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EUPHEMISTIC STRATEGIES IN THE LEXICO-DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF VIOLENCE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF AI-MEDIATED WAR NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the role of euphemistic language in the lexico-discursive construction of violence in AI-mediated war discourse. The research examines how lexical choice, syntactic structure, and discursive framing transform violence into sanitized, abstract, and institutionally acceptable forms. The proposed study is situated at the crossroads of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), media linguistics, and the emerging research on algorithmically generated discourse. Precision strike, neutralize, engagement, and collateral damage are not simply expressions used in place of another in the war discourse; they regulate affect, background agency, and transform bodily harm into technical procedure. Although the use of euphemism in political and media speech has been well-researched, its functionality in AI-mediated narratives is relatively under-researched. The study is based on the qualitative CDA framework guided by the three-dimensional model of Fairclough and the socio-cognitive approach of van Dijk. Moreover, the current research examines AI-generated and AI-mediated war-related discourse to detect the repetitive patterns of lexical mitigation, nominalization, passivization, abstraction, and neutralizing frame construction. The analysis reveals that AI systems often recreate institutional repertoires of war language instead of producing ideologically empty descriptions. Their outputs often appear neutral, balanced, and informative, yet this neutrality is itself discursively produced through linguistic strategies. Such linguistic strategies suppress asymmetry, diffuse responsibility, and normalize violence. The paper thus argues that AI is not only a technical medium of transmission but also a discursive agent that exists within inherited systems of representation. The article extends the field of euphemism study to the area of AI discourse, thus, making a contribution to the current field of linguistics and emphasizing the necessity of critical examination of the algorithmically mediated representation of conflict.

Keywords: Euphemism, Discourse of War, Critical Discourse Analysis, Ai-Mediated Discourse, Lexical Mitigation, Nominalization, Agency Concealment, Ideological Framing, Violence Representation

1. INTRODUCTION

Language does not merely report wars and conflicts; it structures the perception, assessment, justification, and understanding of war. Most of the people do not experience armed conflicts directly but by mediated discourse, in the form of news reports, official statements, diplomatic briefings, institutional summaries and, increasingly AI-generated explanations and summaries of these texts. In such circumstances discourse remains the main tool by means of which violence is cognitively and morally interpreted. It implies that the depiction of war is never descriptive. It is selective, socially consequential and interpretive. What is named, which materials are omitted, how agency is distributed, and how suffering is framed all affect whether a violent act is viewed as necessary force, regrettable accident, justified self-defense, or unacceptable brutality (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006).

Euphemism is one of the most significant linguistic processes. Generally speaking, euphemism is the tendency to use less explicit, less offensive or less emotionally charged words and phrases instead of more direct expressions. But in political and military language euphemism, does far more than softening unpleasant language. It restructures perception. Neutralize, surgical strike, precision operation, collateral damage are the phrases which turn killing, bombing, destruction, and death of civilians into technical processes. Euphemism is thus not only an ornamental stylistic device but also a process of ideological mediation. It establishes a separation between the violent act and the human cost, which makes it possible to present the coercive practices as measured, professional and legitimate (Allan and Burridge, 2006; Chilton, 2004).

Critical Discourse Analysis provides an effective framework to explain how such language works. In the case of Fairclough (1995), discourse is a social practice that is a reflection and reproduction of broader social relations. Discourse does not exist in isolation from institutions, power, or ideology, rather, it is involved in the reproduction of ideology since it contributes to the development of shared mental models, social knowledge, and group-based representations of self and other (van Dijk, 2005, 2006). These processes in the war discourse frequently appear as positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The violence of one side is portrayed as defense, stabilization, or intervention, whereas the violence of the other is portrayed as aggression, extremism, or terror. Euphemism is one of the ways by which this asymmetry is linguistically fulfilled.

Artificial intelligence increases the complexity of this issue. Massive language models are summarizing news, paraphrasing articles; answering conflict-related questions, writing explanatory narratives, and condensing politically charged events into readable prose. In such functions, AI systems are not just passive transferring of already existing information rather involved in the reformulation discourse. It is important since recent research has demonstrated that AI-generated and AI-edited journalism can affect the perceived neutrality and bias, summarization systems can recreate harmful selection patterns, and even the news produced by LLM can introduce or maintain framing effects despite the perception of a balance or objectivity (Bender et al., 2021; Steen et al., 2024; Kaeberlein and Alikhani, 2025; Yoo, 2025)

This issue is especially important in war discourse because neutrality itself may operate as a rhetorical style. A sentence may not explicitly judge, but it may still conceal inequalities of power, agency, and suffering. As an illustration, an expression “both sides exchanged attacks” might seem balanced while revealing the disparities in military strength, territory, or civilian susceptibility. Similarly, a sentence like in “infrastructure was damaged during operations” can appear to be real and leave both actor and victim out of sight. In such situations, language does not explicitly justify violence, but it helps in the normalization of violence by making it more abstract and depersonalized.

The current research deals with this issue by discussing the euphemistic approaches in the lexico-discursive construction of violence in AI-mediated war discourses. The term lexico-discursive construction comes into the foreground since it is not the vocabulary that creates violence in the discourse. The syntax, information structure, agency patterns, nominalization, framing, compression, and genre conventions also influence it. An entirely lexical explanation of euphemism would thus not suffice. The article rather claims that euphemistic effects are produced as a result of the interaction of lexical mitigation, grammatical abstraction, and discursive organization.

There are four objectives of this article. First, it re-places euphemism within the war discourse as a more general lexico-discursive tactic as opposed to a more specific lexical replacement. Second, it situates AI-generated conflict language within CDA by treating algorithmic output as discourse embedded in institutional norms. Third, it examines the reproduction of abstraction, mitigation, and agency concealment patterns of war narratives mediated by AI found in

previous patterns of political and media language. Fourth, it claims that the style of neutrality of AI can be ideologically effective in itself, making violence cognitively structured and morally de-escalated.

In this manner, the article makes two significant contributions to the modern linguistics. It brings euphemism studies to the more important area of AI discourse, and it applies discourse-analytic research on war language to the area of algorithmic mediation. These questions are no longer peripheral in a communicative environment where AI is becoming more and more involved in the presentation of conflict.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. EUPHEMISM AS LINGUISTIC REGULATION AND IDEOLOGICAL MEDIATION

In linguistics, euphemism has long been a topic of discussion as a tactic of not using a taboo, saving face, or not offending. However, contemporary scholarship has demonstrated that euphemism cannot be narrowed down to politeness. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), euphemism is closely related to social values, cultural anxieties, and institutional pressures. Their work demonstrates that euphemistic language assists in controlling what can be said and how it can be said, particularly in the circumstances where straightforward expression would cause emotional or moral uneasiness. In this regard, euphemism is a linguistic regulation. It controls and limits interpretation and rearranges the social acceptability of reference.

It is this expanded comprehension that is significant in political discourse. Euphemism in state and institutional language tends to serve the purpose of rendering actions that are morally questionable, administratively intelligible. The language hide the fact that the harmful acts are being reworded through the use of technical or bureaucratic language. Killing becomes neutralization, displacement is relocated, torture changes into enhanced interrogation, and destruction becomes targeted response. These phrases not only just conceal the action behind, rather relocate it within a frame of procedure, expertise, and necessity. The violence is still there, but the rhetoric around it is more palatable and unlikely to create opposition.

2.2. EUPHEMISM IN WAR DISCOURSE

One of the most obvious settings where euphemism can be applied as ideology is war discourse. According to Chilton (2004), political language is essentially strategic: it organizes political cognition in terms of deixis, spatialization and claims of legitimacy. This is one of the reasons why conflict language so frequently groups actors into morally differentiated groups. War is not simply told by means of reference to facts; it is placed in relational meaning. Words linked to the self will tend to index order, security, and defense whereas words linked to the other will invoke danger, irrationality, or aggression.

Mazid (2007) demonstrates that euphemism and dysphemism are used in war discourse as complementary ideological practices. Euphemism mitigates the actions of the in-group, while dysphemism intensifies the perceived brutality or illegitimacy of the out-group. These asymmetries create a moralized discourse where violence is not distributed evenly. The bombing of one actor becomes a surgical strike or operation; that of the other terror or massacre. This imbalance is not accidental. It lies at the heart of the way discourse naturalizes some of the uses of force and criticizes others.

A similar kind of argument is put forwarded by van Dijk in his analysis of political war rhetoric. He showed that how implication, presupposition, and ideological framing can render intervention as a reasonable act in Iraq war (2005) that does not necessarily demand entirely explicit justification. Political rhetoric does not defend violence out rightly, but builds up chains of inferences where violence remains the only logical or ethical conclusion. When violent action is framed as response, protection, or stabilization, it is woven into an argumentative structure that presents force as reluctant necessity rather than active imposition.

2.3. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF VIOLENCE

Critical Discourse Analysis is especially effective when it comes to analyzing such patterns since it connects the textual detail to the institutional power. Fairclough conceptualization of discourse is a three-dimensional model conceptualized in relation to text, discursive practice and social practice. This means that the study of linguistic forms is

not carried out in isolation but in relation to how the texts are created, disseminated and read and to the greater social orders that they replicate (Fairclough, 1995).

The socio-cognitive approach by van Dijk gives another dimension as it focuses on the fact that discourse assists in the formation of shared mental models in which events are perceived (van Dijk, 2006). This is essential in war language since the meaning of the conflict is not solely a matter of information but a matter of cognitive frames in which the information is located. The repetition of euphemistic formulations may normalize some modes of perception of violence making some of its consequences salient and others peripheral. When readers are repeatedly presented with military force in terms of precision, security and response, their interpretive habits can be changed accordingly.

The methodological contribution of Wodak and Meyer to the CDA also supports the importance of considering micro-linguistic decisions as components of bigger ideological trends. Slogans alone do not justify violence. It is also replicated by the structure of the clauses, the role of the participants, repetition of lexicon, and the background assumptions. This is the reason why euphemism should be researched as a network of discursive strategies and not as a lexical phenomenon on its own.

2.4. THE IDEOLOGICAL NOMINALIZATION AND PASSIVISATION WORK

Of particular interest here is the literature on grammar and ideology. Fowler (1991) claims that grammatical structures are not neutral containers of information but they are choices that influence the way social reality is constructed. Nominalization and passivization are two of these structures that are of particular importance in the discourse of violence.

Nominalization transforms actions into nouns or noun-like entities, thereby removing temporal dynamism and often obscuring agency. As an illustration, the destruction of homes is not grammatically as direct as the army destroyed homes. The nominalized version makes the event appear more abstract and less assignable. It shifts the focus out of actor to process. Nominalizations, like operation, engagement, retaliation, and intervention present violence as institutional action, but not as embodied harm. They internalize action into strategic categories.

Passivization collaborates with this by either backgrounding or deleting the actor altogether. The fact that clauses like civilians were targeted, targets were struck or infrastructure was damaged does not always tell who did it. This undermines accountability and may lead to violence being presented as an incident. The nominalization, combined with the passivization, is thus particularly effective: one depersonalizes the act, and the other depersonalizes the agent. The two of them generate depersonalized discourse that blunts moral recognition.

2.5. FROM LEXICAL EUPHEMISM TO LEXICO-DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION

These observations indicate that euphemism in war rhetoric cannot be viewed satisfactorily as a question of lexical substitution. The concept of lexico-discursive construction is helpful in that it highlights that meaning is constructed in the interplay of lexical objects, grammatical patterns, and framing structures. Such a term as operation is not euphemistic in all situations. Its euphemistic power manifests itself when it substitutes a more straightforward account of coercive violence and when it occurs in a wider discourse of strategic necessity, neutrality, and controlled outcome.This is also useful in explaining how seemingly factual language can nonetheless do ideological work. At the simplest level, a clause can be grammatically and semantically correct and yet give a distorted image of violence. For instance, a report saying that “casualties occurred during an operation” might not lie but still conceal actor, victimhood, and causality. Euphemism thus does not only act in terms of substitution but in terms of choice, arrangement and omission.

2.6. AI-MEDIATED DISCOURSE AND INHERITED BIAS

Recent work on large language models extends these concerns into computational contexts. Bender et al. (2021) notoriously caution that huge language models recreate patterns based on their training data without a grounded interpretation, and this increases risks associated with prejudice, misrepresentation, and the amplification of dominant discourses. This can be observed to be very relevant to war language. When institutionalized versions of euphemism and asymmetrical framing are already present in public corpora, then models trained on corpora will tend to replicate them, particularly when asked to summarize, condense or explain.

This issue is supported by research on summarization bias. Steen et al. (2024) demonstrate that the summarization systems may manifest biases in limited situations, such as by hallucinating and making content handling decisions. Although not all summaries have an ideologically distorted form, the overall implication is that AI-generated condensation is not discursively neutral. Summaries are bound to be selective, foreground and compressive. Such processes may play an important role in the understanding of violence in conflict reporting.

Kaeberlein and Alikhani (2025) extend this argument by demonstrating that LLMs can influence perceived bias in journalism. Their writing indicates that AI-generated and AI-edited texts tend to lean toward a middle or neutral voice but this can be detrimental in sensitive human-rights situations as it makes the voices of those concerned less visible and can make misinformation seem more believable. This is especially important for the present study because it indicates that neutrality itself can operate as a harmful discourse style rather than a guarantee of fairness.

Yoo (2025) also shows that even when explicit neutrality is requested, the political news generated by LLM may include unintended political bias and may misrepresent quotations or frame the story. This implies that AI-generated discourse does not necessarily receive ideological tendencies passively; it can also remake them in a new form by its own mechanisms. In war narratives, that could mean the reproduction of euphemistic patterns not only through copying institutional language but through generating balanced-sounding paraphrases that suppress asymmetry.

2.7. RESEARCH GAP

Although much has been written about euphemism in political and media language and an increasing amount of research exists on AI-generated news and bias, the intersection of the two areas is under-researched. Current discourse research tends to examine human-written political rhetoric, whereas computational research tends to investigate the notions of fairness, accuracy, or bias in general without making war language a specific ideological field. It is thus evident that there is a necessity of work that studies the functioning of euphemistic strategies in the context of AI-mediated war narratives as a subset of a greater lexico-discursive system.

This paper fills this gap by posing a question not only on the possibility of AI being biased, but also on how AI-mediated language can be involved in the old linguistic sanitization of violence. By so doing, it unites the discourse studies, linguistics, and AI scholarship to shed light on how new technologies can extend inherited structures of representation instead of avoiding them.

3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design that is grounded on Critical Discourse Analysis will be used to answer the question of euphemistic strategies in the lexico-discursive construction of violence in AI-mediated war stories. A qualitative methodology is suitable as the aim is not to enumerate individual lexical choices but to understand how meaning is generated by the interaction of vocabulary, syntax, agency structure and discursive framing. Euphemism can hardly be limited to single words in war discourse; it is manifested in textual organization and ideological placement.

Fairclough three-dimensional model and the socio-cognitive approach by van Dijk are the main sources of information in the analysis. The model by Fairclough enables the study to attribute textual choices to discursive practices and social organization at large, and the framework by van Dijk provides the possibilities to understand how discourse shapes the ideological representation, specifically framing of groups. The combination of these models allows the article to alternate between micro-level linguistic description to macro-level questions of representation, legitimacy and power.

The study data are a purposive sample of AI-mediated war-related stories. These are AI-generated summaries, explanatory responses, reformulated news-like passages, and conflict descriptions which are common in large language model settings. The research does not purport to be statistically representative. Instead, it focuses on analytically dense examples having repetitive linguistic patterns which are associated with mitigation, abstraction and agency concealment. The goal is interpretive richness as opposed to quantitative generalization.

There are four steps in which the analytic process is performed. To begin with, the lexical items that can be euphemistic are identified, including neutralize, operation, engagement, response, precision strike, and collateral damage. Second, they are studied within the local textual settings to determine whether they are mitigation, abstraction, or emotional distancing mechanisms. Third, it is examined in grammatical structures, i.e. nominalization, passivization,

participant suppression and sequence of information. Fourth, discourse frame is construed in a broader sense to establish whether the text is creating violence as technical, symmetrical, inevitable, or strategically normalized.

This method assumes that euphemism cannot be regarded as a semantic replacement but instead as a lexico-discursive product. A word can be euphemistic just because of the syntactic and ideological context of the word. Likewise, the notion of neutrality may appear to be a tone issue but in reality, it is based on cumulative judgments that suffocate asymmetry and accountability. The qualitative CDA model is therefore particularly suitable in showing how AI mediated discourse plays out in the linguistic management of war.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. EUPHEMISM AS AFFECT MANAGEMENT IN AI-MEDIATED WAR LANGUAGE

This discussion reveals that lexical mitigation is a key process through which the narratives of AI control the emotional responses to war. Most formulations generated or mediated by AI will replace kill, bomb or destroy with less affectively charged words such as neutralize, target, engage or conduct an operation. This replacement is not just a change of tone, but it is a change of interpretive frame in which violence is perceived. Allan and Burridge (2006) state that euphemism is a way of making socially disturbing facts linguistically more acceptable, whereas Chilton (2004) demonstrates that political language is often used to control legitimacy by strategic lexical choice. In this case, it lessens the degree of emotion and presents coercive action as controlled, procedural and professionally regulated (Allan and Burridge, 2006; Chilton, 2004).

An illustration of AI-style example would be a sentence such as: “The forces carried out a precision operation to neutralize strategic targets.” Compared with a more direct version such as “The forces bombed the area and killed people inside the targeted buildings,” the euphemistic form compresses violence into military procedure. The lexical items precision, operation, and neutralization are together concerned with technical efficiency, rather than body injury. This is in line with the view of van Dijk which argues that political discourse tends to soften the actions of the powerful actors and maintain a morally acceptable tone (van Dijk, 2005). This may be even more persuasive in AI-mediated texts, where fluency and moderation are often considered signs of good, as it may appear natural and non-ideological (Kaeberlein and Alikhani, 2025; Steen et al., 2024).

4.2. THE NOMINALIZATION OF VIOLENCE

The second great trend is nominalization. The stories mediated by AI tend to transform actions into abstract processes through the use of such words as operation, intervention, campaign, response, and engagement. Fowler (1991) says that nominalization is ideologically important in that it depersonalizes action and re-presents it as an impersonal process. This causes violence in war discourse to be discussed in terms of strategic development and not an occurrence of pain, injury and death. Fairclough (1995) also noted that discourse constructs social reality through representational choices and nominalization is a representational choice which shifts the interpretation of human experience to institutional logic (Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991).

For instance, an AI-mediated sentence such as “The intervention resulted in infrastructure loss and civilian displacement” is lexically and grammatically more abstract than “The attack destroyed homes and forced families to flee.” The latter stresses on material consequences and human agency, where the former is informationally constrained and institutionally conceptualized. This abstraction is not an objective style choice. It has ideological implications since it diminishes the moral immediacy of the event. Such abstraction can be systematic in model-generated summaries, where brevity and cohesion are emphasized, thus raising the probability that conflict will be expressed in process-oriented, as opposed to human-focused language (Steen et al., 2024; van Leeuwen, 2008).

4.3. AGENCY CONCEALMENT AND THE DIFFUSION OF RESPONSIBILITY

Another prominent characteristic of the AI-mediated war discourse is agency concealment. Passive constructions like civilians were affected, targets were struck, and infrastructure was damaged relegate the perpetrator of violence. According to van Dijk (2006), agency is one of the most significant aspects that can be backgrounded. Fowler (1991) also believes that grammar is ideological in that it determines the distribution of causality and responsibility. The

disappearance of the actor in the form of clause structure results in a decreased salience of accountability (Fowler, 1991; van Dijk, 2006).

A representative example would be: "Several civilians were affected during the operation." Such wording leaves the issue of who did what, to whom and under what circumstances unanswered. The clause anticipates consequence and inhibits agency. Politically consequential in war stories is the suppression of such violence which enables it to be event-like and not actor-driven. Such patterns can be replicated by AI systems since passive constructions are typical of institutional and journalistic prose, and since they facilitate an impersonal informational tone. However, such a detachment of style may also blur the ethical clarity by making violence seem like something that occurred but not something perpetrated by recognizable actors (Bender et al., 2021; Kaeberlein and Alikhani, 2025).

4.4. NEUTRALITY AS A DISCURSIVE AND IDEOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE

Among the most notable findings, it is possible to mention that neutrality in AI-generated war discourse is frequently a discursive act and not a lack of ideology. AI systems often generate symmetrical language wit that do not explicitly evaluate and show events in a symmetrical manner. But, Wodak (2009) states that discourse may seem neutral yet still replicate ideological structures, particularly when it conceals power imbalances.

An illustrative example is the sentence: "Both sides exchanged strikes following rising tensions." This sentence seems to be balanced, yet its symmetrical nature might conceal significant disparities in military strength, territorial dominance, state influence, or civilian vulnerability. Kaeberlein and Alikhani (2025) demonstrate that LLMs have an effect on perceived bias in journalism, and one of the reasons is that measured language may make unequal views look like they should have equal representational weight. This has the potential to normalize violence in conflict discourse because it removes context and re-interprets violence as mutual instability instead of asymmetrical harm (Kaeberlein and Alikhani, 2025; Wodak, 2009).

4.5. AI AS A REPRODUCER OF INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE

The results indicate that AI systems are replicators of institutional discourse as opposed to ideologically neutral communicative instruments. Bender et al. (2021) believe that large language models will recreate patterns in their training data with no underlying understanding, and therefore vulnerable to acquiring dominant discursive norms. If those conventions already include euphemism, abstraction, and agency suppression, then AI outputs may recycle them at scale. This does not require deliberate intent on the part of the system.

This aspect is critical to discourse analysis since it changes the argument of whether AI is biased in a simplistic way to the way AI is involved in the recirculation of ideological language. Fairclough (1995) considers discourse as a socially situated practice, and the text created by AI should be evaluated in the same context. AI does not exist beyond discourse; it is its extension. A model that summarizes conflict in terms of much conventionalized formulations like security operation, strategic response, or escalation following engagement is not simply condensing information. It is replicating the institutional patterns of language that already predetermine the way the violence is perceived by the majority (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006).

4.6. FROM REPRESENTATION TO NORMALIZATION OF VIOLENCE

Lexical mitigation, nominalization, agency concealment, and neutralizing balance have a cumulative effect, which is the normalization of violence (van Dijk, 2006). The repetition of violence as being technical, abstract and reciprocal makes it cognitively manageable and backgrounded in morality. This is the mechanism of normalization: not necessarily with explicit consent, but with repetitive modes of representation that naturalizes violence, render it readable and administratively structured (van Dijk, 2006; Chouliaraki, 2005).

This process may be enhanced by AI-mediated discourse since text generated can have an aura of efficiency, coherence, and objectivity. Such language can be construed by the users as condensed truth as opposed to discursive reconstruction. However, according to the recent research on journalism and LLMs, the power of fluent AI prose can make inherited framing patterns seem even more natural and credible than traditional media prose (Kaeberlein and Alikhani, 2025; Yoo, 2025). The violence being normalized in AI-mediated discourse is not only a linguistic concern but

also a technological one: AI rephrases institutional discourse in the form that seems contemporary, neutral, and very consumable.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that euphemistic methods are at the heart of the lexico-discursive production of violence in AI-mediated war discourses. The AI-generated and AI-mediated discourse often recreates the institutional repertoires of lexical mitigation, abstraction, nominalization, passivization, and neutralizing balance. Such strategies not only make language softer on the surface; they redefine the way in which violence is cognitively processed and morally evaluated. Making violent actions portray as technical processes, hiding agency, and flattening asymmetry, AI-mediated discourse may help in the normalization of violence, maintaining the illusion of objectivity.

The paper thus disputes the notion that AI-generated conflict language is neutral by default. Rather, AI systems work within inherited discursive ecologies and frequently rebrand the already existing ideological systems in fluent, persuasive, and seemingly nonpartisan prose. This renders the war language mediated by algorithms a valid and requisite subject of critical linguistics. This study should be furthered in future studies with larger corpora, cross-model comparison, prompt-sensitive analysis, and case-specific conflict datasets in order to be able to analyze the discursive role of AI in the representation of violence even more precisely.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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