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## A Pragmatic Study of Fallacies in Selected Political Speeches on the Palestinian Crisis

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دراسة تداولية للمغالطات في خطب سياسية مختارة حول الازمة الفلسطينية

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تحليل المغالطات في بعض الخطب السياسية المتعلقة بالأزمة الفلسطينية. وتُعرّف المغالطة بأنها تقديم حجج زائفة، سواء كانت غير كافية أو غير ذات صلة أو خاطئة أو غير مقبولة. وتهدف الدراسة إلى الكشف عن المعايير التي ينتهكها السياسيون عند عرض حججهم المغلوطة، وكذلك الأساليب التي يوظفونها في خطاباتهم حول الحرب في غزة. تعتمد الدراسة على المنهج النوعي، وترتكز على نظرية جونسون (2000) في تحليل المغالطات. وقد تم اختيار خطابين لجو بايدن وبنيامين نتياهو بشأن الحرب على غزة ليشكلا عينة البحث. وبعد تحليل النصوص المختارة، تبين أن السياسيين قد استخدموا مغالطات في خطاباتهم حول الأزمة الفلسطينية والحرب في غزة. فقد ثبت أن بايدن ونتياهو انتهكا بعض معايير "الإطار الجدلي" و"النواة الاستدلالية". كما لوحظ أنهما انتهكا معيار القبول من خلال تقديم أسباب وتبريرات غير مقبولة للحرب على غزة، وانتهكا معيار الحقيقة عبر اللجوء إلى الكذب وطرح حجج مغلوطة في محاولاتهم لإقناع الجمهور بجدوى الحرب. علاوة على ذلك، خالفا معيار الصلة بطرح أحداث لا علاقة لها مباشرة بالحرب، كما قدما تبريرات غير كافية للمجازر التي يرتكبها الاحتلال في غزة، وحاولا منح الصهاينة شرعية لما يمارسونه ضد النساء والأطفال. التداولية، المغالطة، اللغة السياسية، الأزمة الفلسطينية. الكلمات المفتاحية

### Abstract

This study is dedicated to the analysis of fallacies in selected political speeches on the Palestinian crisis. Fallacy is the act of presenting some false arguments such as insufficient, irrelevant, false or unacceptable speech. The study aims at finding out the criteria that are violated by the politicians in presenting their fallacious argument and the ways they employ these fallacious arguments in their speeches on the war in Gaza. The study is qualitative in nature and is based on Johnson's (2000) theory of fallacy. Two speeches by Joe Biden and Benjamin Netanyahu on the war on Gaza have been selected as sample of the current study. After analysing the selected data, it has been found that politicians are fallacious in their speeches on the recent Palestinian crisis and the war in Gaza. Biden and Netanyahu have been proved to be fallacious as they violate some of the criteria of the dialectical tire and illative core. They are noticed to violate the criterion of acceptability where they mention some unacceptable reasons and justifications for the war on Gaza. They also violate the criterion of truth in that they lie and mention fallacious arguments in their efforts to persuade their audience of the war. They, furthermore, violate they criterion of relevance in that they discuss some events that are irrelevant to the war. Finally, they present some insufficient justification for the genocides the Zionists commit in Gaza and they try to give the Zionists the right to do what they are doing against the women and children. Key words: Pragmatic, fallacy, political language, Palestinian crisis.

**1. Introduction** The analysis of the language of politicians must focus on the context of situation as it is produced by the main actors in the polity. It, however, should be extended beyond the text to include the

context in which the discourse is produced (Fairclough, 2006). This means that the nature of the text should be identified within the contexts or the situation in which is presented and interpreted (Chilton, 2004). The situation in Gaza is regarded as a crisis which is initiated on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October when there are some attacks by Hamas on the Zionists settlements. The American and Zionists politicians have given many speeches on this crisis and have tried to justify the Zionists attacks on Gaza after the 7<sup>th</sup> of October attacks. These politicians are sometimes fallacious in their speeches concerning the crisis in Gaza. Fallacy has been the main concern of various studies that have dealt with it from different perspectives: logical, dialectical, pragma-dialectical and pragmatic ones. Strauss and Feiz (2014) assert that language could shape and reflect the actual world people live in and it functions as a powerful tool via which people could get the help and support, they need in times of struggle and conflict. Political language contains different linguistic elements that can help the politicians to persuade their audiences to achieve certain aims. Politicians intend to exploit language to deceive people and deliver certain messages that are difficult to be understood by common people (Yuzhakova & Polyakova, 2018). Thus, the current study intends to identify the pragmatic strategies that are used by the American and Zionists politicians in presenting their fallacious arguments on the crisis of Gaza.

### **1.1. Research Questions**

This study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the criteria that have been violated by the American and Israeli politicians in their speeches on the recent Palestinian crisis?
2. How do these politicians try to employ their fallacious arguments in their speeches on Gaza crisis?

### **1.2. Research Objectives**

This study aims at:

1. Identifying the criteria that have been violated by the American and Israeli politicians in their speeches on the recent Palestinian crisis.
2. exploring the ways these politicians try to employ their fallacious arguments in their speeches on Gaza crisis.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Definition of Pragmatics**

Pragmatics is 'the study of language or utterance in the context. It can be regarded as social science as it depends on context and participants (Alattar, 2021). It can be understood as the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context' (Rose & Kasper, 2001, p. 2). The emphasis on language users and their choices is central for most of the definitions provided in the field of pragmatics. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is therefore interested in making appropriate linguistic choices (e.g. choosing appropriate functional language) depending on the intended purpose of the utterance. Pragmatics as a branch of linguistics is defined as the study of contextual meaning communicated by a speaker or writer, and interpreted by a listener or reader (Al-Muslehi & Al-Utbi, 2021).

### **2.2. Pragmatics and Argumentation**

Argumentation is a communicative process of supporting, modifying and criticising a target claim. It involves engaging the minds of the audiences through interaction (Rieke...et.al, 2013, p. 234). Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004, p.2) defined argumentation theory as 'an interdisciplinary academic field concerned with the study of argumentation, with contributions of scholars from disciplines such as philosophy, linguistics, psychology, political science, communication, artificial intelligence, and the law' Argumentation gives opinions or reasons to reinforce or reject another opinion (Walton, 2007). As Renkema (2006) believed, an argument is a set of claims in which one or more of them are put forward to offer reasons for another claim. Bulut (2019) asserted that argument is the conclusion of a statement that contains reason and evidence. Walton (2007) stated that argumentations can be divided into three

major groups, namely; argumentations with components in the form of a witness's testimony, argumentations with components in the form of verbal classification, and argumentation with components in the form of rules. According to Bulut (2019), the argumentation is the result of the discussion in support of a claim. Furthermore, Hasibuan and Manurung (2020) assert that the standard argumentation is the one that consists of a combination of a premise, explanations, and proofs to form a conclusion.

### 2.3. Pragmatics and Reasoning

Walton (2008) pointed out that when investigating types of reasoning there can be found two types of reasoning; deductive and inductive reasoning. However, many scholars in this field of study are not satisfied with this division. Walton (2008) claimed that there is still an additional form of reasoning that is 'neither deductive nor inductive'. He (2008) called it 'presumptive' reasoning. Govier (2010) argued that this form of reasoning is mainly reliant on general knowledge. Another sort of reasoning proposed by Wellman (1971) is conductive reasoning. There are four types of reasoning that are important to those utilised in the context of political language.

**A. Deductive Reasoning:** According to Rottenberg and Winchell (2018, p.455), deductive reasoning is defined as 'the reasoning by which a conclusion must be true because the statement on which it is based is true'.

**B. Inductive Reasoning:** Hurley and Watson (2018, p.37) opined that in inductive reasoning 'the content of the conclusion is in some way intended to go beyond the content of the premises.' Inductive reasoning provides a weaker claim than deductive reasoning.

**C. Conductive Reasoning:** Walton (1995) said that this type of reasoning is a reasoning from given data to a hypothesis that explains the data. Conductive reasoning is very common in forensic evidence.

**D. Presumptive Reasoning:** According to Reed and Walton (2001, p.2), this type of reasoning 'supports inference under conditions of incompleteness by allowing unknown data to be presumed, and defeasible conclusions can be withdrawn or modified if known (but uncertain) data turns out to be flawed'.

#### 2.3.1 Definition of Fallacy

The fallacy is an important component of our daily interactions; individuals produce fallacies in workplaces, families, institutions, advertisements, media, and so on. As a result, Fallacy is at the top of any complete argument system. The investigation of fallacy begins as soon as arguments and logic are introduced. Since then, there have been some debates about the meaning of fallacy. Because of this inconsistency and dispute, different techniques, ideas, and meanings of the word fallacy have emerged. Researchers view and evaluate fallacy differently. Some, like Aristotle and the Sophists, analyse fallacies logically. Others, such as Hamblin (1970), advocated a dialectical approach. The fallacy is a linguistic standpoint which may be seen as a derailment of strategic manoeuvre (Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1999). Others, on the other hand, dealt with fallacy from the cognitive linguistic point of view. In this respect, Walton (1995, p. 23) described the fallacy as: 'an argument that comes up short of a certain criterion of accuracy; when used in a context of a conversation; but that, for different reasons, has a semblance of appropriateness about it in context; and presents a serious barrier to the realization of the objective of a conversation'. Incorporating Walton's (1992) perspective with that of Eemeren and Grootendorst (1999), as well as the one explained by Walton (2007), fallacy is considered as a strategic derailment caused by releasing a false argument (an assertion that violates a specific principle of accuracy) in assistance of an earlier issued assertion, and it is used as a carefully constructed persuasive communication tactic.

2.4. Political Language The idea of political language with a distinct identity occurs in the middle of the 21st century, along with the realisation of the importance of logos in the construction of the political power balance (Rdhaiwi, Kadhum & AbdulLateef, 2016). The issues addressed, the organizational methods, and the creativity of the processes utilised in initiating and amplifying the audience's state of mind distinguish political language from other sorts of languages (Wen & Taylor, 2021) Coyle (2008) identified the following characteristics that lend distinctiveness to political speeches: deliberate ambiguity that aims to affect a broader group of receivers; the message's dissimulated nature, assuming that there is never a complete connection between the speaker's intents and what he says and does, with certain strategies staying continuously concealed from the receptor; the imperative tone, which seeks to elicit a reaction from the listener to legitimize the power group embodied by the emitters; the political speech's apparent polemical foundation, that expresses the emitter's goals and objectives while contrasting them with those of the political opponent. Conducted among a sequence of liberties and restrictions founded, on the one side, by the target aimed, on the other side, by the characteristics of the variables of the communicative context, the discourse symptom from the political field stands to gain distinct physical features due to the particularity of its features. Approaching a large and diverse audiences, political language is distinguished by an elevated level of accessibility at the level of the content distributed in addition to the level of verbal expression. Accordingly, 'a balance is essential between academic or legal precision and the vagueness of the contemporary language, of the ordinary language, as between seriousness and familiarity' (Coyle, 2008, p.52). The employment of rhetorical strategies and the preference for words with high emotive substance provides a greater effect at the receptor level, and the use of political myths permits the addition of an evaluative component (Saleem & Alattar, 2020). In the context of political language, euphemism is a strategy for recreating the political referential by presenting an image based on the speaker's objectives and goals (Lilleker, 2006). As a language of a specialised sphere of communication, political language has its unique peculiarities.

### **3. Methodology**

The research methodology used in the current study is qualitative in nature. According to Shank (2002), qualitative research is 'a type of systematic empirical enquiry into meaning' (p. 5). In this definition, systematic implies structured and according to particular norms that are approved by the qualitative scientific community. The term empirical denotes that this type of research technique is supported by specific experience and knowledge, making it possible for researchers to make logical sense of their own experiences (Al-Utbi, 2019). Besides qualitative investigation, the current study is based on Johnson's (2000) theory of fallacies for the analysis of the selected data.

According to Johnson (2000), whether an argument is fallacious or not, it should be judged on the following levels:

1. The Dialectical Tier. Johnson (2000) proposed dialectical relevance for testing fallacious arguments of the dialectical tier. According to Johnson (2000), an argument is dialectically relevant if it contributes something to the goals of the context in which it occurs. At this level, there is one main strategy of issuing the fallacious argument which is violating dialectical relevance. When the argument is irrelevant to the preceding argument that it is intended to support, fallacious argument of dialectical relevance occurs.
2. The Illative Core. The pragmatic strategies of issuing fallacious arguments at the illative core are proposed by Johnson (2000, p. 191). These are as the followings:
  1. Violating the Acceptability. An argument is said to be fallacious if it violates the acceptability criterion. Speakers mention things that are socially or culturally unacceptable.
  2. Violating the Truth. An argument is regarded as fallacious if any of its premises is false or untruthful. Speakers present issues that are falls and unreliable to the listeners.

3. Violating the Relevance. Another strategy for committing fallacious argument is violating the relevance criterion. Speakers depend on things that are unrelated to the issue they are discussing in their speeches just to try to validate their intentions.

4. Violating the Sufficiency. The last strategy of committing fallacious argument is violating the sufficiency criteria. This is violated when the justifications, reasons and evidence are insufficient and do not prove what the speaker pretends.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

##### **4.1. Analysis of Joe Biden's Speech**

This speech has been delivered by Biden on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2023, 11:28 pm. This speech has been delivered after the events of the 7<sup>th</sup> of October when Hamas attacked the Zionists settlements.

##### **Extract (1)**

when the pure, unadulterated evil is unleashed on this world. The people of Israel lived through one such moment this weekend. The bloody hands of the terrorist organization Hamas — a group whose stated purpose for being is to kill Jews.’ In this extract, Biden is seen to be fallacious as he violates the acceptability criterion. He violates this criterion where he says that evil has been unleashed by Hamas and describes them as terrorists who attack Israel. This is unacceptable since the Palestinian defend themselves and their country from the Zionists invaders who has occupied most of the Palestinian homeland. Describing Hamas as terrorists is something unacceptable because they have been living under the attacks of the Zionists who used to attack the civilians, kill the women and children and make them live in starvation.

##### **Extract (2)**

‘Young people massacred while attending a musical festival to celebrate peace — to celebrate peace. Women raped, assaulted, paraded as trophies. Families hid their fear for hours and hours, desperately trying to keep their children quiet to avoid drawing attention.’ This extract shows that Biden violates the acceptability criterion where he continues to defend the Zionists and give them the right to do what they are doing in Gaza. He mentions some incidents which he things that they have been committed by Hamas in the Zionists settlements. Biden is noticed to avoid speaking of the Zionists' crimes against the Palestinian and focuses on imaginative events for which he has no solid evidence. He, in fact, tries to justify the Zionists war in Gaza and their crimes against the civilians in the city. In fact, this extract proves that Biden also violates the criterion of truth where he keeps talking about things that Hamas has not committed.

Violating these two criteria proves that Biden is fallacious.

##### **Extract (3)**

‘The brutality of Hamas — this bloodthirstiness — brings to mind the worst — the worst rampages of ISIS. This is terrorism. But sadly, for the Jewish people, it’s not new.’ The speaker, in the above extract, is found to violate the criteria of acceptability and sufficiency. He speaks of the act of Hamas and consider it as bloodthirstiness in his attempt to justify the Zionists' war in Gaza and give them the right to do what they have done in the city. The things that Biden mentions in this extract are unacceptable and do not justify the crimes of the Zionists against the Palestinians along these years. The Palestinian try to protect themselves from the Zionists and liberate their homeland from the brutality of those invaders. Violating these criteria in his speech shows that Biden is fallacious.

##### **Extract (4)**

‘ So, in this moment, we must be crystal clear: We stand with Israel. We stand with Israel. And we will make sure Israel has what it needs to take care of its citizens, defend itself, and respond to this attack.’ Biden, in this extract, is believed to violate the criteria of acceptability in that he directly announces the

United States' support to the Zionists in their war in Gaza. He states that his administration supports the Zionists and encourages them to do whatever is needed to invade Gaza and eliminate Hamas. In spite of the fact that the Zionists have attacked Gaza, killed the civilians and bombed the hospitals, still Biden declares that the United States stand with them and proved them with everything they need to go ahead with this genocide. Biden is seen to be fallacious as he regards Hamas' act as terrorism, but he gives the Zionists the right to kill the civilians including women and children.

**Extract (5)**

'I just got off the phone with — the third call with Prime Minister Netanyahu. And I told him if the United States experienced what Israel is experiencing, our response would be swift, decisive, and overwhelming.' In this extract, Biden is thought to violate the criterion of acceptability where he is seen to instigate the Zionists and encourage them to commit a genocide against the civilians in Gaza. This is unacceptable since he encourages them to make terrorist crimes against unarmed civilians. Biden is found to reject what Hamas has done to the Zionists settlements and consider it terrorism, but he justifies the Zionists attacks on Gaza, justifies them and instigates them to attack them even harder, more decisive and destructive.

**Extract (6)**

' There is no place for hate in America — not against Jews, not against Muslims, not against anybody. We reject — we reject — what we reject is terrorism. We condemn the indiscriminate evil, just as we've always done.' Biden, in this extract, is assured to violate the criterion of truth. He says that there is no hate against Muslims and at the same time he instigates the Zionists to attack Gaza, destroy the city and commit such a genocide against the Muslims. Biden is a liar, fraud and a two-faced person because he rejects the attacks on the Zionists and encourage them on the Palestinian and he says that there is no hate against Muslims and supports the Zionists to kill Palestinian Muslims, this is hypocrisy.

**4.2. Analysis of Netanyahu's Speech**

PM thanks both Biden and Trump, proposes new anti-Iranian 'Abraham Alliance' after Gaza demilitarized, deradicalized 25 July 2024, 1:26 am

Benjamin Netanyahu has delivered this speech to a joint meeting of Congress at the US Capitol on July 24, 2024, in Washington, DC. This speech is concerned with the crisis that happened in Palestine after the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2023.

**Extract (1)**

'In the Middle East, Iran's axis of terror confronts America, Israel and our Arab friends. This is not a clash of civilizations. It's a clash between barbarism and civilization.' In this extract, Netanyahu is believed to violate the dialectical relevance in that he discusses the conflict between Iran and America and this is something irrelevant to the Palestinian crisis. Netanyahu is seen to be fallacious as he speak of things that are irrelevant to the situation in Gaza, but he tries to present himself as a loyal ally to the America. He wants to present himself as thankful and grateful to the American administration who supports the Zionists in their war in Gaza.

**Extract (2)**

'Three thousand Hamas terrorists stormed into Israel. They butchered 1,200 people from 41 countries, including 39 Americans. Proportionately, compared to our population size, that's like 20 9/11s in one day.'

Netanyahu, in this extract, is noticed to violate the truth criterion where he talks about some inaccurate things. He is proved to be fallacious since he mentions the numbers of Hamas members who attacked the Zionists settlements on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October and the number of the Zionists who got killed in that attack, but these numbers are not accurate and he is not sure from the number of Hamas members. Netanyahu,

furthermore, calls Hamas members as terrorists and this is not true since they defend their country and their home land from the Zionists invaders.

**Extract (3)**

‘Yet incredibly many anti-Israel protesters, many choose to stand with evil. They stand with Hamas. They stand with rapists and murderers.’ In this extract, Netanyahu is assured to violate the truth criterion in that he says that there are protestors who stand with Hamas and this is a lie. This lie proves that Netanyahu is fallacious where the protestors stand with the Palestinian civilians, they stand with the children who get killed by the Zionists or they die because of starvation. He accuses the protestors of supporting evil and supporting the murders and this is a fallacy. It is a form of fallacy because Netanyahu describes Hamas, who try to defend their country, as murderers and forgets what the Zionists do in Gaza and Rafah. He neglects the genocides the Zionists commit against the unarmed civilians in these cities.

**Extract (4)**

the Tyrants of Tehran, who hang gays from cranes and murder women for not covering their hair. Netanyahu, in the above extract, is found to violate the relevance criterion in that he speaks of the situation in Gaza and all of a sudden, he turns to speaking about an Iranian leader. Violating this criterion proves that Netanyahu is fallacious as he mentions something irrelevant in his attempt to convince his audience that the Americans and the Zionists are threatened by Iran. Netanyahu wants to convince his audience that Iran supports Hamas in their attack on the Zionists settlements and neglects the fact that Hamas try to defend their country from the Zionists invaders.

**Extract (5)**

‘The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has shamefully accused Israel of deliberately starving the people of Gaza. This is utter complete nonsense. It’s a complete fabrication. Israel has enabled more than 40,000 aid trucks to enter Gaza. Netanyahu, in the above extract, is seen to violate the truth and sufficiency criteria. He violates the truth criterion where he says that the Zionists allow the aids to be delivered to Gaza and this is a lie since the civilians in Gaza live under the siege of the Zionists who prevent any aids to be delivered to Gaza and that is why people, particularly children, are dying because of starvation. The Zionists, according to the USA suggestion by building a port on the southern borders of Gaza, have allowed the aids to be delivered to the south of Gaza, while the north of Gaza still live in starvation and no food is delivered there. He also violates the sufficiency criterion in that the things that he talks about, and which he thinks to prove that Israel is a legitimate State, are insufficient and do not prove the legitimacy of the Zionists and still they are colonists. Violating these criteria proves that Netanyahu is fallacious and does not say the truth.

**(6)Extract**

‘If there are Palestinians in Gaza who aren’t getting enough food, it’s not because Israel is blocking it, it’s because Hamas is stealing it.’ In this extract, Netanyahu is noticed to violate the acceptability and truth criteria. He violates the acceptability criterion as he accuses Hamas of stealing the food from the civilians in Gaza and this is not true because Hamas members are part of the families in Gaza and they cannot steal the food from their families. Moreover, Gaza has been under the war and siege of the Zionists for months and no aids are allowed to get into Gaza, particularly the north part of the city where people are in famine. He, in the same vein, violates the truth criterion in that he says that Israel does not block the food from being delivered to Gaza and this is not true since the Zionists have prevented the aids from getting into Gaza. The USA has suggested building a port on the southern borders of Gaza through which aids can be delivered to Gaza, particularly to the people in the south while those who are in the north still, they live in famine.

**5. Conclusion**

Based on the analysis of the selected data, it has been found that politicians are fallacious in their speeches on the recent Palestinian crisis and the war in Gaza. Biden and Netanyahu, as the main figures and leaders of the war in Gaza, have been proved to be fallacious as they violate some of the criteria of the dialectical tire and illative core. These politicians have been found to present some fallacious arguments in their speeches as they try to justify the Zionists war on Gaza. Biden and Netanyahu are noticed to violate the criterion of acceptability where they mention some unacceptable reasons and justifications for the war on Gaza. They also violate the criterion of truth in that they, most of the time, they lie and mention fallacious arguments in their efforts to persuade their audience of the war on Gaza. They, furthermore, violate they criterion of relevance in that they discuss some events that are irrelevant to the war on Gaza as they discuss this particular issue in their speeches. Finally, they present some insufficient justification for the genocides the Zionists commit in Gaza and they try to give the Zionists the right to do what they are doing against the Palestinian civilians including women and children.

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