86). Halliday (2004) comments on the irony of the interpersonal function of modality in language, that it “lies in an apparent paradox on which the entire system rests — the fact that we only say we are certain when we are not” (p. 624-5).

News reports tend to present reported happenings as simple facts, and thus, in terms of modality

this involves a predilection for categorical modalities, positive and negative assertions ... and therefore [little] modalizing elements (modal verbs, adverbs, adjectives, hedges, and so forth). It is also a predilection for objective modalities, which allow partial perspectives to be universalized ... This myth underpins the ideological work of the media: offering images of and categories for reality, positioning and shaping social subjects, and contributing for the most part to social control and reproduction. (Fairclough, 1992, p. 160-1)

Expression of modality is primarily achieved through modal verbs (e.g. *may, will, could, might, shall, should, would*) and their negation, modal adjuncts (e.g. *probably, perhaps, certainly, unlikely, usually*), modal quantifiers (e.g. *any, most, some, a lot of, few*) and lexical verbs that show modality (e.g. *seem, appear*). It is important to indicate that modal expressions (particularly modal verbs) have both epistemic and deontic usages according to the context in which they are used. For example, ‘*will*’ has the meaning of volition (deontic) (e.g. *I will buy a car*), and the meaning of prediction (epistemic) (e.g. *this will get him in a lot of trouble*).

It is also noteworthy that modality in Arabic is realized differently from English. While English modal expressions are mostly grammatical, Arabic modal meanings are mostly lexical and lexico-syntactic (Moshref, 2012; Ali, 2013). Modal meanings in Arabic are realized by various means of syntactic structures like particles, such as *قد* (*qad*), which has the epistemic function of indicating possibility if it precedes an imperfective verb (e.g. *قد يتبادر إلى ذهنك هذا التساؤل / this question might cross your mind*) or the function of added emphasis if it precedes a perfective one (e.g. *وقعت العديد من الحوادث / several accidents did happen/indeed happened*). Other forms for modality include phrases such as *من الممكن/لا بد/من الواضح* (*may be/ must/clearly*) and lexical verbs such as *يجب/ينبغي/يستطيع* (*must/ should/can*).

3. Description of Data

The data for this study consists of 40 news reports, 20 English and 20 Arabic from the online versions of 4 newspapers; American liberal *The New York Times* (NYT), British conservative the *Telegraph* (TG), Egyptian state-owned *Al-Ahram* (AH) and the Qatar-based international *Al-Jazeera* (AJ). The 40 news reports cover 10 major incidents in the period between February 2012 and July 2015. Each newspaper holds a different ideological as well as linguistic background, hence, enriching the study. The 10 major incidents are:

- #1 Soccer riot in Port Said Stadium (1/2/2012)

- #2 Protests in Egypt following Anti-Islam Movie (11/11/2012)
- #3 Ahmadinejad of Iran’s visit to Egypt (5/2/2013)
- #4 Luxor balloon crash (26/2/2013)
- #5 Isis Declaration of Caliphate (29/6/2014)
- #6 2014 Israel’s ground invasion of Gaza (17/7/2014)
- #7 Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa (31/7/2014)
- #8 Shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, USA (10/8/2014)
- #9 Charlie Hebdo Attack (7/1/2015)
- #10 Greece votes ‘No’ to EU austerity measures (5/7/2015)

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Modality in English News Reports

Perhaps the best way to describe how modality works in a text is that it describes unrealized situations or predicts possible consequences (Reah, 2002). Those unrealized situations and alternative possibilities count as comments and evaluations, thus paving the way for bias to occur through directing the discourse in an ideologically-favourable way. Table 1 below provides the number and percentage of modal expressions (simple/periphrastic) used in both reports.

<i>Modality</i>			
<i>TG</i>		<i>NYT</i>	
No.	%¹	No.	%
34	0.48	62	0.53

Table 1 Number and Percentage of Modal Expressions (Simple/Periphrastic) in English News Reports

In most of the reports, modality has been one of the linguistic tool through which bias rears its head. While bias manifests itself in various linguistic tools, e.g. lexical choices, syntax, and thematic organization, modality is the most powerful since it embodies the interpersonal function of texts and gives text producers the opportunity to interact with and influence their readers. Both newspapers exploit modality to interfere in the process of reporting either by commenting on the truthfulness of some aspects of the incident or evaluating its possible outcomes. Additionally, the frequent use of modality enhances the notion of subjectivity, hence steering away from the objectivity course. On the whole, NYT uses more modal expressions than TG, hence it shows a higher tendency to get involved, regardless of

¹ % = number of occurrences divided by total number of words (11,533 words in NYT and 6,964 words in TG)

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the incident's degree of proximity to the United States. On the other hand, TG's bias is more evident in those incidents that interest the newspaper as *British*.

Modality is helpful in eliciting the way reporters position themselves towards the proposition they are making. In the examples below about the protests against the anti-Islam movie, both newspapers employ modal adverbs but in two different directions.

- (1) a) The film **produced** in the US **apparently** insults the Prophet Mohammed.

(TG #2)

- b) A movie which was **reportedly** produced in the US

(NYT#5)

The above excerpts report the origins of the movie that enraged the Arab world. The degree of evidentiality is clearly different in the two newspapers and this is mainly attributed to their respective ideologies and backgrounds. TG sticks to the story and expresses no doubt whatsoever, using a categorical assertion – *produced in America* (1-a) – and combining this with the comparatively stronger epistemic modal adverb *apparently* to express a high commitment to the truth of the proposition that the movie does insult the Prophet. On the other hand, NYT, being American, expresses doubt – through the epistemic adverb *reportedly* – about the movie being produced in the US (1-b) which weakens the claim that it is actually produced there.

In (89) below about the Iranian visit to Egypt, whereas TG uses no modal expressions, NYT uses a predictive modal verb *will* coupled with the negative epistemic modal adverb *unlikely* which serves the report's purpose of undermining Iran's international role and asserting their isolation.

- (2) Many analysts **think it unlikely** that the Egypt-Iran thaw **will** develop into fully restored relations.

(NYT#3)

In some of the reports, speculating about the repercussions of the incidents are the main preoccupation, unveiling the reporter's concerns. The difference between the two newspapers lies in the amount of modal expressions used. In reporting the ISIS declaration of their Caliphate, both newspapers were worried about the rise of the ISIS Caliphate, but the intensity of such concerns differed, owing mainly to the US involvement in Iraq.

- (3) **It is also a plausible threat** of the group's expansionist goals – with Iran, once part of the caliphate, and other Muslim nations such as Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey now in the direct line of Isis's advances

(TG#5)

- (4) a) But the declaration **could trigger** a wave of infighting among the Sunni militant factions that formed a loose alliance in the blitz across Iraq **and impact** the broader international jihadist movement, especially the future of a-Qaida.
- b) It was **unclear** what immediate impact the declaration **would have on the ground in Syria** and Iraq, though experts predicted it **could herald** infighting among the Sunni militants.
- c) The greatest impact, however, **could be** on the broader international jihadist movement, in particular on the future of al-Qaida.
- d) More ominously, the insurgent blitz, which prompted Kurdish forces to assert long-held claims over disputed territory, **has raised the prospect** of Iraq being split in three, along sectarian and ethnic lines.

(NYT#5)

As can be seen in the examples above, TG cautiously attempts to reflect on the meaning of such declaration, using the periphrastic expression *it is a threat* with the strong adjective *plausible*, (3) which also forces upon the readers their own point of view. On the other hand, NYT (4 a-d) uses a variety of modal expressions to express its worries about the Caliphate; it uses modals verbs *could*, *would* and the periphrastic variants *unclear* and *the prospect*. The modal expressions help build a horrifying mental image in the minds of readers about the impact of ISIS, hence raising the sense of dread and sensationalizing the group.

Likewise, when reporting the Ebola virus outbreak, the two newspapers show a high degree of tendency to use predictive modal verbs, enforcing their concerns upon the readers. Because the degree of involvement is somehow similar, since the Ebola virus is a global threat, both newspapers use an equal amount of modal expressions as shown below.

- (5) a) The health chief leading the fight against the Ebola outbreak in West Africa has **warned** it was spiralling out of control towards a “catastrophic” epidemic that **could** engulf the region.
- b) Sierra Leone ordered its security forces to take health officials on house-to-house searches to find anyone suspected of harbouring an Ebola sufferer, **despite fears** such a robust approach **could** alienate the public.
- c) The leader of the Ebola task force in Guinea said moves by neighbouring Liberia to shut all schools to contain the disease **could prove counterproductive**.

(TG#5)

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- (6) a) Now that cases have spread so widely, controlling the outbreak **will** be more costly and difficult.
- b) As news of the Ebola outbreak has spread globally, **there was some worry** that the disease **could** spread beyond West Africa.
- c) **There were concerns** about how staff members **should** react if they suspected a traveler had been infected.

(NYT#5)

The above examples reveal the concerns of both newspapers as expressed by modality. They are preoccupied with the reverberations of the disease, raising fear in their readers through predicting the possibility of such epidemic *spiralling out of control*. Additionally, the judgmental look on how Africans deal with the disease is evident in NYT's report, using the epistemic periphrastic *there are concerns* and deontic modal *should* (6-c). For TG, the report only raises the possibility of their moves *proving counterproductive* through the epistemic modal *could* (5-c).

When reporting the Charlie Hebdo Attack, both newspapers use modality to evoke their concerns.

- (7) For several years, Europe's intelligence services have **feared** that Muslim extremists who have travelled to Syria, Iraq and elsewhere to fight **would** return home to plot carnage, and the gunmen's ruthless efficiency **left little doubt** that they had received military training

(TG#9)

- (8) The third suspect is Hamyd Mourad, 18. News reports said the brothers, known to intelligence services, had been born in Paris, raising **the prospect** that homegrown Muslim extremists were responsible.

(NYT#9)

As shown above, the newspapers' degree of commitment differs. In (7), TG uses a couple of terms that definitely shows higher commitment to the truth of what it proposes. The verb *fears* and the modal verb *would* directs the reader to believing that the *fears of Europe's intelligence services* have come true. This is further enhanced by the strong periphrastic modal expression *left little doubt*. On the other hand, NYT (8) uses the modal noun *prospect* to refer to its concerns about the origins of the attackers. TG's eagerness is mainly attributed to its sense that Britain could be next in the series of attacks that hit Europe, thus it is more involved in the incident than NYT.

Both newspapers also show a high degree of involvement in the reporting of Greece voting No to the EU referendum. The shocking 'No' definitely calls for speculation on part of the reports. However, TG shows more preoccupation with what would happen following the results of the referendum while NYT dedicates some of its modal expressions to claim objectivity by being more cautious in reporting the incident, as evident in the following examples from the reports:

- (9)
- a) The Prime Minister is on Tuesday expected to attend a summit meeting of EU leaders in Brussels as they discuss how to prevent **Greece's possible exit** from the eurozone causing economic turmoil.
 - b) The country's [Greece's] banks, which are almost empty already **will** collapse imminently unless the European Central Bank agrees to extend an emergency financial lifeline.
 - c) Mr Osborne has also repeatedly warned that the British economy **will** be hit if Greece leaves the eurozone.
 - d) Senior figures in the Government believe that it **could** strengthen Britain's negotiating hand ahead of the in-out referendum because the EU **will** be reluctant to risk losing another member if Greece leaves the bloc.
 - e) **There are fears** that chaos in the EU if Greece leaves the eurozone **could** strengthen the hand of eurosceptics pushing for a British exit.
 - f) If the country drops the euro, it **will most likely** have to start reprinting the drachma, which Greece used for more than two millennia until 2001. While that will restore some control over its own economic policies, the **price may be years of further penury** as the currency tries to regain its feet. **One other likely legacy** is bitter division between "Yes" and "No" voters, who blame each other for the country's economic misfortunes.

(TG#10)

- (10)
- a) Greeks delivered a shocking rebuff to Europe's leaders in a historic vote **that could redefine** Greece's place in Europe and **shake** the Continent's financial stability.
 - b) At stake, however, **may be** far more than Greece's place in Europe, as experts have offered wildly differing opinions about what the referendum **could** mean for the future of the euro and the world's financial markets.
 - c) Even before the voting was over, some European leaders began trying to contain the **potential damage**.

d) Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, a leftist who came to power in January vowing to reject new austerity measures, **which he called** an injustice and economically self-defeating.

(NYT#10)

As can be seen, TG uses the stronger epistemic modal verb, *will*, in creating more vivid scenarios that involve both Greece's and Britain's future following the No. First, it creates the scenario of *Greece's possible exit* from the eurozone (9-a) and then goes on to *strongly* suggest, via the modal *will*, that the Greece's banks will collapse unless the EU does something. The rest of the modal verbs are dedicated to predicting scenarios about Britain's future that are built on the *potential* Grexit. The scenarios include the British economy's damage, the reluctance of EU leaders to let Britain go easily in case a referendum is held, and strengthening of the calls for a British exit because of the chaos in the EU (9 c-e).

Finally, in (9-6), TG uses modals to speculate about the results of its *proposed scenarios*. In case Greece leaves the EU, it is assumed that it will go back to dealing with its old currency, drachma. TG then *strongly* suggests – via using strong epistemic modal verbs and adverbs, *may*, *will* and *likely* – that Greece would suffer from poverty until the currency stands again on its feet in addition to division between its Yes and No voters. All of these scenarios are somehow disastrous and they count as judgment, disclosing the report's stance on the matter; strongly objecting to the No vote.

On the other hand, NYT is concerned with the outcome of the No vote on the wider scale of Europe and the rest of the world. This is achieved through modal nouns and verbs of possibility. In (10 a-c), the report uses the modal adverbs *could* and *may* and the modal noun *potential* to voice the worries that the No vote might lead to an unstable Europe, financially speaking. Then it goes to impose upon the readers that the world's financial markets *may be at stake* as well. NYT also makes use of the modal expression *which he called* in (10-d) to claim distance from calling EU's austerity measures *injustice* and *economically self-defeating*.

4.2. Modality in Arabic News Reports

Modal expressions in Arabic have the characteristic of being mainly periphrastic, with some instances of particles like *qad*, *sa*, and *sawfa*. It is important to clarify that some of the particles used as modal expressions (e.g *qad*) have different functions in news discourse (Khalil, 2000). As pointed out by Khalil (2000), *qad* and *kana qad* have the function of “temporal anteriority” (p. 178). For examples, as given by Khalil (2000, p. 179), in the following sentence

Jalasa 'ala al-kursiyy wa-qad badā 'alayhi al-surūr

Sat-he on the-chair and-particle appeared on him the-joy

He sat on the chair as joy appeared on his face

Without *qad*, the second clause would be temporally sequent to the first, so the presence of *qad* ‘reverses the sequential relation between the two events’ (Al-Tarouti 1991: 146).

Since news discourse has an inverted pyramid structure, the temporal organization of pieces of information in the reports does not necessarily follow a chronological order. Hence, particles like *qad* or *kana qad* retrieve the chronological order of news events in the same report. Below is the analysis of the bias-indicating modal expressions detected in both newspapers

<i>Modality</i>			
<i>AH</i>		<i>AJ</i>	
No.	% ²	No.	%
40	0.95	30	0.96

Table 2 Number and Percentage of Modal Expressions (Particle/Periphrastic) in Arabic News Reports

As shown in table 2 above, the percentage of modal expressions are fairly the same in both newspapers. The following paragraphs provide a qualitative analysis of some Arabic modal expressions through examples from the Arabic corpus that betray bias in the news reports.

While present in the corpus, Arabic modal equivalents to the English counterparts *قد/may* or *سوف/will* are not the main vehicle for bias in the Arabic corpus. Instead, an interesting strategy is used by the reports, i.e. making covert or hidden pronouns overt and explicit for the sake of emphasis, hence signalling involvement in reporting. It is known that Arabic has a category of pronouns that are not explicitly stated in the sentence such as *هو-هي/verb to be*. In the corpus, they are equivalent to categorical assertions with added emphasis, hence signalling bias. Some examples are:

- (11) (a) وهذه هي المرة الأولى التي يتمكن فيها محتجون من صعود سور السفارة الأمريكية. **This is the first time** that protesters are able to climb the wall of the US Embassy

(b) وأكد بيان الحزب أن الإساءة للرموز الدينية والمقدسات هو اعتداء على حقوق الإنسان ويدعو لنشر العنف والكراهية بين المصريين، وأن على المصريين أن يفتنوا لكل المحاولات الرخيصة والخبثية لحرق هذا الوطن بالاعتداء على مقدساته.

The party's statement assured that offending religious symbols and holy places **is a blunt violation** of human rights and calls for the spreading violence and hatred among Egyptians, and that **Egyptians should beware** of all the pitiful and malicious attempts to burn this country by attacking its sanctities

(AH#3)

² % = number of occurrences divided by total number of words (4,170 words in AH and 3,109 words in AJ)

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- (12) أكد الدكتور إبراهيم نجم مستشار مفتي الجمهورية أن إعلان داعش دولة الخلافة الإسلامية المزعومة هو مجرد رد فعل على الفوضى التي تحدث في العراق
Dr. Ibrahim Najm, the Mufti advisor, assured that the IS declaration of an **alleged Islamic caliphate is only a reaction** to the chaos that occurs in Iraq

(b) لأن الجهاد هو مسئولية الدولة وليس الأفراد
Jihad is the responsibility of the state, not the individuals
(AH#5)

In the examples above, AH uses the corroborated categorical assertions to communicate a message to its readers regarding the propositions stated. In (11-a), it is asserted that protesters climbing the walls of the US embassy is unprecedented, to point out their vulgar actions, implicitly condemning them. In (11-b), the words of the Free Egyptians party are asserted by means of the explicit pronoun, signalling approval by the report, in addition to the deontic modal expression على المصريين أن يفطنوا/Egyptians should be aware of which portrays Egyptians as inattentive and also implicitly decries the protesters' actions. In (12 a-b), the report uses the corroborated categorical assertion to voice its opinion about the IS caliphate declaration. The modal adjective مزعوم/alleged coupled with the explicit pronoun هو and the diminutive adverb مجرد/only-just diminish the IS caliphate in a severe flagrant bias against ISIS. In (12-b), the explicit pronoun enhances the power of the proposition asserted.

Other instances of covert pronouns made explicit is used in the report about the 2014 Gaza war, where each news report directs its modalized expression in a favourable way, as shown below.

- (13) وهذه هي المرة الأولى التي يتم فيها إعلان تهدئة مؤقتة متبادلة منذ بدء الهجوم الإسرائيلي على قطاع غزة
This is the first time a temporary mutual truce is announced since the Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip

(AH#6)

- (14) وذلك بعد يوم هو الأعمق استشهد فيه 27 فلسطينيا بينهم أربعة أطفال قضاوا نحيم في مجزرة بخان يونس
That came after a day, **that is the most violent ever**, in which 27 Palestinians, including four children, were martyred in a massacre in Khan Younis

(AJ#6)

AH's concern is with the truce and calming down the situation, while AJ's is with the casualties of such war. This is evident in the use of the explicit pronoun above; AH uses it to assert the fact that the humanitarian truce is agreed upon by both parties (13), while AJ asserts the violent nature of the Israeli aggression on Gaza (14).

Reporting the same incident, both news reports use periphrastic modal expressions that betray their attitudes.

- (15) ذكر راديو إسرائيل أن وحدة من الجيش الإسرائيلي أحبطت صباح أمس محاولة تسلل من وصفتهم «مخربين»

Israel Radio reported that a unit of the Israeli army foiled an infiltration attempt yesterday morning by those **whom it described** “vandals”

- (b) **وقد استمع** عباس لملاحظات حماس وناقش مع أبو مرزوق **آفاق الحلول**
Abbas **did listen** to Hamas’ remarks and discussed with Abu Marzouk **prospects for solutions**

(AH#6)

- (16) وكان رئيس الوزراء الإسرائيلي بنيامين نتانياهو ووزير دفاعه موشيه يعالون قد أعلنوا الثلاثاء استئناف الهجوم على غزة، بسبب ما سميها رفض حركة حماس المبادرة المصرية

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon have announced the resumption of Tuesday’s attack on Gaza, because of **what they call** Hamas’s rejection of the Egyptian initiative

(AJ#6)

The modal expressions *من وصفتهم* / *what it described* (15-a) and *ما سميها* / *what they called* (16) are used by the reports to weaken the proposition and question its truth, hence diminishing Israel’s truthfulness. In (15-b), AH uses the emphatic particle *قد* to stress the fact that Abbas is cooperative, and the modal noun *آفاق* / *prospects* to activate that solutions are possible, in accordance with the report’s preoccupation with calming the situation.

A discrepancy in the modal attitudes appears in reporting Ahmadinejad’s visit to Egypt, as shown below:

- (17) **وتعد زيارة نجاد الأولى** لرئيس إيراني منذ عهد شاه إيران والثورة الإسلامية عام **Ahmadinejad's visit is considered the first** for an Iranian 1979 president since the reign of the Shah of Iran and the Islamic revolution in 1979

(AH#2)

- (18) **وهذه هي أول زيارة** يقوم بها رئيس إيراني إلى مصر منذ الثورة الإسلامية الإيرانية عام 1979

This is the first visit by an Iranian President to Egypt since the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979

(AJ#2)

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Based on the previous examples, it is clear that AH simply states the fact that Ahmadinejad's visit is the first (17), while the same proposition is corroborated through the use of the explicit pronoun (18). AJ uses emphasis to activate the information that relations between the two countries were previously severed, whereas the information is presented in the most mitigated way possible by AH.

Other examples of modal expressions in the corpus include the following.

(19)

(a) خلافة «داعش» وهم سيتبدد بسرعة
"ISIS" Caliphate .. an Illusion that **Will Quickly Vanish**

(b) **يجب على العلماء التحذير** من هذه الأفعال التي تشوه صورة الإسلام والمسلمين
Islamic scholars must warn against such acts which distort the
image of Islam and Muslims

(AH#5)

In the above example (19-a) about the ISIS declaration of caliphate, AH uses the strong epistemic modal particle *سـ*/*will* coupled with the adverb *بسرعة*/*quickly* to draw a mental picture of a weak and perishable ISIS and force it upon the readers. In (19-b), the strong deontic modal verb *يجب*/*must* embarrasses the Islamic scholars and implicitly accuses them negligence which in turn resulted in the emergence of Isis.

In the following example about the protests following an anti-Islam movie, AJ uses a modal verb to achieve an ideological goal.

(20)

ويبدأ أن إطلاق أعضاء الألتراس عددا من الألعاب النارية وهم يرددون "بالروح بالدم نفديك يا رسول الله"؛ زاد من حماس المشاركين فتقدم بعضهم إلى مبنى السفارة الأميركية الواقع في ضاحية "غاردن سيتي" القريبة من ميدان التحرير، وتمكنوا من تسلق جدران السفارة العالية

It seemed that the Ultras members' launching fireworks and chanting "with our blood and soul, we sacrifice ourselves for you, Messenger of God" increased the enthusiasm of participants. Some of them went to the US Embassy building located in Garden City, near Tahrir Square and were able to climb its high walls

(AJ#3)

As evident, the modal verb *يبدأ*/*seemed* hedges AJ's claim and gives it a safe ground to voice its opinion. AJ tries to give a reason for the protesters' climbing the US embassy walls, ascribing it totally to the Ultras members. In doing so, the report gives an implicit justification for and approval of what happened, hence signalling bias.

5. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to investigate how ideological bias is linguistically expressed and manifested through modality in Arabic and English news reports. It has been found that diverse ideological and linguistic backgrounds deny the possibility of unbiased reporting since they are inevitably expressed in news language. Additionally, analysis of modal expressions of the news texts yields interesting differences in the way each set of newspapers exploits the interpersonal function of the news text to interact with their audience. On the one hand, English news reports mainly uses epistemic modal expressions to predict possible consequences of and describe unreal situations related to the incident reported to project its own point of view and forces the reader to perceive the news event in the same way. On the other hand, Arabic news reports interact with the audience through corroboration and emphasis of some aspects of the news event instead of offering possibilities and evaluations. This is mainly done by both newspapers through making hidden pronouns explicit, which is equivalent to categorical assertions with added emphasis. Hence, Arabic news reports use modality to communicate an emphasized version of what is already reported, rather than creating unrealized situations and imposing them upon their readers.

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