



Framing Conflict through Euphemism and Dysphemism in Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern Media

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ABSTRACT

The Israel-Hamas conflict, claiming around 42,960 lives from October 2023 to September 2024, has received extensive international media attention with varying portrayals. While Western perspectives are widely examined, research on non-Western media remains limited. This study analyzes how Channel News Asia (CNA) in Southeast Asia and The National in the Middle East employ euphemism and dysphemism to frame public perceptions of the conflict. Using Allan and Burridge's typologies, this qualitative research examines 20 news articles from each outlet between October 2023 and September 2024. Through coding and categorization, it explores how language not only reports events but also shapes national and international discourse. Results reveal a significant difference in rhetorical approach: CNA predominantly uses dysphemisms, particularly to delegitimize Hamas, positioning the group as a threat to state and represent a very bad thing or condition. In contrast, The National employs more euphemisms to soften portrayals of Palestinian actions and emphasize humanitarian concerns, presenting Palestinians sympathetically and highlighting civilian impact. This strategy suggests alignment with pro-Palestinian narratives, aiming to evoke empathy from readers. This study contributes to media discourse analysis by examining non-Western framing of conflict, illustrating how euphemisms and dysphemisms act as ideological tools in shaping public opinion. Expanding the scope to include non-Western perspectives highlights the role of

regional media in influencing global narratives on sensitive geopolitical issues. Future research could apply this framework to similar rhetorical strategies in other conflicts and contexts.



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INTRODUCTION

Media plays a fundamental role in shaping public perception of conflicts through selective language use. News reporting not only provides information but also influences how audiences interpret political and military actions. In the case of the Israel-Hamas conflict, linguistic framing becomes a critical tool for constructing narratives that either justify or delegitimize actors involved in the war. Euphemism and dysphemism are among the most effective rhetorical devices in conflict reporting. Euphemisms soften language to reduce the emotional impact of controversial actions (Allan & Burrige, 1991; Burrige, 2012), whereas dysphemisms amplify negative connotations, portraying specific groups or events in a more extreme light (Allan & Burrige, 2006). The strategic use of these linguistic devices influences how conflicts are perceived by the public, shaping political attitudes and policy responses.

The recent escalation of the Israel-Hamas conflict, from October 7, 2023, to September 14, 2024, resulted in 42,960 deaths (AJLabs, September 18, 2024). This prolonged conflict has dominated international headlines, with media across various countries offering differing portrayals of the events. Western media outlets, for example, provide starkly contrasting depictions. The BBC (2023) refers to Hamas as Palestinian "freedom fighters," whereas the American Jewish Committee (2023) describes them as "Iran-backed terrorists" operating in the Gaza Strip. These conflicting portrayals reflect how media narratives are constructed to align with specific political and ideological perspectives. As Chomsky (2022) argues, mass media is not merely a conduit for information but a tool in the struggle for meaning, where those who successfully shape dominant narratives gain public legitimacy.

Linguistic choices in news reporting have a significant impact on shaping public perceptions of conflict. Euphemisms serve multiple functions, from making language more pleasant to reducing offense and maintaining political or social stability (Burrige, 2012). Allan and Burrige (1991) categorize

euphemisms into several types, including shortening, circumlocution, remodeling, semantic shift, and borrowing. Borrowing terms from other languages is particularly common in politically sensitive contexts, allowing media to obscure meaning while framing events in a way that aligns with a particular agenda. Conversely, dysphemisms are used to present individuals or groups in a more negative light (Veronika & Degaf, 2024). Allan and Burridge (1991) classify dysphemisms into eight forms, including taboo terms, obscene cursing, mocking animal comparisons, and discriminatory language. While dysphemisms can be used to express anger or humiliate opponents, they may also reinforce group identity or emphasize shared sentiments (Allan & Burridge, 2006).

While extensive research has examined conflict framing in Western media, studies focusing on non-Western media remain limited. Several investigations have revealed how linguistic choices shape narratives in Western outlets. For example, Sutkutė (2024) analyzed discourse surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict in 2023 in England (BBC) and Lithuania (LRT), showing that LRT often depicted Hamas and Palestinian citizens as threats, whereas the BBC focused on humanitarian aspects. Similarly, Neureiter (2017) examined news bias in the conflict's coverage across England, Germany, and the United States, finding that liberal media were more critical of Israel. In contrast, conservative outlets portrayed Israel as a defensive actor. Kareem (2023) compared Al Jazeera Arabic and Fox News, demonstrating that Al Jazeera framed Palestinians as victims of military aggression, while Fox News depicted Israel as a nation under siege by terrorist threats.

In addition to media discourse, euphemism and dysphemism have been widely used as political and rhetorical tools. Euphemisms are frequently employed in the media to mitigate public unrest, justify controversial actions, and stabilize national narratives (Ahmed & Jomaa, 2022; Alsayed, 2023; Fayyaz et al., 2023). Dysphemisms, on the other hand, have been strategically used in political discourse, notably by figures such as Donald Trump, to attack opponents, reframe negative actions, and manipulate public perception (Degaf et al., 2023; Olmat, 2020). Research indicates that the United States has historically relied on euphemisms to justify military interventions and frame its actions as necessary for maintaining global security (Ahmed & Jomaa, 2022; Alsayed, 2023). Similarly, Pakistan has employed euphemistic language to regulate public discourse and mitigate political unrest (Fayyaz et al., 2023).

These language strategies are not exclusive to media reporting but extend to broader ideological and political frameworks. Media has long been recognized as a propaganda tool that employs linguistic framing to align public opinion with political objectives (Kalinina et al., 2019; Wardana & Geubrina, 2024; Nartey &

Ladegaard, 2021). Euphemism and dysphemism, in particular, serve as rhetorical strategies that newspapers and digital platforms use to reach and influence a broad audience (Aytan et al., 2021). Choi (2020) and Elyas and Aljabri (2020) emphasize that dominant political ideologies are embedded within media discourse, while Habibi et al. (2022) and Nurjanah (2021) highlight the significance of word choice in news reporting, as even subtle shifts in language can dramatically alter audience interpretation. The way conflicts are reported varies significantly across regions due to differences in geography, culture, economic ties, and editorial policies (Fengler, 2020; Fatinova, 2024). These variations underscore the need for further research into how non-Western media outlets construct narratives s major geopolitical events.

Outside the realm of media discourse, euphemism has also been widely analyzed in literature and everyday social interactions. Tarigan and Marpaung (2023) examine how euphemisms facilitate the conveyance of sensitive topics in literature while maintaining readability. In socio-cultural contexts, Mudau (2023, 2024) examines how euphemisms soften discussions about death in the Vhavenḁa community, and Zegeye et al. (2023) investigate euphemisms related to sexual acts in Amharic. In political rhetoric, Campos-Delgado (2024) demonstrates how euphemisms have been employed to obscure Mexico's harsh migration policies, allowing the government to present restrictive policies in a more palatable manner.

Despite extensive research on euphemism and dysphemism across different disciplines, little attention has been given to how non-Western media, particularly in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, utilize these linguistic strategies to frame conflicts. While much of the literature has examined Western media narratives, the perspectives of outlets like Channel News Asia (CNA) and The National remain underexplored. Given the geopolitical significance of these regions, analyzing how their media frames conflicts provides crucial insights into how language shapes global discourse.

This study examines how Channel News Asia and The National employ euphemism and dysphemism in framing the Israel-Hamas conflict. The research seeks to identify specific linguistic strategies used by both outlets and analyze their implications for public perception. Two key research questions guide this study:

1. What forms of euphemisms and dysphemisms are employed by Channel News Asia and The National in reporting the Israel-Hamas conflict?
2. How do euphemisms and dysphemisms function in shaping public perception of the conflict?

The analysis focuses on 20 news articles from each outlet published between October 2023 and September 2024, using Allan and Burridge's (1991, 2006) framework to categorize euphemisms and dysphemisms systematically. The findings contribute to the broader field of media discourse analysis, offering insights into how non-Western media frames conflict narratives. Examining these linguistic choices underscores the influence of language in shaping public opinion and lays a foundation for future research on media rhetoric in conflict reporting.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design as it provides a deeper understanding of how language is used to shape public perception in media discourse. Given that euphemism and dysphemism function as rhetorical strategies that carry ideological and political weight, qualitative analysis allows for an interpretative approach that goes beyond mere frequency counts of linguistic features (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Silverman, 2020). This design is particularly well-suited for examining how media outlets use language to frame narratives, as it enables an exploration of the implicit meanings, ideological implications, and sociopolitical influences embedded in news coverage (Masduki et al., 2023). Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on numerical patterns, qualitative research is essential for capturing the discursive and contextual dimensions of language use, particularly in conflict reporting (Eldin, 2023).

Channel News Asia (CNA) and The National were selected for this study due to their extensive influence in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, respectively. CNA, headquartered in Singapore, is a major English-language news outlet that provides coverage of regional and global issues, including the Israel-Hamas conflict. It is widely referenced in policy discussions and academic studies on Southeast Asian media (Lim, 2022). Meanwhile, The National, based in the United Arab Emirates, is a key English-language news source in the Middle East, offering in-depth analysis of geopolitical events and playing a significant role in shaping public discourse on regional conflicts (Hammond, 2021). These outlets were chosen based on their reputation, audience reach, and the role they play in constructing regional narratives on international conflicts.

The study focuses on news articles published between October 2023 and September 2024, a period marked by the escalation of the Israel-Hamas conflict. The war began on October 7, 2023, following a large-scale attack by Hamas, prompting a prolonged Israeli military response. This period significantly influenced media framing. Selecting this timeframe ensures that the study captures how euphemisms and dysphemisms are employed in response to

significant political and military events, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of language use in real-time conflict reporting (Entman, 2019; Reese, 2021).

The data consists of 20 news articles from CNA and The National, with 10 articles selected from each outlet based on relevance to the conflict and their coverage of political and military developments. The study employs Allan and Burrridge's (1991, 2006) framework to analyze the forms and functions of euphemisms and dysphemisms while incorporating insights from more recent studies on media discourse and ideological framing (Burrridge, 2012; Crespo, 2020). Each euphemistic and dysphemistic expression was systematically coded, referencing specific instances (e.g., "CNA15122023-p2-l3" for content from CNA, December 15, 2023, second paragraph, third line) to streamline categorization and comparison between the two media outlets.

Data Analysis Procedures

This qualitative analysis goes beyond merely identifying euphemisms and dysphemisms, focusing on their subtle and implicit implications within rhetorical contexts. By examining how media outlets use language to achieve specific political, ideological, or cultural objectives, the analysis offers insights into the role of these rhetorical strategies in shaping public perception (Eldin, 2023). A tabular presentation of the findings was chosen to highlight the similarities and differences in the use of euphemisms and dysphemisms across various media platforms. This approach facilitates a comprehensive comparison, illustrating how each outlet's language choices influence national and international discourse on the conflict (Degaf et al., 2023; Jha, 2023). The strategic use of language in media not only reflects but also shapes public sentiment and political narratives, underscoring the power of discourse in shaping societal understanding (Anber, 2023; Gallois, 2024).

FINDINGS

This study found that Channel News Asia and The National have different forms of euphemism and dysphemism. From 20 news articles published in CNA and The National, it was found that each article contains euphemisms and dysphemisms based on the theory of Allan and Burrridge (1988, 1991, 2006) and Burrridge (2012). The differences in the number of euphemisms and dysphemisms used in both news media are presented in the table. The following section outlines the main findings that emerged from this comprehensive study:

1. Types of euphemism and dysphemism

1.1 Euphemism

In analyzing 20 news articles in CNA and The National, we used Allan and Burrridge's theory (1991). In this study, we found 4 types of euphemisms: 1)

Circumlocution, 2) Remodeling, 3) Semantic Change, and 4) Borrowing. Our analysis revealed 53 euphemisms in CNA and 65 in The National. The types of euphemisms are detailed in the table below:

Table 1.1 Types of Euphemism

No	Types of Euphemism	CNA	The National
1.	Shortening	-	-
2.	Circumlocution	17	20
3.	Remodeling	14	9
4.	Semantic Change	18	28
5.	Borrowing	4	8
Total		53	65

The analysis of euphemism usage in CNA and The National reveals distinct patterns in linguistic choices. *Semantic change* emerges as the most frequently employed euphemism type in both media outlets, indicating a strategic effort to subtly alter meaning for ideological or rhetorical purposes. *Circumlocution* follows as the second most utilized strategy, highlighting the tendency of both outlets to soften controversial terms through indirect expressions. While CNA employs *remodeling* more frequently than The National, the latter incorporates a higher number of *borrowings*, suggesting an inclination toward integrating external linguistic influences to frame conflict-related discourse.

These variations in euphemism usage reflect differences in how each media outlet frames the Israel-Hamas conflict. The preference for semantic change in both outlets suggests an attempt to reshape public perception through subtle lexical shifts. At the same time, the higher occurrence of remodeling in CNA aligns with its tendency to neutralize contentious expressions. Conversely, The National's greater reliance on borrowings could indicate a strategic effort to maintain cultural or historical connotations in its reporting. The specific examples of each euphemism type and their contextual implications are further elaborated in the following section:

Example 1: Circumlocution

Circumlocution is a strategy where indirect or elaborate expressions replace more direct terms (Campillo, 2006). Both CNA and The National employ circumlocution to frame contentious issues in a more subtle manner, thereby softening the impact of potentially controversial or sensitive topics.

CNA: Hamas officials cited long-simmering sources of tension between Israel and the Palestinians, including around the sensitive Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, which is sacred to both Muslims and Jews and remains at the emotional heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (CNA08102023-p14-l2)

The National: Food insecurity in northern Gaza has reached “catastrophic” levels and Israel’s closure of the Rafah border crossing in the south has further cut supplies at a critical time, a US official said on Thursday. (TN17052024-p1-l1)

In CNA, the phrase “sensitive Al-Aqsa Mosque compound” is used instead of directly referring to it as a conflict-ridden area. The word “sensitive” downplays the extent of violence in the region, making the situation appear less severe.

Similarly, The National uses the term “food insecurity” to refer to extreme famine conditions caused by the war. Instead of using emotionally charged words like “starvation” or “famine,” this euphemism minimizes the perceived severity of the humanitarian crisis while subtly shifting the focus to broader economic conditions.

Example 2: Remodeling

Remodeling involves modifying a word or phrase to make it appear more neutral or less emotionally charged (Maryadi et al., 2022). This technique is often used in military or political discourse to reframe events in a more acceptable manner.

CNA: the terrorist being neutralised shortly after (CNA31082024-p10-l4)

The National: Further deaths were also reported on Thursday, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) commander in Tulkarm Mohammad Abu Shuja'a, who was killed along with "fellow fighters" (TN29082024-p6-l3)

In CNA, the term “neutralized” is a remodeled version of “killed”, commonly used in military operations to depersonalize acts of violence. This choice of language presents the killing as a procedural or technical action rather than an act of force.

Conversely, The National uses “fellow fighters” instead of “terrorist group members” to describe the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) commander’s associates. This linguistic choice reframes the narrative, portraying them as part of an organized resistance rather than an extremist organization.

Example 3: Semantic Change

Semantic change occurs when a word’s meaning is altered or extended to serve a particular ideological or rhetorical function (Gibbs et al., 1989). In both CNA and The National, semantic shifts are used to reframe military actions and resistance efforts.

CNA: Since Friday, soldiers have concentrated their operations on the city of Jenin and its refugee camps (CNA01092024-p1-l2)

The National: Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades issued a statement claiming Mr Al Maqdah as a member and praising his role in “supporting the Palestinian people

and their resistance during the Battle of the Flood of Al Aqsa” (TN07102023-p5-12)

In CNA, the term “operations” replaces “military attacks” or “raids,” intervening sound methodical and necessary rather than aggressive. This subtle shift frames the Israeli military’s actions as strategic and controlled rather than violent or oppressive.

In The National, the term “resistance” replaces “military strike” or “attack,” portraying Hamas as a defensive force rather than an aggressor. This choice of wording aligns with pro-Palestinian perspectives, presenting their actions as justified rather than hostile.

Example 4: Borrowing

Borrowing involves incorporating foreign terms into a language, often to maintain cultural connotations or to soften sensitive issues (Dashti & Dashti, 2017). Both CNA and The National use borrowed terms to influence readers' perceptions of the conflict.

CNA: Hamas was founded in 1987 during the first Palestinian Intifada (CNA08102023-p2-11)

The National: The latest attacks came as the United Nations is slated to start vaccinating some 640,000 children in the Gaza Strip against polio on Sunday, a campaign that relies on daily eight-hour pauses in fighting between Israel and Hamas militants in specific areas of the besieged enclave. (TN16052024-p9-14)

The term “Intifada” in CNA is an Arabic loanword meaning “uprising” or “rebellion”. Rather than using the English equivalent, “rebellion”, which may carry more negative connotations, the term Intifada maintains its historical and cultural significance.

Meanwhile, The National uses “besieged enclave” to describe Gaza, borrowing a military term to emphasize the region's isolation and suffering. This phrase evokes sympathy and frames the humanitarian crisis in a way that aligns with Palestinian narratives.

1.2 Dysphemism

In addition to identifying the types of euphemism, researchers also examined the types of dysphemism used in CNA and The National. To conduct this analysis, researchers applied Allan and Burridge’s (1991) framework. Five types of dysphemism were identified in both media outlets. These types are: (1) taboo terms, (2) dysphemistic nicknames or greetings, (3) IST dysphemism, and (4) indicating terms that express ridicule or disrespect. A detailed explanation of these dysphemism types is provided in the table below.

Table 1.2 Types of Dysphemism

No	Types of Dysphemism	CNA	The National
1.	Taboo terms	11	30
2.	Obscene cursing and swearing	-	-
3.	Comparison of humans and animals	-	-
4.	Dysphemistic nicknames or greetings	44	3
5.	Swear by using terms obtained from abnormalities mentally	-	-
6.	-IST dysphemism	17	7
7.	Indicating terms ridicule or disrespect	10	11
8.	Use of terms borrowed from another language	-	-
Total		82	51

The analysis of dysphemism usage in CNA and The National highlights distinct patterns in their rhetorical strategies. CNA predominantly employs *dysphemistic nicknames or greetings*, suggesting a tendency to label individuals and groups in ways that delegitimize them within the conflict narrative. The National, in contrast, relies heavily on *taboo terms*, indicating a more direct and explicit approach in framing the conflict. The frequent use of *IST dysphemism* in CNA reflects an ideological positioning that categorizes certain actors within broad, often pejorative, classifications, while The National's reliance on *indicating terms of ridicule or disrespect* suggests an effort to undermine the credibility of opposing entities.

These differences in dysphemism usage reflect broader editorial and ideological tendencies in how each media outlet presents the Israel-Hamas conflict. CNA's preference for *dysphemistic nicknames* indicates a strategy of shaping public perception through pejorative labeling, reinforcing specific narratives about key actors. In contrast, The National's reliance on *taboo terms* and *indicating terms of ridicule* suggests a more confrontational stance, emphasizing the emotional and controversial aspects of the conflict. The specific examples of each dysphemism type and their contextual implications are further elaborated in the following section:

Example 1: Taboo terms

Taboo terms refer to words or phrases that are considered offensive, shocking, or highly negative (Stephens & Zile, 2017). Both CNA and The National use taboo terms to frame the actions of opposing groups in a more hostile manner.

CNA: (*Hamas*) releasing gruesome videos of militants dragging bloodied soldiers across the ground and standing over dead bodies, some of them stripped to their underwear. (CNA08102024-p10-12)

The National: Unverified videos circulating on social media from Gaza showed militants dragging the bodies of several Israeli soldiers into the streets in celebration. (TN07102023-p10-11)

In CNA, the phrase "dragging bloodied soldiers" and "stripped to their underwear" are used to emphasize the brutality of Hamas' actions. These words evoke a sense of horror and dehumanization, influencing public perception by portraying Hamas as excessively cruel.

The National, while describing the same event, uses a less graphic expression, simply stating "dragging the bodies." The omission of "bloodied" and "stripped" reduces the emotional intensity, suggesting a more neutral or detached tone while still highlighting the desecration of Israeli soldiers.

Example 2: Dysphemistic nicknames or greetings

Dysphemistic nicknames are used to negatively label individuals or groups, shaping readers' perceptions through emotionally charged language (Hastuti, 2024).

CNA: Israel said it had killed "14 terrorists" since Wednesday. (CNA19082024-p1-12)

The National: "If he wants to stay in power, the Prime Minister has to listen to the extremists within this government, and that's a problem because they are extreme and they do not represent the majority of the state of Israel." (TN22052024-p15-11)

In CNA, the term "terrorist" is used to label Hamas members, rather than "fighters" or "militants." This choice of words portrays Hamas as a threat and serves to delegitimize the group's actions, reinforcing Israel's justification for military operations.

Meanwhile, in The National, the term "extremists" is used by an Israeli citizen to describe right-wing politicians within Israel's government. This dysphemism marginalizes these politicians, suggesting that their views are radical and out of touch with mainstream Israeli society. The use of this word aims to create distance between the government and the general public.

Example 3: -IST dysphemism

-IST dysphemism refers to language that attributes negative characteristics to groups or individuals based on ideology, religion, or race, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and amplifying negative connotations (Gorčević, 2022). In this context, "IST" likely originates from the suffix "-ist," commonly used in terms such as sexist, racist, speciesist, classist, and ageist, all of which describe discriminatory attitudes or language toward specific groups (Allan & Burridge, 2006). Dysphemisms in this category are often used to create or reinforce

divisions by portraying certain groups as inherently inferior, dangerous, or oppressive.

CNA: *The troops were targeting a "mixture of terror groups and terror cells", he said* (CNA28082024-p11-l1)

The National: *Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Sunday said Israel's "current bloody aggression against the West Bank is part of its escalation scheme, driven by racist ideology".* (TN01092024-p9-l2)

In CNA, the repeated use of "terror groups" and "terror cells" classifies Palestinian resistance movements as inherently violent organizations. This framing not only dehumanizes the group but also helps justify military action against them.

Conversely, in The National, the phrase "racist ideology" is used to describe Israel's actions in Palestine. This dysphemism aligns Israel's policies with racism, reinforcing a narrative of systemic oppression. The term suggests Israel's aggression is ideologically driven rather than a response to security concerns.

Example 4: Indicating terms of ridicule or disrespect

These dysphemisms include phrases that mock, belittle, or undermine the credibility of individuals or governments.

CNA: *A woman who yelled "liars!" during Israel's presentation was removed by security guards,* (CNA08102023-p3-l1)

The National: *The "failing" government should be immediately replaced with elections if necessary or by another coalition formed within the Knesset, led by Yesh Atid, the second biggest party, she said.* (TN22052024-p16-l1)

In CNA, the word "liars!" is used by a protester to discredit Israel's claims directly. The explicit nature of the insult highlights public distrust towards the Israeli government's statements.

Similarly, The National refers to the Israeli government as "failing," suggesting incompetence and lack of legitimacy. The use of quotation marks around "failing" adds a sarcastic tone, indicating that this is a widely held or mockingly accepted belief.

2. Function of euphemism and dysphemism

2.1 Euphemism

After identifying the type of euphemism, the researchers then divided the function of euphemism based on Burrridge's theory (2012). Based on this theory, it was found 5 functions of euphemism were found to be used by both media, namely 1) protective euphemism, 2) underhand euphemism, 3) uplifting euphemism, 4) provocative euphemism, and 5) cohesive euphemism. Based on

the research, CNA has 54 functions of euphemism while the national has 68 functions of euphemism.

Table 2.1 Function of Euphemism

No	Functions of Euphemism	CNA	The National
1.	The protective euphemism	15	29
2.	The underhand euphemism	9	14
3.	The uplifting euphemism	9	8
4.	The provocative euphemism	20	12
5.	The cohesive euphemism	1	5
6.	The ludic euphemism	-	-
Total		54	68

From the data, it is evident that the National employs more euphemisms than CNA, particularly in *protective euphemisms*. This suggests a stronger tendency to soften distressing realities, possibly due to its regional political context. In contrast, CNA exhibits a higher use of *provocative euphemisms*, indicating a preference for reframing contentious issues to align with security and counterterrorism discourses.

Both media frequently use *underhand euphemisms*, which obscure the nature of events or downplay controversial actions. The National demonstrates a slightly higher use of *underhand euphemisms*, which may reflect its strategy of reframing Palestinian resistance in a more favorable light. Meanwhile, CNA shows a greater reliance on *uplifting euphemisms*, often used to reinforce positive perceptions of military engagements.

The use of *cohesive euphemisms* in The National highlights a rhetorical strategy aimed at fostering solidarity among Palestinian groups, whereas CNA rarely employs such tactics. This difference aligns with the ideological positioning of each outlet in reporting the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Example 1: The protective euphemism

Protective euphemisms soften the impact of distressing realities by using less confrontational language. These expressions reduce emotional intensity and prevent strong public reactions.

CNA: Israel vowed Thursday (May 16) to "intensify" its ground offensive in Rafah (CNA17052024-p1-l1)

The National: Food insecurity in northern Gaza has reached "catastrophic" levels and Israel's closure of the Rafah border crossing in the south has further cut supplies at a critical time, a US official said (TN17052024-p1-l1)

In CNA, the phrase "intensify" replaces more direct terms, such as "escalate" or "expand attacks." This wording obscures the violent consequences

of military action and presents it as a strategic move rather than an aggressive assault.

Meanwhile, in *The National*, "food insecurity" serves as a protective euphemism for famine and starvation. Through the use of this term, the media downplays the severity of the crisis while aligning the U.S. with a diplomatic stance rather than a direct critique of Israel's actions.

Example 2: The underhand euphemism

Underhand euphemisms can distort or obscure meaning, often serving to misrepresent events and advance political agendas.

CNA: Israeli Justice Ministry official Gilad Noam called South Africa's case, which accuses Israel of violating the Genocide Convention, "completely divorced from facts and circumstances". (CNA19082024-p2-l1)

The National: More than 5,000 rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel, Hamas's armed wing said. It announced it had started "Operation Al Aqsa Flood". (TN07102023-p20-l2)

In CNA, the phrase "completely divorced from facts and circumstances" functions as an underhand euphemism by dismissing genocide accusations without engaging with the claims. This choice of words seeks to create doubt and confusion among readers regarding South Africa's allegations.

Similarly, *The National's* use of "Operation Al Aqsa Flood" instead of "rocket attacks" frames Hamas' actions as a defensive military operation rather than an act of aggression. This euphemism positions Hamas as protectors rather than instigators.

Example 3: The uplifting euphemism

Uplifting euphemisms enhance positive perceptions of a particular group or action (Octavia et al., 2021).

CNA: "We have met explosives already in the first hours, and we have met real-time fire exchanged with terrorists engaging in battle," spokesman Nadav Shoshani told reporters. (CNA28082024-p10-l2)

The National: "The primary role of Mounir and Khalil [in Lebanon] was that they created the 'Popular Army' which is a group of Palestinian youth – around 500 people in Ain Al Hilweh camp alone, which is no small amount," said Zaher Abou Hamdeh (TN23082024-p7-l1)

In CNA, "real-time fire exchanged" is an uplifting euphemism that normalizes combat as a legitimate battle rather than a violent clash. By using "engaging in battle" instead of "attacking Israeli troops," CNA frames Israel's actions as defensive rather than offensive.

In *The National*, "Popular Army" replaces "armed civilian militia," reinforcing the image of an organized and respected resistance movement. This euphemism appeals to nationalistic sentiment and justifies the militarization of young Palestinian fighters.

Example 4: The provocative euphemism

Provocative euphemisms aim to redefine controversial terms in a way that removes stigma or legitimizes actions.

CNA: *But while Israeli military operations have become a daily occurrence in the West Bank* (CNA31082024-p1-l2)

The National: However, the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades issued a statement claiming Mr Al Maqdah as a member and praising his role in "supporting the Palestinian people and their resistance during the Battle of the Flood of Al Aqsa" (TN23082024-p14-l3)

In CNA, the term "operations" replaces "military raids" or "armed incursions," making these activities appear routine and necessary. This wording helps normalize military presence in the West Bank.

Conversely, *The National* describes Hamas attacks as "resistance," portraying them as a justified struggle rather than acts of war. The phrase "supporting the Palestinian people" removes negative connotations and presents Hamas fighters as defenders rather than aggressors.

Example 5: The cohesive euphemism

Cohesive euphemisms reinforce solidarity within a group and strengthen shared identity.

CNA: *Israel's retaliatory military campaign has killed at least 40,602 people in Gaza* (CNA28082024-p31-l1)

The National: Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) commander in Tulkarm Mohammad Abu Shuja'a, who was killed along with "fellow fighters", the group confirmed in a statement. (TN29082024-p6-l3)

In CNA, a "retaliatory military campaign" legitimizes Israeli attacks as a response rather than an offensive strike. This term implies justification and shifts responsibility away from Israel.

Similarly, *The National* describes combatants as "fellow fighters," reinforcing a collective identity among Palestinian forces. This choice of words evokes solidarity and shared struggle rather than individual militancy.

The variation in euphemism functions between CNA and *The National* underscores their distinct editorial approaches in framing the Israel-Hamas conflict. The preference for *protective euphemisms* in *The National* suggests a strategic effort to soften portrayals of violence, whereas CNA's reliance on

provocative euphemisms reflects an inclination toward justifying military responses.

The frequent use of *underhand euphemisms* in both outlets demonstrates how language is manipulated to influence audience perceptions, with CNA emphasizing security narratives and The National leaning toward resistance discourses. *Uplifting euphemisms* in CNA reinforce a positive portrayal of military actions, while *cohesive euphemisms* in The National strengthen group identity among Palestinian actors.

2.2 Dysphemism

After identifying the types of dysphemism, the researchers analyzed their functions based on Allan and Burridge's (1991) framework. The analysis identified six primary functions of dysphemism used in both media: to humiliate others, to characterize the identity of a group, to show anger, to emphasize something or a condition, to state and represent a very bad thing or condition, and to express astonishment. The findings indicate that CNA employed dysphemism more frequently, with 134 instances, compared to 57 instances in The National. This difference suggests that CNA tends to use stronger language to delegitimize specific groups, while The National employs dysphemism more selectively, likely to highlight the severity of certain events. A detailed explanation of these dysphemism functions is provided in the table below.

Table 2.2 Functions of Dysphemism

No	Functions of Dysphemism	CNA	The National
1.	used to humiliate others	47	8
2.	to characterize the identity of a group	51	5
3.	to show anger	3	5
4.	to emphasize something or a condition	18	23
5.	to state and represent a very bad thing or condition	13	10
6.	to show closeness in friendship	-	-
7.	to express astonishment	2	6
	Total	134	57

From the data, it is evident that CNA uses dysphemisms more frequently than The National, particularly in the categories of humiliating others and characterizing group identity. This pattern suggests a firmer tendency in CNA to frame groups negatively, which aligns with security-focused narratives that portray certain actors as threats. In contrast, The National employs dysphemisms

more selectively, often emphasizing conditions or expressing astonishment, which suggests an effort to highlight the humanitarian impact of the conflict.

The use of dysphemisms to humiliate others is more prevalent in CNA, where terms such as *terrorist organization* are frequently applied to Hamas, reinforcing a negative perception. Meanwhile, The National employs this function sparingly, with terms such as *failing government* used to critique Israeli leadership rather than delegitimize specific groups.

Both media use dysphemisms to characterize the identities of groups, though CNA applies this strategy more frequently. CNA's framing of Hamas as a *terrorist organization* contrasts with The National's use of terms such as *bloody aggression* and *racist ideology* to critique Israel's actions.

In terms of emphasizing conditions, The National surpasses CNA by using dysphemisms to underscore humanitarian crises, as seen in phrases like *spectacular destruction* to describe Israeli military actions. This framing contrasts with CNA's focus on security concerns, such as its use of *colossal failure* to describe Israel's intelligence shortcomings.

Example 1: used to humiliate others

Dysphemisms used to humiliate others aim to discredit, insult, or delegitimize individuals or groups by portraying them in an extremely negative light.

CNA: *Hamas is designated as a terrorist organisation by Israel, the United States, European Union, Canada, Egypt and Japan.* (CNA28082024-p8-l1)

The National: *The "failing" government should be immediately replaced with elections if necessary or by another coalition formed within the Knesset, led by Yesh Atid, the second biggest party, she said.* (TN22052024-p16-l1)

In CNA, the term "terrorist organization" is used to delegitimize Hamas and reinforce negative perceptions of the group. This label positions Hamas as a violent and unlawful entity, justifying Israeli military actions against them.

In contrast, The National employs "failing government" as a dysphemism to criticize Israel's political leadership. This phrase portrays the Israeli administration as incompetent, undermining its legitimacy and authority.

Example 2: Characterize the identity of a group

This function of dysphemism is used to frame a group's identity negatively, shaping public perception.

CNA: *Hamas is designated as a terrorist organisation by Israel, the United States, European Union, Canada, Egypt and Japan.* (CNA28082024-p8-l1)

The National: *Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on Sunday said Israel's "current bloody aggression against the West Bank is part of its escalation scheme, driven by racist ideology"* (TN01092024-p9-l2)

In CNA, the label "terrorist organization" is used again to define Hamas in a criminal and violent framework, reinforcing negative stereotypes.

Meanwhile, The National describes Israel's actions as "bloody aggression" and attributes them to "racist ideology." This characterization aligns Israeli policies with systematic oppression, reinforcing the idea of ethnic discrimination in its military campaigns.

Example 3: Showing anger

Dysphemisms used to express anger highlight strong emotions of frustration or resentment.

CNA: Israelis had assumed that their intelligence services would be able to alert the army to any major attack or invasion well in advance. That colossal failure still haunts the legacy of then-Prime Minister Golda Meir (CNA08102023-p5-l1)

The National: "We decided to put an end to all the crimes of the occupation (Israel), their time for rampaging without being held accountable is over," the group said. (TN07102023-p21-l2)

In CNA, the term "colossal failure" shows the anger and frustration of Israeli citizens over the government's failure to stem Hamas attacks. The use of this phrase influences readers to see Israel's condition as a weak region, which can trigger feelings of disappointment or doubt the effectiveness of its security. CNA frames this news using dysphemism to emphasize the anger directed at Israel.

Meanwhile, in The National, the phrase "time to rampaging" reflects pro-Palestinian anger over Israeli attacks that seem to rage because they were attacked on October 7 by Hamas. However, Israel did not calculate the effects of its attacks on Palestine in previous years. This term describes the strong emotions in responding to Israel. This term directs the reader's opinion in understanding the flow of the conflict as if Hamas was the party that started it first.

Example 4: Emphasize something or a condition

This function of dysphemism is used to intensify the severity of a situation.

CNA: An Israeli siege on Gaza has brought dire shortages of food as well as safe water, medicines and fuel for its 2.4 million people. The threat of famine hangs over parts of the war-ravaged territory. (CNA17052024-p26-l2)

The National: One lawyer compared Israel's "spectacular destruction" of Rafah to the genocide of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995 (TN16052024-p9-l1)

In the CNA example, humanitarian conditions are described with dysphemism. In the statement of "the threat of famine", CNA emphasizes the

serious threat of a humanitarian crisis. The reader's opinion can be focused on the aspect of humanism and compassion for the victims of war.

The National expresses other war conditions by using the phrase “spectacular destruction”. Lawyers utter this language strategy to frame Israel's actions as very cruel by equating them with genocide. This sentence emphasizes the cruelty of war conditions, and public opinion can lead to compassion and lead to blaming Israel's actions.

Example 5: state and represent a very bad thing or condition

This function of dysphemism highlights catastrophic events or extreme circumstances.

CNA: South Africa accused Israel on Thursday of stepping up what it called a "genocide" in Gaza, urging the court to order a halt to Israel's assault on Rafah. (CNA18052024-p2-l2)

The National: Israel's attack on Rafah is part of an “endgame” in which Gaza is “utterly destroyed” as a place fit for human life, the UN's highest court was told on Thursday. (TN16052024-p1-l1)

The use of the word “genocide” indicates a severe condition. A South African politician uttered this sentence and is aimed at Israel's actions in Rafah. This word influences readers to see this conflict not just as an effort to defend territory but to frame gross human rights violations committed by Israel.

Meanwhile, the word “endgame” describes the situation and despair of civilians who are victims of war. The national media frame this news with a humanitarian perspective in Palestine by incorporating a language strategy aligned with the UN. This word influences readers in seeing the conditions of Palestine and can move feelings of compassion to social support actions.

Example 6: express astonishment

Dysphemisms can also be used to convey shock or disbelief regarding a situation.

CNA: Israel's Gaza campaign has since demolished swathes of the enclave, and killed more than 40,500 people, Palestinian health officials say. (CNA30082024-p20-l2)

The National: The UN World Food Programme said in a post on X on Thursday that the threat of famine has “never loomed larger”, and that stocks of fuel and food would run out in days. (TN17052024-p27-l2)

CNA uses the word "killed" and pairs it with numbers reaching tens of thousands to emphasize the surprise in a negative frame. The mention of a high death toll serves as an example of dysphemism in this context. This framing influences the readers' perception, leading them to view Israel's actions in

attacking Palestine as excessively cruel. Additionally, it highlights potential international human rights violations committed by Israel in Gaza.

Astonishment is also conveyed through the depiction of starvation conditions in Palestine. By stating that the "threat of famine has never loomed larger," the report evokes a heightened sense of humanitarian awareness regarding the crisis in Gaza. Readers may also be astonished by the response of international organizations in addressing this issue.

The variation in dysphemism functions between CNA and The National underscores their distinct editorial approaches in framing the Israel-Hamas conflict. CNA's higher frequency of dysphemisms, particularly those used to humiliate others and characterize group identity, reflects a narrative focused on security concerns and counterterrorism discourses. In contrast, The National's selective use of dysphemisms, particularly in emphasizing conditions and expressing astonishment, aligns with its strategy of highlighting the humanitarian impact of the conflict.

CNA frequently employs dysphemisms to cast Hamas in a negative light, while The National emphasizes Israel's actions as oppressive. This difference in language use demonstrates how media outlets deliberately shape their narratives to reflect specific ideological and geopolitical positions.

DISCUSSION

This study examines the form and function of euphemism and dysphemism in non-Western media and their role in framing public perceptions of the Israel-Hamas conflict. The findings indicate that The National employs more euphemisms than CNA, using language that softens reality, emphasizes humanitarian aspects, and attracts reader sympathy. In contrast, CNA relies more heavily on dysphemisms, which serve to underscore the severity of the conflict and delegitimize specific groups. These results align with previous research, suggesting that media strategically employ language to shape public narratives, either mitigating or intensifying particular perspectives depending on ideological and political considerations.

The linguistic strategies adopted by CNA and The National reflect broader ideological and political undercurrents that influence media narratives. CNA, operating in a Southeast Asian context that balances diplomatic ties with Israel and Middle Eastern nations, selectively employs dysphemisms about organizations like Hamas. This approach aligns with regional political discourse, where counterterrorism and security concerns significantly shape public narratives (Jha & Kumar, 2023). Research suggests that media framing often reflects dominant political ideologies, reinforcing perceptions of extremism and national stability (Ozymenko & Larina, 2021). CNA's characterization of Hamas

through dysphemistic language is consistent with this pattern, presenting the group as a security threat while reinforcing a regional narrative that prioritizes counterterrorism (Jian, 2024). These linguistic choices suggest a deliberate strategy to align with audience concerns regarding extremism, further shaping public perceptions in favor of regional stability (Doménech-Beltrán, 2024).

A contrasting linguistic pattern emerges in *The National*, a media outlet based in the United Arab Emirates, which operates within a media environment more sympathetic to Palestinian narratives. The frequent use of euphemisms when describing Palestinian resistance movements and civilian casualties reflects a broader regional sentiment that traditionally supports the Palestinian cause, even as the UAE maintains diplomatic ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords (Abualrob & Yousef, 2024; Huda et al., 2022). The framing choices in *The National* contribute to a narrative that fosters empathy toward Palestinian actors while critically portraying Israeli military actions. This approach aligns with research suggesting that media narratives are shaped by national contexts and political orientations, particularly in coverage of conflicts involving Gaza (Amer, 2022; Priya, 2024). The way Palestinian experiences are framed in Arab media further influences public perception and international discourse, reinforcing portrayals of Palestinians as victims of prolonged occupation and conflict (Barari & Yacoub, 2024; Hashish et al., 2023).

The variations in language use between CNA and *The National* are not incidental but are shaped by institutional and geopolitical influences. Media framing is closely linked to political ideology, media ownership, and national diplomatic agendas, factors that strongly determine how conflicts are reported (Martin & McCrain, 2019; Murray & Nyberg, 2020). The degree of state influence and media regulation is particularly significant in non-Western contexts, where press freedom varies widely and reporting is often aligned with national foreign policy objectives (Peterson, 2020; Kalinina et al., 2019). The framing strategies observed in CNA and *The National* suggest an ongoing effort to balance journalistic reporting with the broader political and diplomatic realities that define their respective regions.

Building on previous studies of media coverage of the Palestine-Israel conflict, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of linguistic strategies in conflict framing. Studies by Sutkutė (2024), Neureiter (2017), and Kareem (2023) highlight how Western media portray the conflict through varying lenses, often influenced by political affiliations and cultural perspectives. This study expands on such analyses by examining how non-Western media engage in similar rhetorical framing, demonstrating that euphemisms and dysphemisms serve as ideological tools that reinforce specific perspectives while suppressing alternative narratives. These findings align with research by Ahmed

and Jomaa (2022), Alsayed (2023), and Fayyaz et al. (2023), which emphasize how euphemisms shape public perceptions of conflict, as well as studies by Degaf et al. (2023) and Olimat (2020), which highlight the role of dysphemism in delegitimizing opponents.

The broader implications of these findings suggest that non-Western media play an increasingly prominent role in shaping global discourse on conflicts. While Western media have traditionally dominated narratives surrounding international conflicts, Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern media outlets now contribute perspectives deeply rooted in regional politics and historical contexts. As Fengler (2020) and Fatinova (2024) suggest, media discourse is influenced by cultural, economic, and geopolitical factors, all of which shape how conflicts are framed and interpreted by different audiences.

From a linguistic perspective, this study reinforces the argument that euphemisms and dysphemisms are not merely stylistic choices, but rather function as deliberate rhetorical strategies intended to achieve specific communicative goals. These findings support the perspectives of Aytan et al. (2021), who argue that euphemisms and dysphemisms in news media function as tools of political persuasion. Similarly, Choi (2020) and Elyas and Aljabri (2020) emphasize that media discourse reflects dominant ideologies, shaping public perception through language choices. In the case of CNA and The National, linguistic framing serves as an indicator of broader ideological alignments, where language is strategically employed to navigate the complex political landscape of their respective regions.

Beyond political and journalistic implications, these findings resonate with research in cultural and literary studies. The National's use of euphemisms for military actions mirrors literary and cultural approaches that soften harsh realities, making them more palatable to audiences. This aligns with research by Tarigan and Marpaung (2023) on euphemisms in literature and Mudau's (2023, 2024) studies on euphemisms in social interactions, which demonstrate how indirect language is used to reframe sensitive topics. Similarly, this study parallels Campos-Delgado's (2024) research on euphemisms in political rhetoric, illustrating how language can obscure controversial policies and reshape public discourse.

The findings of this study emphasize the importance of media literacy in conflict reporting, particularly in non-Western contexts where linguistic choices align closely with geopolitical, ideological, and diplomatic factors. The strategic use of euphemisms and dysphemisms reflects broader political alignments that shape how conflicts are framed for different audiences (Al-Radhi, 2019; Mirrlees, 2023). Since language influences public perception, engaging critically with media discourse is necessary to understand the rhetorical strategies embedded

in news narratives (Soriano et al., 2019; Schlessinger et al., 2024). Analyzing media outlets such as CNA and The National reveals how non-Western media actively shape global discourse, providing alternative viewpoints that either challenge or reinforce dominant international narratives (Harlow et al., 2022). Future research could build on this analysis by examining a wider range of regional media outlets, particularly in contexts where state influence, media ownership, and ideological positioning significantly impact editorial policies and language framing in conflict reporting.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research, CNA and The National have different patterns of euphemism and dysphemism. CNA uses more dysphemism while The National uses more euphemism. These two differences stem from the fact that each medium has its own ideology and distinct geographical conditions. Euphemism and dysphemism can effectively build public perception, so they are often used by political or military actors. For example, the national uses euphemism to soften military actions while CNA often uses dysphemism to label Hamas. This finding emphasizes that language has an important role in shaping public narratives, especially in international conflicts.

This study makes significant contributions to the analysis of euphemism and dysphemism in media framing of conflict. The findings reveal that CNA employs dysphemisms more frequently, particularly in negative portrayals of Hamas. At the same time, The National relies more on euphemisms to soften descriptions of military actions and emphasize humanitarian concerns. These linguistic strategies reflect the ideological stance and regional positioning of each media outlet. The study also demonstrates that euphemisms and dysphemisms are not merely linguistic choices but serve as rhetorical tools to shape public perception and align media narratives with specific political or ideological agendas. Analyzing Channel News Asia and The National highlights how regional media influence both local and global discourse on conflict through strategic language use, offering new insights into the underexamined role of non-Western media in shaping international narratives.

However, this study has limitations, as it examines only two media sources within a specific time frame. It does not explore other conflicts or analyze how the use of dysphemisms and euphemisms may evolve. Future research could expand the scope by including media from a broader range of countries, particularly in Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe, to compare how different geopolitical contexts influence the framing of conflict in media. Additionally, a longitudinal study could examine how euphemism and dysphemism usage shifts in response to changing political climates, diplomatic

relations, or military developments. Further research could also employ corpus-based quantitative methods to track linguistic trends across a larger dataset, providing more generalizable insights into the role of media rhetoric in shaping public perception. Finally, investigating audience reception through surveys or discourse analysis of social media reactions could offer a deeper understanding of how these linguistic choices influence public opinion.

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