The Language of Diplomacy:
A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Global Reactions to the Iran-Israel Conflict and Their Role in Shaping Peace and Conflict Narratives

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Abstract:

This study delves deep into the sociolinguistic analysis of how the international perspectives of peace and conflicts are shaped by the diplomatic language specifically in the recent Iran-Israel conflict in October 2024. By focusing on the official statements issued by United States, Russia, and Turkey, the research paper explores how world powers use discourse to position themselves, manage global perceptions, and either mediate or intensify geopolitical tensions. The study utilizes the Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the framework for analyzing diplomatic language in the Iran-Israel conflict. It involves linguistic descriptivism i.e. text analysis, interpretation and explanation. By situating the Iran-Israel conflict within a sociolinguistic framework, the research highlights how diplomacy is not merely about policy, but about the strategic use of language. The findings reveal distinct patterns in how peace and conflict are discursively constructed, offering new insights into the intersection of linguistics, politics, and international relations.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Iran-Israel conflict, diplomatic discourse, peace and conflict narratives, sociolinguistics, international relations, geopolitical language

INTRODUCTION

The intricacies of Iran-Israel conflict are deeply rooted in its geo-political significance. After the collapse of the Pahlavi monarchy in Iran in 1979, the first foreign policy action of the revolutionary government was the severing of Iran's ties with Israel (Farhang, 1989). The revolutionary government in Iran has never accepted Israel as a sovereign legitimate state because of the political and religious factors. Iran's constant support to the political and militant organizations that oppose Israel such as Hezbollah and Hamas, adds to the tension in the region and between the two countries (Christensson, 2024). On the other hand, Israel views Iran's nuclear ambition and support for the above mentioned groups as a serious threat to its own existence. Both the countries have been fighting the proxy war through the non-state actors since 1980s (Jones, 2019) but recently in

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October, 2024 both the countries have directly attacked each other which has aggravated the conflict. As we dig deep into the depths of Iran-Israel relations, we are confronted with narratives rich in conflict, collaboration and mutual distrust.

Language is not only the means of communication but is an essence of the diplomatic vocation (Kurbalija & Slavik, 2001) and has a profound impact in shaping the diplomacy around the world. The type of language used by the country's representative clearly reflects the ideologies, the agendas, and the approach to the matter adopted while also giving hints to what might countries future stance can be on the matter. According to Kurtz & Turpin (2008), if we consider knowledge as a power than language too is a power and those who control the language of war and peace exercise an enormous influence on how the war and peace is perceived and what behaviors we accept in the relation of peace and conflict.

Language has always played a crucial role in shaping the course of conflict either by exacerbating tensions or by promoting peace specifically in the case of Iran-Israel conflict. This research paper strives to offer a deep analysis in determining the role of language used in the diplomatic reactions by the US, Russia and_Türkiye in response to Iran and Israel conflict in October, 2024 in constructing the narrative of peace and conflict. The statements by the country's representative will be analyzed as a peaceful or conflicted by taking into consideration the three- dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Norman Fairclough. According to Martin and Wodak (2001), critical discourse analysis (CDA) is 'fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language'. The model will help uncover how diplomatic language constructs power dynamics, ideologies, and geopolitical alignments.

The research will explore the following key questions; How peace and conflict narratives are constructed by the diplomatic discourse? What ideologies and power relations are reflected in global reactions or discourse?

The research offers a comprehensive analysis of the global reaction to the Iran-Israel conflict by taking into account the Three Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Fairclough. By examining the statement from major global players like USA, Russia and Turkey, this paper highlights how language not only reflects the geopolitical alignments, power dynamics and the ideological stances but also constructs the narrative of peace and conflict. The study also provides valuable insights into how the discourse plays a crucial role in the international relations and the conflict resolutions, offering a unique contribution to understanding the role of global reactions in framing peace and conflict narratives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Being both a mirror and a construct, diplomatic language actively shapes narratives of conflict and peace while reflecting geopolitical dynamics. International diplomacy has long focused on the Iran-Israel rivalry, which is rooted in historical grievances, ideological antagonism, and regional geopolitical conflicts. Few studies systematically examine how state and non-state actors linguistically frame this specific conflict to advance competing narratives. However, scholarly work at the intersection of sociolinguistics and political discourse has looked at how language constructs adversarial or conciliatory stances. Critical discourse analyses provide frameworks for analyzing

power relations in texts, whereas existing research on Middle Eastern geopolitics emphasizes strategic and historical aspects. According to Gillian R. Brown and George Yule (1986) language is not only used for the description of things rather it is also used for doing things as well. They are of the view that choice of lexical and syntactic features of a language reflects on the broad socio-cultural background of the speakers. Additionally, by resorting to Searle's (1969) scholarship of Speech Act Theory, we can analyze that how diplomatic statements function as performative acts (e.g., declarations, warnings). John Searle's Speech Act Theory looks at how language is utilized to carry out acts as opposed to merely communicating information. By differentiating between saying something (locutionary act), doing something by saying it (illocutionary act), and the result of that action (perlocutionary act), it concentrates on the intended meaning and consequence of an utterance. Therefore, this paper employs sociolinguistic analysis of the diplomatic language, which provides a framework for understanding how language is used to perform actions and shape social interactions, while taking into consideration the speakers' intentions. Thus, speakers' intentions constitute the core of Speech Act Theory.

 Similarly, the penetrating analysis of diplomatic language used by the representatives of different countries as a Global reaction to Iran-Israel conflict, delves deep into the study of their roles in shaping peace and conflict narratives. Halliday's (1978) perspective regarding this concept is same that language is considered to be a social act because people communicate in a social setup. Language and society affect each other rather directly linked in terms of communication. It is the language that shapes and construct our identities and build our narratives. Likewise, the language spoken by socially and politically dominant people has a great influence on the common masses. Fairclough (1992) is of the view that people belonging to a specific social setup have different relational and expressive norms which is revealed through their speeches. This shows that there is a strong tie between the social and linguistic variables. Two of most important ideas in sociolinguistics are linguistic capital and symbolic power. They examine how language usage and proficiency can uphold power structures and confer social advantages. These concepts clarify the ways in which language interacts with social structures, education, and class. According to Bourdieu's (1991) theories on linguistic capital, some speech patterns are more valued in society than others. Linguistic capital encompasses both the capacity to use language effectively in a number of social contexts and situations as well as mastery of the dominant or standard language variety. By comprehending these relationships, one may see how language influences social realities and maintains inequity, as in the demonstration of diplomatic language which plays a pivotal role in shaping peace and conflict narratives regarding Iran-Israel conflict.

Subsequently, it is the language which shapes discourse and different socio-political views which leads towards the manipulation of common masses. By drawing upon Foucault's (1987) scholarship of discourse and power, it has inferred the discourse as an abstract principle which represents classification or dividing principles. Foucault posits discourse as a function of power and builds a narrative that discourse construct regimes of truth. Foucault named discourse as 'dispositif' which represents institutions and their bodies of knowledge which construct truths. On account of this, the concurrent diplomatic narratives of the powerful bodies of knowledge regarding the recent Iran-Israel conflict, are considered as legitimate truths which assert truth as product of power. Therefore, language is politically a powerful tool used for the exercise of diplomacy. Wodak and

Fairclough (2013, 2015) are of the view that language is used as a practice of creating hegemony, power and dominance in a society. It seems to be a complete reflection of social practices.

Linguists have attempted to describe the role of language in conflict initiation or how language shapes the way conflict unfolds and escalates. In this case, the nature of conflict is tied to discourse structures and linguistic constructions, showing that discourse is strongly inter-connected with how conflict may develop and intensify (Chiluwa, 2021). On account of this, it is evident that language plays an important role in diplomacy and in shaping peace and conflict narratives. The research methodology that we will be using in this research paper to analyze the statements of different countries' representatives, in relation to Iran-Israel conflict, is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA has been previously utilized to analyze the speech of Martin Luther King in socio-political context. Additionally, a few CDA studies have examined the media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Amer (2017) applied the research methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the representation of political social actors in media coverage of the Gaza war of 2008–2009. The findings of this study suggest that news reports on the Gaza war of 2008–2009 are influenced by the political orientations of the newspapers and also their liberal and conservative ideological stances.

Correspondingly, many existing studies substantiate to be directed towards the role of media in aggravating or reducing the conflict but no prior research has been conducted or carried out on the analysis of the language used in the diplomatic reactions of the Middle Eastern conflict specifically the Iran-Israel conflict. By examining the sociolinguistic techniques—metaphors, lexical selections, and framing devices—used in diplomatic declarations, and institutional rhetoric to support viewpoints, dehumanize opponents, or indicate amenability to compromise, this research fills these gaps. By doing this, it adds to larger discussions on how language either exacerbates or lessens conflict in divisive situations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on the language of diplomacy in global reactions to the Iran's ballistic missiles attack on Israel on 1st October 2024 and Israel's counterattack on Iran on 26th October 2024 by focusing on how linguistic features and discursive practices shape peace and conflict narratives. It employs a qualitative research design, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the language used in diplomatic reactions to the conflict. The data collection process will involve gathering the press releases and the statements of the government officials on behalf of the country such as Foreign Ministers and Spokespersons from the official governmental sites and the twitter accounts of USA, Russia, and Turkey within the time frame of 1st October 2024 - 3rd October 2024, and 26th October 2024 - 29th October 2024.

The US being a global superpower plays a key role in shaping the dynamics of the peace and conflict specifically in the case of Iran and Israel conflict. Previously, it has also been involved in the initiatives like Iran Nuclear deal (JCPOA). With its extensive military aid to Israel and the sanctions imposed on Iran (Fayazmanesh, 2008); the US actions significantly impact the region. Its narrative often emphasizes on the democracy, human rights and global security and when critically analyzed can reveal how discourse legitimizes actions and shapes the global perception of peace and conflict.

Russia also plays a crucial role in the regional politics of Middle East because of its strategic interest in the region such as vast oil and gas reserves, which drives Moscow's energy-driven economy, and it is a significant ordinance supplier to the region, selling arms worth billions of dollars, specifically to Syria, Egypt and Iran (Lund, 2019). Being a permanent member of the UN Security Council, its narratives are often crucial for building peace and conflict narratives of the region.

Similarly, Türkiye, the neighboring country of Iran, lies at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East which makes it a significant player in the regional politics. Its ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has adopted the Pan-Islamist ideological approach to its foreign policy, according to which Türkiye is the leader and the defender of Muslim interests and communities worldwide (Baskan, 2019). Being the member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) it plays a significant role as a mediator for dialogue and negotiation.

The selected data will be analyzed using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA, presented by Fairclough (1989) in his work "Language and Power." It involves three levels; linguistics descriptivism, interpretation, and explanation. This model is supposed to be an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse, for it views language as a form of social practice. It focuses on the ways through which social and political dominance is exercised in discourse by "text and talk". Moreover, the three-dimensional model highlights processes of the production and reception of a discourse fragment in a particular context. Fairclough identifies three dimensions to critical discourse analysis. The first dimension represents the discourse fragment, a "Text" that could be any object of analysis, including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts. The second dimension of "interpretation" can be described in terms of production and reception of a 'text' in a particular 'context."

The third dimension of discourse is the 'power behind discourse' or 'social practices' functioning behind the entire process and governing the power relations in discourse and role of language in shaping Peace and conflict. The choice of CDA as the research approach is justified by its ability to examine language as a form of social practice. The selection of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the linguistic features, discursive practices, and sociocultural context of the diplomatic language.

ANALYSIS

This research will be analyzing the reaction statements by the US, Russia, and Türkiye in response to the Iran ballistic missile attack on Israel and the counter attack of Israel on Iran within the theoretical framework of three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Norman Fairclough.

USA

On 1st Oct 2024 when Iran launched ballistic missiles on Israel the US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller in his press briefing said,

> "This was a brazen, unacceptable attack by Iran, and every nation in the world must join us in condemning it … Israel has a right to defend itself, as any nation does. In terms of what Israel's response will be, of course there must be consequences for Iran for this attack. We've made clear that there must be consequences." (Miller Mathew, 2024)

Linguistic Descriptivism

The lexical choice often reflects the speaker's attitude and ideologies towards an event. In this particular statement negative connotations are quite prevalent which is reflected in words like "brazen" and "unacceptable". Here the phrase "there must be consequences" has been repeated twice, clearly emphasizing and threating Iran about the potential repercussion. Overall the statement is assertive in nature signaling the certainty and authority of the speaker.

Interpretation

Matthew Miller, the spokesperson for the US State Department, during the press briefing on 1st October 2024 communicated the US firm stance on the conflict of Iran and Israel. Through the statement Miller emphasizes the grave nature of Iran's actions and invites the world to condemn it while also assuring/showcasing/insuring the US unity and support with Israel by acknowledging its right of defense.

Explanation

The discourse reinforces the "us vs. them" dynamics by framing Iran as an aggressor and Israel as a defender which is evident through the use of pronoun "we" which is inclusive for Israel but at the same time exclusive for Iran. Similarly, the speaker while using the word "attack" twice doesn't highlight the nature of attack which might be provocative for the audience. Overall this narrative justifies and encourages the military or diplomatic responses and in turn perpetuating cycles of conflict instead of fostering resolution.

When Israel counter attacked on Iran, the reaction of USA was, "It is our aim to accelerate diplomacy and de-escalate tensions in the Middle East region. We urge Iran to cease its attacks on Israel so that this cycle of fighting can end without further escalation" (Savett Sean, 2024).

Linguistic Descriptivism

In this diplomatic response the use of positive connotations is prominent. The use of phrase like "cease its attacks" and "de-escalate tensions" hints at speaker's intent to stabilize the region by focusing on overall atmosphere of conflict, not just specific act of aggression. The phrase "we urge" signals a strong recommendation, delivered with authority, and functioning as a directive statement in nature.

Interpretation

The White House National Security Council spokesman Sean Savett in his statement on Israel attack on Iran on 26th October 2024 clarifies USA's objective of enhancing diplomatic relations and reducing the ongoing tension prevalent on the Middle East region and strongly recommend Iran to not react in order to end this cycle of fighting so that further destabilization in the region can be prevented.

Explanation

The discourse carries a peaceful narrative which focuses on the stability of region and acceleration of diplomacy. However, Iran has been projected as an 'aggressor' and instead of emphasizing mutual understanding and collaborative resolution only one party is being restrained.

When we analyze both of the discourses by the same country, a contrasting approach towards the same conflict is revealed. The first one is promoting conflict while the second one is advocating for the

peace in the region, yet both blaming only one party. The conflict-oriented statement uses aggressive language, such as "brazen" and "there must be consequences" and frames Iran as the primary aggressor and justifies the belligerent acts. While, the peace-oriented statement focuses on terms like "accelerate diplomacy" and "de-escalate tensions" and promotes stability in the region but still places the responsibility of the conflict's escalation on Iran. This consistent blaming of one side creates a sense of alignment with the defensive and nationalistic motive and reflects a strategic intent of shaping narrative by blaming only one party which might influence public perception and potentially shape the response of the conflict.

RUSSIA

Russia didn't give any reaction to the Iran attack on Israel. However, when Israel counterattacked the statement was released by Foreign Ministry on behalf of Russia. Which states,

> "The Foreign Ministry expresses its deep concern regarding the ongoing explosive escalation between Israel and the Islamic Republic. This situation poses a real threat to regional stability and security. We urge all the stakeholders to exercise restraint, stop violence and prevent the situation from sliding towards a grave disaster. It is high time that efforts to provoke Iran to respond cease. There must be an end to the spiral of uncontrolled escalation. Russia is ready to work with all the parties to de-escalate the confrontation." (Zakharova Maria, 2024)

Linguistic Descriptivism

The language used in this diplomatic response is of formal and neutral nature. Phrases like "exercise restraint, stop violence" and "de-escalate the confrontation" emphasis the measures to ensure peace and to avoid "grave disaster". The appeal "We urge all the stakeholders" is assertive yet maintains neutrality. The term "efforts to provoke Iran" subtly and indirectly imply the responsibility of conflict to the other party while avoiding the direct accusation. Overall the narrative encourages resolution while framing one side as instigator indirectly.

Interpretation

The Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, in her statement communicates the stance of Russia on Israel's attack on Iran. While expressing "deep concern" and recognizing the potential threats of the escalating war on the region she suggests the key players to cease aggression so severe calamities could be avoided. She also assures that Russia is ready to take measures to reduce the prevailing tension in the region.

Explanation

The discourse reflects on the peaceful narrative where involved parties are advised to stop the active aggression so that further escalation can be prevented. It also urges the stakeholders to promote conflict resolution through mutual diplomacy.

TÜRKIYE

Türkiye released its official press release on Iran attack on Israel on 26th October while preferred to remain silent on Iran's attack. The press release reads as under:

> We condemn Israel's attack on Iran in the strongest terms…It is now clear that putting an end to Israeli terror in the region has become a historic task to ensure international security and peace. We therefore call on the international community to take immediate action to enforce the law

and stop the Netanyahu government. As Türkiye, we reiterate that we do not want any further war, violence, and lawlessness in our region. For the restoration of peace in the Middle East, it is imperative that the countries of the region and non-regional actors act with reason and common sense.

Linguistic Descriptivism

The discourse consists of strong evaluative language. The use of the superlative degree of adjective such as "strongest terms" hints towards the intense disapproval of Israel attack on Iran. The loaded phrase "Israel terror" suggests the reinforcement of pejorative view of Israel where it is conflated with acts of terrorism. The repetition of *"region"* signifies the geographical focus and concern for broader implications. The use of authoritative language in phrases like "ensure international security and peace" and "enforce the law" suggest that a structured and lawful environment should be maintained for the "restoration of peace".

Interpretation

The press release of 26 October 2024 titled "Regarding Israel's Attack on Iran" and published/available on the official site of Ministry of foreign affairs of Türkiye intends to condemn Israel attack on Iran and to emphasis the need to put an end to the Israel's acts of terror in the Middle East in order to avoid further destabilization of the region. Furthermore, it urges the International community to enforce law and the countries and the non-state actors to act with reasons and so that peace can be restored in the region. Moreover, It also emphasis the fact that Türkiye doesn't want any war or violence in the region.

Explanation

The statement focuses on the ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, where Israel's actions are criticized. In this discourse the speaker is positioned as the proponent of peace by emphasizing the fact that international communities should take action and enforce the law to maintain international peace and security. Here the ideological stance assumes a binary opposition; Israel's actions as primary destabilizing force versus the speaker's stance as peace-promoting.

DISCUSSION

The first question is focused on how the peace and conflict narratives are framed by the diplomatic discourse. The analysis of the reaction statement to the Iran-Israel conflict suggests that the lexical choice used by USA portrays the contrasting nature towards the same conflict. It portrays Iran as an aggressor and completely acknowledges the defense right of Israel while ignoring the fact that Israel has been attacking the key Iranian diplomatic premises through its proxies (United Nations, 2024), instead of having a neutral approach as a mediator it is inclined towards Israel and its statement is more conflict oriented while promoting or encouraging Israel to counter attack and show consequences to Iranian actions. In contract, Türkiye statement portrays Israel as aggressor while hinting towards its previous atrocities and need to put an end. The statement is building a peaceful narrative and encourages the stakeholder to act responsibly for the stability of region. While, Russia has adopted a neutral approach to the conflict and its statement although uses the negative connotation but is more inclined towards building a peaceful narrative and Russia itself is ready to play the role in bringing back the peace in the region. These narratives suggest that the sociolinguistics strategies adopted by the speaker play a crucial role in shaping the peace and

conflict narratives which ultimately leads to the further escalation or de-escalation of the conflict and in turn impacting peace and security of the region.

While the first question dealt with the role of discourse in constructing peace and conflict narrative the second focuses on the ideologies and the power relations that shapes the discourse. The US and Israel have been strategic allies since the founding of Israel in 1948 and are persistent to maintaining a close US-Israel cooperation. The inclination towards Israel, prominent in the analyzed discourse, is shaped by the political and economic benefits for the US. The primary reason to support Jerusalem is to counter the influence of Russia and China in the middle east while maintain a significant strategic position in the region. Since 1985, the US has approved the grant of approximately $3 billion annually to Israel (Zanotti, 2015). The US and Israel have signed a free trade agreement, since 1985, which reduces the barriers and promote effective trade between the two countries (The US Embassy in Israel, n.d.). All these factors collectively collaborate in the formation of discourse. On the other hand, Türkiye being an Islamic state shares religious ideologies and sentiments with Iran. Supporting Iran can be considered as getting one step closer to achieving the dream of the revival of Ottoman Empire. Apart from that both the countries are on the same platform of opposing the western military presence in the Middle East. Türkiye Tehran is the major supplier of energy such as Petroleum and petroleum products (before May 2019), natural gas, agricultural products and metal products to Türkiye (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, n.d.). According to Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), during 2017, Türkiye had the largest net trade with Iran in the exports of Machines ($663M), Chemical Products ($537M), and Textiles ($259M). Hence the statement of Türkiye is influenced by its geopolitical goals, political and religious ideologies. Moving forward to Russia, its neutral narrative is shaped by its political, strategic and ideological ideas. Russia and Iran are the vital economic partners; Iran supplies Russia with the natural gas and in turn Russia exports arms to Tehran. The exports of Iran to Russia have increased at the annualized rate of 12.7%, from $318M in 2016 to $ 579M in 2021 (Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), n.d.). On the other hand, Israel and Russia are trade partners specifically in defense, intelligence and technology. Israel's high tech sector, particularly cyber security, is a main point of attraction for Russia. In 2022, Russia exported $359M to Israel and the main products exported were Diamonds ($104M), Plywood ($42.3M), and Raw Aluminum ($18.4M) (OEC, n.d.). By remaining neutral over the Iran- Israel conflict Russia ensures that its regional influence remains intact without alienating either side and in order to balance and preserve its strategic, economic, and geopolitical interests in the Middle East it stayed neutral over Iran-Israel conflict and shaped its discourse in a way that legitimizes its role as a mediator of peace without disrupting its regional influence.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusively, this study advocates for the pivotal role of discourse in promoting peace and conflict narratives. Through the use of Critical Discourse Analysis, it is obvious from this study that the narrative of USA was conflict oriented as it portrayed Iran as an aggressive country. This stance clearly states the fact that USA's strategic alliances are inclined towards Israel because of its trade. Additionally, the narrative of Turkey portrayed Israel as an aggressive country. This is evident from this narrative that because of similar Islamic ideologies, Turkey's sympathies were more inclined towards Iran. The language used by the Government official was negative, yet it was a peaceful

narrative. Moreover, the narrative of Russia was neutral, yet it was promoting peace because it acts as a mediator of peace on part of both the countries. Russia acts as a mediator of peace therefore its discourse is shaped on the basis of the ideological and political interests because Russia has strategic interests in both the countries i.e. Iran and Israel.

There are certain other aspects of this research study which can be studied by the future researchers. The speeches of Government officials are taken into consideration in this study but media discourse analysis is another crucial factor that plays significant role in shaping peace and conflict narratives, which paves way for the future researchers. Another aspect of this research is that the Iran-Israel conflict can be studied in a broader context and the future researchers can study the impacts of this conflict on other countries in their further research. Furthermore, similar patterns of analysis can also be followed while studying Israel-Palestinian conflict which can elevate the insights for the future researches.

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