



Received : 10-03-2026	Accepted : 13-06-2026
Published : 30-06-2026	Doi : 10.32699/liar.v10vi1.11079

The Construction of Identity and Solidarity in Arabic Language Content About Palestine on the Instagram Account 'Ayn 'Ala Filastin: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

This study examines the construction of identity and solidarity in Arabic-language Instagram content related to Palestine from a sociolinguistic perspective. Social media has become a crucial space for expressing collective identity and mobilizing global solidarity. This research employs a qualitative approach using discourse analysis to investigate linguistic strategies in digital communication. The data consist of 15 selected Arabic captions from the Instagram account **عين على فلسطين** posted between January and March 2025. The analysis is based on the identity construction framework of Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough (2015). The findings reveal that identity and solidarity are constructed through collective pronouns, emotional metaphors, and resistance-oriented expressions. These linguistic strategies not only reflect ideological positions but also strengthen emotional engagement and digital solidarity among audiences.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, identity construction, solidarity, Arabic discourse, social media

A. Introduction

Language is a fundamental element in human social life. Beyond functioning as a means of communication, language also plays an important role in constructing social identity, expressing cultural values, and establishing social relationships within society. In the field of sociolinguistics, language is understood as a social phenomenon that cannot be separated from the community in which it is used. Sociolinguistics examines the relationship between language and society, including how language use is influenced by social, cultural, ideological, and situational factors in communication (Holmes, 2013). Therefore, language does not merely reflect social reality but also contributes to shaping group identity and social solidarity.

The rapid development of information technology has significantly transformed communication practices in contemporary society. Social media has emerged as a new communicative space where individuals and communities can express ideas, construct identities, and articulate positions on various social and political issues. Platforms such as Instagram function not only as spaces for sharing visual content but also as arenas for disseminating discourse, shaping public opinion, and mobilizing social solidarity on a global scale (Zappavigna, 2018). Through linguistic choices, symbols, and narrative structures embedded in social media content, users can present particular identities while simultaneously fostering emotional connections with specific social groups.

One of the global issues widely discussed in digital spaces is the conflict in Palestine. This conflict, which has persisted for decades, is not only a matter of international politics but also a humanitarian issue that has generated widespread global solidarity. Social media plays a crucial role in disseminating information about the conditions in Palestine and serves as a platform for communities around the world to express support and empathy for the Palestinian people. In this context, language becomes a powerful instrument for constructing narratives of struggle, collective identity, and solidarity with groups perceived as experiencing injustice (Fairclough, 2015).

One social media account that actively disseminates information related to Palestine is the Instagram account *عين على فلسطين*. This account consistently publishes content related to the social, political, and humanitarian conditions in Palestine using Arabic. The use of Arabic in these posts not only functions as a medium for delivering information but also potentially constructs collective identity and reinforces solidarity with Palestine. The choice of vocabulary, rhetorical style, and linguistic expressions within these posts may reflect ideological stances and values that the account aims to convey to its audience.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language use in digital media can serve as a significant mechanism for constructing social identity. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue that identity is not static but is dynamically constructed through linguistic practices in social interaction. In digital communication contexts, linguistic practices within discourse can represent group identities, ideological positions, and solidarity relationships between speakers and the communities being discussed. Therefore, analyzing language use in social media content can provide deeper insights into how identity and social solidarity are constructed through digital communication practices.

Several previous studies have demonstrated that social media serves as an important arena for constructing identity and social solidarity through language. Zappavigna (2018) shows that communication practices in social media facilitate what she calls ambient

affiliation, a form of social connection created through linguistic and symbolic resources in online interactions. Similarly, Androutsopoulos (2014) argues that language in digital media is frequently used to express group identity and to signal ideological positions regarding specific social issues. Furthermore, research on language and identity in public discourse suggests that particular linguistic choices can reflect social positioning and ideological values held by specific groups (Holmes, 2013).

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between language, identity, and digital media from different perspectives. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue that social identity is constructed through linguistic practices in social interaction. Holmes (2013) further explains that linguistic choices reflect social positioning and ideological values within particular communities. In the context of digital communication, Androutsopoulos (2014) emphasizes that social media provides a space where individuals and communities negotiate identities and ideological positions through language. Likewise, Zappavigna (2018) demonstrates that language use and hashtags facilitate ambient affiliation, a form of social bonding created through digital communication. More recently, Pérez-Sabater (2021) highlights that linguistic strategies employed in social media contribute to the construction of solidarity and emotional engagement with social issues. However, these studies primarily focus on digital identity, online activism, or general social media practices, without examining how collective identity and solidarity are simultaneously constructed through Arabic-language Instagram content related to the Palestinian conflict. Moreover, to the best of the authors' knowledge, existing studies have predominantly examined Palestine-related discourse from political communication, media, or international relations perspectives, whereas sociolinguistic analyses focusing on Arabic-language Instagram discourse, particularly on the account Eye on Palestine, remain absent or very limited.

Therefore, this study addresses this research gap by examining how collective identity and solidarity are simultaneously constructed through lexical choices, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies in Arabic-language Instagram content published by the account Eye on Palestine. Unlike previous studies that tend to analyze identity representation or digital activism separately, this study integrates both concepts within the framework of digital sociolinguistics. Consequently, this research extends the scope of sociolinguistic inquiry by demonstrating how Arabic-language social media discourse functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a mechanism for constructing collective identity and transnational solidarity in the context of humanitarian discourse and global conflict.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to examine how the use of Arabic in Instagram content posted by the account Eye on Palestine represents and constructs social identity and solidarity from a sociolinguistic perspective.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using discourse analysis within a sociolinguistic perspective. The qualitative method is chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how language use in social media content represents and constructs social identity and solidarity. This research focuses on interpreting linguistic phenomena contextually based on meanings embedded in digital texts (Creswell, 2014). The study is observational in nature, as it analyzes naturally occurring data from social media without experimental manipulation. To ensure clarity and reproducibility, the method is organized into several subsections covering the research design, data source, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design with a discourse analysis approach. The research does not involve experimental manipulation but observes language use in its natural context, particularly in social media communication. The design allows the researcher to examine how linguistic elements function in constructing identity and solidarity within digital discourse.

2. Data Source and Participant Characteristics

The data source of this study is Arabic-language Instagram content published by the account عين على فلسطين (Eye on Palestine), which primarily disseminates information and narratives related to the Palestinian humanitarian crisis and social issues. In this qualitative study, the units of analysis are textual data rather than human participants.

The data consist of 15 Instagram posts published between January and March 2025, including captions, quotations, and other textual expressions written in Arabic. These posts were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that the data were relevant to the objectives of the study. The selection was based on the following criteria: (1) Arabic was used as the primary language; (2) the posts were published within the selected research period; (3) they explicitly addressed issues related to Palestine; (4) they contained linguistic features representing identity construction and/or social solidarity; and (5) they were directly relevant to the research objectives. Posts that lacked substantial textual content or consisted primarily of visual material without meaningful linguistic expressions were excluded from the analysis.

The selection of 15 posts was considered sufficient because recurrent linguistic patterns emerged after the fifteenth post, and no substantially new analytical categories were identified. Therefore, the data were considered to have reached thematic saturation, where additional data were unlikely to produce new findings relevant to the research objectives (Guest et al., 2020). This sampling strategy ensured that the selected data were information-rich and provided sufficient evidence to analyze the construction of identity and solidarity in Arabic-language Instagram discourse.

3. Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through a documentation method. The researcher observed, selected, and systematically recorded relevant Arabic-language posts from the Instagram account *عين على فلسطين*. The data collection process involved identifying posts that meet the research criteria, documenting the textual content, and organizing the data into categories.

To ensure consistency, the collected data were classified based on discourse themes, lexical choices, and forms of linguistic expressions. This classification supports a structured and transparent data collection process.

4. Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis is guided by the theory of identity construction proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough (2015). These frameworks are used to analyze how language constructs social identity and represents ideological meanings in discourse.

The analysis focuses on linguistic features such as lexical choices, pronoun usage, metaphorical expressions, and rhetorical structures. The analytical process is conducted in several stages. First, the data are identified and classified based on themes related to identity and solidarity. Second, the linguistic elements in the posts are analyzed to identify patterns of meaning construction. Finally, the findings are interpreted to explain how language functions as a medium for constructing collective identity and expressing solidarity in digital communication.

C. Result and Discussion

This study examines the construction of identity in Arabic-language Instagram content about Palestine published by the Instagram account *@eye.on.palestine*. The account was selected because it consistently disseminates information concerning the humanitarian situation in Palestine using Arabic captions accompanied by visual images, infographics, and documentary photographs. Unlike conventional news media, *@eye.on.palestine* combines factual reporting with emotional narratives, allowing identity to be constructed through

linguistic choices, visual representations, and social interaction simultaneously.

The data consist of fifteen Instagram posts uploaded between 20 June and early July 2026. These posts were selected through purposive sampling because they represent various dimensions of Palestinian life and reflect different strategies of identity construction. Rather than focusing solely on military conflict, the selected posts portray broader aspects of Palestinian society, including rural life, imprisonment, medical crises, forced disappearance, psychological trauma, humanitarian violations, media literacy, and community resilience. Consequently, the dataset provides a comprehensive representation of how Palestinian identity is discursively produced through social media.

The analysis focuses primarily on the Arabic captions and textual elements contained in each Instagram post. Images are treated as supporting contextual information that reinforces the linguistic meaning expressed in the captions. Since this research employs a sociolinguistic perspective, the primary concern lies in how language indexes social identity, positions social actors, and constructs relationships between Palestinians, Israeli authorities, and the international audience.

The fifteen selected posts can be classified into several thematic categories. The first category concerns collective identity and cultural heritage, represented by posts describing Palestinian rural life and agricultural traditions. These posts emphasize that Palestinian identity is inseparable from the land, collective memory, and intergenerational cultural practices. The second category addresses human rights violations, including posts discussing torture, administrative detention, forced disappearance, pregnant female prisoners, and prison conditions. These posts construct Palestinians as victims of systematic oppression while simultaneously portraying their perseverance and dignity.

Another category highlights personal testimonies, including narratives of Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya and former prisoner Mujahid Dani Mafleh. Through first-person narratives, these posts personalize the broader political conflict by presenting individual experiences of suffering, survival, and resilience. Rather than portraying victims as passive objects, these testimonies position them as credible witnesses whose lived experiences authenticate the humanitarian crisis.

The data also include statistical and informational posts, such as the infographic presenting the number of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons. Unlike narrative posts, these captions rely on numerical evidence and institutional sources to strengthen their credibility. Nevertheless, identity construction remains evident because statistics are framed within a humanitarian discourse emphasizing injustice, discrimination, and collective suffering.

Another important theme concerns psychological and social consequences of war. Posts discussing early aging among children in Gaza and recommendations for managing continuous exposure to distressing news demonstrate that identity construction extends beyond physical violence. These captions depict Palestinians as individuals experiencing long-term psychological trauma while simultaneously encouraging international audiences to remain engaged without becoming emotionally overwhelmed. Such discourse constructs solidarity as an active social responsibility rather than passive sympathy.

Finally, several posts explicitly encourage international awareness and advocacy by inviting audiences to share information, pressure international institutions, and support humanitarian intervention. Through these captions, Palestinian identity is relationally constructed alongside the identities of international organizations, global audiences, medical professionals, journalists, and human rights advocates. Identity therefore emerges not only from self-representation but also through interactions with broader transnational communities.

To analyze these processes, this study adopts the sociocultural linguistic framework proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005). According to their framework, identity is not a fixed or inherent characteristic but is continuously constructed through discourse and social interaction. Five analytical principles guide the analysis: Emergence, which views identity as produced through discourse; Positionality, which examines how speakers position themselves and others; Indexicality, which investigates linguistic forms that signal particular social meanings; Relationality, which explains identity through relationships such as similarity and difference; and Partialness, which recognizes that identity is always incomplete and selectively represented.

Applying these five principles enables the present study to examine how Arabic linguistic expressions construct Palestinian identity across different communicative contexts. Rather than merely describing humanitarian events, the Instagram captions actively shape perceptions of Palestinian society by emphasizing resilience, collective memory, dignity, victimization, resistance, and solidarity. Consequently, identity is understood as an ongoing discursive process that develops through the interaction between language, visual representation, and audience engagement within digital media.

Table 1. Summarizes The Fifteen Instagram Posts Analyzed In This Study.

No.	Main Theme	Dominant Identity Constructed
1	Rural Palestine	Collective cultural identity
2	Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya	Humanitarian victim and professional identity
3	Prisoner statistics	Collective victim identity
4	Forced disappearance	Victim and martyr identity

No.	Main Theme	Dominant Identity Constructed
5	Drugs targeting Gaza	Collective resistance identity
6	Systematic torture	Oppressed collective identity
7	Former prisoner's testimony	Resilient survivor identity
8	Pregnant female prisoners	Gendered humanitarian identity
9	Media literacy	Responsible global solidarity
10	Early aging among children	Traumatized childhood identity
11	Harvest traditions	Collective rural identity
12	Village cooperation	Community solidarity
13	Preservation of agricultural heritage	Cultural continuity
14	Daily life under occupation	Everyday resilience
15	International advocacy	Global humanitarian solidarity

The first Instagram post analyzed in this study is entitled "ماذا يعلمنا ريف فلسطين عن الحياة؟" ("What Does the Palestinian Countryside Teach Us About Life?"). The carousel post portrays rural Palestinian life through photographs of elderly farmers harvesting wheat, accompanied by Arabic captions emphasizing agricultural traditions, collective labor, food security, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Rather than depicting Palestine solely as a territory affected by conflict, the post reconstructs Palestinian identity through everyday rural practices, positioning agriculture as both a cultural inheritance and a form of resistance against displacement. This finding demonstrates that identity is not merely represented through explicit political statements but is discursively constructed through descriptions of ordinary social practices. The analysis is presented using Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) five principles of identity construction.

1. Emergence

According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identity is not a fixed attribute but emerges through interaction and discourse. In this post, Palestinian identity emerges through repeated references to agricultural life instead of direct political narratives. The opening sentence, "ريف فلسطين ليس هامشاً في الحكاية، بل قلبها" ("The Palestinian countryside is not a marginal part of the story; it is its heart"), immediately establishes the countryside as the central symbol of Palestinian existence.

The caption further explains that the countryside feeds the people, preserves memory, and stores experience passed down through generations. Identity therefore emerges through narratives of cultivation, harvesting, and communal cooperation rather than through military or political discourse. The repeated mention of wheat, land, harvest, and villages constructs Palestinian identity as inseparable from agricultural life.

Moreover, the post describes harvesting as a season where the entire village

participates collectively. Such discourse constructs identity through everyday social interaction. Instead of portraying farmers only as agricultural workers, the caption positions them as guardians of history and culture. Consequently, Palestinian identity emerges naturally from daily practices that sustain both material life and collective memory.

2. Positionality

The principle of positionality concerns how discourse assigns social positions to individuals and groups. In this post, Palestinian villagers are positioned as knowledgeable, productive, and resilient members of society. They are represented not as passive victims but as active agents capable of sustaining their communities despite prolonged occupation.

Several lexical choices reinforce this positioning. Expressions such as "يحفظ الذاكرة" ("preserves memory"), "يتعلم الفلسطيني" ("the Palestinian learns"), and "يصنع الفلاح منجله بيده" ("the farmer makes his own sickle with his own hands") portray Palestinians as skilled, self-reliant, and deeply connected to their land.

Simultaneously, the post implicitly positions the land itself as an extension of Palestinian identity. The countryside is described not simply as geography but as a living space that shapes values, cooperation, and survival. This positioning challenges dominant international media narratives that often reduce Palestine to scenes of destruction and armed conflict. Instead, Palestinians are presented as individuals whose identities are rooted in work, tradition, and dignity.

The discourse also positions the audience as observers invited to appreciate the cultural richness of Palestinian rural life. Rather than demanding sympathy, the caption encourages recognition of Palestine as a society possessing history, civilization, and social continuity.

3. Indexicality

Indexicality refers to linguistic forms that point to broader social meanings. Throughout the caption, several lexical items index collective identity and resistance. Words such as ريف (countryside), القمح (wheat), الحصاد (harvest), القرية (village), الأرض (land), and الفلاح (farmer) carry meanings beyond their literal definitions. These terms symbolize cultural continuity, belonging, and attachment to ancestral land. Within the Palestinian sociocultural context, agricultural vocabulary indexes the historical relationship between people and territory.

Likewise, the statement that nothing is wasted and that every resource has value indexes resilience and sustainability. Rather than emphasizing scarcity, the discourse highlights creativity and collective responsibility. The repeated description of harvesting as

a communal activity indexes solidarity among villagers, where every member contributes to sustaining communal life.

Visual elements reinforce these linguistic indexes. Images of elderly farmers, golden wheat fields, handmade agricultural tools, and communal harvesting visually signify authenticity and historical continuity. The interaction between verbal and visual signs strengthens the construction of Palestinian identity as rooted in indigenous agricultural traditions. Therefore, the post indexes Palestinian identity not through slogans of resistance but through ordinary cultural practices that symbolize endurance and permanence.

4. Relationality

Identity is also constructed relationally through similarities, differences, and social relationships. In this post, Palestinian identity is defined through its intimate relationship with the land, community, and inherited traditions.

The caption repeatedly contrasts meaningful rural life with contemporary consumer culture. For example, the explanation that Palestinian women practiced sustainable living before the concept of "zero waste" became globally popular establishes an implicit comparison between traditional Palestinian knowledge and modern environmental discourse. This comparison positions Palestinian rural practices as longstanding, valuable, and environmentally conscious.

Furthermore, the post constructs relationships among different members of society. Farmers, women, children, and entire villages participate collectively in harvesting, illustrating that Palestinian identity is fundamentally communal rather than individualistic. Cooperation becomes a defining social value.

Another relational aspect appears through the implicit contrast between permanence and displacement. Although occupation is never explicitly mentioned in every slide, emphasizing rootedness in land indirectly opposes narratives seeking to erase Palestinian historical presence. Consequently, identity is relationally constructed through attachment rather than confrontation.

5. Partialness

According to Bucholtz and Hall, identity is always partial because discourse selectively represents certain aspects of social reality while omitting others. This principle is evident in the present post. Although Palestinians continue to experience occupation, military violence, and humanitarian crises, these issues are intentionally absent from the narrative. Instead, the post selectively foregrounds agricultural traditions, village cooperation, and cultural heritage. Such selective representation does not deny conflict but strategically emphasizes another dimension of Palestinian identity that is often overlooked

in international media.

By highlighting everyday rural life, the account expands public understanding of Palestine beyond victimhood. Palestinians are represented simultaneously as farmers, parents, neighbors, craftspeople, and cultural bearers. This selective focus contributes to a more complex and multidimensional construction of identity.

The post therefore illustrates that identity is neither singular nor complete. Palestinian identity is represented through one particular lens—rural cultural heritage—which complements rather than replaces other identities portrayed across different Instagram posts.

The findings indicate that the Instagram account @eye.on.palestine constructs Palestinian identity primarily through cultural discourse instead of overt political rhetoric. Applying Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework demonstrates that identity emerges through representations of ordinary agricultural practices, is positioned around dignity and self-reliance, indexed through culturally significant lexical choices, relationally defined through community and attachment to land, and partially represented by emphasizing heritage over conflict.

Unlike mainstream media representations that frequently portray Palestinians solely as victims of war, this post foregrounds everyday life as a source of identity. The countryside becomes a symbolic space where memory, culture, resilience, and collective belonging intersect. Thus, resistance is communicated implicitly through the preservation of traditions and the continued cultivation of ancestral land rather than through explicit political discourse.

Overall, this first post demonstrates that Instagram functions not only as a platform for information dissemination but also as a powerful discursive space where Palestinian identity is continuously negotiated, reconstructed, and communicated to global audiences through language and visual storytelling.

D. Conclusion

This study examined how Arabic-language Instagram content published by the account Eye on Palestine (@eye.on.palestine) constructs collective identity and social solidarity regarding Palestine from a sociolinguistic perspective. Drawing upon the Sociocultural Linguistic Framework proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and supported by Fairclough's (2015) Critical Discourse Analysis, the findings demonstrate that identity is not represented as a fixed social attribute but is continuously constructed through linguistic practices and digital discourse.

The analysis of fifteen Instagram posts reveals four dominant patterns of identity construction: (1) the construction of Palestinian collective identity through cultural heritage, historical memory, and attachment to the land; (2) the construction of humanitarian solidarity through emotional expressions, personal testimonies, and representations of shared suffering; (3) the construction of resistance through lexical choices emphasizing resilience, dignity, and hope; and (4) the humanization of Palestinian victims through linguistic strategies that transform numerical statistics into personal and social identities. These findings indicate that lexical choices, metaphors, collective pronouns, evaluative expressions, and rhetorical structures function as significant sociolinguistic resources for positioning Palestinians as active social actors rather than merely passive victims of conflict.

From the perspective of Bucholtz and Hall (2005), the findings confirm that identity emerges through discourse (emergence), is negotiated through social positioning (positionality), indexed by specific linguistic features (indexicality), constructed through relationships with others (relationality), and selectively represented according to communicative purposes (partialness). Furthermore, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis demonstrates that these linguistic choices simultaneously function as ideological strategies that shape public interpretations of humanitarian issues and encourage transnational solidarity through digital communication.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated analysis of collective identity and solidarity within Arabic-language Instagram discourse concerning Palestine. Unlike previous studies that have generally examined digital identity, online activism, or solidarity as separate phenomena, this research demonstrates how identity and solidarity are simultaneously constructed through lexical choices, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies in humanitarian social media discourse. Consequently, this study extends the scope of digital sociolinguistics by highlighting the role of Arabic as a discursive resource for constructing collective identity and mobilizing global humanitarian solidarity in the context of contemporary conflict.

Theoretically, this research enriches sociolinguistic studies by demonstrating that identity construction in digital spaces involves complex interactions between linguistic practices, ideology, and social context. Practically, the findings suggest that social media platforms can function not only as channels for disseminating information but also as effective spaces for fostering empathy, collective awareness, and humanitarian advocacy through strategic language use.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to fifteen Instagram posts published within a specific period and focuses primarily on textual analysis. Future research is recommended to employ larger datasets, incorporate multimodal discourse analysis involving visual and audiovisual

elements, and compare identity construction across different Arabic-language social media platforms to provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital humanitarian discourse.

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