

How the Politicians Play with Words?

Assist. Prof. Ayad Hammad Ali

Anbar University - Faculty of Arts

Dept. of English

Abstract

The present paper is entirely devoted to explore how the politicians play with words and what approaches they use to achieve this goal. On the basis of semantic change, four approaches are proposed through which the politicians play with words. First, euphemism where the word bears negative connotations is replaced by a word which bears positive connotations. Second, dysphemism where the word bears positive connotations is replaced by a word which bears negative connotations to serve certain interests. Third, innovating new expressions according to the situation. Fourth, employing the rhetorical device-particularly metaphors which are imaginatively used to give negative or positive connotations/images about a given word. To recapitulate, euphemism, connotations, and metaphors are the key processes used by the politicians to maneuver or circumlocute. A gloss of semantic innovations and expressions were used to support the assumptions set out in this paper.

مستخلص البحث

كيف يتلاعب السياسيون بالكلمات؟

كُرس البحث الحالي لمعرفة كيف يتلاعب السياسيون بالكلمات ومعرفة الطرق التي يستعملونها لتحقيق هذا الهدف. واعتماداً على مبدأ تغيير المعنى، فقد اقترح أربع طرائق للتلاعب بالكلمات وهي على النحو الآتي: الأولى لطافة التعبير التي تتضمن استبدال الكلمة ذات إيحاء سلبي بكلمة ذات إيحاء ايجابي. والثانية عدم اللطافة في التعبير التي تتضمن استبدال الكلمة ذات إيحاء ايجابي بكلمة ذات إيحاء سلبي. أما الطريقة الثالثة فإنها تنصب على تكوين كلمات جديدة على وفق متطلبات الموقف. والرابعة هي استعمال الوسائل البلاغية وخصوصاً المجاز الذي يستعمل في تصوير كلمة معينة بإيحاء سلبي أو ايجابي. فلطافة التعبير وعدم اللطافة في التعبير الإيحاءات والمجازات هي عمليات أساسية يستعملها السياسيون للمناورة بالمعنى أو الالتفاف على المعنى. ولا بد الإشارة إلى أنه تم استعمال تعابير دلالية جديدة لدعم فرضية هذا البحث.

Introduction

The study of political discourse, like other areas of discourse analysis, covers abroad range of subject matters, and draws on a wide range of analytic methods. At present the politicians play with words in order to sell their policy

or gain the opinion of the public to their own side. The problem raised in this study is the Iraqi and American politicians play with words in certain political discourses through using some approaches concerning the war in Iraq and its political situation. Hence, the aim of this study is to figure out how do they play with words ? what methods they use to play with words ? why do they play with words ? The main goal of this study is to explore the approaches that the politicians use to play with words. The verb 'play' in this context is polysemous because it means circumlocution, maneuver, semantic change, etc. The main hypotheses set out in this study (i) playing with words depends on the connotation being negative or positive, (ii) positive connotation results in euphemism, whilst, negative connotation results in dysphemism, (iii) the period of occupying Iraq witnessed coining new expressions. The procedures include defining the term semantic change and presenting the proposed approaches of playing with words. Making some tables which show the linguistic phenomena observed in this study. The study is limited to present the four approaches used in playing with words by analyzing statements and phrases employed by American and Iraqi politicians. The corpus of this study is taken from American and Iraqi politicians and military commanders' statements concerning the war in Iraq and its political situation from 2003 until now.

1. The Process of Semantic Change

Change, as it is known, the essence of existence in the sense that everything that exists in a tangible and perceptible form changes with the passage of time. The ways in which the meanings of many words change are too complex to be understood in terms of a neatly describable pattern. (Thakur, 2007: 226). Crystal (2006, 227) ensures that when a word or sense ceases to be used, it is said to be obsolescent or obsolete. This often happens because an object or concept is no longer of value to community other than to the historian or literary scholar. But a word or sense may become obsolescent if it develops unpleasant associations or is replaced by another word which is felt to be more modern.

Gee (2005: 12) presents an example through which he shows how one can play with words and phrase the words for his benefit or negative propaganda against someone or a certain institute. He ensures that language is used to convey a perspective on the nature of distribution of social goods, i.e., to build a perspective on social goods. For example, if I say 'Microsoft loaded its operating system with bugs, I treat Microsoft as purposeful and responsible, perhaps even capable'. But if I say, on the other hand, Microsoft operating system is loaded with bugs, I treat Microsoft as less purposeful and responsible, and less capable. How I phrase the matter has implications for social goods, such as guilt, blame, legal responsibility or lack of it, or Microsoft is bad or good motives (Ibid).

Accordingly, the interesting issue in all this is in relation to what one believes a word means, and what effect beyond a word's core or semantic meaning. In Iraq, for example, the Ministry of Defense issued a rule in 2005 through which it prevented using the expression National Guards instead it recommended to use the expression the Army because the former expression gives the impression that Iraq is weak and the Military Institute is weak, too, for this reason it was replaced by the latter expression the Army connoting that Iraq is strong. Another example which shows the semantic change is when the American Forces replaced the expression Baghdad's Sniper by the expression Jubba which means a kind of dance practiced by the American Blacks. The reason behind changing this expression because the former bears negative connotation to the American troops and scared them for this reason it was replaced by the latter expression.

President Bush, for example, when the two Towers of New York were attacked and Muslims were accused of bombing them, Bush declared in 2001 that he will fight the enemy (Muslims) and said "This is another Crusade" but meanwhile, he received many objections. Therefore, he replaced (euphemized) it by the expression. "The war against terror", soon the media adopted this expression which is already a euphemism for Crusade in that all the world supported him. When Bush replaced the word 'Crusade', which bore negative connotations, he got all the support and agreement where his purpose was the same and sold his policy.

2. Negative Connotation $\approx$ Positive Connotation Results in Euphemism

Connotation refers to the emotional associations (Personal and Communal) which are suggested by part of the meaning of a linguistic unit-especially a lexical item (Crystal, 2003: 66). Lobner (2002: 35), on the other hand, states that if an expression has descriptive meaning, any mention of it will activate not only the concept for its potential referents but also with it a host of further associations. As a result, these are called connotations and often considered to be something like a secondary meaning in addition to the primary lexical meaning. Some linguists believe that negative connotations together with social taboos are responsible for what are called euphemisms. In terms of positive connotations, Leech (1974: 53) considers euphemism as a technique which consists of replacing a word which has offensive connotations with another expression which makes no overt reference to the unpleasant side of the subject and may even be a positive misnomer. The word politician, for example, for some people, carries negative connotation which is replaced by the word statesman which carries positive connotation. The politicians may resort to the first approach which is modeled "negative connotation (replaced by) positive connotation which results in the process of euphemism. The best example which embodies the assumption mentioned above when the American Military

Commanders replaced the phrase 'Baghdad's Sniper' by a word which has a positive connotation Jubba, because the former bears negative connotation to the American troops. Below is a table which exhibits the hypothesis aforementioned

No.	Expression	Connotation	No.	Expression	Connotation
1.	Occupation Forces	Negative	8.	Coalition Forces	Positive
2.	American Forces	Negative	9.	Multi-National Forces	Positive
3.	Debaathification Association	Negative	10.	Questioning and Justice Association	Positive
4.	Ashraf Camp	Negative	11.	Iraq's Sons Camp Insurgents	Positive
5.	Resistants	Negative	12.	Armed Men	Positive
6.	Awakening Groups	Negative	13.	Sons of Iraq	Positive
7.	National Guards	Negative	14.	Iraqi Army	Positive

Table (1)

Negative and Positive Connotations

The American politician John McCain delivered his speech to the Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and gave some remarks about the political situation in Iraq through his visit to Iraq in August 2008. He described the Sahwa in a double way saying the Sons of Iraq and Awakening Movements, where former Sunni insurgents have now joined in the fight against AlQaeda, continue to go."

In March 17, 2010, Spokesman of the Iraqi High Electoral Commission, Qasim Al-Eboudy declared the results of parliamentary elections, he reached the item Compensational Seats and their contribution to the parties, he said " I do not prefer to use the phrase Compensational Seats rather I would prefer to use the phrase the National Seats. So that he believes that using the phrase Compensational Seats bears negative connotation and it is unfavorable phrase;

therefore, he replaced it by the phrase National Seats which bears positive connotations and connotes no in difference or injustice.

Blackwater is a name of the American company which is concerned with presenting protection services. It has changed its name from Blackwater into Xe which is pronounced /zi:/. The reason behind this semantic change from negative into positive is the 2007 shooting at Nisour Square in Baghdad that left 17 Iraqi citizen dead. The allegations of bribery and weapons violations, the relations with the Iraqis that deteriorated so badly the company, was kicked out of the country. A year ago, the military contractor adopted a new name Xe which is an abbreviation for the inert gas xenon. So, the word Blackwater gets negative connotations from the Iraqi people which forced the owner of the company to replace it with Xe which has positive connotations in order to make the Iraqi people and the public forget the bad actions committed by the individuals of this company in Iraq(Mihas,2010 :128

2. Positive Connotation $\approx$ Negative Connotation Results in Dysphemism

Connotation is viewed by Finch (2000: 151-152) in terms of communicative value of a word in stating that connotation has something to do with the communicative value of a word, i.e., with meanings which are socially acquired. So, to replace the word which has positive connotation by a word which has negative connotation results in dysphemism which is the opposite to euphemism. Unlike euphemism, dysphemism is to replace the positive with negative or replace the favorable with unfavorable connotations. When the American Forces occupied Iraq in 2003, the politicians gave expressions which had negative connotations, to the Iraqi Government such as Saddam's Regime Old Regime, Supporters of the Old Regime as Bush prefers to call those who fight the American Forces. The table below shows the assumption aforementioned:

No.	Expression	Connotation	No.	Expression	Connotation
1.	Resistance	Positive	7.	Terrorism	Negative
2.	Fighters	Positive	8.	Insurgents	Negative
3.	Mujahids	Positive	9.	Ali babas	Negative
4.	Faddayeen	Positive	10.	Desert Rats	Negative
5.	Iraqi Army	Positive	11.	Saddam's Army	Negative

6.	Fighters fighting the American Forces	Positive	12.	Saddam's Remainings	Negative
----	---------------------------------------	----------	-----	---------------------	----------

Table (2)

Positive Connotation $\approx$ Negative Connotation = Dysphemism

Also, John McCain states that from June 2007 through my most recent trip last month, sectarian and ethnic violence(negative connotation) in Iraq has been reduced by 90 percent. Civilian deaths and deaths of coalition forces fell by 70 percent. Political reconciliation(positive connotation) is occurring across Iraq at the local and provincial grassroots level. Sunni and Shi'a who were chased from their homes by terrorist and sectarian violence (negative connotation) are returning. He added that Iraqi forces recently battled in Basra against radical Shi'a militias(negative connotation) (Kulo,2009:12).

3. Innovating New Expressions

Innovating a new word or innovation is one of the word formation processes which means the invention or coining new words (Yule, 2007:53). The emergence of new political concepts needs for new expressions to cope with those concepts and the result would be neologisms. Political discourses are the most common field in which neologisms widely invented in the sense that the term entyrism is used currently with the meaning of political infiltration (Newmark, 1991:59). In politics new words are introduced from time to time according to the different political concepts that take place. Consequently, political discourse is full of neologisms as for instance words like AlQaeda and terrorism.

Modern language undergoes invention of new words for an urgent need on political, economic, social, and scientific levels. The politicians, for example, have a general reputation for the construction of what the Americans call fog or the British call political gobbled gook. The American Navy have described the high waves as climatic disturbances at the air sea interface, while, in 1960s President Nixon's press secretary coined the phrase biosphere overload for cover population. Also, it is called demographic strain by some government officials (Wilson, 2004: 411).

The euphemism prison abuse was coined after the Abu Ghraib prison scandal broke in spring 2004 in order to avoid the word torture which clearly characterized what some American soldiers and civilian contractors did in one of the most notorious prisons of Saddam's former regime. Abuse is a misdemeanor or mistreatment, while torture denotes a violent crime which involves an infliction of severe physical pain as a means of punishment or

coercion. According to military officers at Abu Ghraib, they were encouraged to create favorable conditions for interrogation, which is another euphemism for rough and aggressive techniques approved by the government for conducting interrogation procedures. These techniques entailed a systematic softening up of prisoners through isolation, privations, insults, threats, and humiliation – methods that the Red Cross concluded were tantamount to torture. Originally, the above techniques were used against Qaeda enemy combatants at Guantanamo Bay, but later the Guantanamo-style interrogation methods were exported to Abu Ghraib, even though the Iraqi war was supposed to have been governed by the Geneva Conventions(Elena, 2010: 132).

The Iraqi political scene is full of newly coined expressions due to the needs of the politicians to play with words by inventing expressions which support their statements or situations. The Iraqi politicians used the adjective 'political' with different nouns. Let us see the collocational range of the adjective political which is used with different nouns:

No.	Collocational Range of Political	Arabic Equivalent	No.	Collocational Range of Political	Arabic Equivalent
1.	Political Struggle	الصراع السياسي	14.	Political Fighting	الافتتال السياسي
2.	Political Specialization	الخصخصة السياسية	15.	Political Reforming	الإصلاح السياسي
3.	Political Operation	العملية السياسية	16.	Political Reconciliation	المصالحة السياسية
4.	Political Accord	التوافق السياسي	17.	Political Groups	المجاميع السياسية
5.	Political Servitude	التخادم السياسي	18.	Political Scene	المشهد السياسي
6.	Political Dream	الحلم السياسي	19.	Political Bloc	كتله سياسيه
7.	Political Vision	الرؤيا السياسية	20.	Political Horizons	أفاق سياسيه
8.	Political Violence	العنف السياسي	21.	Political Compliments	مجاملات سياسيه

9.	Political Sectarianism	الطائفية السياسية	22.	Political Parties	أحزاب سياسية
10.	Political Interests	المصالح السياسية	23.	Political Faces	وجوه سياسية
11.	Political Racism	العنصرية السياسية	24.	Political Change	تغيير سياسي
12.	Political Corruption	الفساد السياسي	25.	Political Dialogs between Blocs	محاورات سياسية
13.	Political Extremism	التعصب السياسي	26.	Political Bids	مزادات سياسية

Table (3)

The Collocational Range of the Adjective Political

The Iraqi prime minister Noori ALMaliky in one of his speeches said " he is none of us who sells Iraq in the market of the political bids ", so he collocated the adjective political with the noun bids. On the occasion of Iraq's Army Day, the Iraqi president Jalal Taliban delivered a speech on this occasion, in January 10,2011 Al Baghdadi Channel conveyed his word and giving the title of its newsletter concerning Taliban "Taliban stresses not to indulge the Army in political issues". Also AL Arabia Channel conveyed the opinion of the leader of Sadder Current with the title " Al Sadder is with the political resistance". Also, Al Sadder adds that "there are political methods to be followed if the new government did not achieve its commitments to the Iraqi people". Moreover, Naseer Al Ani , a member in the Aleraqiya Bloc, used the expression political siege when he requested to lift the rule of Debaathification. John McCain evaluated the Iraqi government by collocating the adjective political with the noun order by saying "Iraq's political order is also evolving in hopeful ways."

No.	Newly Coined Expressions	Arabic Equivalent	The Party Coining this Expression
1.	Sectarian Rage	العنف الطائفي	President Bush
2.	Sectarian Reprisal	الانتقام الطائفي	President Bush
3.	Baghdad's Sniper	قناص بغداد	Iraqi Resistance
4.	Debaathification Association	هيئة اجتثاث البعث	Iraqi Government

5.	Awakening Groups	مجاميع الصحوات	American Forces
6.	Iraq's Sons	أبناء العراق	Iraqi Government
7.	Iraq's Sons Camp	معسكر أبناء العراق	Iraqi Government
8.	Questioning and Justice Rule	قانون المسائلة و العدالة	Iraqi Government
9.	Sunni Extremists	المتطرفون السنة	President Bush
10.	Shi'a Extremists	المتطرفون الشيعة	President Bush
11.	Death Squads	فرق الموت	President Bush
12.	Saddamians	الصداميين	Iraqi Government
13.	Saddam`s Men	أزلام صدام	Iraqi Government
14.	Saddam`s Remainings	فلول صدام	Iraqi Government
15.	Saddam`s Orphans	أيتام صدام	Iraqi Government
16.	Sectarian Specialization	الخصخصة الطائفية	Iraqi Politicians
17.	Political Specialization	الخصخصة السياسية	Iraqi Politicians
18.	National Reconciliation	المصالحة الوطنية	American Government

Table (4)

The Newly Coined Expressions

The American Forces in cooperation with the Iraqi Government launched different battles against the Armed Men and these battles were given different names even they were connotative and suggestive, such as Red Dawn, the Lion's Voice, the Crumpy Lion, the Saber, etc. On the other hand, the Iraqi Army later launched different Military operations which were given labels which have scaring connotations.

The most significant expression which was coined newly in 2003 is Debaathification which means after failure the Ruling Ba'thist Regime, the American Forces set out this term which means rooting out the members of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party from the Regime.

All the wars broken out in our world witnessed an expansion of executive power. Also, each of them has led to the creation of some new executive departments or the expansion of existing agencies. For example, the war on poverty produced the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO); the war on drugs led to the creation of the Social Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention (SAODAP); Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD); and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

Most recently the war against Iraq and occupying Baghdad and changing the political Ruling Regime has led to the creation of new institutes, offices, movements, and societies, such as the Integrity Association, Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Provincial Affairs, Ministry of Woman, Shuhadaa Institute, the Political Prisoners Institute, Freedom Observatory Center, Debaathification Association then changed into Questioning and Justice Association, Shiite Endowment, Sunni Endowment, Ministry of Emergents and Displaced, Federal Police, Local Police, Federal Building Service (FBS), Awakening Groups, then changed into Awakening Conference, Anbar Saving Council, Emergency Salaries, Al-Mehdi Army.

5. Employing Rhetorical Devices

Politicians employ rhetorical devices in their statements. Basically, they employ metaphors and metonymies. Hurford et al (2007: 331) view metaphors as conceptual (mental) operations reflected in human language that enable speakers to structure and construe abstract areas of knowledge and experience in more concrete experiential terms. Riemer (2010:429) exhibits metaphor as an important variety of figurative language which is traditionally defined as the use of an expression in a sense which resembles its literal meaning. In the expression, he is loaded with responsibilities, the expression loaded down is used metaphorically, since it does not refer to actual physical burdens, but to certain things (responsibilities) resembling them. To recapitulate, metaphor is also a type of meaning change based on analogy or similarity between two objects or concepts.

Wilson (2004: 409) states that metaphorical uses of words may describe the world for us in particular ways such that one comes to understand the world in that way. Metaphor makes no literal sense unless people are able to transfer their ideas about the word swallow which literally means pulling out something to the Stomach, to an entirely new referent which metaphorically means 'invade'. This logic has long been used in the political discourse, often describing nations as if they were people, such as when President George Bush justified war on Iraq in 1991 on the grounds that Iraq was trying to swallow or rape Kuwait. Therefore, war metaphors have become a common rhetorical technique for rallying a nation. From 2004 to 2007, Iraq witnessed terrorist acts

like kidnapping and killing innocent persons according to their sectarian belongingness, the policemen, military men, etc. The terrorists cut the heads of those persons and these terrorist acts affected on the feelings of the Iraqi people which pushed them to call the terrorists *Alaasa* which is an Iraqi slangy expression and is widely used in the Iraqi community. Etymologically, this expression means to chew something fiercely by clapping it between the teeth strongly then swallow it. Hence, this expression which is metaphorically employed, bears negative connotations in depicting the terrorists when they take somebody away then murder him savagely.

On the other hand, speakers make use of a familiar area of knowledge which is called the source domain to understand an area of knowledge that is less familiar, the target domain. The source domain is typically understood through our experience and with the physical world around us. There is a kind of conceptual mapping operation in which aspects of knowledge in the more familiar source domain are placed in correspondence with the aspects of the less-familiar target domain in order to structure the target domain in a way that makes it more accessible to human understanding. President Bush, for example, employed some metaphorical expressions in his speeches concerning the situation in Iraq-especially in 2003 onward. So that, he said:

(1). Al-Qaeda is wounded, (Bush's Speech delivered in May 1, 2003), the source domain here is 'wounded', while the target domain is effected by the attacks. Thus, the intended meaning is that Al-Qaeda is some how damaged. Another example, he said:

(2). The Scattered cells of the terrorist network still operate... (Bush's Speech delivered in May 1, 2003). The source domain is 'the scattered cells', while, the target domain is 'they are very small groups just like the cells'. The intended meaning is the terrorists are still dangerous. Also, he said:

(3). There is a proliferation of deadly weapons. The word proliferation is a biological term which means increase of number of germs or livings. Therefore, the source domain is 'proliferation', while the target domain is 'spreading out of the dangerous weapons' situation. Hence, the intended meaning is a warning of nuclear weapon's spread.

(4). In the images of falling statues, we have witnessed the arrival of a new era. (Bush's Speech delivered in March 1, 2007). The source domain is occupation of Iraq and the target domain is the existence of a new government in Iraq. The intended meaning is Iraq became democratic. Bush also uses another metaphor to declare the need of the Iraqi people for freedom.

(5). In the eyes of a hungry people everyday here. They are starved for freedom and opportunity. (Bush's Speech delivered in May 1, 2003). The source domain is the Iraqi people are suffering from the embargo and the target domain is they are looking for freedom. So, the intended meaning is to free Iraq from the ruling regime.

Another device which might be employed by the politicians is metonymy. Hurford et al (Ibid) present metonymy as a kind of non-literal language in which one entity that is used to refer to another entity that is associated with it. In other words, metonymic concepts allow us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else. Figuratively, metaphor and metonymy have the same functions and goals. Bush uses some considerable metonymies in his speeches as in:

(6). The United States is fighting side by side Sunni and Shia and Kurds to root out the terrorists and extremists. (Bush's Speech delivered in Dubai, 2008). The expression United States represents the American Forces working in Iraq not the American Government. Also, he declares:

(7). The United States will continue to support you as you build the institutions of a free society. (Bush's Speech delivered in Dubai, 2008). The expression the United States here represents the American Government.

Conclusion

Wars, crises, diplomatic and political situations lead the politicians to play with words in order to rally their nations, and gain the public opinion. In so doing, they cancel a truth, or change the truth. In some situations, they need to replace a word which has negative connotations with a word which has positive connotations to alleviate the situation or to get rid of its effect. In other situations, they need to replace a word which has positive connotations with a word which has negative connotations in order to distort or deform the foe. So, there is a change in meaning. Also, the politicians sometimes coin new expressions to label certain unexpected situations, also, to give names to newly founded parties, organizations, societies, wars, etc. In the Iraqi situations, new offices, parties, institutes, and organizations were founded and given political names such as Political Prisoners Associations.

Bibliography

- Crystal, David. (2003). A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers.
- Finch Geoffrey (2000). Linguistic Terms and Concepts. London: Macmillan.

Hurford, J., Brendan, M., and Michael, B. (2007). Semantics.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kulo Lena (2009). Linguistics Features in Political Speeches. < <http://www.lena.org>. >

Mihas Elena (2010). Non-Literal Language in Political Discourse. <[http://www. Mihaswisconsin.org](http://www.Mihaswisconsin.org). >

Newmark Peter (1991). About Translation. Bristol: Longman Press.

Gee James(2005). An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Practice. London: Routledge.

Rierner Nick (2010). Introducing Semantics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yule George (2007). The Study of Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thakur Damodar (2000). A Concise History of English. New Delhi: Baharti Bhawan.

Wilson John (2004). "Political Discourse", in Schiffrin, D., Tannen,D. and Hamilton.(eds.). The Handbook of Discourse Analysis. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing LTD.