A lot has been said about Palestine and the Occupied Territories: we can easily find texts (academic or simply journalistic) concerning politics, economy or social issues from the historical or current perspective. However, it should be emphasized that language seems to be one of the most neglected aspects of Palestinian studies. The research that I would like to present in my paper is only a sample of bigger project analyzing Palestinian Arabic language (both spoken and written) in accordance with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodology.

The choice of this particular methodology can be thus explained in the words of one of its main advocates Ruth Wodak:

Particular interest lies [A.K.] in the relation between language and power. The term CDA is used nowadays to refer more specifically to the critical linguistic approach of scholars who find the larger discursive unit of text to be the basic unit of communication. This research specifically considers institutional, political, gender and media discourses (in the broadest sense) which testify to more or less overt relations of struggle and conflict. ¹

Relying on the definition provided by Wodak, one can easily observe that those elements are among the most important factors in creating Palestinian reality nowadays: the institutional dimension, as a direct result of the current political situation, organizes and influences the lives of thousands of

Palestinians on every possible level, from obtaining work permits to the freedom of commuting, which determines their professional life and family relations. Gender as a cultural element is still under a huge influence of Muslim culture; however, media discourses are areas that reflect conflict, struggle and resistance in great detail.

Taking sides so explicitly in a conflict situation is perceived as a lack of objectivity that should be avoided by scholars. However, Teun van Dijk emphasizes:

‘solidarity with the oppressed’ with an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power. Unlike much other scholarship, CDA does not deny but explicitly defines and defends its own sociopolitical position. That is, CDA is biased—and proud of it.²

Thus, the aim of this paper is to present what elements related to politics—in particular to the Occupation—are reflected in the Palestinian discourse nowadays. Creating the list of topoi will be performed in accordance to Siegfried Jäger’s statement that discourse has “linguistic and iconic characteristic […], focusing on ‘collective symbols’ (topoi) which possess important cohesive functions in texts.”³ Furthermore, Norman Fairclough and Gunther Kress say that “dominant structures stabilize conventions and naturalize them, that is, the effects of power and ideology in the production of meaning.”⁴ This is the main assumption leading to the conclusion that, even though language seems to be a reliable source of knowledge, especially when used by the oppressed, it is still a tool whereby power and dominance are exercised. This realization simply requires a deeper insight and analysis.

CORPORA DATA AND CONTEXT

The data analyzed in that paper are taken directly from the TV series “Fauda” (first season, episodes 1-6) distributed by Netflix (premiered in February 2015). “Fauda” is described by Wikipedia as “an Israeli political thriller television series”⁵ written by Lior Raz and Avi Issacharoff and based

on their personal experience while working as officers in an IDF\textsuperscript{6} unit. A close examination of the text created by two Israelis (even though both are fluent Arabic speakers) has further crucial implications in the analysis what will be presented later in this paper.

The series tells the story of a special unit of Israeli forces that is trying to capture a Palestinian terrorist Abu Ahmad who has been declared dead and recognized as a martyr. When some of his family members are killed (the action starts with the assassination of his younger brother during his own wedding), Abu Ahmad, also known as “the Panther,” is preparing his revenge on the Jews. The rather lively and complex plot includes the taking and exchange of hostages, suicidal bombing, cooperation with secret services. The plot also reflects the internal Palestinian conflict between the government of the PA, Hamas and independent fighters.

The objects of this study are dialogs (defined by Wodak as “larger discursive unit of text, […] the basic unit of communication”\textsuperscript{7}) treated as whole communication events in social context. As Ron Scollon observes, “the analysis of discourse opens a window on social problems because social problems are largely constituted in discourse.”\textsuperscript{8} Since the sociolinguistic complexity of Arabic language is not the aim of this study, the dialogues quoted here are transcribed directly from the original subtitles provided by Netflix in Modern Standard Arabic but, taking into account the fact that the film characters mostly use the Palestinian dialect, the differences will be presented only if they result in a considerable change of meaning. This method can also be justified by the fact that the most important concepts organizing the discourse (so called topoi) are used in the same form in dialect and standard language (they only differ in pronunciation).

One more point needs to be clarified: only the linguistic aspects of the communication are studied in this paper. Due to space limitations, all non-linguistic aspects, or even semi-linguistic aspects (hesitation, tone of voice, pace of speaking, etc.) are not taken into consideration. I believe that linguistic data alone will be sufficient to present reliable conclusions. However, those ignored aspects are worthy of further study.

\textsuperscript{6} IDF — Israel Defense Forces, i.e. the military forces of the State of Israel. They consist of the ground forces, air force, and navy. It is the sole military wing of the Israeli security forces.

\textsuperscript{7} R. WODAK, “What CDA is about,” 2.

“Fauda” was written and produced by Israelis or, at least, by people with an Israeli citizenship. Therefore, one can assume that they are unable to stay away from the political context that is so prevalent in their life. Even though the actors speak fluent Arabic, we need to remember that they are Israelis—so called mustarawim,\(^9\) which adds complexity to the context. The language should then be investigated from two different points of view. First, in its diegetic aspect as an element of the plot (what is said by the characters to each other as part of the plot). This study should provide us with information about the discourse that creates the image of Palestinian society. What makes this conclusion unreliable is the fact that—beyond the diegetic aspect—“Fauda” was written and produced by Israelis. Thus, the second perspective takes into account the authors’ background: then we can clearly see that dialogs are just examples of what Israelis think Palestinian people say to each other. Of course, it cannot be denied that dialogs are based on the personal experience of the authors and reflect the Israeli-Palestinian reality to a certain extent. On the other hand, we can consider the language used in “Fauda” as the exercise of the dominant power over the oppressed. What leads us to this conclusion is not only the deep and detailed examination of what is said but—more significantly—what is not said in the dialogs. Siegfried Jäger observes that

\[
\text{the spectrum of what can be said can be restricted, or an attempt can be made to exceed its limits, via direct prohibitions and confinements, limits, implications, creation of explicit taboos, but also through conventions, internalizations, and regulation of consciousness. Discourse as a whole is a regulating body; it forms consciousness}\.\]

Those restrictions and omissions—all the silence that cannot be neglected—is just the noisiest evidence that “Fauda” is just another example of power and dominance relation.

\(^9\) It is extremely interesting that, in the whole season 1, this word appears only once, when Walid (Abu Ahmad’s closest companion) and Abu Ahmad refer to capturing a Jew who speaks Arabic and works as a spy. As everyday experience shows, this phrase is commonly used by Palestinian people in their everyday conversation. This can be another argument supporting the theory that “Fauda” should be seen as artificial discourse expressing Israeli dominance over the Palestinian people.

\(^{10}\) Siegfried JÄGER, “Discourse and knowledge: Theoretical and methodological aspects of a critical discourse and dispositive analysis,” in R. WODAK and M. MEYER (eds.), \textit{Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis}, 35.
The first analyzed dialogue takes place during the wedding of Bashir and Amal. One of the guests there is brother of Abu Ahmad, Abu Khalil, who delivers the opening speech. He says:

Welcome our guests. We’re here on this joyous occasion that celebrates happiness and love. But I’d like to just mention my younger brother, Abu Taufiq, may rest in peace, Bashir’s father, and Abu Ahmad, Taufiq Mustafa Hammed, the brave Panther [hero — A.K.] and shahid (martyr), Bashir’s brother, who I wish was with us today. With us, however, is Nassrine, Abu Ahmad’s brave wife. Let us say the “Fatiha” to pray for their souls. [saying “Fatiha”] When I see you, Bashir and you, Amal, I say to myself, this is the best revenge. Despite all that the occupation has done to us, we still bear children. We’re successful, we rise families, have children and prosper.11

This part is organized based on the contrast that occurs on different levels. The speaker emphasizes the joy and happiness that accompany that event. This implies the internal opposition between the current political situation where one can find no reason for enjoyment and the happy event that gathers people in shared celebration. What he wants to express is simply the rebellious disagreement with the common belief that happiness is not possible in this land.

The next thing that strikes the reader/listener of that speech is the long list of expressions describing Abu Ahmad (the protagonist of the whole series). First, we learn about his family relationships, then his nickname—the name of the cruel and ruthless terrorist, which is followed by the statement that he is a hero and a martyr. These two words can be classified as the main concepts organizing the Palestinian discourse: in their references and meanings, they are almost synonyms. Being a martyr implicates being a hero (but this relationship is not always true in the reverse direction).

Yet another contrast appears: although Abu Ahmad is no longer with us, we are not left alone as his wife is still there. Nassrine is a heroine and the Abu Khalil feels honored by her presence. But what makes her a heroine? It is not a matter of her bravery but simply the fact that she is—or more precisely—she was the wife of Abu Ahmad and now she is his widow. It turns her into a symbol, an example to follow, which can be considered a manifestation of social prestige.

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11 “Fauda” s01 e01 [22:16].
Next, all the wedding participants say “Fatiha.” Of course, it is an expression of their attachment to religion, but it can be also perceived as the calling of God’s name to legitimize their actions, to confirm that the way they have chosen is the right one—the only one.

In the second part of his speech, Abu Khalil says that looking at the happy couple is the real revenge. Revenge should be included in the list of the main concepts organizing the Palestinian discourse, at least from the perspective of “Fauda.” What his words show us is the fact that people are treated by their leaders as a tool of revenge. However, it is definitely non-violent revenge that the speaker values most. We can even infer that starting a family and living a normal life is more valuable in eyes of the wise man than violent attacks, and yet he says that Bashir and Amal are “true/real revenge.”

He continues: “despite all that the Occupation has done to us [...].” From this very beginning one can observe that occupation / al-ḥtilāl represents the active perpetrator that is able to perform certain actions over a passive subject—in this case expressed by the pronoun us (originally attached to the preposition by / bi introducing an object we use — nomen instrumentalis), i.e. the Palestinians. There is an obvious and clear antagonism here: they—the Jews, the powerful occupiers, and we—not strong enough to resist, objects over which power can be exercised. But Abu Ahmad’s brother continues:

we are still able to give birth to our children. We are still able to succeed, to start families, to give birth to children and to bring them up.\footnote{12 This repetition is not seen clearly in English translation of that dialogue provided by Netflix subtitles.}

It opens yet another perspective where passivity is overcome and giving birth to children is just another way of fighting the Occupation. The concept of “success” / naḥāh is the vaguest one—does he mean victory over the Israel? Or just the ability to live a peaceful life? But he does not explain his intentions. Instead, he switches back to family life and procreation as the way of revenge. This repetition is, in a way, emphasizing the most fundamental truth: although the list of things that Palestinians can do is limited, they are still able to perform their fundamental activities within the family framework; they are still able to build their families and the Occupation cannot prevent them from doing it. That undefined “success” is another fixed element of any official Palestinian speeches. Not often do we come across
the definition or explanation of what is behind the idea of “success” mentioned above by Abu Khalil but it seems an inevitable part of every public speech delivered by Palestinian officials. It is probably just a vague promise given to the audience that all suffering is just temporary and there is an end that will come—sooner or later.\textsuperscript{13}

What we find in that very short speech of Abu Khalil is a text built on contrasts that occur on many different levels. The internal contrast is created among the people present at the wedding: the dead Abu Ahmad and his living wife who is the heroine. More importantly, however, there is an external contrast too: an opposition between happiness (because of the wedding) and sadness (there are martyrs and the memories of them need to be cultivated), there is an active perpetrator (the Occupation) and a passive victim (Palestinians deprived of their ability to perform certain actions), there is a group of people who able to celebrate nonetheless, and there is a hostile world around them.

The next dialog takes place between Abu Ahmad, who turns out to be alive (which the viewers already know from the very first scene), and his younger brother Bashir. This short quotation will suffice to point out the main topoi forming the Palestinian discourse.

– (Bashir) Will you be at the wedding?
– (Abu Ahmad) I’m a Shahid (martyr). Shahids don’t go to weddings.
– But the Jews have stopped looking for you.
– Right and I don’t want them to start all over again\textsuperscript{14}.

Here one can observe an amusing contradiction: Abu Ahmad describes himself as a martyr / šahīd and then adds that martyrs do not go to wedding parties. It sounds obvious when we realize that martyrs are dead. And Abu Ahmad is dead for the Jews (or, rather, he wants them to believe he is dead but we know that Ali Al-Karami informed the Jews that Abu Ahmad had managed to survive).

This is one of the first moments in the series when a Palestinian character mentions the Jews. While examining the data collected from the series, we can reach the conclusion that the word “Jews” is the most often used descriptive term in relation to regular citizens, soldiers, special agents and politicians. There is no distinction between “a Jew” understood as a follower

\textsuperscript{13} Another misty concept widely present in this kind of discourse is the phrase „when we win” / hattā nantāṣir that organizes Palestinian future in terms of undefined time frames.

\textsuperscript{14} “Fauda” s01 e01 [9:31].
of Judaism and “an Israeli” denoting a citizen of the State of Israel (not recognized as a state by many Arabs) who is not necessarily a follower of Judaism. There are clues that make us believe that Palestinians pay no attention to distinguish between Jews and Israelis indeed. However, it is almost impossible to accept the theory that the language is deprived of other — mostly lexical — means to describe the enemy as suggested by “Fauda.” A detailed study of the data confirms that the most common word is “Jew,” followed by the pronominal pronoun in its independent form “they” or as a pronominal object attached to a verb (used as direct object). Very often using a pronoun instead of more specific forms is a sign of distancing oneself and a kind of impersonal or even hostile attitude between two people involved in communication. “Fauda” does not reflect this obvious fact that can be observed in everyday spontaneous chats of the Palestinian people: pronouns are the most widely used form in relation to Israelis — soldiers, politicians and generally people somehow contextualized by the occupation. The third group that I have distinguished are all the abusive words or phrases collected within one category. Its share in all the data is insignificant: three phrases referring to the animal aspect of the opponent (“those animals,” “those dogs” and “son of the bitch” as the most insulting one). It is obvious that context is the most important factor determining the choice and usage of some linguistic means. However, one might expect that the language presented in “Fauda” should be more “natural,” thus more insulting and brutal or — at least — more direct as it is used in emotionally charged situations. But what the spectator finds in the climax is Ali Al-Karami fighting for his life and insulting Jews by calling them “animals” — not even “a beast.”

When Ali Al-Karami is released from prison, he returns home and talks with his wife who says:

[…] I’m scared. Everyone says that Nadia was treated at Haddasah Hospital because you collaborated with the Jews.

The Arabic word that appears here is al-ǧamī’a (the same rooted word Ali will use when talking with Abu Ahmad) that indicates the group of people that Ali used to be a part of, but he is probably no longer one of them (in English translated as “everyone”). Then his wife mentions the suspicions

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15 English subtitles express stronger emotions as the phrase “those bastards” is used.
16 “Fauda” s01 e05 [7:48].
held by members of the community: “you cooperate with the Jews.” This is one the scariest accusations that a Palestinian can hear. Being accused of cooperation with the Occupation is tantamount to being banished from the community. And it does not apply to just one individual but also to his or her family. Since honor is one of the most important values organizing Arab societies, betrayal is the worst possible disgrace that can happen to a family.

His wife’s fears are confirmed when Ali goes out into the street and he meets a neighbor. The man expresses his surprise at seeing Ali and says: “We were worried as we thought that the Jews had killed you.”\(^{17}\) The neighbor underlines his attachment to the community through the plural forms of the verbs: “we were worried” and “we thought.” Again, Ali faces a community that is united and operates as a one body. He continues walking and comes across a few young boys on a motorbike. They are more direct and openly hostile towards Ali.

– (the boy) We’re glad you’re back from those animals.
– (Ali) God bless you.
– We were brought up on stories about you. My father used to say you’d rid us of all the Jews here, but I’m glad he died before witnessing this shame. You got Bashir killed and you’ll pay for it, you bastard. I spit on you\(^{18}\).

Ali character is again surrounded by accusations and the one word that seems to be a subordinate concept: shame. He is “a bastard” and nobody will forgive him—even Abu Ahmad, his close friend who was like a son to him—and he will soon see for himself.

This is the tragic end of the story. Ali asks Shaykh to organize his meeting with Abu Ahmad because he wants to “clear his name”\(^{19}\) but Walid tries to discourage Abu Ahmad from that meeting as he is sure that Ali is the one who betrayed them. However, the Panther tells Walid a deeply-moving story from his childhood: Ali helped him and treated him like his own son when he was 16. This touching scene might be an attempt to present a bit of the Arabs’ human nature and their emotional side. We see Abu Ahmad as a sentimental guy who—despite everything—does not lose faith in his friend. However, the next scene will dispel this idyllic image and the audience will

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\(^{17}\) “Fauda” s01 e05 [8:41].
\(^{18}\) “Fauda” s01 e05 [8:57].
\(^{19}\) Yet another concept appears here: it can be placed in the same category as “cooperation with the Jews” or “betrayal.” As a natural consequence of shame, the guilty one tries to prove his innocence. This motif is widely presented in the Ali’s behavior and all his attempts to convince Abu Ahmad about his innocence.
see—again—the cruel and ruthless terrorist who knows no mercy even for his best friend to whom he owes so much. Thus, the viewer does not have much time to get used to this positive attitude toward Arabs. When Ali finally meets Abu Ahmad, a careful observer can distinguish three groups involved in the meeting. The first group, to which Ali wants to belong the most, is Abu Ahmad’s inner circle. We know that Ali used to be part of that circle, as the Panther himself says to Ali:

How could I say no? [to the offer of a meeting, A.K.] Remember, we are one family, Ali.20

Although Ali used to be part of that group, he does not feel safe and secure due to the betrayal he has committed. There is also a wider group described as “our youth,” supposedly deceived by the Jews, who regard Ali as a traitor. Despite being Palestinian, these youngsters seem to be in opposition to Ali. They have an openly hostile attitude to him, as demonstrated by the scene in front of his house, where they cursed him and spit on him. Ali tries to diminish their role as he says:

[…] and as you know, our youth can be easily deceived. They play right into Jews’ hands21.

They are inexperienced because of their age, and the additional phrase they play right into Jews’ hands indicates that they are just passive objects manipulated by the Jews. Here comes the third group that stands in clear opposition to Abu Ahmad and to the youth as well: the Jews, or as Ali calls them “those bastards” (Arabic “those dogs”) and this is one of the few unequivocally abusive words used towards the enemy. The tragedy of Ali is even greater when we realize that his friend Abu Ahmad seems to accept his explanations but, after saying that “he appreciates the honesty” and advising him “not to worry,”22 shoots Ali in the back.

In this dialogue we can clearly observe the slow expulsion of the character out of each circle: he is no longer on the side of Palestinian youth, nor in Abu Ahmad’s family. He cannot admit this but the only circle to which he belongs is that on the side of Jews, however shameful or hard to admit it is.

20 “Fauda” s01 e05 [32:23].
21 “Fauda” s01 e05 [32:50].
22 “Fauda” s01 e05 [34:25].
“Fauda” undeniably provides us with insight—even if only partial and incomplete—into the topoi that organize the Palestinian discourse. We can distinguish the following concepts: “martyr” (also including its plural forms) used 12 times,23 “hero”—2 times; “success” and “victory” used just once but representing the category of undefined concepts used as rhetoric figures. There is also a group of words strongly related to betrayal: “traitor” and “betrayal”—4 times; “collaborator” 3 times while the verb “to collaborate”—4 times and “secret services”—3 times. Furthermore, there is a lexical set of expressions reserved for describing the enemy: usage of pronoun, “the Jews,” “the Israelis” and some abusive phrases. Thus, four main categories of lexicon can be distinguished: (a) self-describing lexicon, (b) vague concepts used as rhetoric figures; (c) lexicon related to treachery and (d) lexicon describing the enemy. While the first two categories are treated separately, the last two have some common elements as they share the same social and political context: the enemy is the one who oppresses the Palestinians and drives them to betrayal.

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23 All the quantitative data cover episodes 1 to 6 in the first season.
Although the above analysis is just an incomplete attempt to describe the Palestinian discourse, it reveals an extremely significant truth about the language used in “Fauda” where the point is not in what is said but, rather, in what is not said. Because, as S. Jäger observes,

the demonstration of the restrictions or lack of restrictions of the spectrum of what can be said is subsequently a further critical aspect of discourse analysis. 24

There are definitely some restrictions, probably connected with the fact that the series is produced by Israelis and has been written by two former servicemen based on their military experience in the IDF. Still, when one carefully examines the data, one cannot deny that concepts such as martyrs, heroes or traitors are indeed present in the Palestinian discourse. Furthermore, one cannot reject that ruthless terrorists like Abu Ahmad do exist. Nonetheless, with except for the brutal terrorists and some people around them, the West Bank presented in “Fauda” seems quite a peaceful place: some kids playing football in the street, sellers offering fresh fruits and vegetables and people celebrating a wedding with the most delicious sweets from Daud’s shop. There is no single mention of other aspects, that—it needs to be clearly stated—define life in the West Bank to a greater extent than martyrs, traitors and suicide bomb attacks. If we think about an ordinary day in Palestine, we can see: checkpoints, long lines to go to work, unexpected raids, closed roads, the wall. In the first season of “Fauda,” however, there is not a single mention or hint of all that. It is not surprising then that Sayed Kashua, an Arab writer living in Israel, writes in his essay entitled “‘Fauda’ creators think Arabs are stupid,” published in Haaretz:

In the Israeli TV series there are no rulers or ruled, no occupation, no historical background, no checkpoints, no poverty, no home demolitions, no expulsions, settlers or violent soldiers. 25

“Fauda” is a good example of the abuse of power over the oppressed but it is not self-evident or easy to notice, even after a long analysis of the language and context. David Machin and Andrea Mayr underlines that

It is also important to note that power can be more than simple domination from above; it can also be jointly produced when people believe or are led to believe that dominance is legitimate in some way or other.²⁶

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


**“WHAT A MESS!”: READING “FAUDA” ACCORDING TO CDA**

**Summary**

In this paper Netflix series “Fauda” (season 1) is analyzed in accordance to the Critical Discourse Analysis and its main advocates like Ruth Wodak and others. The crucial factor influencing this research is political context of the authors of the series who used to be Israeli soldiers and they rely on their personal experience while creating episodes. This double complexity has its further implications in the analysis. As the result of the investigation there was presented the list of main topoi organizing Palestinian discourse and later, this list was confronted with Palestinian reality and her credibility was assessed.

**Key words:** Arabic language; Critical Discourse Analysis; “Fauda”; film studies; Netflix; quality TV.

ODCZYTANIE SERIALU “FAUDA” ZGODNIE Z ZASADAMI
KRYTYCZNEJ ANALIZY DYSKURSU (CDA)

Streszczenie
W artykule analizowany jest serial Netflix „Fauda” (sezon 1). Analiza jest prowadzona zgodnie
metodologią Krytycznej Analizy Dyskursu (CDA) w ujęciu głównych jej zwolenników, takich jak
Ruth Wodak i inni. Kluczowym czynnikiem, mającym wpływ na wyniki analizy, jest kontekst
polityczny autorów serii, którzy byli żołnierzami izraelskimi i przy tworzeniu kolejnych odcinków
opierają się na osobistych doświadczeniach. Ta podwójna złożoność ma dalsze konsekwencje w ana-
lizie. W wyniku wnikliwej prezentacji została przedstawiona lista głównych toposów organizujących
dyskurs palestyński, a później ta lista została skonfrontowana z rzeczywistością palestyńską i oceniono
jej wiarygodność.

Słowa kluczowe: język arabski; Krytyczna Analiza Dyskursu; „Fauda”; filmoznawstwo; Netflix.