

Propagated Media Bias in the Coverage of Khashoggi's  
Case in the Saudi Newspaper Arab News:  
A Systemic Functional Grammar Perspective

التحيز الإعلامي المروج له في تغطية قضية خاشقجي في الصحف  
السعودية: منظور منهجي وظيفي

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### Abstract

According to the references included in the research, the Middle East area is exposed to a set of crises that may cause instability, including killing some public figures, stirring up public opinion, or escalating some international problems through media to direct societies opinions. The disappearance and then the killing of Jamal Khashoggi caught the attention of the whole world since October 2018 up till the moment. Saudi writers are propagated biased against Jamal Khashoggi in worldwide media. Thus, the purpose of the present research is to investigate the rhetoric stance of Saudi writers towards the issue of Khashoggi. The present research adopts Halliday's (2014) systemic functional grammar framework which is based on the linguistic analysis of six processes, i.e. material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioural, and existential. The data of the research consists of eight articles written by renowned Saudi journalists during the period from October 11, 2018 to November 1, 2018. The results of the research revealed that the writers of *Arab News* are not biased against the case of Khashoggi but rather they are defending the stance of Saudi authority.

### Key Words:

Systemic functional grammar - transitivity – linguistic analysis – media discourse analysis - media bias

### التحيز الإعلامي المُروج له في تغطية قضية خاشقجي في الصحف السعودية: منظور منهجي وظيفي

ان اختفاء ومقتل جمال خاشقجي جذب انتباه العالم بأسره منذ أكتوبر ٢٠١٨ حتى وقتنا الراهن. وفقا لما ورد بالمصادر البحثية المرفقة. ويعتمد البحث الحالي على منهج هالیدی ٢٠١٤ للتليل الوظيفي القائم على ست عمليات وهم: المادية والمعنوية واللفظية والسلوكية والعلاقية والوجودية. وتتكون بيانات البحث من ثمانية مقالات لصحفيين شهيرين خلال الفترة من ١١ أكتوبر ٢٠١٨ إلى ١ نوفمبر ٢٠١٨. وتوضح نتائج البحث ان الكتاب السعوديين في جريدة الاخبار العربية يتبنون موقفاً متحيزاً ضد قضية خاشقجي ويدافعون عن موقف السلطات السعودية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: جمال خاشقجي - قواعد منهجية وظيفية – التعدية - التحيز الإعلامي

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### **Introduction**

Means of communication have become an integral part of our lives and affect mainly the composition of our ideas and our attitudes. So, it is necessary for anyone who can put up words or address issues to be careful of the impact on the surrounding community. Recently media is used as a main tool in directing and affecting the public opinions and attitudes in countries as a part of controlling other countries. Khashoggi's murder, a Saudi prominent journalist, has caused a grave fracture in regional and global politics in terms of both its method and its impact. Media bias has been approached in many studies (see literature review) for the purpose of describing and analyzing language used. The present research focuses on a particular newspaper - *Arab News*- and how it covers the issue of Jamal Khashoggi's disappearance and murder. Saudi journalists are not biased against the case of Khashoggi as propagated by worldwide media but rather they are defending the stance of their country Saudi Arabia. They attempted to defend the Saudi authority through the little coverage of the issue at the time of distress. Drawing on Halliday's (2014) transitivity system, this research attempts to reveal propagated media bias of some Saudi writers not against the case of Khashoggi but for defending their country and its national security.

### **Objectives of the Research**

The national Saudi newspaper- *Arab News*- was propagated as being biased against the case of Khashoggi by worldwide media. Saudi journalists followed a wait – and – see approach. They called people to wait for the results of legal investigations. They provided little coverage of the issue defending their country and its national security. Part of the function of linguistics is to describe the discourse and identify writers' style and techniques of writing not to judge their opinions. Thus, the aim of the present research is to investigate whether the Saudi writers of the newspaper *Arab News* are biased for or against the Saudi authority.

### **Questions of the Research**

The present research attempts to answer these questions:

- 1-What is the stance of the Saudi writers of *Arab News* towards the case of Khashoggi?
- 2-How do the Saudi writers of *Arab News* show bias for the Saudi authority in the case of Khashoggi in the articles under study?

### **Methodology of the Research**

The present research does not deal with Khashoggi's case as a matter of personal opinions or for judging writers' attitude to prove their status or opposing it. It carries out a linguistic analysis of the newspaper articles related to this case from the linguistic point of view as a case leading to great arguments in all social media websites. The present study adopts Halliday's (2014) transitivity system. Halliday's system links the linguistic choices to the different social functions, i.e. media bias in the present research. This system investigates six linguistic processes; namely, the material process, the mental process, the verbal process, the behavioural process, the relational process, and the existential process. The researcher investigates the influence and significance of each process individually. In addition, a frequency count of all these processes is provided.

### **Background**

Every passing day, since October 2, 2018, reveals a new development regarding the case of Jamal Khashoggi. He entered the Consulate of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul on October 2, 2018 to obtain documents necessary to marry his Turkish fiancée Hatice Cengiz and he never appeared since then. The Saudi authority has various stands towards the issue of Khashoggi. That is, they stated that he was not killed and that he left the consulate in the same day October 2. They kept saying these words for 17 days. On October 19, Saudi Arabia declared that Khashoggi died in a fistfight in the Saudi consulate of Istanbul (Haltiwanger, 2018, pp.4-5). As a result, "the statement issued by the Saudi administration announcing Khashoggi's death 18 days later escalated global reactions" (Haltiwanger, 2018, p.2 & Telci, 2018, pp.9,14).

In the early days of the incident, Saudi officials insisted that they knew nothing about the killing of

Khashoggi at the consulate building and that he had left shortly after entering the premises. However, they acknowledged in a statement issued on October 20 that Khashoggi died after discussions between him and the persons who met him at the consulate led to a quarrel and a brawl; and his body was removed by a local accomplice of the perpetrators (Telci, 2018, p.9).

Jamal Khashoggi was born in Medina in 1958 to a well-known rich family in Saudi Arabia. He was a prominent intellectual figure in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, "he was known as a reformist dissident in Western circles" (Telci, 2018, pp.10, 11). He worked for eight years as editor-in-chief of *Al-Madina*, then he worked for *Arab News*, and lately he worked for *Al Watan* (p.10). He was known for his criticism for the Saudi authority, especially King Salman's policies and "Saudi authorities also banned him from writing in newspapers, appearing on TV, and attending conferences" (Telci, 2018, pp.10). Due to the bad relation between the Saudi regime and him, Khashoggi immigrated to the US. He always criticized the Saudi regime in his column in *Washington Post* (ibid, 2018, pp.10-11).

The Turkish authorities took a biased stance against Saudi Arabia. According to the Turkish authorities, Khashoggi was killed on the hands of 17 men sent to Turkey by the Saudi government. Then, his body was dismembered and was dissolved with acid (Haltiwanger, 2018, pp.8-9). There are many sources that point fingers of accusation to Prince Mohamed bin Salman. That is, "US intelligence agencies have suspected MBS Prince Mohamed bin Salman ordered the killing of the journalist. Thus, they are distorting the world image of a historical nation like Saudi Arabia. (Bouoiyour & Selmi, 2018, p.3). Thus, the purpose of the present research is to investigate the Saudi journalists' stance towards the issue of Khashoggi and Saudia.

### **Arab News**

It is the most renowned and popular newspaper in the Saudi society. It is the first English- language newspaper in Saudi Arabia. It was founded by Hisham and Mohammed Ali Hafiz in 1975. It has a wide

readership profile with readers from all over the world. It has a large distribution and diverse group of readers.

*Arab News* is popular among many sections of Saudi society, including nationals and foreign residents, and from various socio-economic levels — guest workers to company CEOs. With such a large distribution and diverse group of readers, *Arab News* is the first choice among executives in local and foreign financial institutions. Because of its wide readership profile, the paper serves as a much sought-after medium for advertising and regional brand building. With the advent and growing popularity of the Internet as a source of information, the daily's website ([www.arabnews.com](http://www.arabnews.com)) gets hundreds of thousands of hits every day from Web surfers worldwide (<http://www.arabnews.com>).

### **Literature Review**

By definition, the word bias refers to showing an unjustified favoritism toward something or someone. Thus, on a very simplistic level, media bias refers to the media exhibiting an unjustifiable favoritism as they cover the news. When media transmit biased news reports, those reports present viewers with an inaccurate, unbalanced, and/or unfair view of the world around them (Levasseur, 2008). Media bias is represented by omission or addition of certain information (Anderson & McLaren 2012, p.33). According to Entman (2007, p. 163), media bias takes three distinctive forms:

The term seems to take on three major meanings. Sometimes, it is applied to news that purportedly distorts or falsifies reality (distortion bias), sometimes to news that favors one side rather than providing equivalent treatment to both sides in a political conflict (content bias), and sometimes to the motivations and mindsets of journalists who allegedly produce the biased content (decision-making bias).

Media bias exists in all societies but with varying degrees and types. According to D'Alessio and Allen, there are three types of biases: selection or gatekeeping bias, coverage bias, and statement bias. Bias can

lead to ideological segregation, antagonism, or can lead to democracy (cited in Saez-Trumper,Castillo& Lalmas,2013, p.1).

Bias of selection refers to preference of certain stories, communities or persons. Coverage bias refers to "the preference for giving a larger amount of coverage (time/space)" to certain stories or certain persons. Statement bias refers to "preference for expressing more favorable (or more disfavorable) statements" about certain stories or persons (Saez-Trumper , Castillo , & Lalmas , 2013,pp.1-2).

As far as the researcher knows, few studies have approached media bias including the following. Holtzman et.al (2010) in their study aim at disseminating the approaches of Text-analytic methods that become increasingly popular in cognitive science for understanding differences in semantic structure between documents and introduce a text-analytic technique based on the BEAGLE semantic space model (Jones & Mewhort, *Psychological Review*, 114, 1–37, 2007). They add new features to test between-corpora differences in semantic associations by analyzing television transcripts from cable news from a 12-month period. They reveal significant differences in political bias between television channels and find expected differences between newscasters (Colmes, Hannity). Compared to existing measures of media bias, their measure has higher reliability and CASS can be used to investigate semantic structure when exploring any topic that affords a large text-based database.

Quackenbush (2013) asserts that the likely factors contributing to public perception of a liberal media bias are indicative of the ideological preferences of partisan individuals and customers, rather than any blatant compromises of professional integrity by American journalists. This study found strong evidence to suggest an overwhelming conservative media bias within the 2012 election coverage by American media outlets.

Another analysis by Telci (2018) examines the details of Khashoggi's heinous murder, the reactions of international actors to the incident, and its possible implications in Middle Eastern politics. The analysis also discusses the developments, in the above context, since October 2, the day Khashoggi walked into the consulate building.

This is parallel with other studies like Groseclose & Milyo (2003), Baum & Gussin (2005), Druckman & Parkin, (2005), Ruschmann (2006), Hoffman & Wallach (2007), Mackay (2007), Streissguth (2007), Covert & Wasburn (2009), Moriearty (2010), Cheah (2012), D'Alessio (2012), El Nashar (2014), DiMaggio (2017), and Yunzhao (2018). The aforementioned studies highlight the influence and impact of media bias on audiences through linguistic analysis.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Transitivity is a grammatical linguistic system that reflects actions, events, and experiences committed by participants who are involved into different processes under circumstances of time, space, manner or cause (Halliday, 2014, p.213).

The processes of transitivity include the following:

- Material process: it is a prototypical reflection of actions, events, things that happen, and of people or other actors doing things, or making them happen. It is structured as: actor + process + goal: e.g. *I'm having a shower* (p.214).
  - Mental process: it is a process of consciousness, feelings and emotions. Mental processes are concerned with "our experience of the world of our own consciousness" (p.245). It consists of: senser + process + phenomenon (pp.245- 48) e.g. *I don't want a shower* (p.214).
  - Relational process: it is a process that "serves to characterize and to identify" (p.259). It is a process "to generalize – to relate one fragment of experience to another in some kind of taxonomic relationship" (p.214). It is structured in two modes: attributive and identifying (p.263).
- ❖ Attributive relational process "*a* is an attribute of *x*" is structured as:  
Carrier+ process+ attribute  
e.g. Sarah is wise,  
e.g. Peter has a piano,  
e.g. The fair is on a Tuesday (pp.265-67).
  - ❖ Identifying relational process "*a* is the identity of *x*" is structured as:  
Identified+ process+ identifier  
e.g. Sarah is the leader (pp.265-76).

- Behavioural process: it is a process of "typically human physiological and psychological behaviour, like breathing, coughing, smiling, dreaming and staring" (p.301). It is structured as behavior + process+ (behavior) (pp.301-2).  
e.g. *people are laughing* (p.215).
- Verbal process: it is a process of saying and meaning. It is important in establishing the discourse of narratives and dialogic passages.  
It is structured as: sayer + verbiage + (receiver) e.g. *I said it's noisy in here* (p.302).
- Existential process: it is a process that "represents that something exists or happens" (p.307). It "prepares for something that is about to be introduced; and that something is presented as new information" (p.308-9). It consists of subject (there)+ verb to be+ (existent). e.g. *there was another robbery in the street*.

### Data of the Research

The data of the present research consists of eight articles for renowned Saudi writers; Faisal Abbas, Abdulrahman AlRashed, and Abdelaziz AlUwaisheg. They cover the period from October 11, 2018 to November 1, 2018 in the *Arab news* newspaper as the most famous national paper. They are written at a time of world distress regarding the issue of Khashoggi. The data are listed chronologically as follows:

**Table (1):**

no	Article title	Author	Date
1	On the curious case of Khashoggi's disappearance	Faisal Abbas	October 11, 2018
2	The media has already killed Khashoggi	Abdulrahman Al Rashed	October 11, 2018
3	Exaggerations around the case of the late Jamal Khashoggi	Abdulrahman Al Rashed	October 20, 2018
4	You don't honour Khashoggi by insulting his country	Faisal Abbas	October 21, 2018
5	Freedom of expression was my friend Jamal's defining principle	Abdelaziz AlUwaisheg	October 22, 2018
6	Iran's gains in the Khashoggi crisis	Abdulrahman Al Rashed	October 22, 2018
7	What does a post- Khashoggi Saudia look like?	Faisal Abbas	October 27, 2018

Other unknown writers dealt with the case representing personal opinions; however, the researcher believes that these eight articles may represent the official viewpoint of Saudi people.

### **Analysis and Discussion:**

The influence of media cannot be denied. Media bias can be used for or against an issue. The present research tackles how media bias is used by some Saudi writers for the sake of their country Saudi Arabia to defend its national security. The analysis of the data under study is done in light of Halliday's systemic functional grammar theory. The analysis and discussion can be seen as follows. Examples are listed chronologically and are discussed as follows:

#### **Material Process:**

It consists of an agent, a process verb, and a goal. It is used to reflect actions that happen in reality. Saudi writers use it to defend Saudi Arabia's attitude towards the case of Khashoggi and that it is taking concrete actions towards the issue. This can be seen from the following examples:

Ex (1): The only thing Saudi Arabia is not doing is responding to every piece of unsubstantiated reporting or wild claims out there. Emotions aside, this is the correct thing to do (Abbas,2018).

This example consists of agent (Saudi Arabia), material process verb (doing) and a goal (responding to every piece of unsubstantiated reporting or wild claims out there). As this example explains, the writers defend and justify the attitude of Saudi Arabia in its silence of not responding to every piece of information.

Ex (2): Saudi Arabia is being attacked here because it is the country that has taken the boldest and most far-reaching steps in the field of internal reforms, which are facing opposition throughout the region (Al Rashed, 2018).

As this example illustrates, this is a material process. Saudi Arabia is the goal that is being attacked from others like Turkey, Qatar and

Russia. These countries are the agent. This agent is in passive structure and not directly stated. The material process verb is "is being attacked" depicts the biased role of other countries against Saudi Arabia.

Ex (3): Most likely, this excessive exaggeration in politicizing the case and attacking the Kingdom, with the resulting confusion between several cases, will push many countries and institutions that are subject to these pressures to take a stance of solidarity with Saudi Arabia. The case will turn against those who lead and fuel the battle against Saudi Arabia (Al Rashed ,2018).

There are many material processes in this extract. The actor is countries and institutions who are against Saudi Arabia. The process verbs are " politicizing", "attacking", "push", "turn", and "fuel". The goal is Saudi Arabia as it is influenced by the acts of these countries.

Ex (4):The BBC certainly doesn't; to our shock, they could not confirm to us that they had obtained the recording from their Turkish source, or that they had even heard it — while insisting , with unconscious irony, that they adhered to their editorial standards(Abbas, 2018).

Through this example, the writer attempts to explain his doubt about the credibility of BBC sources about Khashoggi's case. This is clear through the material verb "obtained".

Ex (5): I first met Jamal Khashoggi in 1993 in New York and we became friends, meeting occasionally in Saudi Arabia, the US or Europe, usually in meetings or conferences to discuss regional issues. We worked closely together when he became adviser to Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the UK and the US, and later when he became editor-in-chief of Al-Watan, where I wrote a weekly column for seven years (Auwaisheg, 2018).

This extract encompasses many material process verbs like " met, meeting, worked, wrote". The agent is "I" and the goal is "Khashoggi". It expresses the strong relation between the writer and Khashoggi. The

writer attempts to show his good relation with Khashoggi and that he has trusted information and in return people must trust him.

Ex (6): Since the start of the crisis over Jamal Khashoggi's murder, Iran has avoided making any official comment or taking an official position, although Iranian media has been focusing on the issue. Tehran has so far adopted a wait-and-see approach. Unlike the Turks, it has not been hostile to Saudi Arabia, leaving the door open for all options (Al Rashed ,2018).

This extract encompasses different material processes represented by the verbs "making, taking, focusing, adopted, and leaving". The agent of these processes is Iran. It reflects Iran's stance towards the case of Khashoggi. It adopts a neutral stance towards the issue contradictory to that of Turkey and Qatar.

### **Mental Process:**

The mental process ranks second in the frequency count after the material process. It consists of a senser and a phenomenon. It is used to express emotions and feelings as the following examples indicate:

Ex (1): As a friend, a fellow journalist — and a former deputy editor of Arab, his sudden vanishing certainly raises serious concerns, particularly as the incident happened in Turkey, a country known for its hostility toward the media.

In this example, the mental verb "known" is used to refer back to Turkey as a country known for its hostility to media. Moreover, the use of the material verb "happened" referring to the process of killing beside the mental process "known" are both used to point fingers of accusation towards Turkey.

Ex (2): In conclusion, the case of the disappearance of Khashoggi calls for reflection. From both the human and moral standpoints it is completely and utterly unacceptable, and if he was really killed — according to the Qatari-Turkish propaganda — it would be an international crime. At the

moment, it is being turned into a battle against the new Saudi project (AlRashed, 2018).

This example provides a mental process through the use of the mental verb "call for reflection" which urges the readers to think and reflect on the case of Khashoggi and that Saudi Arabia is being attacked through this case.

Ex (3): Saudi oil is indispensable, essential and the most widely distributed in world. Also, Saudi geopolitical influence in the region cannot be disregarded because geography is an indisputable reality in politics. Furthermore, Saudi religious influence cannot be overlooked as it is the Qibla of more than a billion Muslims. Moreover, the Saudi regional role cannot be ignored given that the region is divided into two main axes, and the Kingdom's crucial support for many countries and institutions cannot be supplied by others (Al Rashed ,2018).

The mental process is recurrent in the above extract. The mental process verbs are "disregarded", "overlooked", "and ignored". The sensor is Saudi Arabia. It indicates that Saudi Arabia plays a worldwide role on the economic, political, and religious levels. So, it is not easy to attack it using a case like Khashoggi's.

Ex (4): And from them, at least such conduct is to be expected. But what on earth happened to some of the most reputable global players in our industry, who day after day ignored their own code of conduct and the basic rules of journalism by relying on one-sided anonymous sources? (Abbas, 2018).

Through this example, the writer criticizes Saudi journalists who adopted the stance that Khashoggi was killed. He accuses them of ignoring the basic rules of journalism.

Ex (5): Jamal's vast knowledge of Islamist groups was sometimes confused by his detractors as sympathy, which was far from the truth in my opinion. He abhorred

the violence carried out by some of them, but thought it was possible and pragmatic to co-opt some of the peaceful elements into an inclusive political process (Aluwaisheg, 2018).

This example indicates Khashoggi's attitude towards Islamist groups. The mental process verbs are "abhorred" and "thought", the sensor is Khashoggi and the phenomenon is "the violence carried out by some of them".

Ex (6): Iran knows that Saudi Arabia has been pushed into a corner, but that it will eventually get out of it. So Tehran wants to gain from the crisis by using it in a different way than Turkey has done, by appearing to move closer either to Washington or Riyadh (Al Rashed, 2018).

This example contains a mental process represented by the mental verbs "knows". The sener is Iran and the phenomenon is Saudi Arabia. It explains Iran's stance towards Saudi Arabia after the murder of Khashoggi.

### **Verbal Process:**

Verbal processes are very few in the articles under study. They consist of a sayer, a verbiage, and a receiver. They can be seen through the following examples:

Ex (1): In the meantime, the only thing that can be said is that my thoughts and prayers are with the Khashoggi family at this very difficult time (Abbas, 2018).

In this example, the sayer is unknown in the passive structure, the verbiage is "that can be said" and a receiver "the Khashoggi family". The writer pays condolences for the Khashoggi's family.

Ex (2): Actually, it does not come as a surprise that governments embarking on a self-changing policy, like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, are being targeted .... In that sense, our fellow journalist Jamal Khashoggi has been "murdered," even if he reappears alive. This is simply

because he has been used as a bullet in the media battle; and those who claim to be defending him are the least concerned about him, as their real target is in Riyadh (Al Rashed, 2018).

As this example illustrates, we have a verbal process depicted through the verb "claim". The sayer is the pronoun "those", the verbiage is "claim to be defending him are the least concerned about him, as their real target is in Riyadh", and the receiver is the readers. Through this process, the writer declares that Khashoggi is used by the media as a bullet against Saudi Arabia and not for his own sake.

Ex (3): Twitter, of course, is a hopeless case; an environment so toxic that some of what has been said about Saudis, and Arab/Muslim culture in general, is just horrendous (Abbas, 2018).

Through this verbal process, the writer attempts to persuade his readers that social media, Twitter in particular, provided unpleasant information about Saudi Arabia. It is an implicit message not to trust social media about what it says about Khashoggi's case.

Ex (4): He appeared to be palpably in pain as we talked about Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen and Libya (Aluwaisheg, 2018).

This verbal process consists of a sayer "we", a process verb "talked" and a verbiage "about Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya". This process indicates Khashoggi's stance and feelings about the status in these countries especially after the Arab Spring.

### **Behavioural Process:**

It consists of behavior + process+ (behavior). It reflects behaviours and manners. It can be seen in the following examples:

Ex (1): It should be expected that some would exploit crises to spread doubt, disrupt the project, and try to turn the welcoming and enthusiastic international public opinion against it; just as we have seen in the Western media regarding the Khashoggi case (Al Rashed , 2018).

In this example, the behavior is "we" which refers to the Saudi public, the behavioral process verb is "have seen" and the behavior is the attitude of Western media regarding the Khashoggi's case.

Ex (2): However, despite critical positions and withdrawals, Saudi Arabia will still maintain its extensive role and relations and will continue to exert its regional influence. The Kingdom's relations will be affected but surely not disrupted, as these relations are driven by the supreme interests of other states and not just by Saudi Arabia (Al Rashed ,2018).

This extract includes different behavioral processes represented by the verbs "continue", "exert", and "affect". The behavior is Saudi Arabia. This indicates how strong Saudi Arabia is even if it is being attacked from different institutions and countries who exploit the case of Khashoggi.

Ex (3): Even though he disagreed with some of the practices of the current Saudi leadership, he remained loyal, and even praised many of the reforms (such as last year's crackdown on corruption) in some of his most recent Arabic television interviews (Abbas, 2018).

This extract includes two behavioral process verbs "disagreed" and "remained". The behavior is "he" which refers back to Khashoggi. The behaviour is "loyal". This example indicates that Khashoggi loved his country and he remained loyal even if he criticized some of its policies.

Ex (4): Nonetheless, having Saudi Arabia trapped in a corner serves Iran, especially in light of stringent US sanctions against the latter. Tehran sees the Khashoggi crisis and the Turkish attack against Saudi Arabia as a gift from heaven (Al Rashed, 2018).

Through this example, the behavior is "Teheran", the process verb is "sees" and the behavior is "the Khashoggi crisis and the Turkish attack against Saudi Arabia as a gift from heaven". It indicates Iran's stance towards the case of Khashoggi and Saudi Arabia.

### **Relational Process:**

There are two types of relational processes: attributive and identifying. They can be seen from the following examples:

Ex (1a): More importantly, Khashoggi is not a Turkish citizen but a Saudi one (Abbas, 2018).

This is an identifying relational process. It consists of an identified "Khashoggi", a relational process verb "be" and an identifier "not a Turkish citizen but a Saudi one". It expresses the identity of Jamal Khashoggi.

Ex (1b): So, while on one hand concerned journalists have a right to question Khashoggi's disappearance, we should not ignore that there is also much at play here from a Qatari point of view considering Khashoggi's political affiliations, and his most recent stance which was critical of Riyadh (Abbas, 2018).

This is a relational attributive process which consists of Carrier+ process+ attribute. The carrier is "Khashoggi's political affiliations and his most recent stance", the verbal process is "was" and the attribute "critical of Riyadh". The adjective "critical" provides attributive description of Khashoggi's affiliation.

Ex (2): Khashoggi is thus a victim of the war raging in the region. His battle is part of the chain of ongoing media and political battles, each of which is now exploiting his "cause." In the crisis precipitated by his disappearance, the ultimate aim is to portray a government, in this case the Saudi government, as evil; as another North Korea or Russia or any other that had been portrayed as such (Al Rashed ,2018).

As this extract indicates, there is a relational attributive process whereby the carrier is Khashoggi, the process verb is verb to be "is" and an attribute "a victim of the war raging in the region". The writer attempts to express that Khashoggi is a victim of many parties against Saudi Arabia.

Ex (3): Many reading this will still ask, how did he die? It is a fair question, and one that must receive a full answer. But until the investigations are complete, let us focus rather on how Jamal lived (Abbas, 2018).

This example provides relational attributive processes. The carrier is "investigation", the attribute is "complete" and they are linked by verb to be "are". It is used to tell the readers to wait and see after the investigation is complete.

Ex (4): Jamal had an almost encyclopedic knowledge of Islamist groups, both political types and violent extremists such as Osama bin Laden. He utilized that knowledge to cover the New York trials (Aluwaisheg, 2018).

This example indicates a relational attributive process. The carrier is "Jamal", the process verb is "had", and the attribute "an almost encyclopedic knowledge of Islamist groups". It indicates that Khashoggi has a wide knowledge about the Islamist groups and extremists like Osama bin Laden.

Ex (5): In politics, crises often create opportunities. Iran, which is currently besieged, is quite aware of this. It took advantage of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait to get closer to Saudi Arabia, but this time the Kingdom's distress is temporary (Al Rashed, 2018).

This example indicates that the case of Khashoggi is temporary and it does not diminish Saudi Arabia. This is clear through the carrier "Kingdom's distress" and the attribute "temporary".

Ex (6): As investigations into the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder in Istanbul continue, some questions will clearly remain unanswered until those inquiries are complete. With all due respect to the many sudden "experts" on the Kingdom, the truth is that no one can confidently say what happens next (Abbas, 2018).

As this example indicates, there is a relational attributive process "until those inquiries are complete" whereby the carrier is "inquiries" and the attribute is "complete". This process indicates that the investigations are still being done and the results may come different than what has been published through the media.

### **Existential Process:**

It expresses the existence of certain facts and information. It consists of subject (there)+ verb to be+ (existent) as the following examples indicate:

Ex (1): After all, there is a formal investigation in place and it must be allowed to be conducted without interruptions or distractions (Abbas, 2018).

In this example, the subject is "there", the verb is "is" and the existent "a formal investigation". It expresses the existence of the fact that there is an investigation done by Saudi Arabia in the case of Khashoggi.

Ex (2): Beside the "Brotherhood," there are still remnants of other ideological schools and organizations that are reconsidering their status in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. These organizations do not die out, but temporarily disappear or reposition themselves. (Al Rashed ,2018).

This example indicates the existence of the fact that there are remnants of different ideological organizations that appeared during the Arab Spring.

Ex (3): Saudi Arabia has a strong political system and such attacks cannot affect it. Given the significance of Saudi oil to the global economy, the Kingdom's geopolitical importance and its great religious influence, this will be a losing battle for the parties that wanted to politicize Khashoggi's case, in order to weaken and exclude Saudi Arabia. There will be a hefty price for everyone (Al Rashed ,2018).

The existential process here consists of the subject "there", the verb "will be", and the existent "a hefty price for everyone". It indicates

the fact that all the parties who are against Saudi Arabia will be punished one day or another.

Ex (4): But the Saudi-US relationship is strategic, and there is no trust whatsoever in Iran as a peaceful neighbor. However, there is room for maneuver without undermining higher interests (Al Rashed, 2018).

This example indicates existential process through the subject "there", and verb to be "is". The existents are "no trust whatsoever in Iran as a peaceful neighbor" and "room for maneuver without undermining higher interests" successively. They indicate that Iran should not be trusted.

Ex (5): Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Turkey and Qatar, which are in a political conflict with Saudi Arabia, will spare no chance to exploit the case and play political football with it. Therefore, we must differentiate between two crimes. The first is the murder of Khashoggi, may he rest in peace. The second, which is still in progress, is the orchestrated campaign against Saudi Arabia (Al Rashed , 2018).

The existential process in this example consists of a subject "there", verb to be "is" and existent "doubt that Turkey and Qatar, which are in a political conflict with Saudi Arabia, will spare no chance to exploit the case and play political football with it". It indicates the fact that Turkey and Qatar are politicizing Khashoggi's case and exploiting it against Saudi Arabia.

**Results:**

The results of the present research can be seen through the following table.

Table (2): Systemic Functional Processes in the Articles under Study

Processes	Material process	Mental process	Verbal process	Behavioral process	Relational process	Existential process
Articles						
On the curious case of Khashoggi's disappearance	25	9	1	4	7	7

The media has already killed Khashoggi	40	4	4	11	7	1
Exaggerations around the case of the late Jamal Khashoggi	39	4	0	7	4	3
You don't honourKhashoggi by insulting his country	28	4	3	8	9	0
Freedom of expression was my friend Jamal's defining principle	24	11	4	5	8	0
Iran's gains in the Khashoggi crisis	19	5	0	10	5	2
What does a post-KhashoggiSaudia look like?	17	6	1	7	7	2
Expectations over Khashoggi's crisis	29	7	0	4	4	2

As table (2) illustrates, it provides a frequency count of all the occurrences of Halliday's transitivity processes. It is clear from the analysis that the material process is the most recurrent process in the articles under study. It used 221 times. The mental process is used 50 times. The verbal process is used 13 times. The behavioural process is used 56 times. The relational process is used 51 times. The existential is used 17 times.

It is clear from the analysis that Halliday's (2014) linguistic processes answer the question: who does what to whom where and when. It focuses on the agents of the actions, the receiver of the actions, and the circumstances. The analysis and the results of the research revealed that the material process is the most recurrent process. The use of material process is not haphazard but rather intentional and reflects the attitude of

the Saudi journalists towards the case of Khashoggi and their stance towards Saudi Arabia. That is, they are taking a wait- and – see approach towards the case of Khashoggi defending Saudi Arabia's stance. They are waiting for the results of the legal investigations done by Saudi authorities. Moreover, it is clear from the analysis that the case of Khashoggi received little coverage from Saudi media compared to world newspapers at the beginning and even after the declaration of his death so as not to escalate the issue at a time of world distress.

Last but not least, it must be mentioned that impact of media cannot be denied. On the one hand, Iran, Turkey, and Qatar are using media against Saudi Arabia escalating the issue of Khashoggi. On the other hand, Saudi writers are using media for the sake of their country defending its national security.

## Conclusion

The present research revolved around media bias. It sought to investigate the linguistic choices and their social functions. It studied eight articles in the Saudi newspaper, *Arab News* to reveal the stance of renowned Saudi writers towards the case of Jamal Khashoggi. The methodology of the research depended on Halliday's (2014) systemic functional grammar approach focusing on the analysis of the six linguistic processes suggested. The material process reflected concrete doings and actions. The mental process reflected emotions and feelings. The verbal process reflected sayings and narratives. The behavioural process reflected psychological and physiological behaviours. Relational process reflected attributes and relationships. Existential process reflected existential facts. Recent technologies may propagate bias stance of countries or violate facts for the purpose of special social targets.

The present research answered two questions:

1- What is the stance of the Saudi writers of *Arab News* towards the case of Khashoggi?

The Saudi writers are not taking a biased stance towards Khashoggi but rather they defend their country.

The Saudi writers are not biased against the killing of Khashoggi.

2- How do the Saudi writers of *Arab News* show bias for the Saudi authority in the case of Khashoggi in the articles under study?

The Saudi writers show bias towards their country Saudi Arabia through the use of language. They employed Halliday's (2014) linguistic processes: material process, mental process, verbal process, behavioural process, relational process, and existential process.

This research may open new avenues of research. It may make a positive contribution to the field of linguistics and inspires other researchers with new insights for approaching media discourse and media bias. Further, a number of studies can be done in light of the current research:

- The data of the current research can be approached through a critical discourse analysis perspective to reveal whether the Saudi writers are biased or not.
- A comparative study can be done comparing the current data to a number of articles written in world newspapers.

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