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## Analysis of Muqtada Al Sadr's and Biden's Speeches on Terrorism: A Discursive Comparative Study

Taif Abdulhussein Dakhil

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### Abstract

*This study intends to investigate how people talk about ISIS and how their beliefs affect what they say. It wants to show how language can change the way people think about what's happening, depending on their ideas. After looking at many speeches and videos of President Muqtada Al Sadr and Joe Biden, we found that they talk about the same things but in different ways because of their beliefs. They use strategies to show themselves positively and to make others look bad when they talk. These strategies are comprised of lexicalization, presupposition, consensus, hyperbole, illegality and disclaimer. Some implications of the findings also suggested that Van Dijkian strategies such as dramatization, empathy, categorization, comparison, consensus, illegality, vagueness and hyperbole and mingling it with the power of language by using the rhetorical devices and aforementioned strategies to depict his hatred and anonymity of himself and his nation from the terrorist and ISIS which has committed unrests at Iraq nation favoured by Ayatollah Al Sadr.*

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## 1. Introduction

Applying discourse analysis is one of the ways through which the explanation of social phenomena is made possible. Discourses represent hegemonic articulations that lead to the production of a semantic or meaning system for phenomena. Discourse is defined as “any practice (found in a wide range of forms) by which individuals imbue reality with meaning (Ruiz 2009). In other words, discourse is a structured totality configured through the articulation process. Articulation represents an action that communicates between apparently scattered elements, in such a way that the identity and meaning of these elements are constructed as a result (Laclau & Moues, 2001). Discourse represents a system of related signifiers which

shapes the social phenomena through its framework, and constructs the interaction between 'self' and 'other,' so that realities derive meaning through it. Different discourses create different paradigms and diverse paradigms produce different semantic systems which result in phenomena taking on different meanings. Therefore, the process of giving meaning to terrorism and its significance (cases or instances) will change in various discourses,) Omidi. & Mobini, 2022).

Language indeed matters a lot in politics. Theorists assert that there is evidence of the intimate connection between politics and language. More specifically, Fairclough (1989) illustrates the relationship between language use and uneven power relations, namely in the contemporary world, as well as the relationship between language and power.

When it is discovered that politicians' beliefs and intentions are not always made clear and explicit, studying their statements and comments becomes quite important. When a strange opinion or ideology is being presented to you, it is simple to reject; nevertheless, when it is hidden, it is easier to put up with.

Consequently, it is possible to examine the subtle and deliberate manipulation and legitimation techniques used in text and conversation through discursive research. Using the ideological analysis of van Dijk CDA, the current study attempted to provide a discursive analysis of certain pertinent statements and comments made on terrorism by both political actors, **Muqtada Al Sadr and President Biden.**

### **1.1. Statement of the problem**

In this study, the researcher studies terrorism from the viewpoints of two politicians: Biden, who represents Western powers, and Al Sadr, who represents the Middle East. Also, this article shows how the ideas of van Dijk are present in the speeches of the political figures, and how well-crafted the speeches are.

Most of the studies on political speech have focused on grammar, not on the overall meaning of the speech. From now on, this study looks at different ways of speaking, especially the 25 suggested by Van Dijk (2005), to show the beliefs of the speakers at a big-picture level. Furthermore, many studies have been done to study individual speeches. For example, Rachman

& Yumanti (2017) looked at a speech by Donald Trump, Antari (2016) studied a speech by Barack Obama, and Obiero (2017) researched one of Obama's announcement speeches. This research looked at two different political leaders from different cultures and backgrounds. One is Muqtada Al Sadr, a well-known religious figure, and the other is Joe Biden, the president of the USA.

## **1.2. Significance of the study**

Language is really important in societies, even in ones with a lot of freedom. It is connected to power and social life. Language doesn't just talk about how things are, it also makes things the way they are. Language is important for the process because it helps to get ready for and make political actions easier. Therefore, using language is important for stating political opinions and encouraging political actions. A political leader needs to be able to convince and influence people to achieve their goals and get society to agree with them in the ongoing battle for power.

Accordingly, it is important to study political talks to understand and explain political goals and reasons better. The purpose of this study is to make people more aware of how beliefs and power are put into language, and how language is connected to society. Moreover, the work supports the use and development of systemic functional grammar in linguistics research.

Moreover, this study's findings will be useful because they can help identify difficult-to-understand real conversations. This usually happens because they don't understand the basic ideas the author is using or the beliefs that are shaping the arguments. So, understanding the beliefs behind a conversation can help you understand it better, especially when it's about politics.

## **1.3. Research questions**

The research questions listed below are intended to go as deeply as possible into the subject matter.

Q1. How does Biden portray terrorism in his speeches?

Q2. How does Biden portray the United States in his speeches—that is, how does he represent his "self"?

Q3. How does Biden's speech depict the Iraqi regime as the "other"?

Q4. How is terrorism represented in Muqtada Al Sadr's speeches?

## **2.2. Literature Review**

### **2.2.1. Discourse**

Although people often use the words "discourse" and "conversation" to mean the same thing, it's important to think about them differently. In simple words, "discourse" means a group of ideas and ways of thinking that give meaning to things in society and the world. These ideas are created and kept going by specific actions. In other words, discourse analysis looks at how people talk and the goal is to find specific ways they use language when they talk or argue. This article will talk about the differences between Foucault's and Habermas's ideas about discourse. Discourse analysis helps us understand how people talk about things in an argument, even if they don't realize it. Tracing conversations can show how everyone gets to talk and give reasons for what they think. "Deliberation" is the third idea that relates to how good a conversation can be. When people talk to each other fairly and openly, taking turns and learning from each other, their conversation might be deliberative, (Hajer, & Versteeg, W, 2005)

#### **2.2.1.1. Text vs. Discourse**

As mentioned before, Harris talked about how speech and writing are linked. The word "text" means connected speech or writing. Yule (2010) also mentioned this idea at the beginning of the discussion as a language that goes beyond just one sentence. Alba-Juez (2009) says a text can be a conversation, a magazine article, a TV interview, or a recipe. This is because modern language study has created the idea of text, which includes all types of talking. Scholars Harris, Yule, and Alba-Juez have tried to say that speech is more like an idea and text is more like something you can touch. Therefore, even though we read and see text and talk about it, it's important to understand that a text is more than just its physical form. Text is like talking because it has a level of being abstract and is explained by seven standards from Beaugrande and Dressler (1989) (cited in Alba-Juez

2009, p Cohesion: pertains to the interaction between syntax and text. Basic ideas in cohesiveness include phenomena like conjunction, ellipsis, anaphora, and recurrence.

**Coherence:** about the meaning of the text. The information or cognitive structures that are implied by the language used but lack a linguistic realization—which influences how the other person receives the message—are referred to here.

**Intentionality:** relates to the writer's or speaker's mindset and intent.

**Acceptability:** It is about getting the listener or reader ready to evaluate the significance or utility of a certain text.

**Informatively:** pertains to the amount and calibre of anticipated or novel information.

**Situationally:** It emphasizes how important the environment in which the text is created is to the creation and interpretation of the message.

Linguists have different ideas about what context means. They want to use their ideas to answer questions in their field. Widdowson said that "context" means the important parts of how language is used in a situation when he studied the meaning of language. He said that context is like a plan, and the language must match the plan to make sense.

### **2.2.2. The symbolic function of language**

The ability to communicate ideas and thoughts through language is essential. In other words, language externalizes and encodes our thoughts. The language uses symbols to accomplish this. Symbols are "word fragments." These could be complete words, meaningful subparts of words (like *is*, as in *disgust*), or "strings" of words (like *He couldn't write a pop song*, much less a whole musical). These symbols are made up of forms, which can be signed, written, or spoken, and meanings that are typically associated with the forms. Since a symbol is made up of two traditionally associated pieces, it is better described as a symbolic assembly (Langacker 1987). Stated differently, this symbolic assembly is a pairing of form and meaning. A sound, like in [k t], can have a shape. (In this case, symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet are used to represent the speech sounds.) A form could be a signed gesture in sign language or the orthographic depiction of a cat that we see on a printed page. The traditional ideational or semantic content that is connected to a sign is known as its meaning.

Now, it can be explained that even though we can think of so many ideas, we are limited by the words we can use to express them. Sometimes we can't find the right words

to explain what we're thinking. This is because there are only a certain number of words and their meanings are already decided. This viewpoint says that language helps create deeper and more complex ideas, beyond just its basic meanings (Fauconnier 1997; Turner 1991). Language contains simple instructions for the brain to understand and create complex ideas, instead of dealing with complex thoughts all at once. Check out this example from Tyler and Evans (2003) to show this rule.

### **2.2.2.1. The Interaction Function of Language**

Language is important when we talk to others every day. Language should do more than just connect words with their meanings. Other people in our community should be able to recognize and use these pairs of forms and meanings. In the end, language is how we share our thoughts and talk to each other. This means that the speaker has to think of complicated ideas and the listener has to figure out and understand these ideas during communication.

### **3. Materials of the study**

The study used newspapers that showed the speeches of Al Sadr and Biden about terrorism. All the words were copied from websites. I got the information from the White House website and the Guardian website. Guardian.co.uk is a website. Additionally, the presentations given here were by the US president between 2020 and 2023. To make the research more likely to be true, the researcher based their study on a few comments. So, the researcher looked at 4 parts of Al Sadr's and Biden's comments. These were chosen randomly from 10 of their speeches and press conferences about terrorism in Iraq and the world from 2020 to 2023. The speeches were about Iraq and the USA. They were given in different places like the U. S Department of State, U. S Congress, the U. S Naval Academy, Chanel, and the White House. Although we will talk about their speeches later, the main point is that Ayatollah Sadr expresses his strong dislike of ISIS in his speeches. Finally, we talk about the speeches of both political figures using van Dijk's (2000) way of looking at them. Van Dijk's (2000) model has been used to find out how people use language to communicate, These are Actor description, Authority, Burden, Categorization, Comparison, Consensus, Counterfactual, Disclaimer, Distancing: Dramatization, Empathy: Evidentially Example /illustration Explanation, Fallacies, Generalization, Humanitarianism, Hyperbole: and Implication.

#### 4. Discussion

To answer the first question of the study, the researcher looked at the speeches Joe Biden gave on August 15, 2021. The US president, Joe Biden, has a plan to fight terrorism. He thinks ISIS is the most dangerous group in the world. So, the final result showed that each topic has a sole way of conveying meaning. In every speech, Biden keeps saying the same things over and over to make Israel in Jerusalem seem great. In the second speech, using the words 'us', 'we' and 'our' shows that we are all together and focused on the same topic. Then in the third speech, they found that the words people choose to use are important. It shows the negative view of some individuals or a group. In simple words, it means that Biden is using different parts of language to make his words more convincing and to show his political beliefs.

Also, Joe Biden is using the sympathy strategy to make people feel sorry for the victims of the terrorist group ISIS's terrible actions. He says that overseas, ISIS has done many awful things. Children were killed, girls were sold as slaves, and men and women were burned alive. Executions by hanging on a cross, cutting off someone's head, and causing someone to die by drowning. "Minority groups are being singled out for large-scale killing. " Holy places were damaged or harmed. Christians were forced from their houses and chased to be killed. ISIS is capturing and killing people who are Christian. We must stop this bad thing from going on.

Furthermore, in response to the second question of the study about how Joe Biden sees himself, he repeatedly talked positively about himself and negatively about others. This helped him escape the tough situation in Iraq and blamed Hillary Clinton for getting America involved in the war. Additionally, considering the statement "However, Hillary has been facing many attacks for months. "Joe Biden is saying that there are a lot of enemies, including Radical Islam, and we need to be careful because they are showing their weaknesses to the world. In his speech, Joe Biden says the enemy is a dangerous person who follows radical Islam and kills people with guns. Biden also said that Hillary Clinton has a negative view of herself and wants America to stay the same. Additionally, to better understand this question, it can be said that Joe Biden used similar argumentative strategies to show that his arguments are strong and that he is trustworthy. He used strategies like empathy, implication, disclaimer, and reasonableness to paint a positive picture of himself and America while making others look bad.

To answer the third question of the study, which is about how Biden represents the Iraqi Regime. So, the main goal of Biden's political speeches can be summed up in the statement "The

Middle East has a lot of culture, spirit, and history." Its individuals are talented, confident and come from different backgrounds. Colourful and powerful. The great future of this area is stopped by fighting, not knowing things, and fear. So, here they showed Middle Eastern civilization in a bad way. Biden sees the future of the Middle East as filled with fighting, lack of knowledge, and fear. The researcher discovered that Biden used strategies to make Americans feel threatened to prevent bad things from happening to the United States in the future. After that, Biden used powerful language at the end of his speech. So, people call the area the Middle East.

Biden says the Middle East is full of culture, spirit, and history. In contrast, Biden used the words "bloodshed", "ignorance", and "terror" to talk about the scary things that could happen in the Middle East. Therefore, the speaker chooses words for his speech to remind the American people that the country's greatness can be destroyed by terror. Biden wants to warn Americans about potential future problems and hopes to prevent them. Biden is using wise sayings and strong language like "bloodshed" to unite Americans and keep their country safe from terror.

**Table 4. 1. Strategies Utilized by President Biden Using VanDijkian's strategies**

<b>Strategies Utilized by President Biden</b>
<p><b>Dramatization:</b> President Biden said that America has been acting like it is better than other countries and not listening to them. He promised to talk about the mistakes America has made in the past. He also said that America would not act like it was in charge anymore. He told CIA officers to admit when they make mistakes and said that Guantanamo Bay makes enemies want to fight against us.</p>
<p><b>Disclaimer:</b> A few weeks ago, in Germany, a refugee armed with an axe wounded five people in a gruesome train attack. Only days ago, an ISIS killer invaded a Christian church in Normandy France, forced an 85-year-old priest to his knees, and slit his throat before his congregation</p>



**Empathy:** When President Biden spoke in Cairo, he did not show the same moral bravery. President Biden tried to compare our human rights record with the oppression of women and gay people in many Muslim nations, and the funding of terrorism, instead of speaking out against it..”

**Example and illustration:** When President Biden spoke in Cairo, he did not show the same moral bravery. President Biden tried to compare our human rights record with the oppression of women and gay people in many Muslim nations, and the funding of terrorism, instead of speaking out against it.”

**Explanation:** We should teach our kids and new members of our society to be proud of our organizations, our past, and what we believe in. Parents and teachers should do this.

**Implication:** This means that assimilation is not being unfriendly, but showing kindness. Our government and the American way of life are the best in the world and will help everyone who follows them to have the best results.

**Illegality:** The Subcommittee believes her plan would cost about \$400 billion over her lifetime. This includes healthcare, welfare, housing, schooling, and other benefits that the State Department didn't include in their numbers.

**Lexicalization:** He says we will attack, invade, and send Special Operations Forces to speed up our attack on ISIL. This is our plan to destroy ISIL. I have told our military to do thousands of airstrikes on ISIL targets. We can do these things together to beat the terrorist threat. He shows his hatred and plans to fight against terrorism.

**Reasonableness:** For example, he tells America that our military will keep looking for terrorists in any country where they might be. In Iraq and Syria, air attacks are targeting ISIL leaders, big weapons, oil trucks, and buildings. Ever since the attacks in Paris, our friends like France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have increased their support for our military mission. This will help us speed up our plan to defeat ISIL. Repetition. As he says" The failures in Iraq were compounded by Hillary Clinton’s disaster in

Libya. President Biden has since said he regards Libya as his worst mistake. According to then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, the invasion of Libya was nearly a split decision, but Hillary Clinton’s forceful advocacy for the intervention was the deciding factor.

**Vagueness:** Hillary Clinton lacks [little) the judgement, the temperament and the moral character to lead this nation. Importantly, she also lacks the mental and physical stamina to take on ISIS, and all the many adversaries we face – not only in terrorism but in trade and every other challenge we must confront to turn this country around

**Victimization:** The Boston Marathon Bombing wounded and maimed 264 people, and ultimately left five dead – including 2 police officers. Moreover, he adds that "Last December, 14 innocent Americans were gunned down at an office party in San Bernardino, another 22 were injured

**Table 4. 2. Strategies Utilized by Muqtada Al Sadr Using VanDijkian's Strategies**

Strategies Utilized by Muqtada Al Sadr
<p><b>Dramatization:</b> We've noticed that when we try hard, it can make a big change and have a positive impact. The brave Iraqi helpers have worked hard to deal with the accusations of working with Daesh in Tikrit. We are happy to see the progress they have made, which is a big step forward for Iraq.</p>
<p><b>Empathy:</b> around .6 million people, are internally displaced and many children and civilians in both Iraq and particularly in Syria lost their lives.</p>
<p><b>Actor description:</b> Muqtada Al Sadr, memorizes and names Iraqi people and mentions some institutions and says “The members of this national service played an important role in destroying ISIS terrorist groups and are still attacking terrorist gangs based in remote areas" (Saraya Alsalam).</p>

**Categorization:** Muqtada Al Sadr stressed the need to pursue terrorist networks through international and regional cooperation to dry up the roots of this support and funding, and said that this was part of a broader diplomatic effort to establish networks related to National and economic interests shared between the countries of the region

**Comparison:** compares the group as courageous, confident, and somewhere homeless and oppressed and out-groups terrorists as oppressing and occupant and saying “terrorism is an ugly phenomenon”

**Consensus:** in his speeches: he says the nation of Iraq should be vigilant enough regarding the harm hit to Iraq and as he mentioned, "all of Altayar are defend home for the Iraqi people and one of them, when he said "Wasfa" that Al-Tayar can not defeat ISIS!.

**Humanitarianism:** In Iraq nearly 1.6 million people were killed and, displaced and many of them were martyred he also sympathetically explains the conditions as mass areas of the country were occupied by Terrorist groups; however, the mutual trust in the states and among the local security forces was dangerously low

Moreover, to answer the last question of the study which is related to the discursive speeches of the political figure, Muqtada Al Sadr, utilized many of the Van Dijkian strategies by concentrating on the issue of Terrorism and particularly Muqtada Al Sadr mentions another strategy of the categorization defined in van Dijkian terms as people tend to categorize people, particularly when others are involved. Thus, here, Muqtada Al Sadr classified the terrorist groups as a very occupying group with dark and non-human objectives which are the enemy of all people in Iraq and also other categories in his speech who are described as positive and friends when he concentrates. Besides, the supreme leader of Iraq used the Van Dijkian strategies mentioned in the table (4.1. & 4.2.), such as dramatization, empathy, categorization, comparison,

consensus, illegality, vagueness and hyperbole and mingling it with the power of language by using the rhetorical devices and aforementioned strategies to depict his hatred and anonymity of himself and his nation from the terrorist and ISIS which has committed unrests at Iraq nation. For example, using the strategy of comparison included the art of rhetoric since Muqtada Al Sadr positions himself in a positive representation and invites its people to maintain the nation's sovereignty and restore the nation of Iraq to a country absent from any terrorist hostility by resorting to Van Dijkian strategy of comparison pronounces the Iraqi forces more courageous and giving them the spirit.

## **5. Conclusion**

In the CDA structure, the writer analyzed the speeches of two political figures using Van Dijkian theory and discussed their speeches using the strategies proposed by Van Dijk. In our research, we looked at speeches from two political leaders. We found that Joe Biden used certain persuasive strategies to make himself and America look good while making others look bad for supporting terrorism. These strategies include showing empathy, making implications, giving disclaimers, and being reasonable. These strategies are common ways to argue and make the speaker seem trustworthy. Furthermore, President Biden is using words and language to persuade the American people to avoid a future of suffering for the United States. Biden is using strong words and wise sayings to unite Americans and protect the country from terrorism. Additionally, Biden needs to study the Critical Discourse Analysis structure used in this research. It looks like the first speech has 3 parts about how people think and feel, including emotional connection, making the enemy look bad, and praising America. The second speech was about emotions, persuading others, using evidence to make things seem less bad, making something seem great, creating an enemy, and using words to persuade.

So, when Ayatollah Muqtada Al Sadr gave a speech, he used some Van Dijkian strategies like dramatization, empathy, and exaggeration. He also used the power of language and rhetorical devices to show his strong dislike and disapproval of terrorists and ISIS, who have caused trouble in Iraq. For instance, by using comparison, the religious leader is using persuasive language to portray himself positively and encourage his followers to

protect their country and make it peaceful again. He also uses comparison to praise the Iraqi forces and boost their morale.

In cap, using van Dijkian framework work the strategies utilized by Ayatollah Al Sadr indicated that he expressed his disgust on terrorism while the American president using some strategies like Hyperbole, Empathy, Implication, Disclaimer, and Reasonableness, apparently pronounced his disgust but in reality, favoured it.

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#### Author Information

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**Taif Abdulhussein Dakhil (Imam Ja'afar Al-sadiq university , Almuthana branch)**

[Taif55181@gmail.com](mailto:Taif55181@gmail.com)

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