

Strategies of Ideological Manipulation in Selected Speeches of Iraqi Political Discourse after 2003

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to investigate linguistic strategies of ideological manipulation in selected speeches of Iraqi politicians after 2003. The analysis focuses on identifying and describing the linguistic tools employed in the data. Furthermore, it tackles the social function of language practice and power in political discourse. To this effect, the researcher, specifically, analyzes the concept of *Federalism* according to two contradictory ideologies. To fulfill this task, the researcher adopts Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (1995b;2006a).

Based on the results of the analysis, the study revealed that there is a number of linguistic strategies to demonstrate ideological manipulation: fallacy, euphemism, lexical repetition, compassion –move, warning and the like. The study arrived at the following conclusions: (1) linguistic manipulation can be considered an influential instrument of political speeches because political discourse is basically focused on persuading people to take major decisions; and (2) Language plays a vital ideological role because it is a tool by which the politicians can convey their agendas to the public employing the whole potentialities and intricacies of English to accomplish their objectives

Key Words: Ideological Manipulation, Political Discourse, Linguistic Strategies, Power

1. Aims of the Study

The present study intends to investigate the following angles:

- The role that language plays in politics;
- The relation between language and ideology;
- The relation between language and power, and
- The impact of linguistic manipulation on the will of the audience.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Ideological Discourse

Ideological discourse is closely related to political discourse, because Fairclough (1989:36) stresses that ideology is realized in discourse and

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that 'discourse is ideological, produced by and producing the social relations of addressors and addressees'. Moreover, it is argued that the term 'critical discourse analysis' (CDA) is the umbrella for the ideological discourse. It is devoted to the analysis of discourse as a kind of social practice. This means that(CDA) can theoretically bridge the gap between micro and macro approaches ,which is a distinction that is a sociological construct in its own right(Van Dijk,2003:354).

As such, it can be noted that politicians are greatly involved in employing language potentialities in order to communicate with the public: they make speeches, addresses and so on. Thus, they intend to influence the audience to accomplish their agendas-that is a political agenda means" a set of policies or issues to be addressed or pursued by an individual or group; also a set of underlying motives for political policy". (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse> political agenda January 20,2015).To fulfill this task, they will use their executive power to change the situation.

Apparently, politicians wish to guide people to what to do and how to live through employing strategies of linguistic manipulation. However, they insist on exhibiting the negative acts of the Other and demonstrate the positive acts of the " Us" or " Self " by employing hyperboles, concrete, detailed descriptions, negative lexicalization and warning (Van Dijk,1995b:156).

Ideological discourse examines the deep ideas that underlie a text. Such ideas are concerned with describing Self or "Us" and the Other or "Them"(VanDijk,2000a:45-47).

It is worth mentioning that ideological discourse analysis heavily centers on the use and abuse of language .Spontaneously, this (ab)use involves a variety of factors and dimensions such as social, cognitive and political ones(Van Dijk,2006b).Another point that should be added in this respect is the role of language to create " power" in the sense that ideologies are deeply reflected in the struggles over power.(see Fairclough,1989;Jones and Peccei,2004).

Likewise ,Wareing (2004:9) highlights the affective function of language with regard to power: language is concerned with who is allowed to say and to whom, which is" deeply tied up with power and social status".

Consequently ,it can be inferred that how the social positions of language users affect or are affected by text and talk. Owing to the difference of social positions, there arise different uses of expressions

which signal such social relations, more specifically the case for pronouns as markers for dominance or politeness.

2.2 Manipulation in Political Discourse

The notion of manipulation is related to what is called "abuse of power and social inequality that occur in oral and written discourse. It can be seen as illegitimate domination supporting social inequality. Similarly, Van Dijk (2006b:360) states that manipulation "not only involves power, but specifically *abuse* of power-that is, *domination*". Additionally, it is argued that power abuse is not only related to the abuse of force but more dominantly may affect the minds of people. Thus, the linguistic choices of the speaker are spontaneously influenced by his ideology. However, Wodak(2006) views language as connected with ideological means , it may not be ideological in itself.

In this stance, Fairclough(1989:6) affirms that " linguistic manipulation is the conscious use of language in a devious way to control the others". In other words politicians intend to gain power to tell people what to do and how to conduct matters through employing manipulative strategies. As such, language can " rhetorically

obfuscate realities, and construe them ideologically to serve unjust power relations" (Fairclough,2006:1).

Thus, Atkinson(1984),stresses that linguistic manipulation is a prominent feature of political discourse, and it evidently relies on the idea of persuading people. In this respect, Van Dijk(2006a:361) postulates that there are two types of manipulation: positive and negative. In the case of positive, the listeners are free to accept or reject the speaker's arguments," whereas in [negative] manipulation recipients are typically assigned a more passive role: they are *victims* of manipulation". Van Dijk(1995b) maintains that there are various discourse strategies that have been employed to achieve ideological manipulation. These strategies " may typically be ideologically relevant, depending on topic, context, speech acts and communicative goals , for In-groups and Out-groups". (ibid:144).In the same vein, the manipulator or the speaker attempts hardly to exercise power over the public to make them believe " or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator, and against the best interest of the manipulated to affect them and distort reality".(Van Dijk,2006b:360)

Grice(1975) maintains that the key goals in mass-media are informing and influencing. As such, Iraqi politicians rely primarily on employing linguistic strategies to affect and change the ideas of their audience.

Van Dijk(2010) indicates that this notion is ,often, used differently, and there is no strict theory involving the structures and processes which deal with manipulation. Most importantly, it has to be highlighted that manipulation is a phenomenon which is broadly used in political discourse ,ultimately, violating "cooperative principle" since it misleads the recipient.(see Saussure,2005:5).Thus, according to Van Emereen (2005:xii), manipulation is 'always intentional and always covert' ,i.e. it is a case of 'intentionality deceiving one's addressees by persuading them of something that is foremost in one's own interest'.

3. Methodology

Owing to the fact that the notion "*manipulation*" is a central issue in political discourse, it is urgently needed to limit the scope of the study to investigating the linguistic impact of manipulative techniques on political discourse in selected speeches by Iraqi politicians after 2003. The research methods were corpus- based, essentially and basically contrastive. The researcher adopts a qualitative method rather than a quantitative one- the data to be analyzed are texts rather than numbers, since the researcher is in pursuit of the content; he is not concerned with numbers .Thus ,according to Quinn Patton(2002:432),"Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for that transportation. Guidance, yes. But no recipe. Direction can and will be offered, but the final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when-and if- arrived at". The selected model is primarily based on Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model(1995b;2006a).The major elements in this model are reflected in the analysis of the data. They are tackled as follows:

- Positive self-presentation
- Negative other-presentation
- Lexicon: Select positive words for Us, negative words for Them
- Rhetorical figures: hyperboles vs. euphemism for positive/negative meanings
- Macro speech act implying Our ' good ' acts and' Their bad acts' e.g., accusation, defence , warning

Data Analysis

This paper specifically analyzes a selection of political speeches with close reference to Iraqi political scene after 2003. The analysis is highly based on investigating the ideological traits of the given texts according to the perspective of the linguistic strategies of manipulation. The aim is to examine the realization of the *abuse* of power in language

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use and its ideological component through a linguistic analysis based on CDA .

The following are representative selections chosen from different political positions by various politicians. Here is a selection of extracts to be investigated according to the strategies of critical discourse analysis(CDA) based on Van Dijk's(1995b;2006a)model with special emphasis on ideological manipulation:

1. During a speech to cheering crowds in Najaf, Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Islamic Council in Iraq endorsed calls for a federated Iraq , saying federalism was needed " to keep a political balance in the country " after decades of dictatorship under Saddam Hussein.

" We believe that it is necessary to form one territory that includes the south and the central Iraq, " al-Hakim said, referring to areas where Shiites form the majority." The constitution must allow the information of regional government based on the principles of equality and justice, " al-Hakim added," We must not let this chance to accomplish this goal away". (al-Hakim : USA Today.Com,2005,-8-11: <http://www.ustoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/Iraq/2005-08-12-iraqxhtm>).

To examine the extract above , it is supposedly needed to answer three questions: who is the speaker , when , and what is the occasion. In this context, Van Dijk(2006c:132-133) highlights this point when he states

It is not sufficient to notice, for instance, that political discourse often features the well-known political pronoun 'we'. It is crucial to relate such use to such categories as who is speaking, when, where and with/to whom, that is, to specific aspects of the political situation.

Al-Hakim, here, addresses the grass roots of the Supreme Islamic Council in Najaf at a time of drafting the constitution within four days Firstly, he begins his speech by the pronoun " We " to suggest that he is ,entirely, authorized by the audience. In addition, he repeats the pronoun " We " to emphasize positive meaning. Rhetorically speaking, repetition is a tactic that can be used in discourse to persuade the recipients to be more concerned with what is delivered by the speaker or writer with a careful rehearsal of facts(Van Dijk,2006d: 78).The speaker, almost, intends to impress and mobilize them through using exact and very subtle expressions. This "We" connotes grandeur, power and intimacy.

To consider and criticize the extract , "Federalism was needed to keep political balance in the country " after decades of dictatorship under Saddam Hussein" , it is convenient to refer to Beaugrande (1980), who argues that any speech is made to achieve certain communicative goals.

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As such, al-Hakim selects positive words for "Us" : *political balance*, and negative words for "Them" : *decades of dictatorship*.

Furthermore, it can be inferred that employing negative lexicalization i.e., *dictatorship* to describe Saddam's regime is to remind the In-group of the atrocities of Saddam. Here, it is seen that one of the strategies that is utilized by al-Hakim is "Compassion move", that is, "Showing empathy or sympathy for (weak) victims of the Others actions, so as to enhance the brutality of the others" (Van Dijk, 1995b: 155). This is a truly negative representation of others. There is an implication that the speaker and the public are, but, victims of Saddam's regime. That is, he deliberately attempts to persuade the community by bringing an element of morality. The speaker employs emotive vocabulary like *political balance*, *dictatorship*, and *Saddam Hussein* so as to stir some passion and gain support in the next electoral process. He compares the new era with Saddam's era. This technique is used for "emphasizing the bad qualities of the other by comparing the target person or Out-group with a generally recognized bad person or Out-group" (ibid). It is possible to interpret the utterance as being a warning against Iraqi parties that "Federalism" is a popular demand for *Shiites*. It is supposed to be the best solution for decades of *dictatorship*.

He, specifically, refers to the south and the central Iraq to express his own agendas- that is, federalism based on sectarian direction, where, the majority of the *Shiia* live in this region. Owing to this premise, he implicitly instigates them using highly manipulative diction to persuade them. The mention of "Saddam" is most likely to arouse anger aside fear. Here, the audience could be reminded of the atrocities of that regime through the use of "dictatorship". Indeed, the "charm" of this sentence rests primarily on its suggestive effects.

For al-Hakim, it seems that he attempts to manipulate the public; he uses polarizing lexical diction such as "We" and "Must" as super ordinate thematic categories that covertly legitimate federalism. Here, the inclusive "We" is purposefully employed to demonstrate intimacy and solidarity. In addition, he intends to emphasize in-group identity and out-group distancing and derogation. Hence, he exhibits himself to the audience as a collaborative and considerate leader.

2. Again Abdul Aziz al-Hakim vowed to give no ground on crucial portions of the constitution. He states, "We will stop anyone who tries to change the constitution". He said, 'Many of the people who voted for us were promised federalism in the south'. He added Kurds-who joined with Shiites to form the current ruling coalition- "agree with us about this

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condition, and we will continue our strategic coalition with our Kurdish brothers."

(nytimes.com/2006/01/11international/middleeast/11end...)

In this extract ,al-Hakim seems to demonstrate the strategy of exploiting power to spread his ideology when he selects strong dictions: *stop, promised*. In this stance ,Fairclough(1992:87) comments on ideologies as "constructions of reality...which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination".

Here, it can be argued that he is, supposedly, authorized by the public to speak on their behalf. Additionally, he assumes that he represents the "Us" or the "In-group" .Al-Hakim insists on *federalism* since it is a promise to be fulfilled for the audience in the south. No one dare to stop this promise. This highly suggestive diction can provide insights to biased attitude and ideological derogating description of Others. In this case, one can infer that he emphasizes his distance of out-group ideology ,i.e. , The Arab al-Sunna .The speaker heightens the situation when he says," the Kurds agree with us... " . He implicitly marginalizes and excludes the Out-group.

3.At the Kmeira Mosque in Baghdad's northern neighborhood of Rashdiah, about 500 Sunni Arabs gathered to listen to Sheik Ayad al-Izzi say 'We reject these calls(for federalism) and we look to them with suspicion.' (<https://ucc-gh.academia.edu/EmmanuelSarfo>) .

At first, it appears that this sharp rejection stems from ideological discrepancies. By presenting his speech at the Kameira Mosque, al-Izzi utilizes the place for emotional ,striking and persuasive way. He intentionally, aims at evoking feelings of unrest and dissatisfaction. No other opportunity ,but rejection. The speaker manages to reflect ideological positive self representation when he attacks the calls for 'federalism' as looking to them with suspicion. In this respect, Van Dijk (2000c:100) argues that the negative characteristics of the Out-group tend to be exaggerated in hyperboles, negative metaphors, number-game and warning, those of the In-group is usually mitigated in euphemisms.

4.Kamal Hamdoun, a Sunni member of the committee drafting the constitution said, 'We reject it wherever it is in the north or in the south, but we accept the Kurdish region as it was before the war'.

"The aim of federalism is to divide Iraq into ethnic and sectarian areas. We will cling to our stance of rejecting this," Hamdoun said.(usatoday.com/news/world/Iraq/2005-08-12-iraq_x.htm)

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In this extract, using the inclusive pronoun, frequently, shows that Hamdoun attempts to convey a comfortable message to the public that he stands with them as one team and shares the same ideology regarding the call for federalism. It can be observed that one of the dominant ideological features of this speech is the sentential repetition to foreground positive self-representation and negative other-representation as in: *we reject, we accept, we will cling*. He entirely rejects federalism in the south, however, he accepts it in the Kurdish region. He is planning to manipulating the audience and making them believe that he is acting for their best. Most importantly, the speaker seems to stick to the point as he refers to the 'aim' of federalism-that is, division of Iraq. He is explicitly instigating the public for rejecting the project of federalism. The manipulative lexical choice of the phrase *divide Iraq into ethnic and sectarian areas* constitutes a negative representation of the Out-group. Similarly, Van Dijk (2000c:100) asserts that the negative characteristics of the Out-group are expected to be expressed in hyperboles and those of the In-group are usually expressed in euphemisms. In this phrase, the speaker intends to represent the case of 'South Federalism' in negative terms, especially when it is associated with dividing Iraq into ethnic and sectarian zones. Hence, the Arab al-Sunna is portrayed as a victim of south federalism. Owing to this premise, he warns the public of this project. In the same vein, Van Dijk (1993a:274) points out that warning moves are presented to emphasize the seriousness of the alleged situation caused by the Out-group; hence the audience is required to stand with the speaker.

5. Saleh al-Mutlaq , a member of the Constitutional Commission Party drew a sharp response saying , " *We* were surprised with Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim's declarations today, " Time is running out and such declarations should be much more calm. *We* do not have time for such *maneuvers*." (USA Today.Com 2005-8-11:).

Using the inclusive *We* entails that he belongs to the grass root whereby it connotes equality and sharing with them the same concern and attitude towards *Federalism*. In political discourse, such tricky maneuver, almost, affects the masses. The speaker counterfactually affirms that asking for federalism is agitating for the time being. Thus, using different methods of manipulation, ultimately, results in achieving specific objectives or agendas.

In this extract, it seems that al-Mutlaq adopts a contradictory ideology towards al-Hakim. It is not unclear that al-Mutlaq is fit enough to convey

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his message through repeating the inclusive pronoun *We* to express his utter rejection for al-Hakim demand.

Finally, it can be viewed that all speakers intend to negotiate their individual agendas. Owing to their ideological discrepancies ,there arise conflicting objectives. This is common in what Fairclough (1995a) calls socio-cultural practice in such contexts.

Concluding Remarks

The study arrived at the following conclusions :

- 1.The organization of political discourse is a distinctive type of discourse, in other words it is baffling, over- loaded and controversial.
- 2.Linguistic manipulation can be considered as an influential instrument of political speeches, because political discourse is primarily focused on persuading people to take political actions.
- 3.Language plays a vital ideological role because it is an instrument by which politicians can convey their agendas to their public employing the whole potentialities and intricacies of English to accomplish their objectives.
- 4.It is mostly apparent that Iraqi politicians employ various strategies of manipulation such as :euphemism, fallacy, lexical options , maneuver, warning, compassion and the like to serve ideologically positive self-representation and negative other-representation.
5. It has been noticed that the negative acts of the out-group have been exaggerated by metaphors and hyperboles by all speakers ,on the other hand, the positive acts of the In-group have been emphasized and overstated by national self-glorification and honesty.
- 6.It has been concluded that the whole implication of manipulation is to emphasize the differentiation between positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation as a device to control the minds of the public.

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استراتيجيات التلاعب الأيديولوجي في الكلمات في نخبة من الخطاب

السياسي

العراقي بعد ٢٠٠٣

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مستخلص

يسعى البحث لاستكشاف ووصف الإستراتيجيات اللغوية المستخدمة لغرض (التلاعب) الأيديولوجي بالكلمات وتأثير ذلك على الجمهور إيجابا أو سلبا في موضوعين : هما موضوعة الفدرالية في موقفين متناقضين .ركز الباحث في تحليله على الوظيفة الاجتماعية للغة وتأثيرها على الخطاب السياسي وفق (النمط الاجتماعي المعرفي) للعالم اللغوي فاندليك؛ كما تناول الباحث مدى تأثير الهوية الثقافية أو الدينية أو الفكرية على الاستخدام اللغوي . في ضوء التحليل توصلت الدراسة إلى مجموعة من الاستنتاجات أهمها: إن السياسيين(عموما) يوظفون وسائل متعددة للتلاعب بالكلمات مثل المغالطة، التضبيب، تكرار المفردات ، التحذير والترغيب . علاوة على ذلك يبدو إن (التلاعب) بالكلمات وسيلة ناجعة بيد السياسيين لتحقيق أجندات محددة ؛في هذا السياق لابد من الاشارة إلى أن السياسي يستغل نفوذه على نحو يمكنه من استثمار اللغة كأداة فعالة في تنفيذ مآربه وغاياته حيثما يشاء.