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Narrative Reframing in Conflict Subtitling: Al Jazeera's *Nuseirat 274: The Hostages Massacre* English Translation

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Abstract

This paper investigates narrative reframing in the English subtitling of Al Jazeera's *Nuseirat 274: The Hostages Massacre*, a documentary capturing a controversial Israeli military operation in Gaza. Applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to the source text and Mona Baker's framing model to the target subtitling, the study analyses how ideologically charged Arabic expressions—relating to hostages, resistance, and civilian casualties—are subtitled for an international audience. The results reveal extensive employment of selective appropriation framing strategy which systematically neutralizes or recontextualizes emotionally potent and politically loaded terminology. Terms that carry cultural reference such as "martyr" and "captive," are transformed in subtitling into more sanitized or ambiguous English equivalents, thereby softening the original narrative's impact. Subtitling further legitimizes military actions and depoliticizes Palestinian suffering by foregrounding humanitarian generalities and omitting specific agency or context. The results emphasize the role of subtitling as an agent of ideological mediation, rather than as an inert linguistic mode of transfer, with radical implications as regards to cross-cultural representation of conflict and trauma. The paper recommends increased consideration of the ambiguities of audiovisual translation (particularly in real time violent and humanitarian crises) combined with critically informed and culturally informed subtitling techniques to support responsible conflict mediation.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); conflict subtitling; framing strategies; ideological mediation and narrative reframing; *Nuseirat 274: The Hostages Massacre*.

إعادة تأطير السرد في سترجة النزاع: الترجمة الإنجليزية لفلم الجزيرة النصيرات 274: مجزرة الرهائن

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الملخص:

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية إعادة تأطير السردية في السترجة الإنجليزية للفيلم الوثائقي لقناة الجزيرة النصيرات 274: مجزرة الرهائن، والذي يوثق عملية عسكرية إسرائيلية مثيرة للجدل في غزة. وبالاستعانة بتحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA) للنص الأصلي، ونموذج "منى بيكر" للتأطير في الترجمة، يحلل البحث كيفية ترجمة التعبيرات العربية ذات الطابع الأيديولوجي—والمترجمة بالرهائن، والمقاومة، والخسائر المدنية—إلى اللغة الإنجليزية حيث تستهدف السترجة الجمهور العالمي. تظهر النتائج استخداماً واسعاً لاستراتيجية التأطير بالاستحواد الانتقائي، والتي تعتمد على نسق منهجي لتحديد المصطلحات ذات الطابع العاطفي والسياسي أو إعادة صياغة سياقها. يتم تحويل المصطلحات التي تحمل دلالات ثقافية مثل "شهيد" و"أسير"، في السترجة إلى ترجمات إنجليزية أكثر انتقائية، مما يخفف من أثر السرد الأصلي. وتسهم السترجة كذلك في إضفاء الشرعية على الأفعال العسكرية، وتجريد معاناة الفلسطينيين من بعدها السياسي، من خلال التركيز على عموميات إنسانية، وتغيب الفاعلية والسياق المحدد. تعكس النتائج دور السترجة كعامل فاعل في إعادة تشكيل سردية أيديولوجية، لا وسيلة لغوية محايدة، مع ما يحمله ذلك من تبعات هامة في تمثيل الصراع والصدمة عبر الثقافات. توصي الورقة بزيادة الوعي بالغموض في الترجمة السمعية البصرية (لا سيما في سياقات الأزمات العنيفة والإنسانية الفعلية)، وبالاعتماد على تقنيات سترجة نقدية وواعية ثقافياً للمساهمة في نقل الصراع بمسؤولية.

كلمات مفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب النقدي (CDA)؛ السترجة في سياق النزاع؛ استراتيجيات التأطير؛ إعادة تشكيل سردية موجهة أيديولوجياً وإعادة تأطير السرد؛ نصيرات 274: مجزرة الرهائن.

1. Introduction

Subtitling of documentaries describing events of real time military operations, e.g., *Nuseirat 274: The Hostages Massacre* is important in the formation of international perceptions of military conflict. Notwithstanding the political statement that has not been discussed in the movie, the film deals with an operation of the Israeli military to rescue hostages in the Nuseirat refugee camp, which is of a humanitarian and military importance. Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is not a transparent medium, which may alter perceptions of actions taken, participants, and casualties in a non-Arabic-speaking audience (Baker, 2006; Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2014). In this regard, there is a need to explore subtitling politics with respect to how ideologically-loaded or sensitive terms like acknowledging the presence of hostages, resistance fighters and civilian casualties may be mediated linguistically and narratively. It has also been observed that subtitling in conflict situations is typically concerned with strategies such as re-labelling, omission, and euphemism that have the potential to reframe violence and humanitarian suffering (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021; Gamal, 2014). Examining these subtitles, it is possible to stimulate the comprehension of life-and-death incidents framing around translation. This can affect the perception of the audiences regarding military acts and their effect on the citizens.

The events of this documentary revolve around the risk taken by rescuers in a congested refugee camp that resulted in a number of fatal deaths to the civilians. *Nuseirat 274* documents the activity of the military forces and suffering that was encountered. Other issues like the number of civilians killed, the displacement and trauma within a tight-packed camp of refugees are major problems of consequential representation and translation in crisis scenarios (Bosseaux, 2023; Federici & O'Brien, 2020). Choices in subtitling influence the sharing of real-life experiences of trauma between languages. Existing studies have shown that translators in emotional and sensitive movies have a responsibility of portraying the survivors veraciously, yet they must not use any language to demean their suffering (Bosseaux, 2025c). The moral decisions that subtitlers have to make are whether to accentuate or tone down local accounts of violence and perseverance (AlShaye, 2025; Bosseaux, 2025c). The subtitles of this documentary demonstrate how the representation of humanitarian crises in the outside world of Gaza turns out.

2. Study rationale

Set during the Gaza war, *Nuseirat 274: The Hostages Massacre* encapsulates a time of great military escalation, civilian displacement and conflicting stories of collective resistance and security. Devoid of explicit political statements, the documentary still overlaps with the implications of a larger political discourse in its subtitled portrayal of an Israeli rescue operation amid a heavily populated refugee camp. Subtitles in these situations are not only linguistic transports, but mediums of narrative mediation, which act to shape international understandings of war, humanitarian impact and validity of force (Baker, 2006; Valdeón, 2024). This study positions subtitling as a form of framing—raising questions about how meaning is constructed or suppressed when conflict narratives travel across languages and cultures.

3. Statement of the problem

This paper focuses on how the issue of cross-cultural representation of humanitarian suffering in conflict related documentaries is affected by subtitling. In particular, it explores the way

emotionally and ideologically loaded terms, such as hostages, civilians, and resistance, are mediated through English subtitles in *Nuseirat 274*. Although there is a growing body of research on trauma-sensitive and narrative approaches to AVT (Bosseaux, 2025c; Kadi, 2025), none has focused on the real-time effects of such strategies in war-zone documentaries that have a high emotional value. This gap is crucial due to the existence of ethical and political pressure as subtitlers might distort, euphemize, or delete traumatic experiences. By examining a politically sensitive, real-time military event, the current study addresses how subtitling functions not only as translation but also as a mode of ideological location and emotional manipulation.

4. Objectives:

- To analyse expressions from *Nuseirat 274: The Hostages Massacre* through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), focusing the portrayal of humanitarian suffering, accounts of military operations, and the allocation of roles to participants.
- To identify and analyse the subtitling strategies applied in the English subtitles using Mona Baker's framing model, with particular attention to how narrative framing manipulates the original meaning.
- To evaluate how subtitling choices influence the ideological positioning and cross-cultural reception of conflict-related events depicted in the documentary.

5. Research questions:

1. How are key expressions in *Nuseirat 274: The Hostages Massacre* classified within CDA categories related to humanitarian suffering, military operations, and participant representation?
2. Which of Mona Baker's framing strategies are most frequently employed in the English subtitles, and in which textual contexts (e.g., references to hostages, military action, civilian harm) do they occur?
3. In what ways do these subtitling strategies reinforce or alter the ideological framing of events in the English version intended for an international audience?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Subtitling practices in conflict/disaster narratives

Subtitling in conflict and disaster narratives operates at the intersection of technical constraints, ethical considerations, and narrative mediation. From a technical perspective, subtitlers work within strict spatial (often ~37–42 characters per line) and temporal limits that demand concise rewording without losing essential informational content, speaker identity markers, or multimodal meaning conveyed through gestures, tone, and ambient sound (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021; Pérez-González, 2014). Baker (2026) said that, in war reporting, these constraints can affect translation. She also explained that framing, emotional tone, and perceived agency can be affected by condensation, omission, and timing.

In translation studies, narrative theory shows how translators (and subtitlers) can shape viewers' understanding of events. In this context, Baker's (2006) narrative framework indicates that lexical selection, labelling, and re-contextualization are used to align the subtitled source with particular political or ideological ideology. Using "civilian" versus "person," or omitting agents in descriptions of violence affects how responsibility and victimhood are perceived (Abdellaoui, 2022; Krutrök & Åkerlund, 2022; Zanotti, 2022).

In the past decade, translation which focuses on the impact of psychological trauma on texts, translators, and audiences has emerged as a significant trend in AVT (AVT) research. In addition to factual correctness, subtitlers dealing with survivor testimony or distressing imagery need to give priority to dignity, authenticity, and emotional accuracy (Bosseaux, 2025a; Huber, 2023). Wright (2018), Bosseaux (2020), and Bosseaux (2025b) introduce guidelines to signal sobs or hesitations which are narratively important. Graphic details should be carefully treated. Furthermore, content creators and NGOs should cooperate to minimise the risk of retraumatization.

Choices related to modality can refer the application of these dynamics difficult. Witnesses' original voice, tone, breathing, and hesitations are preserved in subtitles. This can promote authenticity and agency in the subtitling product. Díaz-Cintas (2010) explained that voice-over can reduce cognitive load for viewers. However, it can obscure identity indications and emotional textures. During the subtitling of documentaries, subtitlers choose between different modes to shape empathy and credibility (Pérez-González, 2014).

Taylor (2014) said that subtitling in sensitive contexts is considered a multimodal task. The integration of on-screen text with visuals, the original soundtrack, audio, and paratext are parts of this task. Paralinguistic cues are often retained selectively due to space constraints, but they play a crucial role in conveying urgency, solidarity, or threat (Baines, 2015; Pagliaroto, 2022; Pavlović, 2004).

Finally, these practices are embedded within institutional and policy frameworks. Style guides and editorial norms used by news agencies, broadcasters, and humanitarian organisations can dictate the terminology used for actors or events (e.g., choosing “insurgents” rather than “rebels”), influencing perception at a large scale (Bazzi, 2015; Boesman et al., 2017; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2013; Neumann & Fahmy, 2012; Tenenboim-Weinblatt & Hanitzsch, 2016).

Collectively, the literature suggests that subtitling in conflict and disaster narratives is not entirely a technical practice, but, rather, a zone of multifaceted mediation influenced by the intersection of spatial-time, sense-making across multiple modes, and ethics of trauma-informed practice, when professional decisions depend on the interplay between the various constraints. Institutional style guides and policies and political framings further condition these factors because, on the one hand, these tools may restrict the lexical, structural, and modal choices of subtitlers and, on the other hand, they may guide them in making decisions. Moving within such a landscape, subtitlers exhibit agency not just in the processes of negotiating precision and accessibility but also in the resistance or recreation of the dominant discourse, framing their work as a consequent and significant meaning-making practice in contexts stretching high stakes.

2.2 Previous studies applying CDA to AVT

CDA has increasingly played a key methodological approach to the study of AVT especially when such AV products are politically and culturally controversial. Although AVT is often viewed as a technological practice, studies increasingly show the added value of subtitling, dubbing, and voice-over are discursive practices of constructing identity, ideology and power. This has made CDA combined with AVT a potent interdisciplinary method through which researchers can disseminate which translations can be influenced and which can influence social, religious and political discourses.

Alhawamdeh (2025) has presented a theoretical introduction based on Multimodal CDA (MCDA) and narrative theory and aspires to examine the re-construction of Arab voices on the stage of western documentary films. Since the study is limited to subtitling and voice-overs AVT, it demonstrates the way in which AVTs help in constructing an Arab identity through narrative filtering and cultural re-contextualization. In the study, it is emphasized that the ideology effect of AVT is not language exclusive, as it reaches out to sound, image as well as character framing- citing the influence of AVT in shaping the way the Arab world is perceived.

Rahmani (2024) used CDA to explore ideological reproductions in subtitles of AVT. Using Farahzad view of three-dimensional CDA model and the translation strategies proposed by Baker and Pedersen, Rahmani examined the methods used by subtitlers to manipulate vocabulary and translation of the English originated films into Arabic. The analysis indicates that the blanking out of the Muslim characters and re-constructing the American characters by the subtitlers is mainly through the use of strategies of omission, introducing, choice expressive lexicon, and cultural replacement. The manipulations illustrate how the subtitler is a manipulative filter of reality, who plays an active role in the construction of ideological discourses to suit the ideological leanings of the target audiences and the patron. The nature of AVT, according to Rauhmani, is very influential

in the power relations it contains and the major role that the subtitling played in shaping and delivering the ideologies based on social-politics.

Hashish et al. (2023) applied CDA to compare two news reports by BBC about the 2021 Israeli attack on Gaza in their Arabic and English versions. Comparing six articles of news stories between the two languages, the research found major differences in headlines, coverage of the events, framing of multimedia, and source. Their CDA analysis shows that the English versions frequently use passive voice and deletion of the agent and euphemistic lexical choices which are depersonalization of Israeli military activity and concealment of Palestinian suffering. Instead, the Arabic translations have more agency, often explicitly attributing the same to Israeli forces and leaving in more narrative signs of Palestinian victimhood. The case study implies that the differences in editorial choices in the two language variants reflect different ideological orientations with the English language site supporting the Western media code of neutrality that has the potential to conceal systemic bias whereas the Arabic language site preserves a more proximate and localized description of incidents.

In a CDA of bilingual reports on CNN and Al Jazeera on post October 7 escalation on Gaza, Tahboun (2024) evaluates how the two outlets have constructed conflicting discourses towards selective translation, wording, and framing of visualizations. Though it is not AVT in a narrow sense, the work is of interest in demonstrating how the ideology translates through the lens of bilingual media between linguistic and cultural contexts. Tahboun also suggested that CNN provides an English-language coverage that tends to strengthen securitized and pro-West narratives, whereas Al Jazeera provides an Arabic coverage that delegitimizes the narratives anchored upon the pro-Palestinian attitude. The discussion demonstrates the informational power of discursive and visual motives that construct the understanding of the world because governments address the issues through framing.

An additional closely related case study regarding ideological manipulation in AVT was provided by Yahiaoui et al. (2021), which discussed the dubbing of the musical animation *This Land Is Mine* into Arabic. By combining an application of narrative theory and appraisal theory, the study examined how dissonances exist between the source text and the target audience based on religious, cultural, and political ideologies influence dubbing approaches. The authors demonstrate that iconographic and visual information affects translational decisions and usually results in negotiations, adaptation, or manipulation. These are changes that show the attitudinal positioning of the translator and the ethical determination that may be seen in that regard towards any strong sense of Zionism in the source text. Although the study does not apply CDA directly, its conclusions resonate with the CDA concerns as the research reveals how the de facto norms of dubbing can be used to transmit ideological values and reimagine collective memory.

Together, these studies demonstrate the critical potential of combining CDA with AVT to expose the ideological operations at work in translating multimedia content. Whether through religious expression, national identity, or geopolitical conflict, AVT serves not merely as a linguistic transfer, but as a discursive act with real political consequences.

2.3 Baker's framing strategies in AVT

This section narrows the analytical aspects from CDA broadly to the specific application of Mona Baker's framing strategies, such as the repositioning of participants, selective appropriation, labelling, and temporal/spatial framing. Although some of the following studies have been previously discussed for their contributions to CDA in AVT, they are included here again for their distinctive engagement with Baker's framework, either explicitly or through clearly aligned analytical practices.

Mona Baker's narrative theory—particularly her conceptualisation of framing strategies—has proven instrumental in examining how AVT mediates political discourse across cultures. Framing—as defined by Baker (2006)—refers to those intentional mechanisms through which representations of reality are constituted, contested, and reconstructed. In doing so, this process is

operationalised following four main strategies: selective appropriation, labelling, repositioning of participants, and temporal/spatial framing (Baker, 2006, 2018). The strategies provide an effective theoretical means to analyse how translators participate in the ideological creation of meaning particularly in a politically sensitive situation like the translation between Arabic and English in relation to Palestine. In those instances, framing will be an important instrument through which subtitlers, dubbers, and audiovisual translators will embody both ideological content and affective appeal of politically charged stories. Both preservative and suppressive framing strategies as well as transformation actions of the source message reveal how the process of translation is not solely transferring linguistics content but an interventive element of an entire narrative within international power systems.

Framing is especially relevant in the area of AVT where more verbal meaning would be closely interlinked with visual and audible components. The subtitling and dubbing of politically-susceptible content, i.e. conflict documentaries, fictional portrayals of the region of Palestine, as well as news bulletins can be used as a fruitful ground to edge both textual and paratextual framing.

Al-Dabbagh and Amro (2024) provide a refined employment of the theory of framing in an example discussed by Mona Baker particularly concerning the English translation of a short film titled *The Present* by Farah Nabulsi. Applying Baker's (2006) strategies, the authors examined how subtitlers make deliberate efforts to re-order narratives in a certain way so that the Palestinian experience can fit the liberal discourses of the West. The paper reflected how the deployment of repositioning and labelling techniques subtly shifts the image of Israeli soldiers into neutral bureaucrats and reframes Palestinian suffering and presents it in depolitized humanitarian terms. Using both CDA and a framing model developed by Baker, Al-Dabbagh and Amro were able to reveal how the subtitle text was used as an ideological reframing process that transforms the perception of politically charged texts in translations. Their publication is a very welcome addition to the engagement of CDA with narrative framing, and an example of how AVT enables the disappearance of occupied voices into the cosmopolitan flow.

Al Salem et al. (2025) provide a practical application of Mona Baker framing strategies in their analysis of subtitling the Arabic expression of religious faith *wallah* (والله) into English in the Jordanian drama. In their study, they point out the avoidance of any religiously-infused language figures and the substitution of neutral ones with the secular in the target language. This translational move is indicative of the intended utilization of tactical appropriation and labelling as postulated by Baker (2006), in order to match the story world to the western secular script. These strategies, claim the authors, can lead to sanitization of the religious discourse, essentially repackaging culturally specific forms of religious expression into neutral ideological terms. Their arguments demonstrate that enabling not only linguistic but ideological needs, the role of framing as a dissonance-management tool is a part of any importing culture in the global media translation.

Rahmani (2024) examines the ideology behind the use of words in English-featured movies, as modified in Arabic subtitles using different methods of translation. Based on the frameworks developed by Farahzad, Baker and Pedersen, the paper found that subtitlers, in their perceived efforts to reframe the Muslim and the American characters, use omission, generalization, and lexical substitution extensively with an intention of casting the negative figures to the former and the positive figures to the latter, often as heroic characters. These strategies, although examined using CDA, are also similar to what Baker refers to as selective appropriation in framing. By omitting or distorting the ideologically loaded words, subtitlers sensorially reframe the ideological positioning of the target discourse so that the new revision fits the target-culture norms and values.

Almabhouh (2021) examines the use of the four framing strategies developed by Mona Baker (2006) in the specific case of Netflix English subtitles of the television series *Fauda* in Israel. Examining 32 cases seen in Seasons 2 and 3, the thesis found that repositioning of participants is the most common strategy (49.3%), selective appropriation also ranks high, with labelling and temporal/spatial framing being the next most common approaches. These policies consistently give

the Israeli side the advantage when it comes to propagating the Israeli version whereby the Palestinians are depicted as aggressors and the Israelis as victims. The results show that decisions made concerning subtitling politically marked content are affected because of the ideological impact as well as the expectations of the target audience, where the choices included support of biased depictions in the international press.

These studies highlight that Baker's framing model is used to show how AVT can be seen as a practice of ideological negotiation. The framing strategies are selective appropriation, labelling, repositioning, and temporal/spatial reframing. They show how subtitlers are considered narrative agents who reshape political meaning for target audiences. When translating a content in conflict setting such as that of Palestine, these framing practices are not treated as linguistic choices only. They are believed to be interventions that affect how narratives travel, how characters are perceived, and how power dynamics are rendered visible or concealed. Using CDA and framing theory together enables a better understanding of translation as a cultural and political act.

2.4 Research gap

There is abundant literature on AVT, especially in conflict and trauma contexts. However, little attention has been given to how subtitlers frame political documentaries related to areas like Gaza, a conflict zone. Many studies focused on fictional representations, post-war events, or general ideological framing. Given this, there is a critical gap in understanding how subtitling shapes immediate narratives in wartime documentaries. Therefore, the present paper seeks to address this gap.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

2.5.1 CDA of source texts

The present paper applies CDA in order to examine the source audiovisual materials dealing with politically sensitive themes. The CDA approach, developed by Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (1998), and Wodak (2001), shows how language constructs ideologies, power hierarchies, and social inequalities.

When used to discuss AVT, this approach helps to identify and classify the discursive patterns in the original spoken content. Therefore, readers can better understand how ideological meanings are constructed in the source and how those meanings are later mediated or reframed in target (during subtitling).

The analysis draws on the following CDA strategies:

- **Depersonalization:** Representing social actors as passive entities or abstract groups rather than individuals, which distances them from human empathy (e.g., referring to civilians as "targets" or "elements").
- **Euphemism:** The use of milder, less direct words or phrases to soften a severe situation (e.g., instead of saying something is forced displacement, it may be called evacuation).
- **Generalization:** Statements made in general, contradicting the specificities, e.g. describing all protestors as rioters or all victims as casualties.
- **Ideological framing:** Creating narratives within certain ideological standpoints i.e. positioning one group as the civilized and another group as the barbaric.
- **Moral framing:** Injecting speech with moral judgments, which may include representing acts as just, defensive, or evil and is not generally bound by legality or proportionality.
- **Omission:** Deleting key actors, actions, or context, often to obscure responsibility or soften the portrayal of violent or controversial acts.
- **Political framing:** Directly framing the discussion using political ideas or platforms, e.g. mentioning resistance as an act of the Islamist extremism or to describe interventions as humanitarian missions.
- **Re-Labeling:** The re-naming of ideological opponents or action, e.g. calling occupation forces "security personnel," or the use of the term "terrorism" when discussing resistance.

- **Technification:** using technical terms to refer to object and tools used.
- **Tone shift:** Continued process of the modification of the tone of the discourse, of the emotional register of events or characters, which influences the attitude of the audience towards them.

The implication here is that when these strategies are adopted, the discourse of the source tends to be rather biased or ideologically tinted in terms of conflict, resistance and identity. An examination of these patterns is a point of departure in thinking about how the ideological framings are later manipulated, preserved, or contested through subtitles.

2.5.2 Baker's framing strategies in subtitling

To analyse the target-language subtitles, this study draws on Baker (2006) narrative theory of framing. While CDA focuses on the source discourse, Baker's model explains how translation—particularly in the context of subtitling—reconfigures narratives through strategic framing. Subtitlers are not neutral channels; they make deliberate choices that influence how the target audience perceives people, events, and ideologies.

The following are Baker's four framing strategies:

- **Labelling:** Words in the subtitle carry evaluative connotations (e.g., “militant” vs. “freedom fighter”). These labels guide the audience on how to project the roles that participants in the conflict attain.
- **Repositioning of participants:** The target text shifts focus away from or toward specific agents through changes in sentence structure, pronouns, or verb choices. This affects how responsibility, victimhood, or authority is perceived in the translation.
- **Selective appropriation:** Subtitlers omit, rephrase, or highlight ideologically charged segments of the original audio. This often appears as omission, generalization, or lexical substitution in the subtitle to align with cultural norms or to depoliticize sensitive material.
- **Temporal and spatial framing:** The subtitle can either change or mask the when and where an event occurs, thus removing them out of their historical-political situated perspective, and therefore decreasing their interpretive effect.

Using the translated subtitles in the study, the researchers apply Baker's (2006) framework to indicate how AVT influences a political discourse by means of reframing. Such framing is usually an adaptive measure or reaction to the institutional pressures, the cultural sensitivities, or the global media conventions and this results in a change of the narrative that has an effect on audience perception.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design of the study consists of the qualitative, descriptive-analytical type, based on the CDA conceptualization in AVT research. It combines CDA and the narrative theory of framing advanced by Mona Baker to explore how discourse that is ideologically and politically charged in an Arabic-language documentary is mediated and re-framed in its English subtitle track. The analysis will be conducted in two steps: first, the CDA-oriented identification and classifying of ideologically significant expressions in the Arabic source text, and second, investigation of how these expressions are reframed through selective appropriation in the subtitles as one of the key framing strategies described by Baker (2006; 2018).

3.2 Corpus Description

The data for this study are drawn from the Arabic-language investigative film “*Nuseirat 274: The Hostage Massacre*”, produced and broadcast by Al Jazeera 360 (add references for source and subtitles).¹ The film, which runs for 1 hour and 22 minutes, uncovers new details about one of the deadliest massacres in the Nuseirat refugee camp, focusing on the Israeli military operation to free hostages held in Gaza. The documentary presents raw footage as well as emotionally and politically

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ak_4Vs4lkvU&ab_channel=AlJazeeraEnglish (Source and subtitles)

charged interviews with residents and journalists. This can provide a detailed account of the unfolding events.

The Arabic source video contains political, ideological, and military terms. The English subtitles reshape these terms to degrees because these subtitles target international audience. The researchers selected this documentary because of its relevance to the events in Gaza. In addition, the documentary is ideologically dense and its official subtitles are available.

3.3 Source Data Analysis: CDA Approach

To obtain the source text for analysis, the researchers watched the documentary and transcribed the terms. A total of 38 politically, ideologically, or militarily charged expressions were extracted. The researchers then classified the expressions using CDA, drawing on frameworks developed by van Dijk (1998) and Wodak (2001). In addition, the following CDA strategies were used for classification of the source expressions:

- Depersonalization
- Euphemism
- Generalization
- Ideological Framing
- Moral Framing
- Omission
- Political Framing
- Re-labelling
- Technification
- Tone Shift

Using these strategies helps us to see how the Arabic discourse constructs ideological positions through lexical choices. The researchers matched each expression with its corresponding subtitle in order to apply Baker's selective appropriation framing strategy.

3.4 Subtitle analysis: Baker's framing model

For the English subtitles, the researchers used Mona Baker's narrative theory of framing (2006, 2018). Baker outlines four strategies: selective appropriation, labelling, repositioning of participants, and temporal/spatial framing. In this study, the researchers focus exclusively on selective appropriation because it was the most dominant strategy.

Selective appropriation refers to the inclusion, omission, or replacement of source-text content in the target text to reshape narrative meaning. In the present study, the researchers applied it to assess how subtitling choices mediate the ideological position of the Arabic original. The researchers decided to narrow the study focus due to space constraints and the observed frequency of selective appropriation in the subtitles. The other three strategies—labelling, repositioning, and temporal/spatial framing—are acknowledged as part of the theoretical framework.

3.5 Ethics, and Limitations

Ethically, all material used in this study is publicly available, and no individuals are identified beyond what is disclosed in the documentary itself. Given the emotionally sensitive and graphic nature of the content, care was taken in the discussion to avoid sensationalism or dehumanization.

As for limitations, the study analyses one documentary and one framing strategy, limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Analysis

In this study, CDA strategies were applied exclusively to classify the source text, while Mona Baker's selective appropriation framing strategy was used solely to analyse the target text (English subtitles). The data were organized according to 5 different groups covering: (1) captives, detainees, hostages; (2) martyr, died, killed; (3) military jargon; (4) victims and victims' cases; and (5) ISF and Israeli narrative. Since multiple CDA strategies may apply to a single extract and the number of strategies is high, it is easier to arrange the source text according to thematic categories

as listed earlier. All target subtitles were classified under Baker's (2006) selective appropriation strategy.

Table (1): Captive, Detainee, and Hostage

Source	CDA strategy	Subtitling (selective appropriation)
تعاليم الإسلام المخصصة للأسرى	Technification/ Euphemism	according to Islamic guidelines for captives .
الاحتلال يحاول تصيّد تلك اللحظات للإجهاز عليهم وقتلهم	Tone shift/ Ideological Framing	to eliminate them
نفذت قوات إسرائيلية خاصة عملية معقدة لإنقاذ رهائن، وتمكنت من إنقاذ أربعة من رهائننا المحتجزين بيد حركة حماس في غزة.	Re-labelling / Technification	This morning, at 11am Israeli Special Forces conducted a complex hostage rescue mission and successfully rescued four of our hostages from Hamas captivity in Gaza.
من بيوت المحتجزين	Re-labelling / Depersonalization/	the vicinity of the hostages' location.
الدار اللي فيها الأسيرة	Re-labelling / Tone shift	Of the building where the detainee was held
واحد فيه ثلاثة رهائن محتجزين وآخر فيه رهينة واحد محتجز	Re-labelling / Political Framing	One with 3 hostages held and another with an individual hostage held

Through the *Nuseirat 274: The Hostages Massacre* documentary, terms related to “captive, hostage and detainee” were used in different occasions. The terminology reflects ideological differences. In general, the subtitler used the term “hostages” instead of a more neutral term like “captives” or “prisoners,” intensifying the emotional and political impact in the English subtitle, presenting them as civilian hostages, rather than as captives in a war-zone context. We can notice that the Arabic term “الأسرى” in sentences is often rendered as “hostages,” which literally translates to رهائن not “captives.” Here, the subtitler intervened in the rendition and framed the source expression in English.

The phrase in the first example highlights religious connotations on how Al-Qassam Brigades behave toward the captives. The English subtitle provided by Al Jazeera reads “Islamic guidelines for captives,” a translation which can be considered a recontextualization of the term. This rendering softens the religious tone and generalizes “concept and ethics” into “guidelines.” The Arabic subtitling shows that such behaviour is designated for captives.

The second phrase is vivid and describes how the Israeli army sought to find the captives. Using *الإجهاز عليهم وقتلهم* *eliminating and killing them* reflects what happened with some of the hostages. The metaphor *تصيّد اللحظات* (“sniping at moments”) implies brutal and relentless killing. It is important to note there that the English subtitle does not convey these details and reduces the expression to “*eliminate them.*” Practically, the English subtitle is a follows a softening strategy in which the subtitler reduced the violent immediacy.

In the third example, the spokesman of the Israeli army adopted a formal tone trying to reflect victory. He used different expressions such as “*complex,*” “*successfully,*” “*special forces,*” and “*rescued*” to reflect the professionalism of the Israeli army. Ideology is clearly highlighted in this context through using military expressions and omitting any reference to the victims. The

spokesman used *hostages*” and preceded it with the possessive pronoun “*our*” to point to the Israeli narrative. Additionally, the spokesman repeated the words “*rescued*,” “*rescue*,” and “*successfully*” to indicate that the troops completed the mission with legitimacy. Therefore, the lexical choices made show a focus on legitimizing the so-called ‘massacre’ and reinforcing the Israeli narrative.

In the fourth example, the Arabic expression *المحتجزين* directly translates into “*detainees*,” a more neutral English term. However, the subtitler rendered it as “*hostages*.” Using this word depicts that they are innocent civilians being held against their will. To add, the translation of *بيوت المحتجزين* contains a shift in meaning. Instead of “*the houses where the detainees were held*,” the English subtitle reads “*the vicinity of the hostages’ location*.” This reframing strategy seems to replace the physical sense of “*houses of the detainees*” with a more tactical, militarized zone.

In the Palestinian context, using the Arabic term *أسيرة* (literally “a female captive”) reflects an emotional and political connotation. However, the subtitle in English re-labelled it as “*detainee*.” This can be considered a more neutral term that omits the gendered aspect. The term *رهينة* (*hostage*) serves the official Israeli discourse which the Palestinians consider untrue. The English subtitle disregards the possibility of their being army personnel. The Palestinian narrative, on the other hand, uses *أسير* (prisoner/captive), which supports the ideology of being illegally treated. Furthermore, the Arabic subtitling fails to reflect gender distinctions, as one can clearly see in the inconsistency between “female captive” and the masculine adjective used in *رهينة واحد محتجز*.

Table (2): Martyr, Died, Killed

Source	CDA strategy	Subtitling
وهنا مستشهد شخص	Re-labelling/Generalization/ Depersonalization	Another man was shot
الشخص اللي استشهد	Re-labelling /Euphemism/ Depersonalization/	he hadn't been killed yet
جارنا طلع واستشهد	Re-labelling/ Tone Shift/ Depersonalization/Euphemism	My neighbour had already been killed earlier
في مرة وأولادها ميتين	Depersonalization/ Tone Shift/ Re-labelling	There was one woman killed here with her kids.
لكن غالبًا استشهدوا	Re-labelling / Euphemism	but most of them got killed .
ومستشهد	Re-labelling / Euphemism	He was dead .
تم استشهاد الناس اللي ماشية في الشوارع	Re-labelling /Euphemism/ Depersonalization	Pedestrians were murdered and cars were burned.
كل اللي كانوا بهادا المكان ما طلع منهم إلا اثنين ثلاثة وإلا الباقي كله استشهد	Tone Shift /Depersonalization	All those who were living here died .

The Arabic utterances often use the term *استشهد/شهيد/استشهاد*. The English subtitles, however, selectively appropriate these terms. The expression *مستشهد* was subtitled as “*was shot*,” which does not explicitly indicate any religious reference, martyrdom. This generalization omits the religious and emotional connotations of being a martyr, adapting the term to the target viewers. Other subtitles render *استشهد* as “*been killed*.” The Arabic term *استشهد* means “*was martyred*.” It carries a religious and emotional reference in the Palestinian context. Rendering it in the passive voice as “*been killed*” neutralizes the term, suppressing its Palestinian and Islamic connotation. In the fifth example, *غالبًا* (“probably”) was mistakenly subtitled as *أغلبهم* (“most of them”). Here, “*probably*” would have been the accurate rendering.

In Arabic phrase *في مرة وأولادها ميتين* describes a mother and her children as being “dead.” The eyewitness recalls what he saw in the street after the Israeli operation. The English translation

intensifies the action as “killed,” though in the passive voice. The image of a mother and her children lying dead is emotionally diminished in the translation.

In the last two examples, the Arabic term *استشهاد* literally means “martyrdom.” This, in the Palestinian context, means an honourable death. The English subtitling, however, renders it as “*were murdered*” instead of “*martyred*,” and places it in the passive voice. In another example, the phrase *ما طلع منهم إلا اثنين* is translated as “*only two survived*,” with the rest described as “martyred” in the Arabic source. Replacing this religious term with “*died*” omits the connotative meaning, since “*died*” is a neutral verb suggesting a natural death.

Table (3): Military Jargon

Source	CDA strategy	Subtitling
اجت الكابتير الكبيرة متر في متر	Omission/Technification	There was a huge van
طلعت الكواد من بين الدور وطبت طخ	Technification/ Omission	The ISF troops came from between those houses and they opened fire
كان إطلاق النار من الكابتير، والطيران كان يضرب بشكل جنوني	Technification/ Tone Shift	The place was under a heavy gunfire.
مع كثافة الطخ اللي صارت	Tone Shift/ Generalization	Once the gunfire started

The first three examples in the table mention *الكواد/الكابتير* which translates as Quad Copters. These are the types of surveillance or shooting drones. In Gaza, the colloquial term *الكابتير* is used by people to refer to Quad Copters which can be used to shoot. The subtitler seems to have misunderstood this technical term and mistranslated it as “*van*,” a generic word that erases its specific military function. The term *الكواد* in the second example refers to Quad Copters, yet it is entirely omitted in the English subtitle. Instead, the subtitle refers more generally to “*ISF troops*.” This is an inaccurate rendering that reduces the vividness and specificity of the scene. Thus, technical terms should be given greater consideration in subtitling, with particular reference to terms that are repeatedly used in warzones. The documentary subtitles render *قوات إسرائيلية خاصة* as “*ISF*.” This rendering is accurate because it reflects a formal military-institutional term. The use of these terms shows that the Israeli forces are highly trained and conduct their operations in a legitimate way.

The phrase “*كثافة الطخ*” means “*the intensity of the gunfire*.” The Arabic expression provides a vivid depiction of the harsh experience of someone being attacked by gunfire from all directions. The English subtitle “*once the gunfire started*” lessens the severity of the incident through the use of a neutral verb “*started*.” The subtitler omitted the reference to two crucial sources of gunfire: quad copters and jetfighters. In addition, the adverb *بشكل جنوني* (“*insanely*” or “*madly*”) which was used to describe the intensity of the shooting was weakened into “*heavy gunfire*.” It is important to note that the omission of these intensifiers can be considered a softening strategy which does not convey the severity of the incident. Selective appropriation is, therefore, used as a tool to reshape the narrative through subtitling.

Table (4): Victims

Source	CDA strategy	Subtitling
من دار الهور جارنا	Personalization	He was our neighbor .
السيارة كان فيها 3 أشخاص. صقاهم.	Re-labeling/ Depersonalization/Omission	He executed them and the car kept running towards him

مرقوا عن الناس وهي مرمية في الشوارع	Re-labeling / Depersonalization/Tone Shift	They just passed by the streets full of bodies everywhere.
مرة أخويا وبنت أختي وأولادها الاثنتين مكممين فوق بعض.	Depersonalization/Tone Shift	All their bodies were stacked one on top of the other.
المجزرة صارت في البيت هادا وأنا حافرجيكم وين صارت المجزرة.	Re-labeling/Tone Shift/ Depersonalization	The massacre happened in this house. I'll show you where it took place

Al-Hoor family name was mentioned in the first example which is considered a personalization CDA strategy by the family name. The English subtitle omitted the family name and retained “*our neighbor.*” Mentioning the family name can be important because martyrdom is something honourable. This led to a loss of significant cultural and social connotations attached to the martyrs.

In the following example, the Arabic expression reflects the incidents happening to the victims on that day. The Arabic verb *صفاهم*, which simple means “*finish them off,*” is used here to convey the brutality of the act. Its English subtitle uses “*executed,*” which reframes the act with a formal, judicial connotation. Although “*executed*” reflects violence, the source Arabic term conveys the harsher brutality of targeted killing.

The Arabic phrase *الناس مرمية* means that “people are thrown on the ground.” The English subtitle, “*full of bodies,*” does not sound to reflect the imagery in the source. The subtitle, therefore, dehumanizes the Palestinians who were thrown on the ground and reduces them to “*bodies.*” In addition, the Arabic visual image *مكممين فوق بعض* “piled on top of each other” is painfully vivid. Eyad, an eyewitness who lost 18 relatives in the incident, describes seeing his brother’s wife, his niece, and her two sons stacked together. The English subtitle which reads “*All their bodies*” does not include these specific identities. It is important to note here that these details may not be important to the international audience, hence they were omitted.

The last example in Table (4) related to the ‘massacre’ which news reports mentioned that it took place in Miqdad family’s house. An elderly man recalls the events. He used the term *المجزرة* which was subtitled directly into “*the massacre.*” This rendering preserves the strong and specific Arabic source term for the targeted killing of the family members. Repeating the term *المجزرة* twice in the source clearly reflects the brutality of the incident. In the English subtitle, the first occurrence only was conveyed in the subtitle and the second was replaced by the pronoun “*it.*”

Table (5): Victims' Cases

Source	CDA strategy	Subtitling
عبد الله ابني طابير بنص الشارع	Tone Shift/Euphemism	My son Abdullah was lying dead in the middle of the street.
شفت شخص متصاوب جنب الحاصل	Omission /generalization/	As I looked, I saw a man shot by the garage.
كان في واحد كتفه مقصوص	Depersonalization/Euphemism	I saw a man in the parlour with a mutilated shoulder.
الناس مقطعة!	Tone Shift/Re-labelling	I see people mutilated!

Eyad, the eyewitness, recalled what happened to his son, Abdullah. He described the killing of his son who was *طابير* *flying* or *thrown away violently.* This happened because of the strong bombardment. In the English subtitle, the term was rendered into “*lying dead.*” This subtitling omits the violent imagery of being killed and thrown in the middle of the street. The English verb “*shot*” was used to subtitle the Arabic expression *متصاوب*, meaning “an injured man.” This subtitle does not show the exact nature of the injury and renders the word as “*shot*” in the passive voice. Moreover, the term “*shot*” is also used to render other expressions indicating martyrdom.

Some of the eyewitnesses narrated what they saw after the 'massacre' had taken place. The English term "mutilated" appears in two different examples. First, the Arabic colloquial expression *اكتفه مقصوص* literally means "his shoulder was cut off." Subtitling it as "mutilated" shifts the meaning toward amputation, though it still conveys the severity of the injury. Second, the Arabic phrase *الناس تمقطعة* is already intense, evoking personal trauma and violence, and can be subtitled as "people are torn apart!" Here, the English rendering "mutilated" is more formal and medical in tone. Alternative renderings such as "torn apart," "shredded," or "blown to pieces" would preserve the intensity and better capture the emotional and graphic horror.

Table (6): ISF, Israeli Narrative

Source	CDA strategy	Subtitling
وقد ثبت أنه إذا استخدمناه بشكل صحيح وثابت، فإنها طريقة جيدة!	Euphemism/ Technification	We in Israel, we started actually this method of targeted killing . And it proved to be that if we are using it in the right and concept way, it's a good method .
لا، إنها عملية قتل فظيعة ضد السكان المدنيين.	Explicitness/ De-euphemization/Moral Framing	No, no, it's a terrible act of murder
وهو ما رفض الضيف الإسرائيلي التعليق عليه	Depersonalization/Omission	the Israeli guest refused to comment on or explain.
طلعوا! طلعوا! يا زلما!	Tone shift	He got out, he got out
من ضمن المستعربين اللي كانوا داخل مخيم النصيرات	Re-labelling/Euphemism	He was one of the disguised soldiers

Targeted killing is described by the Israeli guest as a violent practice of assassination, but re-labelled as a "good and legitimate method." Yuri, the Israeli guest, attempts to justify the practice of targeted killing, reframing it as military strategy and thereby removing the criminality and brutality from the Al-Nuseirat massacre. The inclusion of an Israeli military guest seems to serve as an act of justification for killing and invading a crowded Palestinian refugee camp in broad daylight. By contrast, another guest, Robin, denies the practice of targeted killing, insisting instead that it constitutes murder. The English subtitling as "a terrible act of murder" faithfully preserves the intensity of this condemnation. It is important to note that the first and last example were translated in the video from Hebrew into Arabic then subtitled into English.

The Arabic word *طلعوا* is used in the plural form to mean "They got out!" This word refers to the Israeli Special Forces which left the place. It is clear that the subtitler misunderstood the term and therefore inaccurately rendered it "He got out." In the last example, the Arabic term *المستعربين* (Mista'arvim) was used. Technically, the term refers to "those who disguise themselves as Arabs." These are Israeli forces operating undercover among civilians to carry out operations. The English subtitling renders this as a more neutral phrase "disguised soldiers," stripping away the heavy political and cultural connotations associated with *المستعربين* in the Palestinian context.

5. Discussion

The researchers analysed the English subtitling of the documentary *Nuseirat 274: The Hostages Massacre*. The analysis highlighted the mediation and ideological framing of Arabic source discourse CDA and Mona Baker's framing strategies. The results of the study show that subtitling practices can influence international viewers' perceptions of military operations. In addition, these results indicate that subtitling can be used to reflect humanitarian suffering in a way that conforms to the standards of the streaming channels.

The CDA strategies include re-labelling, euphemism, depersonalization, omission, tone shifts, and technification. There are ideologically loaded expressions concerning the idea of hostages-taking, martyrdom, and death of civilians. These have representations of culture and politics of resistance, victimhood, and militaristic legitimacy to the Palestinian context. As an example, the word *استشهد* (martyred) was not only religious or emotional but also a warfare word which reminds one not only of violence but of confrontational tactics. These findings confirm the use of language in the source text both as a reporting resource and as a framing device of lived reality in terms that are clearly political.

The English subtitles largely represented Baker's (2006) selective appropriation strategy. The main elements of the source were subtitled, rephrased, dropped, or neutralized them to conform the storyline to the common media standards and the possible sensitivities of the foreign viewers. This also involved replacing ideologically-charged words with more neutral lexical alternatives: e.g., use of the term *hostages* in place of the term *captives*, the use of the word *killed* where the more euphemistic word *martyred* would be used, and the use of institutionalized euphemisms in place of colloquial brutality. It was also found that the source re-labelling and tonal shifts took place as in depersonalizing the victims as bodies, removing family or personal identity, purification of collective groups antics into individualized events. These changes indicate the proactive renegotiation of cultural/ideological boundaries on the part of the subtitlers, by which the subject of Palestinian suffering and resistance has been re-contextualized into the discourse of depoliticized humanitarianism, whereas the Israeli military action has been professionalized and legitimized.

The subtitling strategies substantially altered the original ideological framing by selectively appropriating, recontextualizing, and diluting source discourse elements. By omitting agency, softening violent imagery, and substituting politically charged language with neutral or legitimizing terms, the subtitles mediated a narrative that tended to delegitimize Palestinian resistance narratives and soften the perceived severity of Israeli military actions. Rendering “استشهد” as “*was shot*” or “*killed*” erases martyrdom’s religious reference. When “المستعربين” (undercover operatives) is replaced with “*disguised soldiers*” does not convey how Palestinians refer to them in reality. Such subtitling choices show that such practices are governed by broader institutional pressures and media norms. Here, AVT can be seen as an ideological tool that negotiates meaning between cultures and political spheres.

Implications for AVT and Conflict Representation

This study supports the literature emphasizing that AVT cannot be considered a neutral linguistic transfer. It can also be an ideological negotiation with real-world impact on conflict narratives and audience perceptions. AVT underscores subtitlers’ critical role in the ethical mediation of politically sensitive and traumatic content. This can spotlight the tensions between fidelity to source narratives and conforming to institutional, cultural, or market logics. The findings necessitate greater awareness of subtitling’s ideological consequences and call for trauma-informed, ethically reflective practices.

6. Conclusion

The present study analysed the subtitling of *Nuseirat 274: The Hostages Massacre* through CDA and Mona Baker’s framing strategies. It investigated how English subtitles mediate politically and emotionally charged Arabic discourse. The key findings demonstrate that subtitling strategically employs selective appropriation to suppress, neutralize, or reframe the source ideological narratives.

Specifically, the subtitles transformed politically potent terms—such as “*martyred*,” “*captives*,” and “*undercover operatives*”—into more sanitized, depoliticized vocabulary aligned with Western media conventions, thereby softening the portrayal of Palestinian resistance and legitimizing Israeli military actions. These subtitling choices altered the ideological framing from a culturally and politically grounded narrative of resistance and suffering to a narrative tending towards depoliticized humanitarianism and professionalized military discourse.

This study contributes to the research on AVT in conflict zones. It reveals the role of subtitling as a tool of narrative mediation and ideological framing. In addition, the study highlights the ethical complexity faced by subtitlers translating politically sensitive events.

This study is limited to one documentary and discusses one framing strategy, which may restrict generalizability. Future research should explore additional framing strategies and examine audience reception to provide a more comprehensive understanding of AVT's ideological mediation in conflict contexts.

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