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Compound nouns as linguistic framing devices in Arabic news headlines in the context of the Israel-Gaza conflict

Aseel ZIBIN^{1,2}  , Abdel Rahman Mitib ALTAKHAINEH¹ 
and Marwan JARRAH¹ 

¹University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

²Applied Science Private University, Amman, Jordan

 a.zabin@ju.edu.jo

Abstract

Compound nouns, whether metaphorical or otherwise, are compact and image-evoking linguistic structures widely used in news headlines. However, a review of the relevant literature shows that they have not been examined in the context of news headlines in Arabic media. Hence, this study aims to identify the role of metaphoric and catchy noun compounds as powerful framing devices in Arabic news headlines, specifically within the context of the Israel-Gaza conflict. Drawing on Entman's (1993) Framing Theory we analysed the corpus, comprising 350 news article headlines sourced from Arabic news agencies and identified compounds using Altakhaineh's (2019) criteria for compoundhood. The overall number of collected compounds amounted to 231 (196 endocentric and 35 exocentric). The study reveals a purposive use of both endocentric and, on occasions, exocentric noun compounds as catchy expressions and metaphors, showing how they influence the narrative surrounding the target conflict. The deliberate preference for endocentric compounds over exocentric ones in Arabic news headlines reinforces the importance of clarity and immediate comprehension in framing devices to ensure effective communication. Through the identification and analysis of ten frames, we argue that the use of compounds as framing devices in Arabic media coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict reflects a distinctive perspective, constructing a reality that markedly diverges from the narrative often depicted in some Western media. This study contributes to the understanding of Arab media framing, emphasizing the role of compounds in creating compelling, compact, memorable, and emotionally charged representations of current events.

Keywords: *media discourse analysis, noun compounds, framing, news headlines, metaphor, Arabic*

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Составные существительные как средства языкового фрейминга в арабских новостных заголовках (в контексте военного конфликта в секторе Газа)

Асель ЗИБИН^{1,2}  , Абдель Рахман Митиб АЛЬТАХАЙНЕХ¹ ,
Марван ДЖАРРАХ¹ 

¹ *Университет Иордании, Амман, Иордания*

² *Частный университет прикладных наук, Амман, Иордания*

 a.zabin@ju.edu.jo

Аннотация

Составные существительные, будь то метафорические или иные, являются компактными и образными языковыми структурами, широко используемыми в новостных заголовках. Однако, как показывает обзор соответствующей литературы, они не рассматривались в контексте новостных заголовков в арабских СМИ. Цель данного исследования – определить роль метафорических и выразительных составных существительных как важных фреймовых средств, используемых в арабских новостных заголовках, в частности, в контексте военного конфликта между Израилем и Газой. Опираясь на теорию фрейминга Энтмана (Entman 1993), мы проанализировали корпус, состоящий из 350 заголовков новостных статей, взятых из арабских новостных агентств, и выявили составные существительные на основе критериев, разработанных А. Алтахинэ (Altakhaineh 2019). Всего было выявлено 231 составных существительных (196 эндоцентрических и 35 экзоцентрических). Исследование показывает целенаправленное использование как эндоцентрических составных существительных, так и, в отдельных случаях, экзоцентрических, в качестве броских выражений и метафор и демонстрирует, как они влияют на нарратив, связанный с военным конфликтом. Намеренное предпочтение эндоцентрических сложных слов экзоцентрическим в арабских новостных заголовках подтверждает важность ясности и незамедлительного понимания фреймов для обеспечения эффективной коммуникации. Выявив и рассмотрев десять фреймов, мы утверждаем, что использование составных существительных в качестве фреймов в арабских СМИ, освещающих конфликт между Израилем и Газой, создает особую информационную картину, которая заметно отличается от нарративов некоторых западных СМИ. Данное исследование вносит вклад в понимание фрейминга в арабских СМИ, подчеркивая роль составных существительных в создании убедительных, компактных, запоминающихся и эмоционально заряженных описаний текущих событий.

Ключевые слова: анализ медиадискурса, составные существительные, фрейминг, метафора, новостные заголовки, арабский язык

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1. Introduction

Headlines perform several functions at once even with their institutional conventions and spatial restrictions. They introduce the topic reported in the news article, attract the audience's attention to it and thus generate their interest in it,

highlight the focus of the article, and finally indicate the attitude of the news outlet towards it (Morley 1998, Molek-Kozakowska 2014). The latter function is associated with the endeavours of the outlets to frame issues in certain ways using selected linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical devices (Molek-Kozakowska 2014). In other words, given the limited space they have and the density of that item of information in the press, news headline writers are forced to employ terms or language structures which may be regarded as linguistically compact and attention-getting (Herrera Soler 2008). It is exactly in this part of the report where immense efforts are exerted to structure news in way that allows for prioritising, reordering and highlighting the events reported (Herrera Soler 2008). In this paper, we demonstrate how compounds are deployed by news headline writers in Arab media press as framing devices to construct certain realities. In linguistics, a compound is a lexical unit created by combining two or more elements. Numerous definitions have been proposed for compounds since compound elements in certain languages may not exist as independent words, and there is often ambiguity in distinguishing compounds from other linguistic units like phrases and derived words (see Booij 2007, Lieber & Štekauer 2012). In this study, we will use the definition of compounds proposed by Plag (2003: 135), then we will modify it based on Altkhaineh (2019) who analysed Arabic compounds and proposed a distinction between Arabic compounds and phrases. Plag (2003: 135) stated that “a compound is a word that consists of two elements, the first of which is either a root, a word or a phrase, the second of which is either a root or a word.”

In this study, we aim to explore noun compounds which specifically refer to a compound in which both constituent words are nouns (Plag 2003). This is because it has been argued that compounds express complex ideas in a compact, word-like form compared to expressing the same idea with a longer phrase (Adams 2001, Benczes 2010). Based on preliminary analysis of Arabic news headlines in our study, we found that noun compounds in Arabic headlines frequently condense essential key concepts of news stories, enabling succinct yet powerful communication (see Bauer 2020).¹ Compounds can either be endocentric (semantically headed) or exocentric (semantically headless) (see Booij 2007: 81). They can also be metaphor-based (see Benczes 2010, Zibin 2018) which makes them semantically and lexically compact and able to evoke rich images and thus capture readers’ attention. In this regard, Gibbs (1994: 124–125) posits that “metaphors allow people to communicate complex configurations of information that better capture the rich, continuous nature of experience than does literal discourse alone” (Gibbs 1994: 125).

¹ Note that there is a debate on whether exocentric compounds can also be based on metaphor similarly to endocentric compounds. A bahuvrihi-compound which is a form of exocentric compound that refers to the person who possesses the entity described by the compound, e.g. *blockhead*, has been argued to be based on metaphor. Bauer et al. (2013) propose that bahuvrihis are exocentric and often meant metaphorically or metonymically. This study will not dwell on whether exocentric or endocentric compounds can be metaphor based or not.

While previous research (e.g. Benczes & SÁgvári 2022, Nerlich & Koteyko 2009) has investigated metaphorical compounds as framing devices in specific contexts such as migration in Hungarian and climate change in English (UK), the current study seeks to extend this line of inquiry by focusing specifically on noun compounds in Arabic news headlines in the context of Israel-Gaza conflict, which is characterized by its high level of complexity and its strong political implications that are deeply rooted in history and culture. The ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinian militant groups, provide a new context to analyze how noun compounds could be carefully deployed as framing devices in Arabic news headlines to construct a reality that could be different from that constructed in some Western media outlets. This conflict has been ongoing since 1948, but the study focuses on the events that started on October 7, 2023 which is deeply connected to the historical roots of the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. Thus, it may offer an opportunity to examine the role of language in shaping public discourse and constructing different realities. Furthermore, the analysis of noun compounds in Arabic news headlines introduces a cross-cultural aspect, presenting data from Arabic. Hence, the aims of this study are to examine how metaphoric and catchy noun compounds in news headlines in Arab media can be used as framing devices to present a narrative about Israeli-Gaza conflict that is different from the one found in some Western media outlets in light of Framing Theory (Entman 1993, 2007). In particular, the study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

1) To what extent are metaphoric and catchy noun compounds in news headlines in Arab media used as framing devices to present a specific narrative about the Israel-Gaza conflict?

2) What are the main frames found in the collected noun compounds in news headlines in selected Arab media?

3) What are the implications of using endocentric and exocentric noun compounds in news headlines as framing devices?

2. Background

2.1. Arabic compounds

Prior to defining compounds in Arabic, an important distinction should be made between two constructs that are similarly structured but are semantically different. In Arabic, a structure called *Id'ā:fah*, known as a Synthetic Genitive Construction (SGC) or Construct State (CS), consists of two types of structure, compounds and phrases. The construction generally consists of two nouns or, in some cases, an adjective and a noun, with a left-hand constituent taking the nominative, accusative or genitive case, depending on the syntactic function of the whole construct in the sentence under consideration, while the right-hand constituent always takes the genitive case (Altakhaineh 2019). Regarding the definiteness of the construct, Fassi Fehri (2012: 156) shows that the left element, which is the head of the compound (Altakhaineh 2019), is always indefinite, while

the right one can be found as definite or indefinite. Consider the following examples:

- (1) *xa:tam-u ʔal-fata:t-i* (Phrase)
 ring-NOM DEF-girl-GEN
 ‘The girl’s ring’
- (2) *kursijj-u ʔal-xafab-i* (Compound)
 chair-NOM DEF-wood-GEN
 ‘The wooden chair’

Example (1) is a phrase in which the relationship between the two nouns is possessive, whereas example (2) consists of a compound in which the right constituent classifies or modifies the left one. In a recent study that systematically examines the structure of Arabic compounds, Altakhaineh (2019) argues that referentiality and adjacency are considered as the most reliable criteria for distinguishing compounds from phrases in Arabic and possibly across other languages. The former refers to the inseparability of the constituents of the compounds where no element can interfere between the two (see Lieber & Štekauer 2012: 11–12), while the latter refers to picking out entities in the physical world. That is, the right-hand constituent of compounds is normally non-referential (see *ʔalxafabi* ‘the wood’ in example (2) which refers to no specific wood but to the material itself). Conversely, the right-hand constituent in phrases is always referential (*ʔalfatati* ‘the girl’ in example 2 refers to a specific girl). Thus, despite being structurally similar, the two types of SGCs are not semantically similar. Hence, based on criteria of compoundhood suggested in the literature (see Lieber & Štekauer 2012), Altakhaineh (2019) modified Plag’s definition stating that a compound as a complex word consists of at least two adjacent components, where the non-head element typically does not refer to something specific. Each component can be a word, a combining form, or a phrase, with the entire compound being a blend of these elements. This is the definition we adopt to identify compounds in this study.

The relevant literature (Fabb 1988: 66–67, Booij 2007: 81) discusses various types of compounds. The types mentioned here are primarily endocentric or semantically headed compounds, e.g. a *bookstore*, which is type of shop. These compounds have a semantic head, that is the right-hand element *store*. Thus, the compound denotes a hyponym of its head. The other type is called exocentric, which is semantically headless. These compounds have no semantic head and thus do not denote a hyponym of their head, e.g. *egghead* is not a type of a head. Arabic compounds can also be endocentric (*ʕasʕi:ru ʔattuffa:hi* ‘apple juice’) or exocentric (*ʕaʕar ʔalbana:t* lit. girl’s hair ‘candy floss’), yet the head of Arabic endocentric compounds is the left-hand element rather than the right one like English. Arabic compounds can also be metaphor and/or metonymy-based (see Altakhaineh 2022).

Since this study analyses news headlines in the press media, the variety of Arabic studied in this paper is Modern Standard Arabic. This variety of Arabic,

referred to as *fusḥa*., is the only formal variety of Arabic usually found in news broadcasts, newspapers, official correspondences, sermons, among others. The spoken varieties of Arabic rely on the geographical areas of the speakers, e.g. Jordanian Arabic, Syrian Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, etc. These spoken dialects are the ones which are nativized by Arabic-speaking children, while MSA has no speech community (Zibin 2019).

2.2. Theoretical framework

Entman defined framing as the act of emphasizing a particular aspect of reality in communication text. Framing has its origin in the way journalists present news to enhance understanding. Frames capture the essence of a problem, describe the nature of a situation and suggest methods of analysis (see Berinsky & Kinder 2006). Entman (1993: 53) argues that ‘salience’ can be defined as “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences”. Thus, “an increase in salience enhances the probability that receivers will perceive the information, discern meaning and thus process it, and store it in memory” (Entman 1993: 53).

News media significantly influences public perceptions through initial framing (Lee & Basnyat 2013). Media frames are described as central organizing ideas or storylines that give meaning to unfolding events; they suggest the essence of controversies and the core issues (Gamson & Modigliani 1989). In communication research, Framing Theory, also known as news framing theory or Media Framing Theory, posits that people's perceptions are likely to be shaped when media messages are presented within specific frames (see Şenocak 2017, Larina et al. 2020). Frames, according to De Vreese (2005), focus on highlighting the importance of various elements of a topic, while D'Angelo (2019) defines frames as individuals' attempts to persuade using language and paralinguistic messages that describe, identify, and analyse an issue's characteristics and structures.

While many studies presented one-sided frames, i.e. from one perspective, other studies present dual frames or counter frames (Anderson 2018). The former refers to the simultaneous presences of two different frames within a certain narrative or discourse (Anderson 2018). Such frames may provide different perspectives or emphasize different aspects of the same issue. However, they may not necessarily contradict one another. The latter, namely, counter frames, are those that specifically contradict the original frame and are presented at a later date than the original one (Chong & Druckman 2013). According to Anderson (2018), counter frames offer important insights into the concept of negotiated meaning in the presence of competing messages; thus, political science researchers have examined counter-frames within the context of competition in the political field. The current study will also explore counter frames in the context of the Israel-Gaza conflict.

Entman (1993) proposed studying and identifying frames in news stories by analysing particular keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped metaphors, information

sources, and sentences that form thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments. A deductive approach to news framing analysis aims to determine which components in a news story constitute a frame. Framing devices, as defined by Gamson and Modigliani (1989), summarize information and create a “media package” of a problem. They distinguish between framing devices that suggest how to think about the issue and reasoning devices that justify what should be done about it. The five framing devices proposed by Gamson and Modigliani include metaphors, exemplars (historical examples), catchphrases/expressions, depictions, and visual images (e.g., icons).

Our study utilizes Entman's framing theory by employing its key concepts and analytical framework to examine noun compounds in Arabic news headlines. Our investigation focuses on the role of these compounds as framing devices, which potentially influence how the audience perceives and interprets the Israel-Gaza conflict. Building upon Entman's focus on the significance of salience in framing (1993), we investigate how noun compounds amplify the prominence of particular elements of the war in news discourse, thereby constructing different narratives of the war. Our aim is to enhance understanding of how language, particularly noun compounds, influences media portrayals and public perspectives on war by illustrating the function of noun compounds as framing tools.

2.3. Studies on the language of news headlines

In their endeavour to capture the attention of readers, journalists invest significant effort in formulating their news headlines. If a headline fails to capture the interest of the reader, it may result in the story being overlooked, which in turn could lead to a decline in activity on the news page and a reduction in potential commercial profit (Blom & Hansen 2015). Consequently, journalists utilise a variety of techniques to ensure that their headlines are both attention-grabbing and memorable. Some use sensationalism (see Molek-Kozakowska 2013), others employ narrative and stylistic devices (see Schaffer 1995, Ifantidou 2009), some writers centre on provoking content, while others use linguistic and figurative devices, such as metaphors (Herrera Soler 2008, Nerlich & Koteyko 2009, Marcoci 2014, Robert 2020, Zibin 2020, Benczes & SÁgvári 2022). A review of the relevant literature indicates that compounds, whether metaphoric or otherwise, as linguistic devices have not been examined in the context of news headlines in Arabic. This is despite the compact nature of such compounds and their image-evoking characteristics, which make them a potentially useful linguistic structure to be employed in news headlines. Hence, this paper examines the use of noun compounds in news headlines in Arab press media, with particular focus on their potential as framing devices. This section presents a review of some studies on the various devices and styles employed by writers in news headlines. Benczes and SÁgvári (2022) argue that the use of metaphorical language, known as figurative framing, is particularly powerful in conveying intellectual ideas and influencing public sentiment on a given matter. As the issue of migration has been a subject of

intense controversy in the modern Hungarian media, the process of framing begins with the choice of terminology that journalists use to describe individuals who have fled their home countries: *bevándorló* “immigrant”, *migráns* “migrant”, or *menekült* “refugee”. Benczes and SÁGVÁRI (2022) suggest that the associations that arise depend on the label used, which in turn is based on distinct metaphorical conceptualizations. Thus, they conducted an analysis of metaphorical compounds using the keywords found in a media corpus consisting of around 15 million words. The results of the study show that all three keywords primarily elicit negative frames and evaluations that are based on commonly used metaphorical concepts found in international literature, such as FLOOD, OBJECT, BUSINESS, WAR, and CRIME. However, the distribution of these metaphors varies depending on two factors: a) the specific keyword chosen, and b) the political agenda of the media source.

Despite extensive research on news framing and the linguistic aspects of headlines, there is a notable research gap in the literature concerning the role of noun compounds in framing the Arabic media discourse. This study aims to fill this gap by applying Entman's framing theory to the analysis of the compounds employed in Arabic news headlines. Entman's theoretical framework provides a systematic approach to understanding how media shapes public perception through framing. By focusing on noun compounds, this study aims to elucidate the manner in which Arabic compounds are utilized as framing devices in the context of Israeli-Gaza conflict. This will provide insight into the distinctive linguistic features employed to convey meaning, accentuate specific aspects of the conflict, and potentially influence public opinion. 3. Data and methods

3. Data and methods

3.1. Data collection

A pilot analysis of Arabic news headlines was conducted to identify potential compound candidates. This analysis enabled the identification of potential data sources and keywords that can be used to find the target compounds. The main Arabic keywords that we used were: حرب غزة ‘Gaza War’, حرب اسرائيل و غزة ‘Israel and Gaza War’, إبادة ‘genocide’, مذابح ‘slaughter’, أسلحة اسرائيل ‘Israeli weapons’, مجاعة في غزة ‘famine in Gaza’ and related terms. The compounds were manually collected from Arabic newspapers and websites we have earlier identified in our pilot search, namely: الجزيرة (Aljazeera), ديوان (Diwan), الغد (Al-Ghad), الراي (Al-Rai), and الحرية (Al-Hurriyah), القدس (Al-Quds), كتائب (Kataeb), القدس العربي (Al-Quds Al-Arabi), العربي (Alaraby), الأيام (Al-Ayyam), infoplus, Skynews Arabia, الحدث (AlHadath) and others. The compounds were extracted from a total of 350 news article headlines spanning the timeline from October 7, 2023, to December 26, 2023, and the overall number of collected compounds amounted to 231 (196 endocentric and 35 exocentric).

3.2. Data analysis

We conducted a type-based analysis of compounds and the type of metaphor they contain, (see Kövecses et al. 2019). This issue of frequency of occurrence was not considered in our study due to the small size of the corpus. Type-based analysis offers several advantages over token-based analysis in the context of studying noun compounds in a small corpus of Arabic news headlines (see Maalej & Zibin 2024). By analysing each compound, we identified the type of noun compound used (endocentric vs. exocentric) based on Booij (2007: 81), decided whether it can be categorised as catchy (evoking emotions, calling for action, or containing accusatory language that may capture the reader’s attention), and identified the metaphor it encompasses (see Abed & Rathwan 2024).

The identification of noun compounds was conducted in accordance with Altakhaineh’s (2019) criteria of compoundhood (see section 2.2). This criteria-based approach of compoundhood aimed to ensure a thorough analysis of the compounds under investigation, which contributes to the reliability of the findings in this study. The identification of metaphors underlying the compounds was done in line with Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz 2007) as follows:

- (3) عملية "طوفان الأقصى" تكبد إسرائيل خسائر مليونية بقطاع الطاقة أسبوعياً
(Aljazeera Oct 2023)
ʕamalijjat tʔu:fan ʔalʔaqsʔa tukabbid ʔisra:ʔi:l xasa:ʔir milju:nejjah
bigitʔa:ʕ ʔatʔʔa:qah ʔisbu:ʕijjan
Operation “**Al-Aqsa Flood**” Costs Israel Millions in Energy Sector Weekly.

Firstly, we identified the type of compound; ‘Al-Aqsa flood’ is an exocentric compound. In this compound, *flood* is the noun that describes the event or situation, while Al-Aqsa specifies the context of the flood. However, the compound as a whole does not explicitly state the category of the flood or provide the main concept. Instead, it relies on the understanding of the context or the event itself. Therefore, Al-Aqsa flood is an exocentric compound.

Subsequently, the following methodology was employed in order to ascertain the underlying metaphors.

1) Textual analysis: The compound ‘Al-Aqsa flood’ departs from its literal definition of a flood and refers instead to a noteworthy event or happening connected to Al-Aqsa Mosque;

2) Contextual understanding: Considering the historical and theological importance of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the metaphor potentially symbolizes the united effort and mobilization made to protect the mosque from perceived dangers or assaults;

3) Domain mapping: The target domain, AL-AQSA FLOOD, is symbolically coupled with the source domain, POWERFUL HUMAN FORCE MOBILIZED TO PROTECT AL-AQSA, implying an unstoppable human force connected to events concerning

the mosque. This symbolic representation emphasizes the scale and significance of the defensive measures implemented in response to perceived dangers to Al-Aqsa;

4) Linguistic analysis: The term طوفان ‘flood’ is chosen to suggest imagery of a powerful and uncontrollable rush of humans, while الأقصى ‘Al-Aqsa’ identifies the aims of the flood, emphasizing its relationship to the mosque;

5) Interpretation: The compound "طوفان الأقصى" ‘Al-Aqsa flood’ can be seen as representing a united and powerful reaction to protect Al-Aqsa Mosque from potential dangers or assaults. The term طوفان ‘flood’ indicates the collective strength of Hamas fighters who are dedicated to protecting the mosque. FLOOD when connected to humans in other types of discourse has mainly negative connotations, especially in migration discourse (see Zibin 2020), while in this context, it has positive connotations.

We identified the frames used in the compounds based on Entman’s framing theory (1993) as they are the overarching themes that determine the manner in which the conflict is portrayed in noun compounds from the perspective of Arab news websites. There are two main methods for identifying frames: deductive and inductive. The former involves drawing conclusions based on existing theories or principles, which means that researchers analyze discourse with pre-established frames in mind (Corbu et al. 2017, Kushneruk 2024). Conversely, in the inductive approach, researchers derive frames from patterns that emerge in the raw data (Kushneruk 2024). In this study, the authors employed a deductive method, beginning with a broad list of “frame dimensions” (Boydston et al. 2019) and progressing to a specific interpretation of what is expressed in noun compounds found in Arab news headlines. This perspective will demonstrate that Arab news headline journalists use varying types of frames to create a particular narrative (Ogneva, Stepanova & Chikovani 2022, Kushneruk 2024).

The predominant type of frames identified were problem frames, which portray the war as a crisis or challenge. In contrast, diagnostic frames, which were less prevalent, typically elucidate the underlying causes of the war. Our analysis of the frame elements involved recognizing and analyzing specific words – verbs, compounds, adjectives and others – that are employed to communicate the frame. Subsequently, we concentrated on noun compounds with a view to identify recurrent patterns that serve to reinforce the narrative structure, in our case the Arabic narrative as reported in Arabic news headlines. We then undertook an analysis of the potential impact of the frame in question. This entailed an investigation into how the frame in question might be employed to construct a reality that could affect the perception of the conflict. The influence of certain frames on individuals' perception of the war, their attribution of responsibility, and their perception of essential actions cannot be discounted. Furthermore, we considered any emotional appeals (see Ozymenko & Larina 2021) or moral judgments that are subtly incorporated into the frames through catchy words or expressions (those that evoke emotions, call for action or contain condemning language catching the audience’s attention). In addition, we considered the source

of news and assessed the frames consistency. It should be noted that the Arab news media that we examined were relatively uniform in their narrative despite being owned by different Arab countries, with the exception of some news communication channels that did not include one frame in particular (see the following section), i.e. the positive depiction of Hamas fighters (e.g. Sky news Arabia which is owned by the British media and telecommunications conglomerate Sky Group). Although the media outlets in question presented their coverage from the perspectives of Gazans, some discrepancies were identified, suggesting the possibility of divergent viewpoints or ulterior motives. Finally, we examined the counter-frames presented by Arab outlets, which offer an alternative on the Israeli narrative, which is widely accepted in the West.

4. Results

Starting with endocentric compounds and moving on to exocentric compounds, the study of noun compounds is purposefully structured. The order and the data are determined by the thematic importance that has been identified in the data. The frame analysis revealed that the chosen illustrative compounds emphasize 10 main frames: 1) the disproportionate number of losses (genocide) experienced by civilians in Gaza 2) Israel being the aggressor and Gazans being the victims, 3) the severe humanitarian condition in Gaza caused by Israel, 4) the difficult nature of the fighting and the treacherous terrain of Gaza favouring Hamas, 5) the tension about who will prevail in the conflict, Israel or Hamas, 6) the financial (and other) losses incurred by Israel (see example 4), 7) the destructive power of Israeli weapons, 8) the lack of international support to Gaza compared to Israel, 9) the inconsistency in the Israeli media narrative; and 10) the positive depiction of Hamas combatants. The selection of the following examples for discussion was based on the above frames. The analysis attempts to achieve an understanding of how noun compounds are employed to frame and depict the conflict in Arabic news headlines by concentrating on these specific issues.

4.1. Endocentric noun compounds

- (4) مشاهد تفتقر القلوب.. شبح الجوع يخيم على نازحي غزة
 (AlHadath, Dec, 2023)
mafa:hid taft'ir ?alqulu:b... šabaḥ ʔadzu:ʕ juxajjim ʕala na:ziḥi: ʔazzah
 Scenes that Break Hearts... **The Hunger Ghost** Looms over the
 Displaced in Gaza.

In example (4), *شبح الجوع* 'the hunger ghost' reflects the third frame 'the severe humanitarian condition in Gaza caused by Israel'. This is an endocentric compound noun. As explained, endocentric compounds are ones where one element (the head) determines the category of the compound as a whole. Here, *شبح* 'ghost' is the head, and *الجوع* 'hunger' specifies the type of ghost. The compound *شبح الجوع* 'the hunger ghost' contains the metaphor HUNGER IS A GHOST which highlights the intense pain

and hopelessness endured by Gazans impacted by starvation. The compound acts as a framing device by evoking a powerful image. The word شبح ‘ghost’ carries connotations of something eerie, ghostly, or menacing, while الجوع ‘hunger’ emphasizes the specific threat being highlighted. Since the beginning of the conflict on October 7, 2023, Israel has cut off water, electricity, and fuel supplies in the Gaza Strip. Additionally, it has prevented Egypt from allowing humanitarian aid to enter Gaza through the Rafah crossing. The metaphor HUNGER IS A GHOST is a framing technique that emphasizes the seriousness and urgency of the issue of hunger faced by displaced people in Gaza. It can be observed how the metaphoric compound frames the situation it as a dire one that demands urgent international attention and intervention. The description of this ghost has sadly become realistic after having people, especially children, dying because of hunger in Gaza as a result of the war.

- (5) صحف عالمية: معلومات الاحتلال مغلوبة وحذر غربي من مصطلح "إبادة غزة"
 (Aljazeera Dec, 2023)
sʕuhuf ʕa:lamijjah: maʕlu:ma:t ʔalʔihtila:l maylu:tʕah wa haʕar yarbi:
min musʕtʕalah ʔiba:dat yazzah
 International Newspapers: The Occupation Information is Misleading,
 and Western Warning against the Term ‘Gaza Genocide’.

In (5), the term إبادة غزة ‘Gaza genocide’ is an endocentric compound formed by combining two elements: إبادة ‘genocide’ and غزة ‘Gaza’. Within the headline, إبادة غزة reflects frame 9 ‘the potential inconsistency of the Israeli media narrative’ and also functions as a counter-frame to the narrative disseminated by many Western media platforms concerning the state of affairs in Gaza. The compound undermines the narrative presented by Western sources regarding events in Gaza, as it portrays the situation as one characterized by excessive violence and killing by Israeli occupation forces. The news shows that even though these international newspapers report misleading Israeli stories, the West is still not convinced that what is happening in Gaza can be called ‘genocide’.

- (6) 40 يوماً على العدوان الإسرائيلي على غزة.. أرقام مفزعة لعذابات المدنيين وصور مشرقة
 لصمود القساميين ورفاقهم في وجه آلة الموت
 (Infoplus, November 2023)
40yawman ʔala ʔalʕidwa:n ʔalʔisra:ʔi:li: ʕala yazzah .. ʔarqa:m
mufziʕah liʕaʕa:ba:t ʔalmandanijjn wa sʕuwar mufriqah lisʕumu:d
ʔalqassa:mijji:n wa rifa:qihim fi: wadʒh ʔa:lat ʔalmawt
 40 Days into the Israeli Aggression on Gaza... Alarming Figures for the
Civilians Punishments/suffering and Bright Images of the Qassamis
Resilience and Their Comrades in the Face of The Death Machine.

In example (6), three key endocentric compounds are employed: عذابات المدنيين ‘civilians’ punishments/suffering’, صمود القساميين ‘Qassamis Resilience’, and آلة الموت ‘the death machine’ serve as powerful framing devices. They reflect three frames respectively: the third ‘the severe humanitarian condition in Gaza caused by

Israel’, the tenth ‘the positive depiction of Hamas combatants’ and the seventh ‘the destructive power of Israeli weapons’. The first compound frames the civilian experience during the war. The use of *عذابات* ‘punishments’ conveys the idea that Israel is torturing civilians and/or punishing them for what Hamas did on 7th October by its continuous attacks and bombings. The metaphorical use of *آلة الموت* ‘the death machine’ characterizes the deadly force of Israel weaponry, i.e. MACHINE (WEAPONRY) IS DEATH. In this metaphor, *آلة الموت* is a symbolic representation of the military power and war apparatus used by the Israeli forces. The term *آلة* ‘machine’ implies a mechanized, inhumane, systematic nature, heightening the portrayal of the war as an overwhelming and perilous force. This compound contributes to framing the war as not only a series of events but as a powerful and indiscriminate force, killing civilians and combatants indiscriminately. The first compound can be regarded as catchy, while the third one is a metaphor.

The second endocentric compound *صمود القساميين* ‘Qassamis Resilience’ in this context serves as a framing device that portrays individuals affiliated with Al-Qassam Brigades (the military wing of the Palestinian organization Hamas) as fighters for their rights, contrasting with their characterization as terrorists. This framing choice emphasizes the human aspect of their resistance and frames their actions within the context of rights and self-determination. The contrasting narrative in some Western media outlets (e.g. ABC news, The Guardian, Fox News and others) which often employs terms like *terrorists* (ABC News 2024), highlights the divergent perspectives on the same events, showcasing the role of language in constructing different realities.

(7) "وَحْل غَزَاة": معركة عنيدة وضارية وثمنها باهظ

(Al-Ayyam, December, 2023)

*waḥl yazzah: maṣṣarakah ṣani:dah wa d'a:rijah wa ḥamanuha:
ba:hiḍʕ*

“The Gaza Sludge”: A Stubborn and Harsh Battle with a Steep Price

In example (7), the endocentric compound *وَحْل غَزَاة* ‘the Gaza sludge’ can be used as a framing device by employing a metaphorical expression to depict the challenging and difficult circumstances faced in Gaza. The compound reflects the fourth frame ‘the difficult nature of the fighting and the treacherous terrain of Gaza favouring Hamas’. The depiction is somewhat accurate since the bombing has destroyed the infrastructure including streets and when it rains the roads turn all muddy and difficult to navigate. In this context, the term *وَحْل* ‘muddy/sludge’ goes beyond its literal meaning to symbolize a situation fraught with complexities and difficulties. The use of *وَحْل* metaphorically characterizes the state of Gaza as navigating through mud, making it difficult for Israeli troops to find Hamas fighters among all the rubble and mud. This compound is used to reflect the difficult situation faced by Israeli soldiers in Gaza; they have entered into Gaza to find their prisoners and kill/imprison the ones responsible, but they faced a treacherous,

muddy terrain and paid a heavy price for their attempt, i.e. many Israeli soldiers were either killed or injured in their street fight with Hamas.

- (8) تحليل: انتقال إسرائيل لمرحلة ثالثة من المعارك قد يشكل بداية انحسار الحرب
(Al-Quds, December, 2023)
*tahli:l: ?intiqa:l ?isra:ʔi:l limarhala θa:liθah min ʔalmaʕa:rik qad
juʕakkil bida:ʔat ʔinhisa:r ʔalharb*
Analysis: Israel's Transition to a Third Stage of Battles Might Mark the
Beginning of **War Receding**.

In example (8), a metaphor underlies the endocentric compound *انحسار الحرب*, framing it as receding or diminishing. The compound reflects the fifth frame ‘the tension about who will prevail in the war, Israel or Hamas’. In this metaphorical sense, *انحسار* ‘recede’ from WATER could be used to symbolize the gradual withdrawal or diminishing of a war, with Gaza being depicted as a container that is full of WAR [water], i.e. WATER RECEDING FROM GAZA IS WAR ENDING IN GAZA. Just as water recedes or retreats, the term might be employed to describe a situation where hostilities decrease, tensions ease, or a war subsides. WATER, could have been used since water is, in fact, an element in this war. Israel was planning to flood the tunnels used by Hamas with seawater (The Guardian 24 Dec, 2023) to either force them out or neutralize them. However, so far this plan has not been executed and it is implied that Israel may end up agreeing to Hamas terms. These terms include stopping the war on Gaza and freeing all Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. In return, Hamas will release all Israeli prisoners and stop their attacks on Israeli settlements. The use of this compound in this context suggests that Israel may not be prevailing in the war, prompting the consideration of a gradual withdrawal from Gaza.

- (9) دةشنة "حماس" و"قطع رؤوس الأطفال"... اختلاق وتشويه سقط في فخهما العم سام
(Aljazeera Oct 2023)
*daʕʕanat hamas wa qatʕ ruʔu:s ʔalʔatʕfa:l ...ʔixtila:q wa tafwi:h saqatʕa
fi: faxxihima: ʔalʕam sa:m*
Hamas Dae'shification and “Beheading Children”... Fabrication and
Distortion, a Trap which Uncle Sam Fell into.

In example (9), *دعشنة حماس* ‘Hamas Dae’shification’ is an endocentric compound employed as a counter-frame to the tenth frame ‘the positive depiction of Hamas combatants’. The term ‘دعشنة’ is derived from *داعش* ‘Daesh’, the Arabic abbreviation for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a well-known terrorist organization known for its extreme brutality and fanaticism. The title implies that Israel's efforts to equate Hamas with ISIS (by employing *دعشنة*) and attribute abhorrent actions such as killing children to them have been unsuccessful especially when these claims were believed by the US administration referred to as Uncle Sam. The use of the framing strategy in *دعشنة* implies that Israel’s propaganda endeavours to demonize Hamas have had an unintended consequence, since Hamas did not, in fact, commit the alleged atrocities. This exacerbates the irony of

Israel's efforts to undermine Hamas by highlighting the embellishment and misrepresentation in its narrative.

The analysis of the endocentric noun compounds which were much more frequent than exocentric ones: they frame the war as one which mainly affects Gazans civilians, depict Israel as the aggressor, demonstrates the invasion of Gaza might not be in favour of Israel, frames Hamas in a positive light and gives a prediction to the end of the war in favour of Hamas.

- (10) فيما تتحدث إسرائيل علناً عن ارتكاب التطهير العرقي بحق الفلسطينيين في غزة، مؤامرة الصمت
تلوذ الدول الغربية بالسكوت.

(Diwan, Nov, 2023)

*muʔa:marat ʔasʕsʕamt: fi:ma tatahaddaθ ʔisra:ʔi:l ʕalanan ʕan ʔirtika:b
ʔattatʕhi:r ʔalʕirqijj bihaqq ʔalfilasti:nijjn fi: ʔazzah talu:δ ʔadduwal
ʔalyarbijjah bissuku:t*

Silence Conspiracy: While Israel openly talks about committing ethnic cleansing against Palestinians in Gaza, Western countries remain silent.

In example (10), the endocentric compound *مؤامرة الصمت* 'silence conspiracy' reflects the first frame 'the disproportionate number of losses (genocide) experienced by civilians in Gaza' and the eighth frame 'the lack of international support to Gaza compared to Israel'. It contains a catchy expression which conveys the idea that the silence, i.e. inaction, of Western countries regarding the ethnic cleansing in Gaza functions is like a conspiracy. What this compound suggests is a deliberate collusion among these countries to ignore or downplay the situation, despite the severity of the actions being openly discussed by Israel. This framing may influence the audience to critically evaluate the responsibility of Western countries concerning the war in Gaza. The following section presents two examples of exocentric compounds.

4.2. Exocentric noun compounds

In addition to example (3), the following are examples of exocentric compounds:

- (11) قلب الطاولة.. إليكم رد سفير فلسطين في بريطانيا على مغالطاتهم

(Alaraby Oct, 2023)

qalb ʔatʕʕa:wilah...ʔilajkum radd safi:r filastʕi:n ʕala muya:latʕa:tihim

'Table turning'...here is the response of the Palestinian Ambassador in Britain to their Fallacies

In example (11), *قلب الطاولة* 'table turning' reflect the ninth frame and also functions as a counter-frame showing a Palestinian official's response to the Western narrative. It shows that the Palestinian ambassador in Britain has responded assertively to the arguments or misconceptions presented by his opponents. He stated that "the obsession with condemning the victims, blaming them, and condemning those under occupation and colonialism, as well as

condemning the besieged throughout all these years, is morally repugnant”, according to the article. The headline contains an exocentric compound, where the compound does not have a head or main element that determines its grammatical category. Here, *قلب* ‘turning’ is a noun and *الطاولَة* ‘table’ acts as an object. Together, they form a compound that functions as a single unit to convey the idea of turning the table, without one element being subordinate to the other. The compound *قلب الطاولَة* ‘table turning’ serves as a narrative technique to portray a reversal of roles or situations, generally suggesting that the Palestinian ambassador or the Palestinian side, commonly perceived as the weaker party or victims, has achieved dominance or assumed control over the storyline, i.e. TABLE TURNING IS REVERSING A SITUATION. It affirms the notion that the power dynamics are not as unbalanced as they may appear, and that Palestinians are actively involved in contesting and altering the narrative to emphasize Israel's position as the instigator. Let us consider another example.

- (12) الحرب على غزة تتوحش وتدخل مرحلة “عض الأصابع”.. وإسرائيل عالقة بين الأهداف المعلنة العالية والمكاسب المنخفضة
(Al-Quds Al-Arabi, Nov, 2023)
ʔalharb ʕala yazzah tatawahħaf wa tadxul marħalat ʕadʕdʕ ʔalʔasʕa:biʕ wa ʔisra:ʔi:l ʕa:liqah bajna ʔalʔahda:f ʔalmuʕlanah ʔalʕa:lijah wa ʔalmaka:sib ʔalmunxafidʕah
The war on Gaza intensifies and enters the ‘**finger-biting**’ stage... Israel is caught between high declared objectives and low gains.

As discussed before, framing involves careful selection and highlighting of certain aspects of the issue to shape perceptions and influence public opinion. In this example, *عض الأصابع* is an exocentric compound used metaphorically as a framing device to describe a particular stage in the war on Gaza; it reflects the fifth frame ‘the tension about who will prevail in the war, Israel or Hamas’. The metaphor conveys a sense of frustration, tension, or difficulty faced by one of the parties involved (Israel), i.e. BITING ONE’S FINGERS IS BEING ANXIOUS. Using the image of biting one's fingers, the framing suggests a situation where actions or decisions have become challenging, and there may be a sense of anxiety or anticipation. The choice of the metaphor *عض الأصابع* involves selecting a specific aspect or image to represent the current stage of the war. The metaphor emphasizes the idea that the war has reached a critical or problematic stage, where either Israel or Palestinian fighters have to give up and agree to the other's terms. Yet, it seems that the compound is implying that Israel is the one biting its fingers as it is trapped between their high declared objectives and low gains. Using this metaphor, certain aspects of the war are excluded or de-emphasized in favor of highlighting the challenges faced by Israel who is intensifying their aggressive attacks on civilians to make up for its failure against Hamas fighters. It shapes the narrative around the war by focusing on Israel’s difficult situation since it did not achieve what it promised its people at the beginning of the conflict, i.e. eradicating Hamas and freeing all prisoners.

5. Discussion

The analysis indicates that each headline employs deliberate choices of metaphoric and catchy compounds with the objective to construct a specific narrative and convey impactful meanings. This aligns with the tenets of Entman's Framing Theory (1993). Our findings demonstrate a consistent and deliberate use of noun compounds to capture attention and influence the discourse surrounding the conflict, providing support for the Palestinian side and portraying Israel as the aggressor and potential loser of the war. The selected headlines incorporated ten impactful and emotionally charged terms, carefully chosen to convey urgency, provoke specific emotions, and emphasize crucial aspects of the events.

The deployment of counter-frames is a salient feature of the discourse surrounding the contentious issues such as the situation in Gaza. Firstly, it was demonstrated how the use of counter-frames seeks to challenge and contest dominant narratives disseminated by mainstream sources, particularly Western media outlets, which may be inclined to minimize or rationalize specific behaviors. The deployment of counter-frames as been demonstrated to challenge complacency and stimulate critical thinking by presenting alternative viewpoints and questioning existing narratives. In addition to challenging the veracity of prevailing Western and Israeli narratives, counter-frames serve as calls to action, garnering support for oppressed Gazans and amplifying their voices on the global stage. The dual role of compounds as both metaphors and catchy expressions contributes to their effectiveness in capturing readers' attention. This observation is consistent with the view that compounds can be either metaphor-based or creative, a perspective emphasized by Benczes (2006, 2010). This dual nature of compounds makes them both semantically and lexically compact (Bauer 2020), enabling the evocation of rich images and resonating with readers on an emotional level. The choice of specific metaphors that underlie the compounds, such as *عض الأصابع* 'finger-biting', illustrate the creative nature of linguistic choices in news framing. The selection of these metaphors was not arbitrary; rather they were chosen with care to convey the vivid meanings associated with the war. Furthermore, the investigation of compounds in news headlines corroborates studies conducted by Herrera Soler (2008), Blom and Hansen (2015), Molek-Kozakowska (2013), Schaffer (1995), Ifantidou (2009), Marcoci (2014), and Robert (2020). These studies collectively emphasize the significant role of linguistic devices in influencing the formation of news headlines via capturing readers' attention and influencing public discourse.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of media framing in the Arab world, it demonstrating the role of compounds as powerful linguistic tools in influencing public opinion. The use of metaphoric compounds as framing devices in the coverage of the Israeli-Gaza conflict within Arabic media serves as a distinctive perspective, presenting a reality that markedly diverges from the narrative often depicted in some Western media. In the Arab context, Israel is commonly framed as the aggressor rather than the victim. This is because it is perceived as the occupier who forced Palestinians out of their lands in 1948 and

gave these lands to their own people. The carefully chosen compounds in Arabic news headlines play a pivotal role in shaping this alternative reality by emphasizing the actions and policies of the Israeli forces. Terms such as *عدوان إسرائيلي* ‘Israeli aggression’ and *آلة الموت* ‘machine of death’ evoke a sense of Israeli dominance and military might. This framing reinforces the perception of Israel as the primary force responsible for the aggression, fostering a narrative where Palestinians, particularly those who live in Gaza, are portrayed as victims of external force. Such linguistic framing diverges starkly from the narratives often prevalent in some Western media, which highlights the influence of linguistic choices in shaping distinct perspectives on the Israel-Gaza conflict. It can be seen that the use of metaphors that underlie the compounds plays a crucial communicative role by offering readers an alternative perspective on the conflict. Within the context of the Israel-Gaza war, metaphors serve to alter perspectives deliberately (see Steen 2017). Writers, aim to shift the reader's viewpoint on the subject at hand, as noted by scholars such as Charteris-Black (2011), Steen (2017), and Mujagić (2022). The analysis also demonstrates that metaphorical expressions often reflect and reinforce the cultural and ideological perspectives of the discourse's producers. There is power in using certain expressions and manipulating language for persuasive purposes (Sun et al. 2021, Steen 2017, Zibin & Solopova 2024). The underlying metaphors of the noun compounds that are used to construct a reality where MACHINE (WEAPONRY) IS DEATH, demonstrating how the events were seen from the perspective of Gazans in Arab media, e.g. HUNGER IS A GHOST. In the context of the Israel-Gaza conflict, the analysis of metaphoric compounds as framing devices may have revealed how language is wielded to shape perceptions, reveal power imbalances, and make predictions about the end of the conflict, e.g. WATER RECEDING FROM GAZA IS WAR ENDING IN GAZA.

The choice between endocentric and exocentric noun compounds in news headlines as framing devices carries implications for communication and audience comprehension. Endocentric noun compounds, where one element modifies the other, can enhance clarity and precision in conveying the main message. In the context of news headlines, this linguistic structure aids create succinct and straightforward framing devices, which ensures that the audience quickly grasps the intended meaning. Conversely, exocentric compounds, while creatively combining elements (see Altakhaineh 2022), may introduce ambiguity and require a more sophisticated understanding from the readers (cf. Benczes 2006). The creative potential of exocentric noun compounds allows for expressive and innovative language use, but it also risks potential misinterpretation. In the context of news reporting, where immediacy and clarity are essential, endocentric compounds may be more effective in constructing framing devices that efficiently convey the essence of the story without affecting comprehension. The balance between creativity and clarity in linguistic choices reflects the role of language in shaping public perception through news headlines.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined Arabic news headlines pertaining to the Israeli-Gaza conflict, elucidating the strategic use of noun compounds as powerful framing devices. Each headline was shown to be carefully created to evoke specific emotions, shape public perceptions, and convey impactful meanings. This aligns with Entman's Framing Theory (1993). The findings of this study emphasize the creative and deliberate choices made by journalists to capture the attention of readers and influence the narrative surrounding a historical war scenario. Ten frames were identified mainly depicting Israel as the aggressor and Gazans as the victims. Israel, which has proclaimed the right to defend itself after the attacks on 7th October, is depicted through noun compounds as the aggressor killing civilians and combatants without discrimination. This includes the refusal to give them their basic rights including water, food, electricity and fuel. The reality presented in these headlines portrays Israel as a war criminal, while depicting Palestinians as the victims. This narrative contrasts with the perspective often presented in some Western media news in which Israel is the victim and has the right to defend itself. The study revealed a consistent pattern in the use of noun compounds as both catchy expressions and metaphors, which highlights their multifaceted role in shaping the discourse. The analysis has identified the mechanics of media framing in the Arab world, providing a clear perspective on how language, specifically metaphoric noun compounds, can shape public discourse. As media continues to play a crucial role in shaping public opinion, it was argued that the deliberate preference for endocentric noun compounds over exocentric ones in the Arabic news headlines reinforces the importance of clarity and immediate comprehension in framing devices, ensuring effective communication in the context of war scenarios.

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Bionotes:

Aseel ZIBIN is Associate Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan. Her research focuses on cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, metaphor, metonymy and second language acquisition. She has published a wide variety of research papers in journals such as *Language and Cognition*, *Cognitive Semantics*, *Metaphor and the Social World*, *Review of Cognitive Linguistics*, *Folia Linguistica*, *Pragmatics and Society*, and others .

e-mail: a.zabin@ju.edu.jo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2509-064X>

Abdel Rahman Mitib ALTAKHAINEH is Associate Professor of English language and linguistics at the University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan. His research interests lie in the areas of morphology, lexical semantics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and technology in language learning. He has published several research papers in *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Languages*, *Folia Linguistica*, *Studia Linguistica*, *Language and Cognition*, *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*, *Linguistics Vanguard* and others.

e-mail: a.altakhaineh@ju.edu.jo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7605-2497>

Marwan JARRAH is Associate Professor at the University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan. His research interests lie in the areas of syntax, sociolinguistics and pragmatics. He has published several research papers in *Lingua*, *Studia Linguistica*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*, *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* and others.

e-mail: m.jarrah@ju.edu.jo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1528-7326>

Сведения об авторах:

Асель ЗИБИН – доцент кафедры английского языка и лингвистики факультета английского языка и литературы Иорданского университета, Амман, Иордания. Ее исследования посвящены когнитивной лингвистике, прагматике, метафоре, метонимии и овладению вторым языком. Она опубликовала множество научных работ в таких журналах, как *Language and Cognition*, *Cognitive Semantics*, *Metaphor and the Social World*, *Review of Cognitive Linguistics*, *Folia Linguistica*, *Pragmatics and Society* и др.

e-mail: a.zabin@ju.edu.jo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2509-064X>

Абдель Рахман Митиб АЛТАХИНЭ – доцент кафедры английского языка и лингвистики Иорданского университета, Амман, Иордания. Его научные интересы лежат в области морфологии, лексической семантики, психолингвистики, социолингвистики и технологий в изучении языка. Автор ряда научных работ, опубликованных в журналах *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Languages*, *Folia Linguistica*, *Studia Linguistica*, *Language and Cognition*, *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*, *Linguistics Vanguard* и др.

e-mail: a.altakhaineh@ju.edu.jo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7605-2497>

Марван ДЖАРРАХ – доцент Иорданского университета, Амман, Иордания. Его научные интересы лежат в области синтаксиса, социолингвистики и прагматики. Имеет ряд публикаций в журналах *Lingua*, *Studia Linguistica*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*, *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* и других.

e-mail: m.jarrah@ju.edu.jo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1528-7326>