Abstract – Media is considered as an important social institution in society as it is the main source of knowledge about what is going on across the world influencing people and shaping their points of view concerning a given event. More specifically, this study is a textual analysis of the coverage of an international event, the Palestinian membership in the United Nations as seen from two western media networks of CNN, and BBC. It investigates the discourse of each network regarding the Palestinian and Israeli people, through the two analytical angles of transitivity and Critical Linguistics to demonstrate that news is socially constructed and that reality in the press is more about opinions and propositions than facts.

Keywords – Critical discourse analysis, media discourse, Systemic functional grammar.

I. INTRODUCTION

Media language has been studied from different approaches (semiotics, content analysis, critical linguistics, and critical discourse analysis…) (Fairclough, 1995). These linguistic approaches have tried to unveil the ideologies that cover the news discourse and to prove that these ideologies constitute a prominent feature of this type of discourse (Fowler, 1981; Van Dijk, 1988; Bell, 1991; Fairclough, 1995).

A major role of the critical analyst as stated by Fairclough (1995) is to help the reader become aware of the tools used by powerful groups in society to exercise their control through discourse. In fact, the language we are exposed to as listeners or readers, is the product of control and domination issued by broadcasters and journalists to shape their own view. Starting with the micro analysis of grammatical features of the text, the analyst arrives at its macro analysis of social discursive practice.

In fact, various studies state that the media coverage of Palestine’s membership in the UN is biased and unbalanced. Thus, this study deals with the Palestinian bid to enter the UN reporting two famous media companies which have influence on people’s views of the event. These networks are the CNN (Cable Network News) and the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation).

II. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Wodak (2001) defines Critical Discourse Analysis as an approach “being fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (p. 2).

As for Van Dijk, CDA is a field that deals with analyzing written and spoken texts to unveil the discursive sources of power, dominance, and inequality. Hence he asserts: “critical discourse analysis is 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 the social and political context” (Van Dijk 2003, p. 352).

CDA is then defined as a field of linguistics which focuses on the connection between linguistic behavior and attitudes and concerns itself with the discursive practices that are typical of text and talk in any given society. Hart (2014) states that there are assumptions in both Critical Theory and Post-structuralism which assert that discourse is instrumental in the construction of society and that discourse analysis and CDA in particular may, in turn, be instrumental in its deconstruction (p.3). He argues that one crucial way in which language effects social actions and relations is through the ‘normalization’ of ideology. Hart (2014) also claims that models of grammar are useful for CDA. Martin (2000) points out that grammar provides critical discourse analysts with a technical language for talking about language- to make it possible to look very closely at meaning, to be explicit and precise in terms that can be shared by others, and to engage in quantitative analysis where this is appropriate (257-6).

III. CDA AND SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

Halliday’s functional grammar has been used as a tool for doing critical discourse analysis. The relevance of such a tool is based on the assumption that linguistic forms and choices convey social and ideological meanings as stated by Fairclough (2003), Systemic Functional Grammar (hence-forth SFG) is a valuable resource for critical discourse analysis and that the major contributions to CDA have developed out of SFG.

Similarly, Hart (2014, p. 6) defines the similarities between CDA and SFG. He asserts that both fields share fundamental commonalities which are not found between CDA and Generative Grammar (GG). Both SFG and CDA, for example, see language as a primary social resource. Both fields view the forms of language (at all levels) as well as the contents as meaningful. Besides, both see the relation between language and social contexts as dialectical where linguistic ‘choices’ (register) are governed by the communicative situation (setting), but those choices at the same time define the nature of the communicative event (genre), including the interpersonal relationship between participants. This dialectical view is extended in CDA where language is seen as constitutive not only of the immediate situational context but also of wider social structures and relations (Discourses) which, in their turn, determine ways of using language. Most fundamentally, both SFG and CDA examine language in relation to its performative purposes.

3.1. Transitivity

The transitivity system proposed by Halliday interprets the world experience into a set of processes. English transitivity system comprises three main types of processes: material, mental and relational. There are also three subsidiary types: behavioral, verbal and existential. Each situation type is made up of three components: a process, participants and circumstances. It is the kind of the process that determines the nature and number of participants.

Transitivity processes are made up of six major ones.

1- The material processes are ‘simply processes of doing’ (Simpson, 1993: 89). Participants may have an active or passive role. They may be the ‘doers’ or the ‘goal’. Sometimes, they are the ‘beneficiaries’, “the one to whom or for whom the process is said to take place” (Halliday, 1994: 144), or the ‘range’.

2- The mental processes are processes of ‘sensing’ (Simpson, 1993: 91) which can be processes of perception (see, hear), processes of reaction (like, fear) and processes of cognition (think, believe). The major participant is the ‘senser’ or ‘experiencer’ in Toolan’s words (1988: 114). The phenomenon is “that which is perceived, reacted to or thought about” (Simpson, 1993: 91).

3- The verbal processes or ‘processes of saying’ (Simpson, 1993: 90) where the participants may either be ‘sayers’ (the individual speaker) or ‘targets’ (the addressee) (ibid.) or ‘receiver’ (Martin et.al., 1997: 113; Thompson, 1996: 97; Toolan, 1988: 115). The ‘verbiage’ is the message both sayers and targets exchange.

4- The relational processes are defined by Halliday (1994: 119) as “processes of being” suggesting that one participant affects the other in anyway. They may be ‘intensive’ (x is A); possessive (X has A) or ‘circumstantial’ (X is at/on A). Participants are either ‘carriers’/attributants or ‘attributes’.
5- The existential “posits existence” (Benson & Greaves). It is usually “straight forward” as they are headed by the empty particle ‘there’.

6- The behavioral process draws aspects from verbal and mental processes. So sensing and saying are considered as behaviors for verbs like gossip, chat, watch, listen, grin, smile etc. Behavioral processes are similar to mental processes because one participant is endowed with human consciousness.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Since this study is concerned with unmasking the ideological practices used to produce power, dominance, and resistance, two approaches are used for the analysis of data: the socio-cognitive approach and the socio-cultural approach.

This study relies also on Halliday’s transitivity system as it tries to reveal how language structures can produce certain meanings and ideology which are not always explicit for readers.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Process types findings

Analysis of the types of processes in CNN corpus has shown that the kinds of actions that are frequently involved in are material, relational, and verbal.

![Fig 1: Process types in CNN corpus]

In other words, as presented in figure 1, actions of doing and happening (58.91%), then relational process type by 14.00% and in a lower proportion actions implying verbal production (13.25%). However, there is also use of processes that do not belong to the realm of actions but to that of the inner consciousness. These are mental processes and are the fourth in occurrence in this corpus by 9.15 %. Hence, the six grammatical process types were characterized by an uneven distribution in the CNN corpus. Indeed, the focus on actions and sayings is very significant vis-à-vis CNN’s attitude concerning the participants filing the role of actors and sayers.

Concerning the BBC data (Fig 2), the material process type is the most frequent type in the BBC corpus with 59.37%. The second type used is the verbal process type at around 18.07% followed by the relational process type with 10.54%. The percentage of the other three types: the mental, behavioral and existential process types are respectively 6.12%, 1.68% and 1.28%. The material process type in the BBC network is used to show the on going situation and to stress two main facts: the first one is associated to the event under study which is the submission of the bid for statehood in the United Nations. The second fact has to do with the opposition of the US and Israel and the importance of the US veto.
The second type of processes present in the corpus is the verbal type. The BBC network tries to state the two opposing viewpoints subjectively. On the one hand, the Palestinian leaders who are advocating their commitments to argue for their case in the United Nations and trying to get the support of other states who are already members in the UN. On the other hand, the Israeli leaders who are insisting on the drawbacks of the unilateral procedure of Palestinian Authority and arguing on the need to return to the negotiating table between the two sides.

Regarding the relational process type, the BBC subjectively states the opinions of the two sides concerning the Palestinian’s membership in the UN by describing the unilateral move of Palestinians to the UN and the symbolism of such initiative for the Palestinian who are hopeful about the support of other countries for their case, and the Israeli side who are opposing this membership with the support of the United States.

5.2. Findings related to Lexical Analysis

The analysis of the keyword lists obtained from the CNN, and BBC corpora led to the identification of two main categories under which most of the key keywords fall. These categories are as follow:

- Political aspect of the conflict
- Military aspect of the conflict

5.2.1. Political aspect of the conflict

The keywords related to the political aspect of the event under study, the Palestinian membership in the United Nations are: resolution, veto, vote, international law, peace talks, met, meetings. These keywords are present in the two subcorpus. The words veto and vote are associated with the US as they pertain to the importance of the US’s veto in the admission of Palestine in the United Nations. As stated by Browne (2014) “as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, the United States can play a key role in determining membership in the United Nations. It has a more limited role in determining membership in U.N. specialized agencies. A decision to admit a new member in these bodies is generally made by the entire membership, where each member—including the United States—has one vote”.

From the corpus, it is clear that the US is opposing the Palestinian bid. When reporting the event in the CNN, there is intention to insist on the fact that the Obama Administration is opposing this membership because they think that a Palestinian state would fail to bring peace and stability to the region. And also it will increase the tension and cause permanent instability to the region.
5.2.2. **The Military Aspect of the Conflict**

The words related to the military aspect of the Palestine-Israel conflict include words related to the agents and methods of violence. The following table presents the lexis related to Palestine and Israel in relation to who is responsible for the violent actions and what are the methods utilized by both sides in doing these actions.

**Table 1: Lexis related to violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CNN</th>
<th>BBC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methods of violence</td>
<td>Israeli bombing, act of terrorism, stone throwers, airstrikes, terror attacks, grad rockets, Hamas rockets, missiles, violence, lethal weapons, nuclear</td>
<td>Hamas rocket attacks, violence Palestinian rocket fire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Referring to the above table, concerning the agents responsible for violence between Palestine and Israel, the BBC list shows rather a negative image of Israel as it uses words like occupation, illegal, offensive, colonialial to refer to Israel, however, less negative image is associated to Palestine as it is referred to as militant groups.

For the CNN, there is a neutral image of Israel as the list includes words such as militant factions, Israeli Security forces, Israeli Defence Forces, Israeli settlers, Israeli soldiers, IDF, IDF forces, military operations, Israeli troops. These words are often used in relation to Israel and they do not reflect positive or negative connotations. In the other hand, sometimes Israel is referred to as military occupation, Israeli assault which has negative meanings. The Palestinians are referred to as fighters and military factions.

The language surrounding the Israeli military is important as in both networks, the CNN and BBC, Israeli military is referred to as Israeli forces. In this way, the power of Israel is highlighted. Even the Israeli military actions are referred to as offensive which also denotes the invasive power of Israel and implying a position of strength. In fact, the approach adopted in the CNN is to justify the Israeli negative actions by giving reasons for such actions. It is the Israeli troops, the legitimate defense of a nation under attack. Israelis are not terrorists or murders instead their military force has to protect the nation’s legitimate interests.

The second list includes the methods of violence related to the type of operations as well as the weapons used to carry out the act of violence, in the CNN corpus, as it is an Islamist group, Hamas’s actions of violence are referred to as ‘terrorist actions’. Indeed, the Palestinian factions are described as terrorists who conduct violent actions against Israel. The words terrorist and terror attacks are present only in the CNN corpus. This can be explained by the fact that CNN wants to reflect the image of Hamas as a radical Islamist group seeking to destroy Israel and this is the message this network seeks to spread to its audience.

Another point should be stressed is the reference to Iran and its nuclear weapon provided to Palestine in the CNN corpus. In fact, the reference to Iran nuclear weapons can reveal another major argument which can explain US’s opposition to Palestinian membership. The US fears from the ally between Palestine and Iran which will harm the security of America and Israel.

As for the BBC list, there are only hints to Palestine rockets and this explains the neutral position of BBC concerning the Palestine-Israel conflict. The BBC remains objective and reports in ways that enable its audience to make their own assessments about who is doing what to whom.
5.3. Naming Palestine

To better understand the ideological traces of the news, there must be an examination of the way the networks characterize the two sides Palestine and Israel. The focus in this section will be on the naming choices of Palestine. The following table shows the ways Palestine and its officials were referred to in the two networks.

Table 2: Naming Palestine in CNN and BBC corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Naming choices</th>
<th>Extreme Formal</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Ideological and stereotypical naming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Leader Mahmoud Abbas</td>
<td>Hamas</td>
<td>Hamas</td>
<td>Hamas, Fatah Islamist rivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Palestinian Authority Mahmoud</td>
<td>Mahmoud Abbas</td>
<td>Hamas</td>
<td>Hamas, the dominant group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Palestinian Leaders</td>
<td>Abbas</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Hamas fighters (cnn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Abbas</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Hamas</td>
<td>Hamas, the dominant of two Palestinian political group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Palestinian authority</td>
<td>Fatah</td>
<td>Hamas</td>
<td>Hamas, the main face of Palestine (cnn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian government</td>
<td>Palestinian</td>
<td>Militant</td>
<td>portions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Ambassador</td>
<td>Abu Mazen</td>
<td>Hamas</td>
<td>rockets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Liberation Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hamas</td>
<td>terrorists’ attacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rockets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of naming choices indicates that the two networks are extremely neutral or neutral when dealing with Palestinian Authority or Mahmoud Abbas, but when dealing with Hamas, the naming choices in the two networks are ideological or stereotypical. In addition, a significant association was found among the two networks in mentioning the political leaders of both sides either by name or title: the Palestinian Prime Minister Abbas (245 times) more often than the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu (65 times). In fact, for the CNN, Abbas is mentioned almost four times as often as Netanyahu. For the BBC, Abbas is mentioned almost three times as often as Netanyahu.

The frequent reference to Hamas more than Fatah in the corpus is significant as illustrated in figure. For the CNN and BBC, this fact reveals that these networks place the agency, causality and responsibility on Hamas and its destroying actions. Such representation is ideologically present because the CNN and BBC networks blame the ‘Islamist party’ for the terrorist attacks on Israel. Hence this islamist movement is blamed for the failure of the peace process and negotiation between Palestine and Israel.

Fig3: Reference to Hamas and Fatah in the two networks
Hamas as an Islamist movement is portrayed as a negative entity in the American media. In the CNN corpus, Hamas is responsible for ‘war crimes, sending missiles, creating fear and trauma for millions of Israelis’. However, Fatah is depicted as a secular, peace-oriented, non-violence committed political party. This dichotomy between the two political parties Hamas and Fatah who are battling for dominance within the Palestinian community reveals the division in the Palestinian community that the American media try to foreground.

VI. CONCLUSION

while the findings overall support two different orientations regarding this issue, viz. that CNN sides with a position of refusal on this bid, and the BBC with a rather neutral position, it would seem that the question is more complex than that. Indeed, there are also areas which are shared between the two channels; there are cases where CNN tries its best to show neutrality; there are also instances where the BBC shows some sympathy with the Palestinians, without altogether making it so flagrant that the Israeli side would take it very negatively. This is not very surprising, it would seem, as influential news stations also care about an image of objectivity and neutrality in spite of the editorial lines they might have and the agendas that guide them. By way of illustration, some of the findings in this study were to the effect that Palestine can be ‘doer’, judging by certain material processes found in the corpus. But on closer scrutiny, it was found that the verbs used were not very strong verbs of acting. When this was compared with the verbs used about Israel or the USA, most of these verbs were found to be related to strong actions, which again show the hidden agenda of the channel in spite of pointing to a sense of objectivity on the surface. In addition to this, the findings pertaining to verbal processes corroborate this complex pattern whereby, for example, the two stations emphasize the US power and its influence in the question, and where the CNN, for instance, attempts to foreground its neutrality through using verbs such as ‘tell’ and ‘say’ when reference is made to Palestine.

So while the general patterns appear to be bias and neutrality, relating to the CNN and the BBC respectively, one would need to be more careful in handling the data, and to lay bare the intricacies of media discourse, first in terms of description (the lowest level in Fairclough’s model), then in terms of the following, more complex stages, namely explanation and interpretation.

In addition, particular choices and selections are made by power holders at the level of lexis and vocabulary. The lexical categories to use or not to use are selected according to the ideological viewpoint of the network which is often adjusted by power elite. The specific lexis used by the networks has as objective to reflect a specific representation. In the case of the CNN network, the positive representation of the in-group and their allies typically applies to representing the Israeli side. One strategy adopted to mitigate Israeli acts is justifying these acts under the excuse of defending the right to exist.

The Palestinian is referred to as the out group who is represented negatively. The most obvious example which emphasizes Palestinian bad actions is the reference to Hamas terrorists’ attacks. This is further emphasized by ignoring the reference to the main reason for the conflict which is the Israeli illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. In fact, in the CNN network, Hamas is described as the Islamist movement responsible for the terrorist attacks on Israel, then, this movement is referred to as ‘the main face of Palestine’ in order to persuade the audience of the Palestinian bad actions and generalize the image to Palestine

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