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**A Critical Discourse Analysis of Media Coverage on Mahsa Amini's Death:
Exploring Modality, Figurative Language, and Connotation**

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Abstract

This study examines how international media outlets covered the death of Mahsa Amini and the following protest in Iran. To be more precise, three linguistic elements (modality, metaphor, and connotation) are applied to see how language shapes meaning and public perception. 59 editorial articles from nine major news outlets are analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis and computational tools such as Sketch Engine and python. The findings reflect that some outlets preferred to be neutral and used cautious language, whereas others signaled moral urgency and advocacy. Metaphor analysis categorizes them as four main conceptual domains, fire, war, imprisonment, and awakening, and they described the protests in different emotional and symbolic ways. Connotation analysis reveals a pattern of negative sentiment toward Iranian authorities and a positive one to describe protesters, particularly women. The study highlights that language in media is not only function as a vehicle of information, it is also a constructor of meaning and influence in global human rights discourse.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgment	I
Abstract	II
List of tables	V
List of figures	V
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Literature Review	3
1.1 Overview.....	3
1.2 Media Coverage and Representation	3
1.2.1 Media and Public Perception	3
1.2.2 Cross-Cultural Comparisons in Media Framing.....	5
1.2.3 Western vs. Middle Eastern Media Narratives.....	6
1.2.4 Studies on Iranian Media Coverage of Sociopolitical Events	7
1.2.5 Western Media’s Representation of Iranian Politics and Culture	8
1.3 Critical Discourse Analysis and Ideology.....	11
1.3.1 Origins and Evolution of CDA	11
1.3.2 Relevance of CDA to Media Studies	12
1.3.3 Applications of CDA in Media Studies.....	13
1.3.3.1 Studies on implementing CDA on Media Coverage of Sociopolitical Events	15
1.3.4 CDA Approaches to Iranian Media Representation.....	16
1.3.5 Language and Ideology in Media Coverage	17
1.4 Linguistic Tools in Discourse Analysis.....	18
1.4.1 Connotation and Semantic Prosodies.....	19
1.4.2 The Role of Modality in Discourse Analysis.....	20
1.4.2.1 Epistemic and Deontic Modality in Media Narratives	21
1.4.3 Symbolic and Figurative Language	22
1.4.3.2 Figurative Language and Framing in Media Discourse.....	22
1.4.3.2.1 Theories of Metaphor.....	23
1.4.3.2 Symbolism and Ideological Constructs in Media Texts.....	25
Chapter Two: Methodology and Analytical Framework	26

2.1 Overview.....	26
2.2 Research Design.....	26
2.3 Corpus Construction	26
2.4 Data Analysis	27
Chapter Three: Result and Discussion.....	29
3.1 Overview.....	29
3.2 The first research question	29
3.3 The Second Research Question	32
3.3.1 Fire/Explosion – Anger is Fire.....	32
3.3.2 War/Conflict – POLITICS IS WAR.....	32
3.3.3 Imprisonment/Control – OPPRESSION IS CONFINEMENT.....	33
3.3.4 Awakening/Freedom – CHANGE IS REBIRTH / FREEDOM IS JOURNEY	33
3.3.5 Comparisons Across Outlets	33
3.4 The Third Research Question	35
3.5 Discussion.....	38
3.5.1 Modality and Editorial Stance	38
3.5.2 Metaphor as Cognitive and Persuasive Framing	39
3.5.3 Connotation and Semantic Framing.....	41
3.5.4 Integration and Implications	42
Chapter Four: Conclusion and General Remarks.....	43
Bibliography	45

List of tables

Table 3.1 Keyword Analysis 36

List of figures

Figure 3.1 Distribution of epistemic and deontic modality 30

Figure 3.2 Comparative Sentiment Mapping of Selected Media Outlets 35

Introduction

In an era where media narratives shape public perception and political discourse, the influence of words has never been more strong and evident (Polletta, 2016). Narratives, as defined by Miskimmon et al., function as a way to create a shared understanding of the past, present, and future in international politics in order to frame the actions of both domestic and international actors (Gackowski & Brylska, 2022). This means that the discourse serves not only to be a representation of the facts, but also to expose specific ideology.

The ‘Woman, Life, Freedom’ protests started after the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old girl who was detained by the morality police in Iran. She died under suspicious circumstances and the police did not give any clear explanation of what happened to her. To be more precise, they said she had a heart attack and there was not any physical contact while her family claimed she was completely healthy. As a result, the protests have been made in dozens of cities. During these protests, a large number of people were killed, arrested, and hurt. The news of chaos in Iran spread worldwide and many news media covered it. There is an assertion of objectivity of media, however, the journalist chooses which sentences be in the text. Therefore, news discourse to some extent could be considered as biased. The ideology of the author is hidden in the context which can form facts and shape readers’ perceptions. Fairclough introduced Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which its main focus is on the link between “language, power, and ideology” (Fairclough, 1989: 26). Since then, it has found extensive application across various disciplines, particularly in scrutinizing news narratives. In this research, CDA was used to investigate the degree of variation in editorial articles on the same event and how the authors used linguistic elements to shape their readers' perspectives on such events. According to Gee’s (2005, p.2) definition of discourse analysis, it is the examination of how language, both spoken and written, expresses social and cultural perspectives and identities. Analyzing a sociopolitical event gives the chance of uncovering the ways in which language shapes public perception, influences emotional responses, and helps construct social and political realities. Despite the extensive media coverage of Mahsa Amini’s death, academic exploration into the linguistic mechanisms employed to frame this event remains sparse. Therefore, this study examines the three linguistic tools, modality, metaphor, and connotation, which outlets use to report on this important event.

The study includes four chapters. The Literature Review chapter deals with theoretical frameworks, including CDA and linguistic elements, and examines previous research on media discourse. The Methodology chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research design, including corpus construction and analytical framework. The Result and Discussion chapter presents the findings of the discourse analysis and compares them other related studies. Finally, the Conclusion chapter summarizes the main findings, represents the limitations, and suggests ideas for future research.

Chapter One: Literature Review

1.1 Overview

For decade, the power of media to shape perceptions and influence sociopolitical discourse has been a central focus of academic inquiry. Media outlets can both consciously or unconsciously construct narratives that shape societal values, perceptions, and even political decisions. Through the deliberate use of language, modality, and figurative constructs, media discourse becomes an effective tool for legitimizing certain ideologies while marginalizing others. Of all the means that enable us to understand how language reflects, reinforces, challenges societal power structures and legitimizes sociopolitical actions, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as a powerful framework.

Even though the general uses of CDA are widely known, more research is still needed to fully understand some areas including modality, figurative language, and connotation in media discourse. These discourse tools are not neutral; rather, they are essential in establishing the authority and tone of media texts, as well as in evoking feelings and framing stories. They are loaded with ideological meaning, and in order to understand how they affect public opinion, they must be critically examined.

This chapter provides a literature related to media discourse through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which focuses on linguistic elements such as modality, metaphor, and connotation. It also reviews the studies that apply CDA to media coverage of socio-political events and does comparative analysis of Western and Iranian media narratives.

1.2 Media Coverage and Representation

1.2.1 Media and Public Perception

The media plays a pivotal role in shaping public understanding of global sociopolitical events, influencing both individual attitudes and collective responses (Volkmer, 2003). This influence operates through agenda-setting, framing, and the dissemination of opinion cues. Agenda-setting theory postulates that media determines the salience of issues in public discourse, not what people think, but what they think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). For example, during elections, issues highlighted in the media often match those prioritized by voters.

Second-Level Agenda Setting goes even further, suggesting that not only do media highlight issues but also influence how audiences think about them. Intense coverage of a political scandal, for example, can lead the public to prioritize character over policy, impacting voter behavior (Scheufele, 1999). Media also impact political engagement: coverage that emphasizes competition (*the horse race*) over policy can discourage meaningful political participation (Seymour & Norton, 2024).

Given the multifaceted nature of Mahsa Amini's incident, it is imperative to review the role of media in portraying various concepts including crime, safety, legal perceptions and war both in a literal and non-literal form of language. The public perception of crime is greatly molded by the media. It has been noted that there is a high level of overrepresentation in crimes by the news media, especially when involving particular racial groups. As Myers (2024) put it, social media tends to highlight crimes more when Black suspects are involved, hence skewed perceptions about the prevalence of crime and its dynamics concerning race in society. Overreporting these matters creates a loop where media coverage works to strengthen public fears about crime, which is far larger than even actual crime statistics.

Public safety agencies recognize the media's critical role in shaping narratives about safety and security. Positive media coverage can enhance public trust and support for safety initiatives, while negative portrayals can lead to distrust and reduced funding for these agencies (Wayne Delk, 2023). How western media agencies covered the incident of Mahsa Amini's death and public reaction will be further revealed in the following chapters.

The way the media portrays war has a big influence on how the general public views wars. Narratives that either praise or condemn the parties involved can be shaped by the tales and pictures chosen (Minges, 2023). For example, some depictions of the Israel-Hamas conflict have drawn criticism for being biased, which has an impact on how viewers see the validity of either side's activities. Certain parts of conflicts can be emphasized by visual features in news coverage, which further affects public opinion.

The media has an impact on society attitudes and policies in addition to instant views. As several studies have pointed out, both news providers and consumers must comprehend the function of the media. This can be accomplished with a CDA. To counter false information and encourage critical thinking about media use, educational settings are placing a greater emphasis on public

participation with media literacy (Myers, 2024; Wayne Delk, 2023). A CDA-based approach offers useful insights into these discursive processes including the aftermath of Mahsa Amini's death.

1.2.2 Cross-Cultural Comparisons in Media Framing

Cross-cultural framing is imperative when we carry out a discourse analysis of sociopolitical events, especially when translated across languages and cultures. Comparative studies reveal how cultural, political, and historical contexts influence media portrayals and audience interpretations. It has been revealed that cultural dimensions, such as long-term orientation do affect the selection and emphasis of news frames (Zhou, 2006). Cultural values shape media messages by guiding how stories are framed, what is considered newsworthy, and how audiences interpret information, alongside journalistic standards and psychological biases (Dan & Ihlen, 2011).

Cultural values influence framing and news agencies modify their reporting in order to reflect local standards and expectations (Jiang et al., 2016). Cultural context determines which story elements are emphasized. Western media may portray protests as *democratic* expressions, while non-Western outlets might frame the same events in terms of *stability* and *order*. These cultural variables also affect how messages are received. For example, Phan et al. (2023) found that Vietnamese consumers responded more strongly to loss-framed fair-trade messages, whereas American consumers preferred gain-framed ones. This exemplifies how deep-seated cultural orientations form individual decision-making and frame reception (Jia, 2022).

In today's globalized media world, narratives compete against each other in a symbolic contest. In this competition, frames become more effective when they can correspond with a culture's dominant beliefs and values. Culturally meaningful symbols are strategically employed so as to support the impact of their messages (Jiang et al., 2016). Since conclusions based on Western perspectives cannot be blindly applied to non-Western settings, being aware of the impact of symbols helps avoid ethnocentric generalizations. It is essential to distinguish framing practices pertinent to distinct cultural contexts as this contributes to a more sophisticated grasp of global media discourse (Rafiee et al., 2023; Suerdem & Akkilic, 2021).

1.2.3 Western vs. Middle Eastern Media Narratives

Western and Middle Eastern media narratives are shaped by distinct ideological, political, and cultural frameworks. While Western media often emphasizes liberal democratic ideals and builds stories that align with dominant Western values, Iranian and broader Middle Eastern media offer alternative perspectives rooted in different societal priorities (Manley, 2009; ter Horst, 2024). This two-fold focus lends itself to a rich understanding of how media discourse can diverge when crossing cultural borders, as well as the role played by language in these divergences.

Research indicates a significant divide in media narratives between Western and Middle Eastern sources when covering sensitive topics like terrorism and freedom of expression (Ridouani, 2011). Western media tends to emphasize themes of conflict and violence when reporting on organizations like Hamas, while Middle Eastern media focuses more on resistance and heroism (Henarni & Surwandono, 2024).

Western media often emphasizes personal stories and human-interest angles, portraying individuals affected by conflicts as relatable figures. This approach aims to humanize victims and evoke empathy from the audience (Krishnan, 2024; Manley, 2009). Studies have shown that Western media often adopts a pro-war frame when covering military interventions, focusing on the justifications for action rather than the consequences for civilians. For instance, the dominant narrative in western media during the coverage of the Afghanistan War following 9/11 minimized the civilian losses while emphasizing the military victory (Evans, 2010). Furthermore, there is frequently a duality in the terminology employed in coverage of events such as the demonstrations that followed Mahsa Amini's tragedy in Iran, which suggests prejudice. For example, using "murder" or "kill" instead of "die" or "cease" to describe this occurrence might result in erroneous reporting. When talking about Middle Eastern media, it is important to keep in mind that they usually personalize and highlight social impacts rather than individual tales based on historical background and collective experiences (Al Sharafat, 2019). In response to Western portrayals, Middle Eastern media often construct counter-narratives in order to challenge dominant frames and highlight issues that were neglected in Western media such as Palestinian suffering or the humanitarian costs of foreign interventions (King & King, 2018). During the Arab Spring, for instance, Arab media often focused on the humanitarian struggles of protesters rather than

geopolitical calculations (Bruce, 2014). The terminologies that were used in both regions carries ideological weight. Words such as *terrorist vs. freedom fighter* or *martyr vs. victim* significantly shape how audiences understand political actors and events. Not only do these lexical choices reflect but also actively construct ideological positions.

The framing of middle-eastern in Western media contributes to a skewed understanding of these communities, often leading to fear or misunderstanding (Al Sharafat 2019; Krishnan, 2024). Sensationalized reporting that reinforces stereotypes can foster negative perceptions of these groups. In contrast, audiences in the Middle East may interpret Western narratives as biased and imperialistic, and thus be skeptical of Western motives and policy. Such perceptions can reinforce local narratives, emphasizing resistance to "oppression" (Manley, 2009). In other words, recognizing these differences is vital for promoting informed, cross-cultural dialogue. Research often centers Western media, leaving non-Western sources, including Iranian media, understudied. Furthermore, while studies address broad patterns in framing, the interplay of modality and figurative language in constructing sociopolitical narratives is still insufficiently explored.

1.2.4 Studies on Iranian Media Coverage of Sociopolitical Events

Research on Iranian media coverage of sociopolitical events reveals the significant role of new media in challenging government control of information and fostering a global public sphere for Iranians (Sohrabi-Haghighat, 2011). There are studies that indicate that Western media coverage of Iran, especially regarding the sanctions imposed against Iran, employs ideologically biased discursive patterns used to rationalize acts against the country (Youssefi et al., 2013).

CDA and other theoretical approaches have been used to examine media representation of Islam, Muslims, and Iran, revealing the media's role in constructing these groups as the negative "*Other*" (Jahedi, 2015). However, The Iran Media Program at the *University of Pennsylvania* has provided insights into how Iranian journalists operate under severe state restrictions (Sabet & Safshekan, 2013; Sabet, 2013). Thus, the choice of language use depends on understanding the working conditions of Iranian journalists and their perceptions of media's role in society, especially in the context of internet censorship and filtering.

Another important study provides additional discussion of the Iranian media operating as component of a “soft power,” strategy in foreign relations. In Schliebitz (2014), the author argues that Iran uses media to alter or interact with audience perceptions to manipulate outcomes both in and out of the country, thus impacting political decisions in regard to its regime. This approach exemplified an awareness on the part of Iranian policymakers to utilize the media's capacity to sway public opinion, especially when considering Iran's limited hard power capabilities. The research shows how Iran has built a contemporary apparatus of media diplomacy to create positive narratives about the country's foreign policy goals (Schliebitz, 2014).

An extensive analysis has been conducted on the way social media has covered Iranian elections since the 2009 presidential election. During this election, social media appeared as a crucial tool for marshaling protests against perceived electoral fraud, resulting in significant turbulence known as the *Green Movement*. Platform such as Facebook and Telegram, being popular for sharing information among citizens, were blocked as the government’s reaction to the movement. Research shows that social media has the ability to empower citizens by supplying platforms for organization and protest. However, it also presents challenges for the regime, seeking to take control of narratives during politically sensitive times (Rashidi, 2021).

Studies have also examined how Iranian newspapers associate with political factions during seasons. (Sabet & Safshekan, 2013). As newspapers often change their allegiances based on political climates, the intricacies of the Iranian media ecosystem become evident. Print media is a crucial tool for political engagement during elections, according to studies, which shows that newspapers that support different political factions (such as conservatives against reformists) have shifting allegiances (Sabet, 2013).

1.2.5 Western Media’s Representation of Iranian Politics and Culture

A complicated interaction between cultural narratives, geopolitical objectives, and stereotypes has defined how Iranian politics and culture are portrayed in Western media. Iran and its people have always been shown negatively in media narratives, which frequently reinforce Orientalist attitudes and prejudices. According to Ferrero (2013), diplomatic attempts have been hindered by the US media's "Iran Narrative," which portrays Iran as an adversary that is hostile and illogical. Jahedi's

(2015) review, which emphasizes how the media perpetuates unfavorable portrayals of Islam and Muslims, amply supports this picture.

Fayyaz and Shirazi (2013) demonstrate that while some shifts have occurred in Western media representations of Iranians, underlying assumptions remain rooted in essentialized notions of Persian or Islamic civilization. Scott (2000) draws parallels between media coverage of the Iranian hostage crisis and classic American captivity narratives, identifying themes such as depictions of Iranians as *devilish savages* and calls to rally around the flag. These representational regimes are very powerful and have normalized negative representations of Iran by constructing it as a radicalized and backward society needing Western intervention.

Western representations of Iranian politics and culture rely on essentialized versions of both Persian and Islamic civilization. This approach highlights perceived disparities between Iranian society and Western meanings, and reminds audiences that Iranians are inherently 'anti-modern' and incapable of engaging in politics and developing themselves without the assistance of the West (Fayyaz & Shirazi, 2013). Such representations are a part of my “*community of interpretation*” that reinforces xenophobia rather than providing a deeper understanding of Iranian culture or politics.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic are the most obvious historical events that have influenced how Iran is portrayed in Western media. This was a significant turning point and validated the Western public's view of Iran as a repressive and fanatical state (Perletta, 2019). The early 20th century marked a period of political awakening in Iran, particularly during the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911). This era saw the emergence of modern media, with numerous newspapers advocating for democracy and social reforms.

However, Iran had a brief period of media independence after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, but this rapidly declined as the new administration established its hold on power (Halvorsen, 2022). The media was essential to political discourse because it promoted civic involvement and a feeling of national identity. The media was essential to political discourse because it promoted civic involvement and a feeling of national identity. But when Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh was overthrown in a 1953 coup backed by the United States and the United Kingdom,

press freedoms were suppressed and media narratives shifted toward propaganda and state control (Mazrooei et al., 2017; McKernan & Pourtaher, 2024).

The Khomeini-led government imposed strict censorship and closed many publications that opposed its ideology (McKernan & Pourtaher, 2024). The media became an instrument of state propaganda, promoting the Islamic Republic's values while suppressing dissenting voices. This repression was particularly evident during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), where state-controlled media framed the conflict as a defense against foreign aggression (Mazrooei et al., 2017; Rad, 2022).

The events of September 11, 2001, catalyzed a surge in Islamophobia and negative depictions of Middle Eastern countries, including Iran. Following 9/11, Western media increasingly framed Iran within the context of the *War on Terror*, often portraying it as a key adversary. Films and television series such as *Homeland* and *Not Without My Daughter* contributed to this narrative by depicting Iran as a fundamentalist state, reinforcing stereotypes of Iranians as either radical or victimized individuals compliant with Western norms (Coletsou, 2022; Fayyaz & Shirazi, 2013).

Narratives about Iran often depicted it as a rogue state or a primary antagonist in regional conflicts (Marandi & Tari, 2017). Events such as the 2006 Lebanon War intensified this portrayal, with outlets like Fox News framing Iran as a central villain. This narrative was bolstered by influential commentators who reinforced negative stereotypes about Iranian intentions and capabilities. The portrayal of Iran as duplicitous and malevolent became entrenched, often overshadowing more profound understandings of its political landscape (Ansari, 2007; Rad, 2022).

The Iranian government has also engaged in its own disinformation campaigns to shape narratives both domestically and internationally (Cooley et al., 2019). State media frequently portrays dissent as foreign-sponsored conspiracies while vilifying minority groups and opposition movements. This tactic serves to delegitimize protests and maintain control over public perception. In recent years, especially during protests sparked by incidents like the death of Mahsa Amini in 2022, the regime has intensified its use of disinformation to manipulate public opinion and justify crackdowns on dissent (Pirnajmedin et al., 2010).

Moreover, during recent protests in Iran—such as those sparked by the murder of Mahsa Amini—Western media coverage has been criticized for sensationalism and reliance on unverified sources. Reports often depict extreme violence against protesters without acknowledging the complexities of Iranian society or the diverse perspectives within it (Kamalipour et al., 2022). This has led to accusations that Western outlets engage in disinformation campaigns that serve specific political agendas rather than providing accurate portrayals (Esfandiary, 2023; Pechenina, 2023).

According to Marandi and Tari (2017), the contrasting narratives between Iran and the United States further complicate media portrayals. Each nation has developed its own historical myths that inform its foreign policy and public perception. For instance, while Iran emphasizes themes of martyrdom and resistance against foreign intervention rooted in its Islamic heritage, the U.S. narrative often reflects ideals of expansionism and moral superiority (Tirman. 2022). This divergence contributes to ongoing tensions and misunderstandings between the two nations.

The cumulative effect of these media narratives is significant; they shape public opinion about Iran in ways that can influence foreign policy decisions. The dominant narratives tend to overshadow positive representations or more complex portrayals of Iranian culture, such as its rich history, art, and contributions to global civilization. To comprehend these narratives, we must recognize their origins not only in Iranian history but also in global history, and analyze how these narratives continue to adapt and develop according to shifting political context.

1.3 Critical Discourse Analysis and Ideology

1.3.1 Origins and Evolution of CDA

Scholars like Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak concentrated on the critical analysis of language and its function in maintaining and subverting power systems during the 1970s and 1980s, which is when critical discourse analysis first emerged (Billig, 2003). Significant publications that outlined the parameters and techniques of CDA were the result of their joint efforts. Another important factor in spreading CDA research and encouraging scholarly discussion was the establishment of publications such as *Discourse & Society* (Zhao & Sun, 2024).

CDA arose as a response to classical linguistics and discourse analysis, which often disregarded the socio-political settings of language usage. It tried to address this gap by integrating

linguistic study with critical views of society, therefore identifying the ideological components of language (Nguyen, 2024). It is a well-established multidisciplinary area that studies how language, power, and society are related (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). According to Janks (1997) CDA is mainly concerned with the ways in which discourse can be used to reproduce or challenge existing social and power structures.

Over time, CDA has evolved to deepen understanding of the complex interplay between language and society. By analysing discourse, CDA reveals how social realities are constructed and maintained. Examining contemporary issues of power, identity, and inequality is made possible through the use of CDA. Its relevance in analysing new forms of language use has been highlighted with the rise of digital communication and globalized discourse (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). Widely applied across politics, education, and media, CDA aims to detect how language serves particular interests while marginalizing others (Janks, 1997).

Core principles that unify CDA's diverse approaches include an interdisciplinary approach that integrates insights from sociology, linguistics, cultural studies, and political theory; a focus on power dynamics that highlights how language constructs and sustains societal power relations; and a commitment to social justice that aims to uncover hidden ideologies and promote social change are (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Waugh et al., 2016). All things considered, CDA continues to offer critical insights into how language shapes and is shaped by social, political, and ideological forces, ensuring its ongoing relevance in contemporary scholarship.

1.3.2 Relevance of CDA to Media Studies

CDA is a strong framework which is widely adopted in media studies for investigating the complex relationships between language, power, and media narratives (Abdullah, 2014; Hadjiconstantinou, 2021; Janks, 1997; Ramasubramanian & Banjo, 2020). By the use of CDA the ideological underpinnings embedded in media texts, exposing how language perpetuates stereotypes, marginalizes groups, and reinforces dominant narratives is revealed (Sahmeni & Afifah, 2019; Widuna, 2018). As a vital tool in media research, CDA highlights media's role in sustaining social inequalities and power imbalances (Phelan, 2017; Ramanathan & Hoon, 2015).

It is in uncovering how media discourses privilege certain groups while oppressing others where CDA's strength lies (Sahmeni & Afifah, 2019). It analyses how language constructs social hierarchies and representations, thus can impact public perception and behaviour. For example, CDA has discovered biases in news reporting that favour dominant social actors, shaping societal attitudes (Phelan, 2017; Ramanathan & Hoon, 2015).

Enhancing critical media literacy, CDA equips audiences and students with analytical tools to recognize framing techniques and ideological slants which can consequently foster more discerning engagement with media content (Saragi et al., 2020; Ting-tin, 2013). It is the interdisciplinary nature of CDA that allows integration with sociology, linguistics, and cultural studies and enriches the analysis of media discourse within broader social contexts (Ting-tin, 2013). To gain more insights into media production and its socio-political implications CDA plays an important role (Sari et al., 2018). This versatility enables CDA to analyse diverse media texts ranging from news and political speeches to advertising and social media (Bouvier & Machin, 2020; Johnson & Mclean, 2023; Phelan, 2017).

What makes CDA especially relevant in media studies is its focus on what texts do which is uncovering implicit ideologies, assumptions, and power relations (Leotti et al., 2021). Scholars examine how media discourse shapes and reflects social, political, and cultural realities. In media studies, CDA encompasses a wide range of applications, including economic, political, and social domains (Anwar et al., 2020).

1.3.3 Applications of CDA in Media Studies

CDA has been applied to various media forms, including news reports, social media posts, and political rhetoric. For example, Wirzburger (2018) focused on U.S. media coverage during President Trump's administration explored how news outlets constructed narratives around government leaks. The research employed Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach to identify dominant construals of leaking as legal, political, ethical, and depolitical. It revealed how media relied on elite sources to shape public discourse favorably towards governmental perspectives while marginalizing leakers.

Yu and Zheng (2022) took a different tack and examined the coverage of the Hong Kong Extradition Bill Incident by China Daily and The Guardian. The study highlighted disparate depictions of demonstrators and police using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model. They discovered that although China Daily highlighted police attempt to keep the peace and attacked the demonstrators, The Guardian presented protestors favorably while portraying police activities poorly. This study demonstrated how different media outlets portray the same incident from different ideological perspectives.

According to Saragih and Arika (2020), CDA may highlight the power dynamics and underlying ideological positions in digital communication that reflect broader societal problems. Research on political speech on social media by Saragih and Arika (2020) examined politicians' social media posts and language may be used to combat problems like hoaxes and misinformation. Additionally, Rubing and Sandaran (2023) demonstrated that CDA empowers viewers by exposing the ideas woven throughout discourse and improves understanding of how language operates inside media. Researchers can gain insight into how the media impacts societal attitudes and ideas surrounding important topics by closely examining language choices such as representation, modality, and framing strategies.

As far as Framing Strategies are concerned, Bouvier and Machin (2020) found that The choice of specific adjectives or nouns can significantly influence public perception, as seen in the aforementioned studies where language framed individuals either as victims or threats. This clearly depicts how language usage can impact public perception. Moreover, CDA highlights the interplay between media narratives and power structures, illustrating how certain voices are amplified while others are marginalized. This understanding is vital for fostering a more informed public capable of critically engaging with media content (Iarovyi, 2017).

The application of CDA in examining media coverage of socio-political incidents provides invaluable insights into the complex relationships between language, ideology, and power. By analyzing how discourse constructs social realities, we can gain insights into a deeper understanding of media's role in shaping public opinion and influencing political landscapes. There is a paucity of information on conducting a discourse analysis on the media coverage of an Iranian socio-political incident through the lens of modality, metaphor and connotation. However,

there still are some studies that address a similar goal which are reviewed in the following sections after a review on Iran's representation by Western media outlets throughout the past few decades.

1.3.3.1 Studies on implementing CDA on Media Coverage of Sociopolitical Events

The coverage of sociopolitical global events in the media varies considerably relative to the context. There are different cultural, political, and ideological conditions that influence this relationship (Hepp & Krotz, 2008; van Dijk, 2013). Zamith (2022) addresses the specificity of the news values that shape international coverage. It highlights that coverage often displays a geocentric bias, as Western media focuses almost exclusively on Europe, North America and the Middle East while almost not covering the emerging countries in the Global South.

However, even within a western community, for example the USA, how media covers the news and what language uses can vary significantly from media outlet to another and even from region to region. Research analyzing media coverage of protests across different U.S. metropolitan areas reveals a hierarchy in how social struggles are reported. Brown and Harlow found that larger metropolitan newspapers tended to cover protests more extensively than those in smaller regions. According to Seeck and Rantanen (2015), this trend has the potential to affect how the general public views social movements and their legitimacy, indicating that media framing is a significant factor in determining how society views activism.

A very relevant example from the Middle East is the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, which has been subject to varied media portrayals between U.S. and international outlets. Recent analyses indicate that U.S. The media regularly corroborates Israeli official accounts with emphasis on military action and skepticism of Palestinian reports of casualties from Hamas-affiliated sources. In contrast, international media tends to provide a broader perspective, highlighting humanitarian impacts on Palestinian civilians and critiquing Israeli policies more directly. This disparity highlights how media framing can influence public understanding of complex geopolitical issues (Minges, 2023).

These case studies illustrate the complexities of media coverage regarding global sociopolitical events. The impact of globalization and digitalization on media events and how new technologies create novel ways for media events to emerge and reach global audiences is

undeniable (Couldry et al., 2009). However, as the purpose of this investigation is to perform a critical discourse analysis, it is imperative to narrow down the scope and review the literature for more relevant studies. this is done in the following section.

1.3.4 CDA Approaches to Iranian Media Representation

CDA has been employed in various studies to examine how media language reflects and shapes socio-political narratives in Iran. This approach is particularly relevant given the complex interplay between language, ideology, and power dynamics in the context of Iranian socio-political incidents. Critical discourse studies which were about media coverage on Iranian incidents can be reviewed and summarized in three different aspects, studies that addressed political, sports incidents and Iranian identity concepts.

As far as media coverage of Iran sanctions are concerned, Youssefi et al. (2013) conducted a CDA of Western media's representation of Iran's nuclear issues, focusing on editorials from major American newspapers. It analyzed how the language used in headlines and lead paragraphs revealed ideological biases, portraying Iran within a framework that justified sanctions. In order to justify international activities against Iran, the findings showed a strong ideological slant in the coverage, focusing on a binary contrast between "us" (the West) and "them" (Iran).

A significant incident which took place recently was studied by We (2023) who analyzed the media coverage of protests mounted by Iranian players during the World Cup. A comparison made reports coming from different sources including RT, BBC, and Al Jazeera, the research underscored the differences in choosing words and framing. RT's coverage downgraded the protests which is consistent with Iranian government narratives, whereas BBC placed emphasis on the seriousness of the protests and chastised governmental responses. Al Jazeera put forward a more balanced view but still manifested its own ideological stance. This analysis showed how differently media outlets' national interests and ideological positions affected their reporting on socio-political events in Iran.

Another field which was studied was the Representation of Iranian National Identity. Douzandeh et al. (2024) focused on the discourse used in Iran's official tourism website through CDA to understand how it attempts to reshape perceptions of Iranian identity. The analysis

revealed efforts to contest Western stereotypes by promoting a narrative that highlights Iran's rich culture and history. This study employed Fairclough's three-dimensional model to explore how language constructs national identity and counters negative portrayals prevalent in Western media.

It is important to consider the Implications of CDA findings in studies carried out in Iranian context. The application of CDA to media discourse surrounding socio-political incidents in Iran reveals several critical insights. Media language often reflects underlying ideologies that can either reinforce or challenge dominant narratives about Iran. The use of specific lexical choices can create favorable or unfavorable portrayals of events and actors involved (Sivandi Nasab & Dowlatabadi, 2016).

Furthermore, the way incidents are framed by different media outlets can significantly influence public perception both domestically and internationally. This framing often aligns with broader geopolitical interests, showcasing how media serves as a tool for ideological dissemination (Yaghoobi, 2009). CDA also highlights how discourse shapes national identity, particularly in contexts where external perceptions are heavily influenced by historical narratives and political relations. Efforts to reconstruct identity through media can serve as a counter-narrative to prevailing stereotypes (Dabir-Moghadam & Raeesi, 2019).

While numerous studies have employed CDA to investigate media language in socio-political contexts in Iran, they primarily focus on general political discourse or specific incidents. Despite the importance of understanding how language operates within such contexts, there remains a significant gap in research specifically examining media coverage of Mahsa Amini's death. In particular, little attention has been given to the analysis of modality, figurative language, and connotation in this coverage. This study aims to address this gap by exploring these linguistic elements, offering new insights into the ways media discourse shapes public understanding of socio-political events in Iran.

1.3.5 Language and Ideology in Media Coverage

Intrinsically ideological, media discourse is shaped by lexical choices and framing strategies that reflect and propagate specific worldviews (Nawaz et al., 2013). The study of language and ideology in media reveals the subtle but powerful dimensions linguistic choices construct meaning

and reinforce ideological positions. Language ideologies which are reflected through beliefs and assumptions about language use support communication practices and impact how social realities are represented (van Dijk, 1998). Representing how press coverage embeds socio-political and cultural ideologies, evidence from Middle Eastern media provides an obvious example (Ennaji, 1999).

In media contexts, these ideologies can promote socio-cultural traditions, racial identities, and political agendas (Johnson & Milani, 2010). CDA plays a vital role in offering a framework to understand how media language constructs and sustains such ideologies (Nawaz et al., 2013). In political discourse, media representations often mirror ideological biases in favour of dominant groups while marginalizing others. CDA exposes how language perpetuates these power structures (Mortensen et al., 2017).

Media is not a neutral reflection of reality but a social practice shaped by political contexts, where language choices influence public perceptions of gender, power, and authority (Fowler, 2013). Media also shapes identity representations across gender, race, and nationality. For example, sports media coverage often reflects gender biases affecting public attitudes toward femininity and athleticism (Thøgersen et al., 2016). Linguistic analysis reveals the ideological constructs behind such representations.

Language ideologies in public discourse have been transformed by the rise of social media, for example platforms like *X* and *Facebook* enable rapid dissemination. However, they also spread misinformation and polarizing narratives reinforcing ideological divides and shaping political engagement (Johnson & Ensslin, 2007; Milani & Johnson, 2010).

It is important to consciously examine media language so that you can identify implicit ideologies and the possible impact on audience perception and social practice. By analyzing how language creates meaning and represents social values, researchers may be able to understand the processes by which media shapes our understandings of reality. As media continues to evolve with technological advancements, ongoing analysis of these dynamics remains essential for fostering informed public discourse and critical engagement with media narratives. However, the analysis of media discourse around socio-political events in Iran particularly the situation that rose after Mahsa Amini's incident is still missing and further investigation is required.

1.4 Linguistic Tools in Discourse Analysis

1.4.1 Connotation and Semantic Prosodies

To understand the emotional and evaluative dimensions of language, it is necessary to emphasize the roles of connotation and semantic prosody. These concepts elaborate how meaning is constructed, particularly in media and literary discourse. While connotation is relevant to isolated words, semantic prosody emerges from collocational patterns and is relational and contextual. Nonetheless, both emphasize how meaning shifts based on usage and cultural background. For example, the word *sick* traditionally connotes illness (negative), but in slang can express admiration (*That trick was sick!*). Similarly, *spicy* may have different connotations, positive in one culture while discomfiting in another one.

To be more precise, semantic prosody refers to the attitudinal or evaluative meanings that words acquire through habitual collocation (Grabowski & Trklja, 2024). It reflects how meaning is shaped through repeated associations within particular lexical environments. For instance, the verb *cause* regularly occurs with negative outcomes (e.g., *cause damage*, *cause problems*) which can lead to a negative semantic prosody. By contrast, *beneficial* often appears in positive contexts, leading to a positive prosody. It can be analyzed at three levels: individual word connotation, multiword combinations, and broader contextual implications (Gabrovšek, 2007). Shaped by evaluative judgments, semantic prosody is best understood as an interaction between source and target terms (Grabowski & Trklja, 2024).

On the other hand, connotation refers to the emotional or associative meanings a word carries and conveys beyond its literal or denotative meaning (Bulger, 2017). For instance, *home* denotes a physical dwelling but connotes *warmth* and *belonging*. Connotation can be categorized as positive (e.g., *youthful* = vitality), negative (e.g., *childish* = immaturity), or neutral (e.g., *vehicle* = transport).

In CDA, understanding connotation and semantic prosody is vital because texts in media often select words with specific connotations to shape and reflect events. For example, labeling a protest a *riot* invokes disorder and aggression, potentially biasing audience perception.

1.4.2 The Role of Modality in Discourse Analysis

Modality refers to the speaker's or writer's attitude toward the proposition being expressed which includes degrees of certainty, obligation, or permission (Halliday, 2002a). It enables a sophisticated examination of power dynamics, social relations, and ideological frameworks in communicative interactions since it is rooted in the interpersonal function of language (Halliday, 2002b). In other words, modality meaningfully shapes how meaning is constructed and interpreted in discourse, through expressions that convey attitudes toward likelihood, necessity, or desirability. More specifically, it allows language users to express subjective stances via epistemic modality (degrees of certainty), deontic modality (obligations and permissions), and volitional modality (desires).

Modality is thus central in uncovering ideologies, conveying evaluation, and guiding behavior across discourse types (Badran, 2002; Haenko, 2019). In political discourse, this is commonly achieved through using modal verbs revealing ideological positions and serve persuasive functions (Badran, 2002; Xu, 2015). Modal choices can also enable mitigate face threats and maintain social harmony as depicted by Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. For example, *Could you pass the salt?* is more polite than *Pass the salt* (Hyland, 1998). Moreover, modals also reflect power relations. Prevalent in institutional communication and political rhetoric (Dajem & Alyousef, 2020; Xu, 2015), a superior might command, *Submit the report by tomorrow*, while a subordinate may use a polite request like *Could you possibly submit the report by tomorrow?* (Fairclough, 1989).

Modality can reveal biases and ideological positions in discourse. Researchers can find themes, values, and beliefs informing the discourse through modal patterns. For example, politicians used strong modal verbs indicating actors must and should without regard for the consequences, strongly demonstrating their ideological beliefs in political discourse (Fowler, 1991). For instance, different modalities may represent varying degrees of commitment to truth or social claims (Badran, 2002). Accordingly, a modality analysis may either show how language tends to support particular viewpoints or point out ideological contradictions (Xu, 2015).

Analyzing modal markers justifies speaker stance, communicative intention, and the social context (Palmer, 2001). Mediating the relationship between text producers and readers, in media discourse, modality functions as a pragmatic and functional resource (Haenko, 2019). Modality is

a key tool in CDA, offering insights into ideology, evaluation, and social control across diverse communicative settings.

1.4.2.1 Epistemic and Deontic Modality in Media Narratives

Epistemic and deontic modality play significant roles in shaping media narratives, influencing how information is presented and interpreted. By analyzing these modalities, researchers can uncover deeper meanings within media texts, revealing how language influences public perception and societal norms (Wylie et al., 2022). Understanding the interplay between these modalities enhances critical media literacy and fosters a more detailed engagement with media content.

Epistemic modality conveys the speaker's degree of certainty regarding a proposition. In media discourse, it is often used to generate ambiguity or lightly influence opinions (Ozyumenko, 2021). Modal expressions are used by authors to take roles of analyst or adviser and prompt reader engagement (Mukhtarullina et al., 2024). Expressions like *it is possible that* or *it is likely that* signal uncertainty and encourage critical reception (Lyons, 1977), whereas *undoubtedly* or *it is certain that* assert confidence and steer readers toward acceptance (Hyland, 1998).

Epistemic modality can also mask bias. For instance, *The candidate might be involved in the scandal* suggests suspicion without direct accusation (Bell, 1991). Conversely, *The candidate is undoubtedly involved* asserts strong certainty, yet may paradoxically raise questions about the speaker's need to persuade (Fairclough, 1995).

Deontic modality expresses necessity, obligation, and permission, often reflecting societal norms and values. It indicates what is required or permitted in a given context. Expressions such as *“must,” “should,”* and *“may”* exemplify deontic modality by conveying obligations or permissions that guide behavior or actions (Charlow & Chrisman, 2016). Media narratives use deontic modality to prescribe behaviors and attitudes, subtly influencing audience beliefs. For instance, headlines such as *“Citizens must comply with new regulations”* or *“People should take action against climate change”* embed moral imperatives within the narrative (Coates, 1983).

Epistemic modality frames certainty and affects perceived credibility in the news (Mukhtarullina et al., 2024). For instance, the statement *Experts believe the economy will recover* reflects optimism grounded in expert opinion. On the other hand, deontic modality can guide

public responses and behavior, such as *Governments must act on climate change* (Rantsudu & Bartlett, 2024). Deontic modality can also mitigate evaluative judgment. For example, using *should* instead of definitive assertions allows the media to present opinions without overt bias (Rantsudu & Bartlett, 2024). Thus, modality functions as a strategic linguistic choice for balancing persuasion and objectivity.

Modality reflects the media's communicative intent. In short, epistemic modality suggests informing, while deontic modality often indicates persuasion (Levine, 2022; Mukhtarullina et al., 2024). Further research is required to assess how modality shapes reader interpretation and ideological alignment in diverse media contexts.

1.4.3 Symbolic and Figurative Language

1.4.3.2 Figurative Language and Framing in Media Discourse

Figurative language and framing are crucial elements of media discourse that influence viewers' perceptions and comprehensions of information as well as public opinion on social problems. We may better understand how media narratives affect public perception and society attitudes by comprehending these relationships. Figurative language and framing have a dynamic interaction. In order to support particular narratives, framing may need the use of particular metaphors and figurative language. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, framing shifted from viewing the crisis as a *war* to a *journey* which was a sign of public sentiment evolution (Komatsubara, 2024).

Framing theory suggests that the way information is presented (the frame) impacts interpretation by emphasizing some aspects while downplaying others. Common techniques include selection, exclusion, emphasis, and elaboration (Mammadov & Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 2022). For example, covering the media on immigration can be framed through conflict or human-interest lenses which may alter the responses of audience (Amis, 2022). Similarly, framing protests as riots evokes different emotional responses than describing them as demonstrations.

Not only does framing involve content selection but also tone and context. This can shape moral evaluations and causal reasoning (McQuail, 2010). For example, in two distinct contexts,

Rafiee et al. (2023) found Dutch media emphasizing identifiable victims and locations, while Iranian media focused on anonymous criminals, reflecting differing sociocultural values (Otmakhova et al., 2024).

On the other hand, figurative language, especially metaphors, strengthens framing by offering vivid imagery. What metaphors do is to simplify complex issues and evoke emotional responses, for instance, describing migrant influxes as waves may imply threat (van Hulst et al., 2024; Vitez et al., 2022). Other non-literal language features including hyperbole and irony also help construct complex figurative frames (Burgers et al., 2016). Metaphor (e.g., *war on drugs*), hyperbole (e.g., *millions are flooding our borders*), and oxymoron (e.g., *deafening silence*) are the most prevalent types (Saure & Jancinal, 2024). Metaphor and metonymy are central in conflict coverage, modifying event structures and drawing on conceptual and cultural frames (Pinelli, 2016).

These figurative features enhance narratives and serve ideological purposes (Hart, 2023). Although the influential power of figurative language in shaping public discourse has long been acknowledged (Berenson, 2018; Burgers et al., 2016; Carter, 2013), there remains a lack of discursive studies in sociopolitical contexts, particularly in Iranian media.

1.4.3.2.1 Theories of Metaphor

Metaphor is pervasive in thought, language, and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). It is a key feature of human communication, enabling abstract concepts to be understood through more concrete domains (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011; Barnden, 2008). Following Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) definition, a metaphor is "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (p. 5). For example, in *theories are structures*, *theories* is the target domain and *structures* the source.

Conventional metaphors are widespread in everyday language. Mon et al. (2021) illustrate this with expressions like *the road ahead* or *hitting a dead end*, mapping life challenges onto a journey metaphor. Idioms often rely on conventional metaphorical mappings (Gibbs et al., 1997). In contrast, novel metaphors are less frequent and demand more cognitive effort. They are imaginative and not part of everyday language. Martins (2006) describes them as complex and

context-sensitive, while Hartung et al. (2020) note that they are useful only if understood. Shutova (2015) and Do Dinh et al. (2018) emphasize the need to distinguish between conventional and novel metaphors, as the latter pose interpretative challenges.

This distinction aligns with Prandi's (2004, 2017) theory of conflictual metaphors. True metaphors emerge not from conventional mapping but from semantic conflict where literal and figurative meanings converge (Prandi, 2004). Projective and not pre-structured, such metaphors require active interpretation and creative resolution. They can generate new meaning by violating surface coherence. For example, in expressions like *the truth is a naked flame*, the metaphor resists straightforward mapping and invites deeper cognitive engagement. Conflictual metaphors, thus, are inherently non-conventional and exhibit a higher degree of linguistic creativity. Prandi (2017) further distinguishes between stable metaphors (based on established correspondences) and unstable or conflictual metaphors (which trigger semantic tension). The latter are particularly relevant in ideological discourse where ambiguity and interpretive openness serve rhetorical purposes. Metaphor is not just a tool for understanding but a generator of new conceptual structures, especially in sociopolitical texts (Prandi, 2017).

Additionally, Santulli and Degano (2022) stress the argumentative and ideological functions of metaphor. Metaphors do not merely describe reality but construct it by embedding presuppositions and guiding inferential reasoning. Their strategic use facilitates implicit argumentation and ideological alignment. From this perspective, metaphor becomes central to persuasion, ideology, and meaning-making in public discourse. This view expands metaphor beyond cognition into the domain of ideology, making it highly relevant for media discourse analysis.

Many researchers distinguish between conceptual and linguistic metaphors (Littlemore & Low, 2006; Trim, 2007). While conceptual metaphors concern abstract relationships (e.g., *life is a journey*), linguistic metaphors are their verbal expressions (e.g., *he's at a crossroads*). Both are critical for understanding how metaphors function discursively, and both are central to the present study.

1.4.3.2 Symbolism and Ideological Constructs in Media Texts

In media texts, symbolism plays an integral part in analyzing and decoding linguistic and ideological messages. Rooted in semiotics, symbolic expressions construct meanings shaped by cultural and ideological frameworks (Fedorov, 2015; Harless, 1990). Symbolic meanings often operate beneath the surface and require critical analysis to decode.

It is through the use of symbols that complex ideas are condensed. Semiotic analysis, particularly the distinction between denotation and connotation, functions as key to decoding symbolic language (Craig & Heidi, 2007; Miller, 2005). Visual elements, such as flags, also play ideological roles. In the case of Mahsa Amini's death, the use of different Iranian flags in media signified divergent political allegiances. These choices reflect how texts encode ideology through both verbal and visual cues (Lassen et al., 2006). Understanding such symbolic dynamics is essential for revealing the ideological functions of media discourse.

The media's reproduction of cultural myths supports particular interpretations of reality (Fedorov, 2015; Harless, 1990). Mythic portrayals of heroes, villains, or martyrs shape moral and political interpretations regardless of whether they reflect accurate and factual information. In Mahsa Amini's case, media framing constructed her as a heroic symbol of resistance, articulating messages about justice and gendered oppression while skewing audience opinions.

Chapter Two: Methodology and Analytical Framework

2.1 Overview

The chapter includes both the methodological approach and the analytical framework used in the present research which combines corpus-based techniques with qualitative discourse analysis to analyze how international media covered Mahsa Amini's death and the following protests through linguistic choices.

2.2 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in CDA, which suited for uncovering the underlying ideologies in media texts. Since there are a wide range of editorials published by media outlets about Mahsa Amini's death, this study aims to critically analyze the discourse surrounding it. To be more accurate, the focus is on understanding how linguistic tools construct narratives and shape public perception, with particular attention to some linguistic elements namely modality, figurative language, and connotation because these are crucial in shaping evaluative stance, emotional framing, and ideological positioning in political discourse. Modality is used to convey authority, assign responsibility, and highlight the urgency of the events as well. Moreover, the most common type of figurative language, metaphor, is examined to frame the incident emotionally and ideologically. The last element is connotation and the study analyzes the connotative meanings behind the word choices and their variation across different editorials contexts.

2.3 Corpus Construction

This analysis encompasses a diverse range of media outlets, including: Time, The Washington Post, Sydney Morning Herald, Middle East Eye, Los Angeles Times, Le Monde, Guardian, Jakarta Post, and Mainichi Japan. The focus is on identifying patterns of modality, figurative language, and connotation in editorial coverage of Mahsa Amini's death which was definitely a pivotal socio-political event. This varied selection allowed to compare and contrast how different media sources, with their distinct ideological inclinations and target audiences, construct narratives around her death and the subsequent protests. Among those, 59 editorial articles were published between September 2022 till March 2023 were selected. The reason why editorial was chosen over the

other genres is that it explicitly represents a publication's stance and most of the time is linguistically richer in modality, metaphor, and connotation. This varied selection also allowed to compare and contrast how different media sources, with their distinct ideological inclinations and target audiences, constructed narratives around this event. These sources were collected through the online newspaper archive and were converted to plain text to use in Sketch Engine and python. Each outlet was organized into a subcorpus to facilitate comparative analysis. Therefore, three main digital tools were applied for the analysis: Sketch Engine used to manage the corpus, find concordance and collocations, and perform keyword extraction. Python applied to extract sentiment scores and emotional tone through VADER sentiment analyzer and NRC Emotion Lexicon. In Hugging Face which is a transformers library, a pre-trained metaphor detection model (Iwachowiak/Metaphor-Detection-XLMR) was selected and run over the entire dataset.

2.4 Data Analysis

Since the number of selected editorials varied across media sources—for example, 18 from The Washington Post but only one from The Jakarta Post—direct comparison using raw frequency counts would not yield meaningful or reliable insights. To ensure comparability across outlets, frequency data for modality markers and figurative expressions were normalized by total word count, and reported as occurrences per million words. This allowed for proportionate analysis of linguistic patterns regardless of corpus size. Additionally, for figurative language, the focus was placed on identifying metaphor types and conceptual domains rather than comparing absolute counts. This dual approach—quantitative normalization and qualitative interpretation—ensured both fairness and depth in comparing how connotative language, modality, and metaphor were employed across editorial samples.

For the analysis of modality, since the research focused on epistemic (certainty, possibility) and deontic (obligation, necessity) modalities, a list of modal verbs (e.g., must, might, should, ...) and modal adverbs (e.g., certainly, probably, ...) was compiled and by using concordance tool in Sketch Engine, these expressions were extracted. Then the result was visualized and presented in Figure 3.1. In addition to frequency patterns, the analysis examined how different outlets used modality as a rhetorical device. The concordance tool was used again to explore how modal verbs presented in context and how they contributed to the editorial tone or evaluative stance.

Among plenty of pre-trained metaphor detection models in the Hugging Face, one of which (Iwachowiak/Metaphor-Detection-XLMR) was run on the entire corpus and identified metaphorical expressions. Then, the results were manually verified in order to ensure that only valid metaphors were selected. The verified metaphors were organized into conceptual domains such as fire, war, imprisonment, and awakening, based on their underlying source-target relationships. This categorization provided insight into how different media outlets employed metaphorical language to frame the protests—as violent eruptions, catalysts for hope, or acts of resistance. Moreover, the research considered the differences in metaphor types and framing strategies among outlets. Based on conceptual metaphor theory, the metaphors were analyzed according to their ontological, structural, and orientational features. To do so, metaphorical language was examined qualitatively by concordance lines to see how different outlets framed protests.

Not only computational sentiment analysis but also collocational context analysis was used for the last linguistic elements under research, connotation. By doing so, it indicated how emotionally and ideologically word choices shaped the representation of key subjects including Mahsa Amini, the protests, and Iranian authorities. In order to extract sentiment scores and emotional tone at the sentence and word levels, VADER sentiment analyzer and NRC Emotion Lexicon were employed in python and categorized as carrying positive, negative, or neutral connotations. Moreover, Sketch Engine was used to examine the collocation patterns for key terms such as *Mahsa Amini*, *police*, *regime*, *government*, *freedom*, and *protesters*. The most frequent lexical patterns were analyzed for semantic prosody which is considered as a phenomenon in which words acquire an evaluative meaning through habitual co-occurrence with other terms. Using the python-based sentiment scoring with Sketch Engine's collocation analysis could absolutely be helpful to have both breadth and depth in connotation analysis. While python helped quickly spot broad patterns of evaluation, Sketch Engine made it possible to dig deeper into the context and interpret the language in a more nuanced way. Together, these tools worked hand in hand to reveal how editorial tone, ideological leanings, and emotional framing shifted across different geopolitical and cultural settings in coverage of this highly sensitive event.

Chapter Three: Result and Discussion

3.1 Overview

This chapter presents the findings about analysis of three different aspects of language: modality, metaphor, and connotation. The analysis applies a combination of computational tools and manual checking to indicate how media language shapes the way people understand these events. To meet the study's objectives, the following research questions are proposed:

1. How is modality employed in editorials to construct narratives about Mahsa Amini's death?
2. What figurative language do different media outlets use to depict Mahsa Amini's death and the subsequent protests?
3. How do connotative word choices vary among the selected editorial samples?

3.2 The first research question

The first research question has to do with how different outlets use modal expressions to construct narratives about Mahsa Amini's death. As a linguistic element, not only does modality contribute to express judgment, probability, and obligation, but also shapes the speaker's stance. To analyze this, a list of modal verbs and adverbs are examined across the selected sources by using sketch engine. Due to the difference in the number of articles per outlet, the data is normalized per million words to ensure a fair comparison.

As mentioned earlier, deontic modality indicates necessity and obligation whereas epistemic modality expresses uncertainty and likelihood. These two types of modalities emerge from the analysis while their frequency varies significantly among sources and figure 3.1 illustrates this distribution.

Overall, what stands out from the stacked bar chart is that epistemic modality is the most used one in the selected outlets, except for the Mainich Japan. It shows the highest proportion of using deontic modality. This means that it expresses obligation, necessity, or directive tone by using modal verbs such as *must*, *should*, or *will*. It constructs a narrative that implicitly or explicitly

calls for accountability, justice, or reform in response to Mahsa Amini’s death and the wider sociopolitical context.

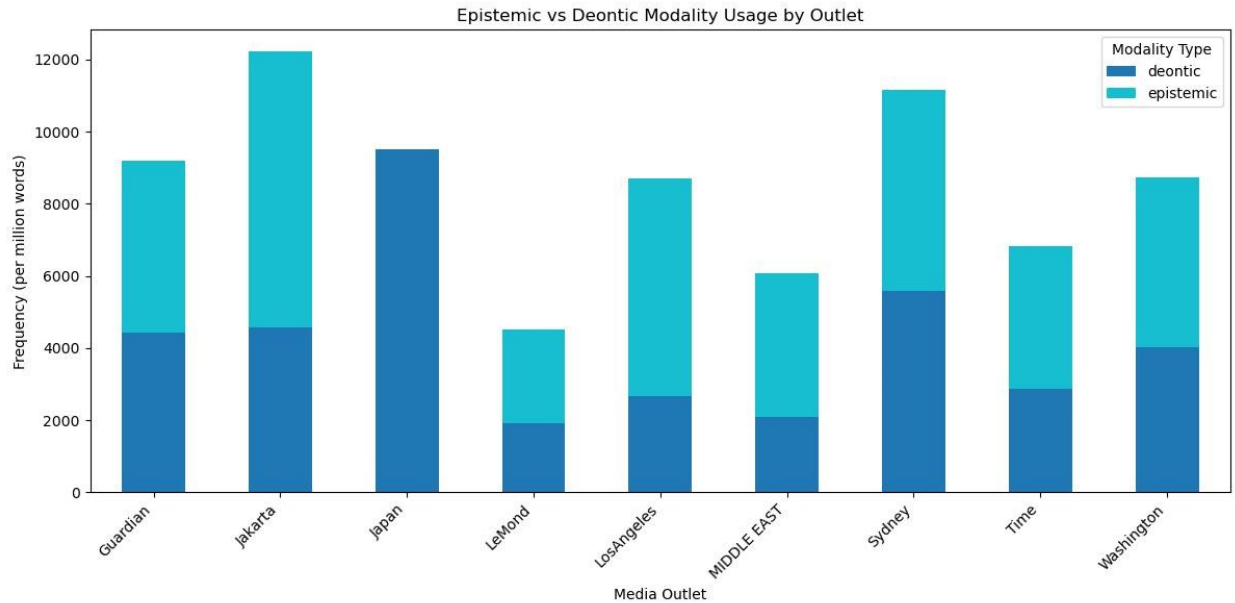


Figure 3.1 *Distribution of epistemic and deontic modality*

In contrast, the Jakarta Post, Le Monde, the Los Angeles Times, the Middle East Eye, and the Time lean heavily towards epistemic modality. That is to say, modal verbs and adverbs such as *could*, *might*, *apparently*, and *allegedly* are used frequently. The reason behind these choices could be political positioning, regional proximity to the issue, or editorial style. Using this type of modality contributes to describe events in a way that there is less involvement or show uncertainty. It also suggests a more observational than prescriptive narrative stance.

Meanwhile, the Guardian, the Sydney Morning Herald, and the Washington Post demonstrate a relatively balanced use of epistemic and deontic modality. These outlets not only provide deontic models such as *must* and *should*, but also use epistemic forms like *may*, *might*, and *undoubtedly*. By doing so, they indicate both authority and empathy, admitting of the complexity of the situation whereas taking a clear stance on certain issues.

Besides finding the frequency patterns, the analysis of modal verbs indicates distinct rhetorical strategies used by different outlets. Consider, the use of *must* in Time, The Washington Post, and Mainich Japan which called for action or moral judgment means urgent appeals for

justice or reform (e.g., Time: *we must amplify the voices of this revolution*. The Washington Post: *The world must isolate the anti-woman regime*. Mainich Japan: *Human Rights must be respected*.) Similarly, the Guardian highlighted ethical duties by using *must* (e.g., Guardian: *their leaders do not listen to them. We must*.) In contrast, Le Monde and Sydney use it to show political positioning rather than direct moral urgency (e.g., Le Monde: *France must align itself with march toward freedom*. Sydney: *Australia must constantly guard its democracy*).

In using *should* which express recommendation or advisability, there is variation in tone. For instance, this sentence, *this should be a strong reminder not to force the people to follow its rule*, which use in Jakarta Post has a reflective national dimension. Some of the outlets such as Washington Post and Sydney Morning Herald use it for policy recommendations: *Biden should continue easing sanctions against Iran on communications tools*. *Australia should not be shy about sanctioning allies if necessary*. In Mainich Japan and Guardian, the modal frame human rights advocacy in such sentences as *Iranian authorities should immediately cease their crackdown* and *Outsiders should also focus on magnifying the voices of Iran's courageous women*, respectively.

Depending on the context, the modal verb *will* can carry different tones and meanings. That is to say, it is usually used to talk about future but in some contexts, it wants to inspire or persuade. Like in these sentences extract from the Guardian, Washington Post, and Time respectively: *they will not be silenced*, *we will continue to condemn the regime's human rights violations*, *we will not let the world turn a blind eye to what is happening in Iran*. In *they will not be silenced*, it shows protesters as brave and unstoppable which motivate the readers to support them. While in the other outlets, it uses in future-oriented or neutral way: *the regime will continue its crackdown*.

As a result, apart from being grammatical tools, modal verbs apply to express opinions, and moral or political stance. Writers choose them wisely to frame how readers understand and feel about the events. Some outlets try to encourage for the actions or present strong opinions whereas the other prefer to be more neutral and careful. So, the former use modal words like *must* or *should* and the latter apply *might* or *could* to show uncertainty.

3.3 The Second Research Question

To identify metaphor across the selected sources, a metaphor detection model is used, then the results verify manually and categorize to four main conceptual domains, fire/explosion, war/conflict, imprisonment/control, and awakening/freedom. Each domain represents how protest is understood both cognitively and ideologically.

3.3.1 Fire/Explosion – Anger is Fire

This domain relates to the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS FIRE, comparing anger, particularly political anger, to something like fire. In this domain, it makes protest seem like it is burning or about to explode which conveys emotional intensity and inevitability. It includes ontological and force-based metaphors since it makes anger feel like a physical force. Phrases like “sparked outrage”, “ignited protests”, “blazes in the hearts”, and “powder keg” were common through Time, the Guardian, Le Monde, and Middle East Eye. These metaphors not only show the protesters as an outburst of anger that had been hidden for a long time, but also emphasize their inevitability and emotional intensity. In Los Angeles Times, continuity and latent resistance present by “embers smoldering” and to depict the spread of protest energy as uncontrollable and explosive, Japan and Jakarta Post use “spread to 80 cities” and “fanned the unrest” which indicates protest energy is uncontrollable and contagious. To put it simply, it is a fire that spreads.

3.3.2 War/Conflict – POLITICS IS WAR

Most selected sources depict the uprising through structural and orientational metaphors based on the conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS WAR. Therefore, metaphors show protests as a fight between the people and the government. By way of illustration, consider these phrases which apply to describe protests in the Washington Post and Time: “a battle pitting two irreconcilable forces”, “execution binge” and “frontlines of a revolution”. Likewise, Le Monde refers to “anti-totalitarian struggle” and “symbols of authority under siege”. On the other hand, military terms such as “crackdowns”, “live fire”, “militia deployment”, and “tactics to crush dissent” are frequently used to describe the government’s actions. These kinds of metaphors depict the protests not just as public disorder, but as a fight for beliefs and values against a religious dictatorship.

3.3.3 Imprisonment/Control – OPPRESSION IS CONFINEMENT

The third domain uses ontological metaphors, especially the conceptual metaphor OPPRESSION IS CONFINEMENT. Iranian regime's authority depicts as restrictive, harsh, and controlling state. The good examples of this are "dragging women off the streets" in the Guardian and "shackles of the regime" in Middle East Eye which pictures the government as a kind of prison system. Sydney Morning Herald and TIME refer to the morality police and surveillance as tools of "ideological enforcement" and "disciplinary violence." The government's control over women's bodies and lives is represented by the word hijab which is metaphorically framed as a "straitjacket" and a "brick in the regime's foundation". The metaphors indicate how the state uses rules and pressure to keep power.

3.3.4 Awakening/Freedom – CHANGE IS REBIRTH / FREEDOM IS JOURNEY

The last domain of metaphors is about rebirth. These metaphors are mostly structural and orientational which depict the protests as hopeful and transformative and structured around the conceptual metaphors CHANGE IS REBIRTH and FREEDOM IS A JOURNEY. That is to say, in Le Monde, a "march towards freedom" and a "beating heart of the fight" are used to show the movement. Similarly, Time describes it as a "revolution within a revolution" which led by "a capable generation of highly educated and globally minded women". By using terms like "awakening", "rising", and "breaking silence", the Guardian and the Washington Post describe protests as not just reactions, but also the demand for real change. The slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom" is often described as a "rallying cry," a "song," or even a "new set of guiding beliefs," especially in TIME and Middle East Eye. These metaphors show the protests as part of a larger movement for women's rights and democracy.

3.3.5 Comparisons Across Outlets

Although all the selected media outlets share the core metaphorical domain, there are some differences in metaphor type and framing strategy. By way of illustration, consider ontological and force-based metaphors in the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS FIRE are mostly used in Time, Guardian, and Washington Post which highlight the emotional intensity and the inevitability of eruption. In contrast, some outlets such as Jakarta Post and Mainichi Japan apply more softer

emotional language for fire metaphors which means they employ spatial metaphors like “spread” and “fanned” that focused more on describing the events.

The second domain relates to POLITICS IS WAR dominantly employ in Washington Post, Time, and Middle East Eye. These metaphors depict the battle between citizens and a repressive regime. A good example could be this “a battle pitting two irreconcilable forces” from the Washington Post or “execution binge” in Time which not only show violence but also brutality. Middle East Eye go a bit further and refer to the hijab laws as the “cornerstone of a battleground” which means the female body itself is the topic of conflict in the broader “war against women”. Again, in Mainichi Japan and Jakarta Post, fewer war-related metaphors are detected. The former use “taking a harsh approach” to show government control but avoid the violent imagery and the latter apply “standard enforcement” and “fanning the unrest” which are metaphors related to governance rather than militarized conflict.

Ontological and bodily metaphor types in imprisonment and control domain are employed noticeably in Middle East Eye, Le Monde, and Los Angeles Times. “Shackles of the regime”, “straitjacket”, and “walls of fear” are the metaphors used in them to depict state repression as a form of physical confinement. Moreover, Le Monde referred to the hijab as “a veil of silence” and which frame it both as an item of clothing and an instrument of ideological restriction. These ontological metaphors reflect how women’s identities and movements are controlled and highlight the protest as a struggle against gendered repression.

The last domain awakening/rebirth includes structural and orientational metaphors are most developed in Le Monde, Time, and Sydney Morning Herald. They indicate protests as hopeful and future-facing. In Le Monde, “march towards freedom” uses the structural metaphor of a journey with a goal. Time describes protests as a “revolution within a revolution” that suggest the new revolution challenges the regime and outdates ideals. Sydney Morning Herald refer to protests as a “wave of resistance” and describes women as the “backbone of the movement”, examples of orientational and structural metaphors respectively.

Consequently, beyond using different metaphorical expressions, the outlets combine them with specific ideological and emotional framings. In this case, some of them use metaphors to reflect urgency, anger, and confrontation, while others emphasize restraint and optimism.

3.4 The Third Research Question

To answer the third research question, sentiment scoring and collocation analysis are used to analyze connotation. This means that by using VADER sentiment analysis, sentences are categorized as positive, neutral, or negative across nine international editorial sources. Since there is inequality between the numbers of articles for each outlet, the results are normalized. Figure 3.2 indicates the sentiment distribution across the corpus.

As shown in Figure 3.2, the percentage of using negative sentiment, apart from Le Monde, is more than 50% in all the outlets, which means that negative expressions are used to describe not only the Iranian regime's actions but also the broader sociopolitical context surrounding Mahsa Amini's death. These expressions indicate moral judgment and ideological stance. Such words as *repression*, *brutality*, and *crackdown* made collocation with *regime*, *police*, and *government* which represent strong negative semantic prosody.

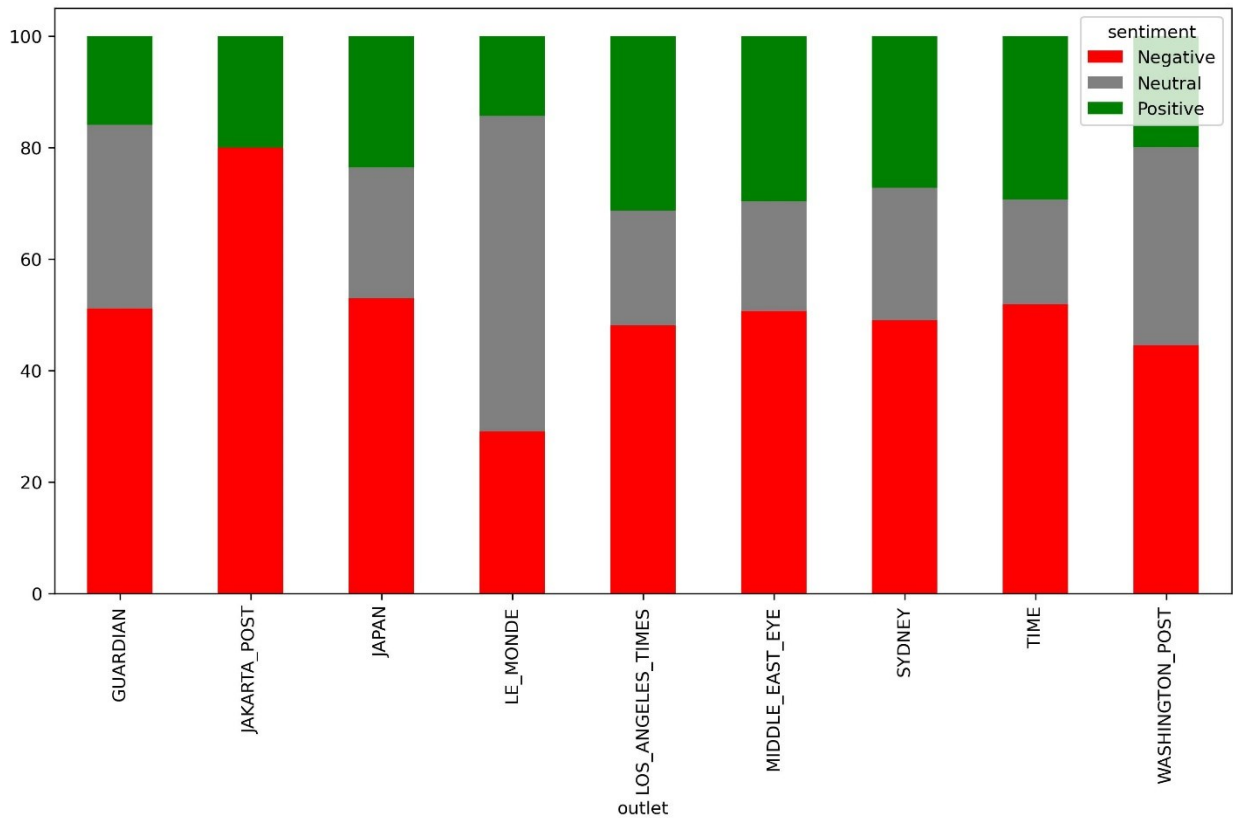


Figure 3.2 Comparative Sentiment Mapping of Selected Media Outlets

Jakarta Post made the highest proportion of using negative sentiment, with 80%. This means that it amplified the emotional tone and positioned the Iranian government as the main antagonist within the discourse. On the other side, neutral sentiment in Le Monde is considerably more dominant than in the other outlets, just over 50%, whereas it has the lowest proportion of the negative one. This could be because Le Monde preferred to describe the event rather than evaluate while most of the sources used more emotional and ideological language.

For a thorough analysis of the sentiment distribution, Sketch Engine is used to investigate the collocational pattern of some keywords such as *Amini*, *police*, and *freedom* and analyze them for semantic prosody. Table 3.1 indicates the keywords with their most frequent modifiers and verbs.

This can be illustrated by the term *Amini*. Due to the co-occurrence of words like *killed*, *death*, *detained*, and *custody*, they clearly made her as a victim of state violence: *Twenty-two-year-old Mahsa Amini was killed by Iran's so-called morality police, over two weeks since the innocent death of 22-year-old Mahsa (Jina) Amini by the brutal forces of the Iranian regime's morality police....* Therefore, a neutral term like *Amini* acquire evaluative meaning by repeatedly co-occurred with emotionally charged words.

Table 3.1 *Keyword Analysis*

Keyword	Common Modifies	Typical Verbs
Amini	22-year-old, detention, death	die, kill, arrest
Police	brutality, morality, custody	arrest, shoot, beat
Regime	oppressive, authoritarian, anti-woman	collapse, respond, impose
Government	repression, lockdown, restriction, assault	inflict, suspend, announce, organize
Freedom	life, personal, fundamental	support, demand, guarantee
Protesters	fearless, pro-democracy, hope	demand, mobilize, burn, hurl

Adjectives such as *oppressive*, *authoritarian*, and *anti-woman* modified *regime* which represent a strong negative semantic prosody. It also appears with phrases such as *a morally bankrupt regime* and *the brutal regime must fall* in Time and Washington Post which means beside describing the regime, they frame it as illegitimate and support the idea that the government is treating people unfairly. On the other hand, some of the selected sources prefer to maintain the neutral register without any explicit judgment, *Islamic regime* and *ruling regime* in Le Monde and Middle East Eye.

In many articles, *police* frequently modify by *morality* and *custody* and their actions describe by verbs like *arrested*, *beat*, and *shoot*. Outlet like Middle East Eye also indicates them as agents of state ideology and emphasize their role in policing women's body (e.g., *thousands have taken to the streets to join women-led protests against the masculinist Iranian regime's oppressive policing of their lives and their bodies* and *Ayatollah Khomeini focused on policing women's bodies as the site of their respective ideologies of power and domination*).

Government appears with some terms like *lockdown*, *repression*, or *restriction*, which constructing it as the main factor of control and suppression. This can be illustrated by some examples from Sydney Morning Herald: *It is a government that is capable to attack cities, it is an ideological government, and it is a government that is capable to kill many people*.

However, *freedom* is frequently part of the slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom" or collocate with terms such as *movement*, *hope*, *rights*, and *future* which have the positive sense and emphasize its ideological value, particularly in Time and Los Angeles Times: *They are fighting tooth and nail to claim their freedom of choice and their right to live life as they please* and *Iranian women are rising up to demand freedom*. This positive collocations with freedom make the protests to see as a demand of human rights and liberation.

Protesters co-occurs with verbs like *demand*, *mobilize*, or *burn* represent them as change leaders, while sometimes in contexts of violence or crackdown. Outlets Los Angeles Times and Sydney Morning Herald describe them as fearless, defiant, or leaders in such sentences as *Protesters burned headscarves and cut their hair*, *Protesters set fire to the old family home of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran and longtime supreme leader*.

As a result, the connotation analysis reflects a contrast in how political sides are described: the Iranian government is framed by terms which emphasize its violence and repression, while protesters, particularly women, are depicted as brave and leaders of change.

3.5 Discussion

This chapter interprets the findings from the analysis of three linguistic elements in the international media coverage of Mahsa Amini's death and the following events. Based on the theoretical frameworks presented in literature review, the analysis of modality, metaphor, and connotation explored that how language used in journalism, besides reporting the factual information, frame, interpret, and convey ideological positions. Now, the discussion chapter investigates the findings in wider context of research on political communication, protest narratives, and media discourse.

3.5.1 Modality and Editorial Stance

The modality analysis revealed how media outlets used language to express certainty, obligation, or caution which are the functions that have been recognized in systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Epistemic modality indicates by modal verbs and adverbs like *might*, *could*, *apparently* or *allegedly* were used to present events with interpretive distance. It is a strategy that show what Hyland (1998) describes as "hedging" which means a technique for writers to express caution and manage the reader's expectations. It also supports Martin and White's (2005) theory that epistemic modality serves as a tool for engagement in evaluative discourse where enables speakers to negotiate their stance and responsibility for their claims. *Le Monde*, *Time*, and *Middle East Eye*, to name but a few, frequently used epistemic expressions which suggest an intention to present the situation with caution and detachment and positions them as observers rather than advocates. According to White (2003), these modality structures help media keeps a sense of neutrality while still conveying ideological stance.

In contrast, media outlet like *The Mainich Japan* took a quite different approach. It used the highest portion of applying deontic modality which make assertive and interventionist narratives. This kind of language makes a discourse as a prescriptive one that implicitly or explicitly urges change, reform, or justice. It mirrors recent findings in media discourse analysis. A good example

of this is the study run by Aigul Mukhtarullina et al. (2024) which shows English-language online news increasingly uses deontic modality to consider the writer as an advisor or moral authority, particularly in political reporting. In the context of international and humanitarian issues, it reflects patterns firstly noted by O’Keeffe (2006): deontic terms frame the events not as neutral reports, but as call to moral action. Such language choices reveal the outlet’s ideological stance in relation to the protest movement.

A number of news sources, like The Guardian, The Washington Post, and The Sydney Morning Herald, demonstrated a more balanced use of both epistemic and deontic modality, a mixed expressions of uncertainty with statements of obligation or necessity. This balanced style indicates a thoughtful editorial approach which means the complexity of the situation is considered while a clear moral stance is taken and also supports Bednarek’s (2006) observation that news discourse often combines multiple types of modalities to show complex evaluative judgments.

In summary, apart from being a grammatical device, modality is a means of constructing positionality. Media sources that used deontic forms often signaled moral alignment with the protests, while those using epistemic ones tend to convey neutrality or keep strategic distance. It aligns with van Dijk’s (1998) assertion that stance and ideology are embedded in the microstructures of language.

3.5.2 Metaphor as Cognitive and Persuasive Framing

The metaphor analysis supported the main principles of Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory which said that metaphors help people to understand abstract or complex experiences through by linking them to more familiar conceptual frameworks. It aligns with the broader view of Charteris-Black (2004) about metaphor. He believes that metaphors in political discourse have a persuasive function by engaging with shared cultural values and eliciting emotional responses.

In the first domain which is Fire/Explosion and relates to conceptual metaphor “ANGER IS FIRE”, terms such as “sparked outrage” or “ignited protests” described the uprising as a sudden and uncontrollable release of anger and tension that had been building under pressure. According to Charteris-Black (2005), these metaphors are common in political rhetoric where anger is linked

to change and often help to legitimize dissent as a natural reaction to systemic injustice. Recent studies have expanded the strategic use of this metaphor in political discourse. This can be illustrated by a corpus-based analysis of Erdoğan's speeches (2024) which shows how fire-related metaphors are shaped by Turkish cultural narratives. Political authorities use this metaphor in different ways, sometimes to bring their supporters together by terms like *our anger*, or to criticize their opponents. In these conditions, the metaphorical intensity is adjusted based on who their audience.

Metaphors in the War/Conflict domain made the protests seem even more intense. Such terms as “battle”, “crackdown”, “frontlines”, and “resistance” described the events as a fight between two sides, the government and the people. This both reflects Musolff's (2006) findings that war metaphors polarize public discourse by establishing a moral dichotomy between virtuous actors and oppressive regimes and aligns with his recent work (2023) on war metaphors which suggest that they help justify extreme actions, encourage emotional unity, and promote an *us-vs-them* mindset.

Some good examples of Imprisonment and control metaphors domain are “straitjacket”, “shackles of the regime”, and “carceral apparatus” which highlighted how the government control over its citizens, particularly women. These patterns support van Dijk's (1998) discourse and control framework which highlights how language reproduces power structures. Moreover, metaphors related to hijab align with Lazar's (2005) feminist critical discourse analysis showing how government power operates through bodily regulation and the ideological control of women.

The last domain related to the CHANGE IS REBIRTH and FREEDOM IS JOURNEY metaphors offered a more hopeful view and focused on change and resistance. Phrases such as “a march toward freedom”, “revolution within a revolution” and “awakening” represented the emotional and moral weight of the movement, whereas placing it in broader global narratives of democratic renewal. This corresponds to Semino's (2008) observation about metaphors of movement and rebirth. They are commonly used to represent protests as progressive and essential steps in societal development. Furthermore, Boakye-Yiado's (2025) research on political cartoons in Ghana indicates that journey metaphor in media discourse creates the sense of solidarity and

shared purpose. To put it simply, collective action as shared journey enhances audience identification and emotional engagement.

Taken together, emotional depth, moral urgency, and ideological clarity were added to the reporting by these metaphorical domains. The diversity of using metaphors among outlets reveals that how they use them to shape political and emotional impact which reflects their cultural background and editorial stance.

3.5.3 Connotation and Semantic Framing

The connotation analysis indicated a clear pattern of negative sentiment usage to describe the Iranian government and its institutions. Apart from explicit terms such as *repression*, *brutality*, *crackdown*, and *authoritarianism*, this negative language was apparent in the collocational patterns. This can be illustrated by the terms like *regime*, *police*, and *government* which frequently appeared with negative words like *violence*, *detention*, *abuse*, and *control*. This is what Louw (1993) and Stubb (2001) calls theory of semantic prosody which means words take positive or negative meaning based on frequent co-occurrence with emotionally loaded terms. These collocation patterns also support van Dijk's (1998) idea about ideological positioning in media discourse. He says that this positioning is achieved not only through explicit evaluation, but also through lexical patterning that becomes "common sense" over time.

However, positive and empowering terms were used to frame the protesters and reflected a more sympathetic or supportive stance. For instance, words such as *freedom*, *hope*, *movement*, *rights*, and *resistance* co-occurred with references to demonstrators, particularly women and young people. These terms depicted them as brave, purposeful, and morally justified in their fight for change. To add to this, verbs like *demand*, *mobilize*, and *defy* also emphasized their active role, which means that they are not just victims of oppression, but agents of transformation. This dimension reflects Chouliaraki's (2006) argument that affective language establishes moral legitimacy in humanitarian reporting.

In contrast, Le Monde maintained a more neutral tone and avoided using highly emotional collocations or explicit ideological framing. This editorial control may reflect a national journalistic tradition of analytical neutrality, as discussed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), who

classify French journalism within the Democratic Corporatist model, characterized by strong professional norms and a relatively detached approach to news reporting. This pattern also aligns with Esser and Pfetsch's (2004) idea that continental European journalism often prioritizes contextual analysis over emotional appeal, particularly when compared to the more advocacy-driven Anglo-American press.

3.5.4 Integration and Implications

This study indicates that stylistic effect is not the only function of these three linguistic elements, modality, metaphor and connotation are also interconnected tools for constructing ideology. These linguistic features reveal more than just report the news; they frame how people see and understand sociopolitical reality. By considering corpus-based and qualitative discourse analysis, this study reflects how language shapes public perceptions of protest movements particularly the ones related to gendered repression and calls for democratic reform.

In doing so, the study reflects how protest movements can be presented as either legitimate or politically neutral based on the cultural and editorial context. This opens pathways for further research, such as studying how audiences respond to these portrayals or comparing them with coverage in Persian-language media to see how stories differ inside and outside Iran.

Overall, apart from highlighting the media's role as a source of information, this study reflects it as a producer of meaning. Which means that language becomes a tool for negotiating justice, legitimacy, and collective memory.

Chapter Four: Conclusion and General Remarks

This study has examined how international media outlets used modality, metaphor, and connotation to frame Mahsa Amini's death and the subsequent protests in Iran. This research has revealed that language in media is not just a tool to convey the information but a powerful means to construct ideological narratives and to shape how events are understood. By analyzing nine global news sources, it has also highlighted how linguistic choices represent editorial perspectives, cultural attitudes, and emotional tone toward one of the most important human rights movements in recent years.

The findings have shown that outlets applied significant portion of epistemic modality, making them to keep journalistic neutrality, while deontic modality was used to call for justice and change. These findings support the idea that modality functions rhetorically, as shown in both corpus result and concordance analysis. The four identified metaphorical domains have provided a framework for understanding how events were emotionally, morally, and ideologically framed. The connotation analysis has represented a negative framing of Iranian government and a positive one of protesters, particularly women.

These expanded findings confirm and extend earlier research on media discourse, particularly theories by Lakoff, van Dijk, and Charteris-Black, while applying them to a contemporary, gendered protest movement. In doing so, this study links linguistic theory with real-world political discourse, it shows how modality, metaphor, and connotation work together to shape global perception of justice, human rights, and social change.

Although the computational tools and qualitative analysis combined successfully, there are some limitations to mention. First in metaphor analysis, the detection model was useful for identifying them but still required significant manual review. Future research could apply more advanced detection models or mix computational analysis with expert annotation to improve accuracy. Next, the data was normalized for having the fair comparison since the number of articles for each outlet was not the same. Doing so may lead to have fairer result but sometimes it made the emotional intensity of the language look weaker. A genre-sensitive model trained on news discourse could improve this in future studies. The last point is related to the corpus. While it was geographically diverse, the study focused just on editorial content. There are other journalistic

genres such as interviews and news articles which could consider in future research to compare different types of content.

Future research could focus on multimodal analysis, particularly on digital platforms where text is combined with videos, images, and headlines. Another area could be the study of audience reactions. It means how readers understand and are influenced by the way outlets frames events. Moreover, researchers could work on how local Iranian media build their own narratives, with or without censorship limitations. This would fill a major gap in understanding how domestic and diaspora discourse interacts with global media representations.

Besides its academic value, this study invites readers to think of real-world power of language and see how it forms political and social issues. Journalists, educators, and everyday media users could improve their media literacy by knowing how linguistic elements like modality and metaphor work in the news. In a time when language is frequently used to push political agendas, it is a crucial skill. By recognizing these linguist patterns, activists and policy makers could frame issues more effectively and get more support.

This research indicates how deeply language, ideology, and power are connected by starting with a specific event of Mahsa Amini's death and broadening to examine global media coverage. It asks for ongoing critical thinking about how we speak, write, and read about injustice, not just to better understand the world, but to help change it.

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