A Pragma- Semantic Model for Ideology Identification in Political Media Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Methodology for the Socio- Cognitive Approach

HUDA H. KHALIL
Department of English
College of Education for Women
University of Baghdad, Iraq
huda.hadi@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq

ABSTRACT

The paper is a critical discourse analysis of political discourse. It relies on van Dijk's socio- cognitive approach which employs miscellaneous linguistic methodologies as input to support the interdisciplinarity of the socio- cognitive base. The paper adopts an eclectic model that combines pragmatic and semantic concepts as a methodology for the socio- cognitive approach. The pragma- semantic interface has always produced better holistic, integrated, and objective linguistic inference. The eclectic model combines Sabet & Zhang's (2015) pragmatic functions of vague expressions (on the pragmatic level) and the semantic macrostructures and the semantic microstructures (on the semantic level). Wodak (2007) emphasises the vitality of the pragmatics in any critical discussion that analyses indirect and inferred linguistic techniques and biased utterances in order to identify and evaluate political discourse. Since vague expressions overlap sometimes in performing pragmatic functions, the pragmatic component of the eclectic model is further supported by the semantic concepts of semantic macrostructure and semantic microstructure. The data is collected from the White House Press Releases (issued in 2014 when ISIS took hold of major Iraqi cities) on Iraq. Such discourse is globally interesting and can shape public opinion about the critical events and realities in Iraq at that time. The analysis has proved the workability of the pragmatic- semantic integration and the paper has come up with a set of concluding remarks.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; semantic macrostructure; semantic microstructure; van Dijk's socio- cognitive; vagueness; White House Press Release

INTRODUCTION

Recently, there is considerable focus on the embedding of identities, ideologies and attitudes in discourse practice since both individuals and groups conceptualise themselves to society through the framing of discourse. Therefore, the linguistic means employed in discourse play a major role in the ways these identities, ideologies and attitudes are presented, performed, enacted and embodied (Foucault, 1984).

Political discourse has significantly participated in marginalizing certain groups and enhancing the power of others. This kind of discourse dispatches ideologies through dominating the social context (as society elites) and employing textual devices as a kind of instrumentation (Ramanathan & Hoon, 2015, p. 66). Political elites may use various linguistic structures to influence the public opinion by activating political and social ideologies and attitudes (Kinder & Sanders, 1990).

The present paper is a critical discourse analysis (CDA) that aims to find out the way White House Press Releases (henceforth WHPRs) employ vague language to perform significant pragmatic functions that participate in the embedding of ideologies. The pragmatic functions are combined with the semantic concepts of semantic macrostructure (henceforth SMA) and semantic microstructure (henceforth SMI) to manage the overlap that sometimes appears in the pragmatic functions that result from the same vague expressions (as is mentioned in the literature review). The WHPRs analysed are the ones issued after April 2014 (when ISIS took hold of major Iraqi cities). At that time, the WHPRs represented the gate through which

America has emitted global messages to the world about the American policy in Iraq. The American role in Iraq is effective in changing the Iraqi situation. After April 2014, Iraq endured one of its tough security escalation periods; it is when ISIS forces invaded major Iraqi cities. There were particular factors that supported the advances and victories of ISIS in Iraq. The most important factor was the military and security vacuum created with the withdrawal of the American troops from Iraq in 2011. At that time, the Iraqi State and the new Iraqi military defense system (after overthrowing Saddam's Regime) was still unqualified in equipment, training, and experience. In addition, the struggle for power among many Iraqi politicians was a considerable factor in this respect. Within April 2014, ISIS could penetrate the fragile Iraqi security system and advance considerably to start building their state. At that time, people in general, and Iraqis in particular, expected more decisive intervention from the US military forces since America has always declared that America is a strong ally for Iraq. However, the White House came to announce the new policy of being a supportive ally rather than a participant in the Iraqi military activities against ISIS.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE SOCIO- COGNITIVE APPROACH

van Dijk's socio- cognitive approach proposes a cognitive mediation between society and discourse to form a "Discourse–Cognition–Society triangle" in such a way that social interaction and discourse influence one another by the "cognitive interface of mental models, knowledge, attitudes and ideologies" (van Dijk, 2009, p. 64). In this case, the critical discourse analyst is not after the text itself as ultimate target, but after the cognitive process behind the production and interpretation of these texts (Fairclough, 2001, p. 16). The cognitive component deals with "the cognitive processes and representations involved in the production and comprehension of discourse" (Van Dijk, 2009, p. 66). More specifically, it deals with mental models which are personal "experiences, perceptions and interpretations of events and situations" (van Dijk, 2009, p. 66). These mental models represent the "cognitive basis of political discourse and political action" (van Dijk, 2002, p. 207). According to van Dijk (2009, p. 66), mental models are the "visual, auditory, sensorimotor, evaluative, or emotional" experiences stored in the memory of individuals. They represent the "cognitive basis of political discourse and political action (van Dijk, 2002, p. 207).

In addition to the mental models, there are other abstract concepts which affect, and can be reflected in, discourse. Such concepts are knowledge, attitude and ideology. Knowledge is a set of beliefs of the epistemic community gained by generalizing mental models, discourses of experiences (stories, news) and awareness from pedagogical discourse. In CDA, knowledge is a source of power. Therefore, people of knowledge in societies may control discourse as well as others' actions (van Dijk, 2009, pp. 68- 69). Ideology is a multidisciplinary concept that is processed within the triangle of "society, discourse and social cognition" and forms a cognitive and social conception that helps "organizing the social cognitions shared by members of social groups" (van Dijk, 1995, pp. 17- 18). It acts like an "interface" between the social groups (together with their social affairs) and the interactional discourse generated in these societies (van Dijk, 1995, p. 18). Ideologies appear (as reflections) in verbal and non- verbal discourse through particular discourse structures (various linguistic clues) that act as means for the identification of ideologies (van Dijk, 1995, p. 17; van Dijk, 2009, p. 69).

van Dijk (1995, p. 21) insists that ideologies occur between the social structures and the minds of the social members and, therefore, "control how people plan and understand their social practices" (van Dijk, 1995, p. 21). The cognitive component is essential for any theory

of discourse and for understanding the mutual effect between the social structure and the structure of talk and text. Cognitive mediation "is defined in terms of the shared knowledge and ideologies of group members and how these influence mental models that finally control the structures of individual discourse" (van Dijk, 2009, 70). Khalil (2020) has shed light on the cognitive component, as a mediated element between language and society by investigating how deixis designs text worlds (mental images) in the minds of young adults when they read dystopia fiction. These text worlds help young adults portray mental images through language (deixis) and indulge in the atmosphere of the story. Nadernia (2018) has proved that "[s]cience fiction stories extend the limits of human realities" by creating imaginary worlds "where things appear different, mysterious, and normless, human measures such as sexism, prejudice, viciousness and other judicial realms are negotiated through typical lenses". Working with ideology and CDA, Rahim (2020) has applied Fairclough's (1989, 2001, 2015) three-dimensional CDA framework to show "how the manipulation of an educational campaign on the GST into a political discourse of nation building produces a positive portrayal of the government with an efficient economic development plan".

Vagueness, in particular, has been adopted in the present paper because CDA is interested in "implicit or indirect meanings, such as implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness…", entailment and so on (van Dijk, 2001, p. 104). Vague language does not represent inadequacy of human language and, therefore, there is no reason to advocate vague language avoidance. Vague language could be as efficient as precise language (Jucker et al., 2003, p. 1738). Moreover, vagueness can be a positive feature of human language for attracting more attention, raising the addressee's suspicion, and leading to deep consideration and appreciation of language in attempting to achieve better understanding (Stubbs, 1986, p. 1; Williamson, 1994, p. 4869; van Deemter, 2010, p. 10 & Sabet & Zhang, 2015, p. 4).

VAGUENESS

In the production of language, verbal or non-verbal, people are committed to clarity and precision. Sometimes, however, people override clarity and precision, intentionally or unintentionally, and produce less than the required information. Philosophers considered vague language as an indication of the speaker's limited knowledge (Williamson, 1994). In linguistics, vagueness is an intrinsic foundational feature of language (Raffman, 2014, p. 2). In communication, vague language is an indication of either the speaker's blur knowledge or his intention to convey vague information as a means for reservation or deception to protect the speaker himself or others. Generally speaking, linguists have mainly focused on lexical and pragmatic indicators of vague language (Raffman, 2014, p. 2).

Sabet & Zhang (2015) approach vague language from two linguistic levels: the lexical level analysis (considered as the micro-analysis) and the pragmatic analysis (considered as the macro-analysis). The present paper is limited to the pragmatic level realization which is put in the form of "three major functions of vague language (Sabet & Zhang, 2015, pp. 44- 45). These functions are as follows:

1. Mitigation: it refers to certain strategies used by speakers to "attenuate" the effect of their speech as an attempt to protect "themselves against various kinds of interactional risks" (Caffi, 2009, p. 645). Sabet & Zhang (2015) classify mitigation to three subcategories:

   a. Self- protection (self- defensive): it helps to protect the speaker's, the listener's or the third party's face and, thus, it overlaps with politeness. For example:
 (1) Boss: Did not like the report you made about our achievements.

*Employee: **Maybe** I didn't go through enough details.*
The employee used the word *maybe* as a vague word to mitigate the situation and protect the reliability of his report.

b. Politeness: the theory of politeness, mainly attributed to Brown and Levinson (1978), is based on the concept of face as first proposed by Goffman (1967, p. 5) to refer to "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". In Brown and Levinson's (1978) politeness theory, participants in interaction take care of each other's face which is of two categories: positive face (the person's desire to be approved and appreciated by others) and negative face (the person's desire of freedom from imposition). Positive politeness is to satisfy other's positive face while negative politeness is to satisfy others' negative face. An example of mitigation through politeness is:

(2) *Wife: How do you see me as a Mom?*
   *Husband: **I think** you are doing your best.*
The husband has issued a face saving act to achieve politeness through being indirect in his speech with his wife about her behaviour as a Mom.

Concerning the subcategories of self- protection and politeness, the present paper deviates slightly from Sabet & Zhang's (2015) in that the paper deals with self- protection as being limited to protecting the speaker's face only and politeness is for the protection of the hearer's and/ or the third party's face. This deviation would ensure the absence of any misunderstanding or confusion for the readers, though Sabet & Zhang's (2015) work is so vivid and misunderstanding free.

c. Downtoning: it is achieved through downtoners (detensifiers). They fulfill a lowering effect that scale downwards from a particular norm. They consist of "approximators" (*all but, almost, hardly, nearly, particularly, scarcely, slightly*), "compromisers" (*enough, kind of, more or less, rather, sort of, sufficiently*), "diminishers" (*a bit, a little, in some respect, just, least, merely, mildly, only, partially, partly, quite, somewhat, to some extent*), and "minimizers" (*at all, barely, in the least, in the slightest, little*) (Quirk et al., 1985, pp. 597- 602).

2. Right Amount of Information: this function is mainly associated with Grice's maxim of quantity which states:
   1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of exchange)
   2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

   (Grice, 1975, p. 45)

The categories of the vague expressions that fulfill the pragmatic function of the right amount of information are:

a. Quantification: when clarity is unnecessary, vague language functions as a kind of qualification exemplified by expressions as *some, many, much, few, little, several, a lot of, plenty of,* and *large amounts* which create an implicature to avoid flouting the quantity maxim (Channell, 1994 as cited in Sabet & Zhang, 2015, p. 126).
b. Emphasizing: it is mostly performed by intensifiers (as *clearly, obviously* and *of course*), repetition of the same quantifier (*lots and lots*) *(*Sabet & Zhang, 2015, pp. 129- 130), or "placing an intensifying premodifier (*really*) in front of a quantifier" (Hyland, 2000, p. 179).

c. Possibility: two groups of indicators can manifest possibility. The first is the group of approximators (Prince et al., 1982, p. 89). The first includes *almost, a little bit, sort of, kind of, somewhat, really, to some extent, around, nearly, about, between, approximately, roughly,* etc. The second includes shields that, rather than affecting the truth- condition of propositions, "affect the pragmatics by inducing implicatures conveying markedness with respect to speaker commitment" (Prince et al. 1982, p. 86) (as *I think, I suppose, I am afraid, probably, as far as I can tell, seem, I'm afraid, according to, it is said that, it seems to, presumably, ...says that…, as is well known, the possibility would be,* etc.). It is apparent that approximators also exist in 1. C above. This is the kind of overlap of vague expressions in performing pragmatic functions. It is this kind of overlap that has created the necessity to include the semantic level as a supporting element.

d. Uncertainty: it is the result of the absence of information, displacement (talking about past, future and even present events), "lack of knowledge/vocabulary or an unequal relationship between participants" (Channell, 1994 as cited in Sabet & Zhang, 2015, p. 136). It is associated with Grice's quality maxim which states:

   [T]ry to make your contribution one that is true
   1. Do not say what you believe to be false,
   2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

(Grice, 1975, p. 46)

3. Discourse Management: vagueness here is concerned with fulfilling a structural function in the management of the communicative discourse. This structural function is managed within the domain of three subcategories:

a) Repair: speech repair is a concept of Schegloff et al. (1977) who introduce a repair system to overcome conversational problems in speaking, hearing and understanding. The repair patterns vary mainly according to the source of initiation, whether initiated by the speaker, to mend his/her speech mistake, or by the hearer after observing a conversational problem. Schegloff et al. (1977) suggest four types of repair sequences:
   (1) Self- initiated self- repair: when both initiation and execution of repair are carried out by the trouble source;
   (2) Self- initiated other- repair: when the architect of the trouble source is responsible for initiating the repair, but its outcome comes from the recipient;
   (3) Other- initiated self- repair: when the recipient of the trouble source initiates, or calls for, its repair but the architect of the trouble source executes the repair themselves;
   (4) Other- initiated other- repair: when the recipient of the trouble source both initiates and executes its repair.

(Schegloff et al., 1977, pp. 364- 365)

Vagueness occurs here when, for example, a speaker makes a false start and the repair, regardless of its source, comes up with a vague word (*I think, I don't know, I guess*) that initiates a new start that goes on till the end of the exchange.

b) Hesitation: certain markers, that are valid for limited time duration, can manage the phenomenon of hesitation. These markers overcome a communicative problem by providing the speaker with time to reorganize the turn. Hesitation markers range from filling pauses by expressions like *uh* and *um*, repetition, corrections, and slow speech. However, when vague words work as hesitation markers (*I think, I guess, as far as I*

know), vagueness occurs as an indication that the speaker is having hard time figuring out what to say (Sabet & Zhang, 2015, p. 143).

c) Turn management: it depends on the mutual feedback among the participants leading to a smooth fashion kind of exchange (Taboada, 2006, p. 329). In certain cases, vague language can function as a tool for turn management among participants. Vague expressions like *I think, It could be* and *according to my knowledge* can be indicated "as the beginning of an utterance that will change the direction of the conversation" (Sabet & Zhang, 2015, p. 149).

Vague expressions are equipped with considerable referential meaning to the extent that they can perform a considerable set of functions. This fact supports the recent view of the "usability and expressive linguistic role" of vague expressions in any discourse. Such expressions grant the text both eloquence and profundity and encourage the addressees to form better insight about the linguistic input (Khalil, 2019, p. 688).

SEMANTIC MACROSTRUCTURES AND SEMANTIC MICROSTRUCTURES

SMA is the theoretical concept used for making the notion of theme in a particular discourse explicit and, thus, exemplifying the gist of that discourse. The SMA discourse manifestations are semantically oriented in the form of propositions that represent the conceptual meaning structures of clauses (van Dijk, 1980; Brown &Yule, 1983). These propositions are "the smallest independent meanings construct of language" and they are "expressed by single sentences or clauses" (van Dijk, 1988, p. 31).

The SMI discourse manifestations are simply the words and phrases which enhance the style and strategy of discourse. It is the lexicalization that occurs in the addresser's text to create discourse with ideologically controlled meaning (van Dijk, 1995). It is very much "the meaning of words…. [and] the result of the selection made by speakers or writers". Such selections "influence the mental models, and hence the opinions and attitudes of recipients" (van Dijk, 2001, p. 103).

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SELECTION

van Dijk's socio- cognitive approach to CDA is selected as a major methodological track. Vague expressions and their pragmatic functions are employed because CDA is interested in "implicit or indirect meanings, such as implications, presuppositions, allusions, vagueness…" entailment and so on (van Dijk, 2001, p. 104). The methodology employed for CDA is an eclectic pragma- semantic one that combines Sabet & Zhang (2015) pragmatic functions of vague expressions (on the pragmatic level) and the SMA and SMI (on the semantic level) as shown in Figure 1:
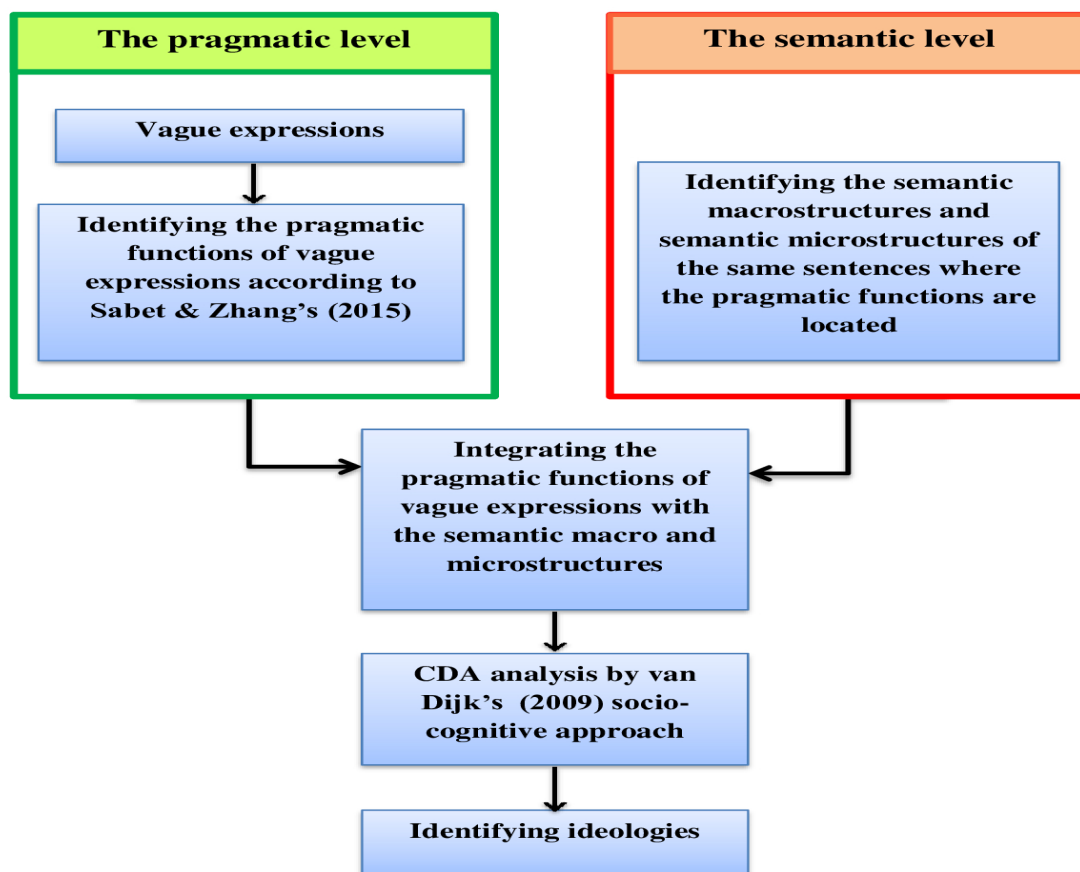
FIGURE 1. Methodology

The model works on the following steps:

1. Identifying the vague expressions in the WHPRs;
2. Identifying the pragmatic functions of these vague expressions depending on Sabet & Zhang (2015);
3. Identifying the SMA and the SMI of the same sentences, where the pragmatic functions of vague expressions are located;
4. Using the results from steps 2 and 3 for critical discourse analysis by van Dijk's (2009) socio- cognitive approach;
5. Identifying the ideologies of the WHPRs discourse towards Iraq.

Vague expressions usually overlap in their manifestation and pragmatic functions. For example, both downtoning and possibility manifest their meanings by approximators (*all but, almost, hardly, nearly, particularly, scarcely, slightly*). Therefore, the reliance on the pragmatic functions alone would not suffice to render accurate critical discourse analysis. Both SMA and SMI work as a stanchion in case a pragmatic function fails to provide a confirmed ideational meaning because of overlap.

The data consists of eight WHPRs issued by the White House about the situation in Iraq after ISIS took hold of major Iraqi cities in 2014. These are the only releases issued mainly for addressing ISIS in Iraq after April 2014 and before 2015 when apparent Iraqi resistance started to appear. The scripts of the WHPRs have been downloaded from the official web site of the White House (https://www.whitehouse.gov) depending on their issuing time and their topic (the ISIS invasion of Iraq). Obama, the US president at that time, is the major speaker in

the eight WHPRs. The releases are structured in the form of question- answer sessions where reporters raise questions to be answered by the main speaker (Obama). The corpus consists of 10802 words. The analysis has covered the sentences included in the responses of Obama where vague expressions are located to decide on the pragmatic functions and the SMA and SMI that support the pragmatic functions. The reporters' questions and the parts of Obama's responses that do not contain vague expressions have all been excluded from the analysis. The research methodology combines both quantitative and qualitative methods since the two are complementary to each other. The quantitative analysis has been performed by manual statistics to count the number of ideologies resulted from the combination of pragmatic functions and SMA and the SMI to find out their workability in portraying ideologies implicitly. The qualitative analysis has been devoted to apply van Dijk's socio- cognitive approach to investigate the ideologies resulted from the combination of tools. The eight WHPRs are as follows:

TABLE 1. The data

	Title	Date	URL
1	Statement by the President on Iraq	June 13, 2014	https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/13/statement-president-iraq
2	President Obama Makes a Statement on Iraq	June 13, 2014	https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/photos-and-video/video/2014/06/13/president-obama-makes-statement-iraq#transcript
3	President Obama Speaks on the Situation in Iraq	June 19, 2014	https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/photos-and-video/video/2014/06/19/president-obama-speaks-situation-iraq
4	President Obama Gives Update about the Situation in Iraq	August 09, 2014	https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/photos-and-video/video/2014/08/09/president-obama-gives-update-situation-iraq
5	President Obama Discusses the Latest Developments in Iraq	August 11, 2014	https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/photos-and-video/video/2014/08/11/president-obama-discusses-latest-developments-iraq
6	The President Speaks on Iraq and Ferguson	August 18, 2014	https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/photos-and-video/video/2014/08/18/president-speaks-iraq-and-ferguson
7	President Obama Delivers a Statement on the Economy, Iraq, and Ukraine	August 28, 2014	https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/photos-and-video/video/2014/08/28/president-obama-delivers-statement-economy-iraq-and-ukraine
8	President Obama on ISIS: 'We Don't Have a Strategy Yet'	August 29, 2014	https://www.cnbc.com/2014/08/29/president-obama-on-isis-we-dont-have-a-strategy-yet.html

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

As for the pragmatic functions of vague expressions in the WHPRs, Table 2 shows the gist of the quantitative analysis in this respect:

TABLE 2. Number of occurrences of vague expressions in relation to the pragmatic functions in the eight WHPRs

The pragmatic functions	frequency of occurrence	Percentage	Subcategories	frequency of occurrence	Percentage
Mitigation	7	6%	self- protection politeness downtoning	7	100%
Giving the right amount of information	83	77%	approximation and quantification	45	54%
			emphasizing	15	18%
			possibility	19	23%
			uncertainty	4	5%

Discourse management	18	17%	Self- repair		
Total	**108**		hesitation	12	67%
			turn management	6	33%

Vague expressions have occurred 108 times in the eight WHPRs analysed. Of the three sub categories of mitigation, vague language has served the pragmatic function of self-protection only, as shown in example extract 1:

*1. First, we are working to secure our embassy and personnel operating inside of Iraq…. So I've taken **some** steps to relocate **some** of our embassy personnel, …. Third, … we're prepared to send a **small number** of additional American military advisors ….*

The SMA is useful here since one can entail, from the propositions of sentences (where the vague expressions are located), that Obama has used the vague expressions *some* and *small number* to protect America's self- image as a supporter of Iraq. He stared talking about taking **some** steps to protect and relocate **some** US embassy personnel. He has tried to mitigate the critical situation and challenges that America was facing at that time as an ally and liberator of Iraq in 2003. Depending on the pragmatic function detected, the ideology of **evasion** becomes apparent in the message that Obama tries to deliver to the public.

Giving the right amount of information is located in the top of the list for having the highest occurrences (83 times, 77%) as shown in Table 2. As for its subcategories, approximation and quantification has the highest percentage (45 times, 54%) in comparison with the other subcategories. Thus, the linguistic vagueness through approximation and quantification has significant effect in enriching the messages with information that might be of major concern to the public. Integrating the pragmatic functions of approximation and quantification with SMA and SMI, the following ideologies appear:

1. Support: this ideology has occurred in the WHPRs when 20 vague expressions of approximation and quantification combined with SMA and SMI clues to infer this ideology, as shown below:

*2. In Iraq, the Iraqi government ... has come around now to recognize that cooperation with us on **some** of these issues can be useful .*
*3. [W]e've worked to help **many thousands** of Yazidis escape the siege of Mount Sinjar,….*
*4. American forces have so far conducted two successful airdrops -- delivering **thousands** of meals and **gallons** of water to these desperate men, women and children.*

The global semantics, represented by the propositions of sentences as SMA aspect, suggests the support produced by the US forces to both the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people. As for the SMI of support, it is located in the expressions of *offers of help, cooperation with us, help many thousands of Yazidis* and *delivering ... meals and ... water to ... men, women and children*.

2. Others' responsibility involvement: this ideology appears when the WHPRs rely on vague expressions of approximation and quantification as an attempt for giving the right amount of information to express other factors (mostly countries and governments) that led to the forming and advance of ISIS in Iraq. He wants to say that America is not the only factor involved in the ISIS crisis in Iraq. For approximation and quantification, vague expressions have occurred 18

times. The supportive SMA exists in the entailment and implicature derived from the propositions of the sentences. There is the entailment that the Iraqi government is deficit in the commitment to create strong army. The implicature elicited here is that the Iraqi government is partially to blame for the victory of ISIS. SMI clues are *not sufficiently*, *not be able to hold contested territory,* and *lack of a sense of commitment* as accusations directed to the Iraqi government:

> *5. I think that you hear similar complaints that the government in Baghdad has not sufficiently reached out to **some** of the tribes ....*
> *Part of the reason why we saw better-equipped Iraqi security forces with **larger numbers** not be able to hold contested territory against ISIL probably reflects that lack of a sense of commitment ...*
> *We have already seen inside of Syria that ... an Assad ... has attracted more and more jihadists or would-be jihadists, **some** of them from Europe....*

Equipped with the vague expressions, Obama has tried to give the right amount of information about other factors of the ISIS invasion: the bias of certain Iraqi tribes, the bias of the Sunni majority in Syria and the *lack of a sense of commitment* by the Iraqi forces have participated in the ISIS crisis in Iraq.

3. Justification: in two instances, Obama has justified not sending troops to Iraq to help in fighting ISIS by providing vague statistics of the previous US sacrifices and casualties in Iraq. As an SMA aspect, there is the implicature that he is not willing to repeat the loss scene again, as shown in 6. He also gave statistics (as SMI aspects) of the advances made by the Iraqi government implying that the Iraqis can depend on their own military abilities as indicated in 7:

> *6. [R]ecent days have reminded us of the deep scars left by America's war in Iraq. Alongside the loss of **nearly** 4,500 American patriots, many veterans carry the wounds ....*
> *7. And the good news is that an election took place in which despite all this mistrust... you still had **millions of Iraqis** turn out ... in very dangerous circumstances..*

4. Warning: Obama has embedded a warning tone for Iraq that unless the Iraqi government takes serious steps, serious consequences will be looming on the horizon. The warning is formed as indirect speech act that could be inferred from the propositional content in 8:

> *8. **Over the next few weeks**, Dr. Abadi needs to complete the work of forming a new, broad-based, inclusive Iraqi government .... Without that progress, extremists like ISIL can continue to prey upon Iraq's divisions.... But they don't have **a lot of time**.*

5. Advisory: approximation and quantification here give the advisory sense. There is also the entailment that the future of Iraq is at stake and the Iraqi government needs to seize the opportunity to encompass all Iraqis together to create a strong population:

> *9. [R]ight now is a moment where the fate of Iraq hangs in the balance, and the test for all of them is going to be whether they can overcome the mistrust, the deep sectarian divisions, in **some** cases just political opportunism ....*

6. In an answer for a reporter's question about whether or not the Syrian civil war is transforming over the borders to Iraq, Obama has vaguely degraded the border issue (in the propositional meaning of his speech as a SMA) as one factor for the ISIS militants sneak to Iraq. This leads to the ideology of the understatement of Iraqi border control.

> *10. Well, I think that's been happening for **some time**. ISIL has been able to gain a foothold in Syria….*

7. Victimization: according to the SMA indication of the sentences in 11, Obama has put Iraq in a victim stand. He states that Iraq has faced challenging difficulties without clear identification (vagueness) of these challenges:

> *11. These have been difficult days in Iraq -- a country that has faced so **many** challenges in its recent history.*

As for emphasizing, the composite analysis of vague expressions, SMA and SMI has revealed four ideologies as follows:

1. Support: this ideology has appeared five times. For example, in 12, the propositions stated entail that America has already supported Iraq militarily and logistically by providing *security assistance* and financial support. Support is emphasised by *steadily* and *obviously*:

> *12. Now, this threat is not brand new. Over the last year, we've been **steadily** ramping up our security assistance to the Iraqi government…. And **obviously,** our troops and the American people and the American taxpayers made huge investments ….*

2. Military non- intervention: this ideology has appeared six times as shown in the 13:
> *13. Meanwhile, the United States will not pursue military options …. There's no military solution inside of Iraq, **certainly** not one that is led by the United States…. But what's clear from the last decade is the need for the United States to ask hard questions before we take action abroad, **particularly** military action.*

Both *certainly* and *particularly* have emphasized the SMA (propositions of sentences) and the SMI (*no military solution inside of Iraq*) to achieve the ideology above.

3. Skepticism: in four instances, Obama has used vague expressions to emphasise the SMA of a series of propositions that call Iraq into question about the Iraqi government and people's readiness to have positive control over the situation and be able to perform radical remedies for the deteriorated situation after ISIS:

> *14. **Obviously** if… ISIL was able to obtain control over major out…. We're not going to allow ourselves to be dragged back into a situation in which while we're there we're keeping a lid on things, and after **enormous sacrifices** by us … suddenly people end up acting in ways that are not conducive to the long-term stability….*

Concerning the subcategory of possibility, the analysis has revealed the following ideologies:

1. Source of danger: according to the SMA, Iraq (with ISIS) represents a source of threat and danger for the American interests. However, danger is unspecified. The SMI indications exist in *danger* and *threat*:

> *15. And this poses a danger to Iraq and its people. And … it **could** pose a threat eventually to American interests as well.*

2. Future Support: this ideology exists in the vague expressions of *I think* and *we think* in combination with the SMI as represented by *very intensive advice and support* and *political compromises* in 16:

> *16. And so **I think** it is important though to recognize … that we have continued to provide them with very intensive advice and support … to urge the kinds of political compromises that **we think** are ultimately necessary….*

3. Skepticism: according to the SMA, Obama's propositions have expressed his doubts about the Iraqi government perseverance to terminate whatever obstacles that might hinder the fateful confrontation with ISIS. He did not give solid foundations for the doubts that are made vague by *I think* and *many Iraq leaders* in 17:

> *17. So what you're seeing **I think** is … **many** Iraq leaders stepping back and saying, let's not plunge back into the abyss; let's see if we can resolve this politically. But they don't have a lot of time….*

4. Bias: this is another repeated ideology. Relying on vague expressions (*I think* and *some*) as a safe haven from commitment, the SMA (entailed from the sentences) portrays Iraq as an unjust country that does not commit its policy to the human rights of just and equal distribution of rights and political positions among various sects:

> *18. I **think** that you hear similar complaints that the government in Baghdad has not sufficiently reached out to **some** of the tribes had been able to bring them in to a process ….*

5. Military non- intervention: this future ideology manifests itself through the implicature (SMA) of the sentences in 19. The US military troops do not have the immunity from punishment in case they commit a deed as self-defense. Therefore, there is no possible US military intervention in Iraq:

> *19. We had a core requirement which we require … that they're provided immunity since they're being invited by the sovereign government there, so that if… they end up acting in self-defense … they're not **somehow** hauled before a foreign court.*

The analysis of the last pragmatic function of giving the right amount of information, certainty, has come up with the following ideologies:

1. Support: The contextualization of this ideology exists in the meaning entailed from the propositions of the sentences in 20. These entailments are made certain by the use of both *urgently* and *everything*:

> *20. [T]he United Nations in Iraq is working **urgently** to help respond to the needs of those Iraqis …. The U.N. Security Council has called on the international community to do **everything** it can to provide food, water and shelter.*

2. Skepticism: according to the SMA, the propositions of the sentences in 21 entail a certain approaching (*earlier this month*) catastrophe. This is an indication of how skeptic America is about the Iraqi potential of self- defense:

> *21. The Mosul Dam fell under terrorist control **earlier this month** and is directly tied to our objective of protecting Americans in Iraq. If that dam was breached, it could have proven catastrophic….*

As for the last pragmatic function, discourse management, it seems that it comes in the middle of the list for the identification number of vague expressions employed, eighteen times. No conversation minor breakdowns have occurred in any of the WHPRs analysed and, thus, no repairs existed. As for hesitation, it has the highest number of occurrences, twelve out of eighteen. The ideologies inferred through hesitation are:

1. Support: the expressions *now*, *so*, and *indeed* fill the hesitation gaps in 22. The ideology of support also exists in the SMA (propositional meaning of the sentences) and the SMI (*responsibilities to support*):

> *22. **Now,** Iraq's neighbors also have some responsibilities to support this process.... **So** the United States will do our part, but understand that ultimately it's up to the Iraqis….*
> *__Indeed,__ across the region we have redoubled our efforts to help build more capable counterterrorism forces so that groups like ISIL can't establish a safe haven….*

2. Source of Danger: this ideology became certain by *in fact* and triggered in the implicature derived from the propositions of sentences in 23:

> *23. We want to make sure that we've gathered all the intelligence that's necessary so that if, **in fact**, … they're targeted, they're precise and they're going to have an effect.*

3. Bias: the propositional meaning of 24, that is made certain through *I think worse*, entails the ideology that Iraq adopts a bias policy towards particular Iraqi sectors:

> *24. **I think worse** over the last two years… the sense among Sunnis that their interests were not being served….*

4. Non- military intervention: the vague expression *I think* gives the contextual meaning of certainty in combination with *we always have to guard.* This certainty, together with the SMA of the propositional meaning in 25, leads to the ideology above:

> *25. **I think** we always have to guard against mission creep, so let me repeat what I've said in the past: American combat troops are not going to be fighting in Iraq again.*

Since turn exchange forms a vital parameter in the layout and structure of the WHPRs, vague expressions has not not missed that pragmatic function subcategory through which two ideologies have appeared:

1. Others' responsibility involvement: using *well*, Obama has performed a turn exchange in which he expressed propositions that entail the SMA of other parties' involvement in the responsibility of supporting Iraq:

> 26. **Well**, *we're in contact with them now…. And we will be getting a better sense from them of how they might support an effort to bring about the kind of political unity inside of Iraq ….*

2. Skepticism: the vague expression *look* is the turn exchange tool (in 27) that raises skepticism about the genuine Iraqi ability and commitment of the Iraqi government and people to decisively confront ISIS and exile their militants off borders (as indicated in the SMA level manifested in the propositional meaning of the sentences):

> 27. **Look**, *the United States has poured a lot of money into these Iraqi security forces…. The fact that they are not willing to stand and fight, and defend their posts against admittedly hardened terrorists ….*

The results of integrating the quantitative and qualitative analyses of vague expressions employment for the three pragmatic functions, SMA and SMI employment for ideology inference, are shown in Table 3:

TABLE 3. The ideologies from vague expressions in relation to the pragmatic functions and their sub- categories

The Pragmatic Functions	Subcategories	Ideology	Number of occurrences
Mitigation	self- protection politeness downtoning	evasion	7
Giving the right amount of information	approximation and quantification	future support	20
		others' responsibility involvement	18
		warning	2
		justification	2
		advisory	1
		understatement of Iraqi border control	1
		victimization	1
	emphasizing	support	5
		military non- intervention	6
		skepticism	4
	possibility	source of danger	5
		support	6
		skepticism	6
		bias	1
		military non- intervention	1
	uncertainty	support	2
		skepticism	2
Discourse management	Self- repair		
	hesitation	support	3
		source of danger	3
		bias	4
		military non- intervention	2
	turn management		

Table 3 provides a panoramic view of the ideological situation in the WHPRs towards Iraq. Depending on Table 3, a more condensed table has resulted, as follows:

TABLE 4. The ideologies, together with their frequency of occurrence, in the eight WHPRs on the Iraqi ISIS crisis

Ideology	Number of occurrences
support	36
others' responsibility involvement	21
skepticism	15
military non- intervention	9
source of danger	8
evasion	7
bias	5
warning	2
justification	2
advisory	1
understatement of Iraqi border control	1
victimization	1

Table 4 is the gist of the second fold analysis, the socio- cognitive critical discourse analysis, for ideology identification to figure out how America portrays Iraq in a highly accessible sensitive discourse (WHPRs) during a very critical period after ISIS invasion of major Iraqi cities.

CONCLUSION

Vague expressions form a vital foundation in the formal, semantic and pragmatic structure of the WHPRs. The majority of the vague expressions have performed giving the right amount of information function. This finding reflects the kind of messages delivered. The WHPRs focus on showing sources of support to Iraq, the shared defense responsibility, intentions of military non- intervention and providing justification for that and stating pieces of advice for Iraq to overcome the crisis.

Each of the vague expressions traced has integrated with its pragmatic function and the semantics of the co- textual surroundings to elicit a socio- political ideology. Each vague expression in the data has performed a specific pragmatic function (as planned in Sabet & Zhang (2015)). The pragmatic functions are further substantiated by the SMA and SMI in the sentences where the vague expressions are located. Although the statistical tables of vague expressions have shown discrepancy regarding the number and kind of pragmatic functions, WHPRs have shown textual pieces of evidence for the three functions (mitigation, giving the right amount of information and discourse management). The paper is mainly after the pragmatic functions since they form the base in the methodology.

In Table 4, the ideology of support is on the top of the list. It is mainly structured through providing vague statistics of the kind and size of the American support since vague expressions form the base of the methodology. Thus, the ideology of support is intrinsic in the ideology of military non- intervention since the former seems to be an alternative for the latter; instead of fighting ISIS, America is ready to provide indirect support for the Iraqis so that they fight ISIS. Others' responsibility involvement is another dominant ideology through which, Obama has distracted the public attention so that no one would accuse America of committing mistakes in Iraq. WHPRs throw Iraqi government (and other countries) the responsibility for marginalizing certain Iraqi sectors and failing to build unified military forces. Other parties are considered responsible for the situation in Iraq. This responsibility has led to skepticism

that reflects the American mistrust of the Iraqi government and people, as shown in example 27 above.

The WHPRs portray Iraq as a source of danger. This tendency has shown up eight times (see example 23). In addition, the tone of evasion could be clearly elicited from Obama's speech as a way of eluding the reporters' questions about the way America would fight ISIS with Iraq (see example 1). In many instances, the WHPRs present Iraq as a bias country that favours one of its multi- sect communities on the expense of others (see examples 5, 18 and 24). This bias policy, according to the WHPRs, has led to weak commitment for the Iraqis to stand firm and support the government against foreign destructive forces. Other ideologies have also appeared in the WHPRs discourse but with no clear tendency or insistence: warning, justification, advisory, understatement of Iraqi border control and victimization.

Future research can be made to pragmatically analyse vague expressions through Grice's cooperative principle and the conversational maxims and integrate it with CDA.

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