

## A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL DEIXIS IN ISIS SELECTED MESSAGES

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**ABSTRACT:** *Power and ideology, which are two main concerns in critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach, have become medium for each other to innervate and sustain each other in the society. Both of them can be manifested via the use of some linguistic expressions and forms. Halliday's Systematic functional linguistic (SFL), can be applied in the sake of investigating those linguistic forms in harmony with CDA. The current article investigates the use of deixis to represent power relations and ideologies in two messages of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi (leader of ISIS). The analysis involves CDA based on the works of van Dijk (2000 & 2008) and Fairclough (1989, 1995 & 2003) in addition to Halliday's SFL (1985 & 1994). The conclusions manifested different power relations in Al-Baghdadi messages (Allah Almighty and Al-Baghdadi, Al-Baghdadi and Non-Muslims, and Al-Baghdadi and the Muslims). Further, ideologies of principle belief, the believers' duty and political ideologies are all identified through the use of personal deixis such the pronoun 'I' and the pronoun 'we' refer to Al-Baghdadi (the speaker) and to ISIS (his group) respectively, the pronoun 'Him' and the pronoun 'He' represent Allah Almighty. In this context, the pronoun 'we' has no power over anyone, while the pronoun 'Him' is the powerful one.*

**KEYWORDS:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideology, ISIS, Personal Deixis, Power Relations

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### INTRODUCTION

Juergensmeyer (2008:23) states that there is a widespread belief that religion and its institutions are major sources of violent crisis and conflicts, including terrorism. Such belief comes from the historical background of all the major three religions of the world Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Terrorist groups whose actions have been established upon religious tenets have authority and justice allotted to them and are consequently in a position to have their violence endorsed through their power. In all three Abrahamic religions of the world (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), "there is language that has been interpreted not only to permit killing, but where killing in the name of God becomes a sacred obligation" (Post, 2007: 160). This article tackles the radical language used by terrorist organizations in order to justify their terrorist conducts. The aim of this article is to identify the types of power relations implied in Al-Baghdadi selected message and the ideologies represented in the message through focusing mainly on the use of personal deixis.

### An Overview of Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is "a theory and method analyzing the way that individuals and institutions use language" (Richardson, J. 2007: 1). According to van Dijk (1993: 249) analysis of critical discourse emphasize on the relationships among "discourse, power, dominance, and social inequality",

and how those relations are being reproduced and maintained. CDA specialists have adopted what is called “explicit socio-political stance”, that is because their interest of the “often opaque relationships” between discourse practice and cultural structures (ibid: 252).

Many scholars gave their standpoints of CDA indicating that “there is no *single* theory or method which is uniform and consistent throughout CDA” (Weiss & Wodak 2003: 68). Further, Weiss and Wodak (2003: 6) suggest that “the whole theoretical framework of CDA seems eclectic and unsystematic”. Martin and Wodak (2003) point out that CDA has never been and has never attempted to be one single specific theory or methodology.

CDA has been mainly associated with the ideas of Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun Van Dijk, although as critical discourse analysts themselves point out, that there is no single, homogeneous version of CDA. Rather, what we find is a whole range of critical approaches that can be classified as CDA (e.g. Gee, 1990; Scollon, 1998; Richardson, 2007). Many of these authors emphasize the need for analysis to draw on a range of linguistic methods to research things like the production and reception of texts (Wodak and Meyer, 2001; Richardson, 2007). But importantly, what all these authors have in common is the view of language as a means of social construction: language both shapes and is shaped by society. CDA is not so much interested in language use itself, but in the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures. It is influenced by literary theory and sociolinguistics because it is not simply a method of decoding the meanings that are hidden in a text; rather it interprets the texts in their specific context by taking into account the historical, present (and in many cases future) circumstances through an attempt to uncover the writer’s attitude towards the participants and the circumstances presented in a text. The most fundamental characteristic of Critical Discourse Analysis is its concern with social life and especially the role of discourse in social life.

According to Fairclough (1995), CDA developed as a response to the traditional divide between linguistics and areas of social science such as sociology. Whereas linguistics traditionally focused on the micro analysis of texts and interactions, social science was traditionally concerned with social practice and social change. That is, whilst linguistics was concerned with the interactional dimension of analysis, social science was concerned with the structural dimension. In CDA the analysis of social life requires investigation of a combination of the interactional and the structural. Van Dijk (2001) presents a harder edge to the claim that CDA is concerned with social problems, representing it as “discourse analysis with an attitude” (96). In van Dijk’s view CDA emphatically opposes those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power: “CDA does not deny, but explicitly defines and defends its own sociopolitical position. That is, CDA is biased – and proud of it”. CDA is fundamentally political in its orientation, interdisciplinary in its scholarship, and diverse in its focus. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) brief the major features of CDA as:

1. addresses social problems
2. power relations are discursive
3. discourse constitutes society and culture
4. discourse does ideological work
5. discourse is historical
6. the link between text and society is mediated
7. discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8. discourse is a form of social action

(Fairclough & Wodak (1997: 271))

An important principle is that discourses can only be understood with reference to their historical context. Subsequently, CDA refers to the “extralinguistic factors such as culture, society and ideology in historical terms” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Wodak, 1996). SFL becomes the essential toolkit in investigating ideologies within the social practice that is to transfer them. It is applied to reveal the presence of discursive practice which implicates power relations and ideologies. Personal deixis is one of the elements of SFL that is employed in order to reveal ideologies. The context of power within the personal deixis illustrates the cognitive and metaphorical factor that is directed by the speaker or the user of the discourse. It is understood how discourse is embodied in the appropriate deixis to illustrate the intended message, such as the stylistic features selected for clarifying the meaning and purpose.

This article explores power relations and ideologies manifested through the use of personal deixis in Al-Baghdadi’s message: “*A message to the Mujahideen in The Month of Ramadan*”. As the ideology is central object of the article since it has a vital role in Al-Baghdadi’s establishment of his state ISIS; simultaneously, power relations are also to be the goal of analysis since it functions to display the role Al-Baghdadi plays in revealing his organization ideologies.

## METHODOLOGY

The source of data analysis in this article is a message of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi entitled: *A Message to The Mujahideen in The Month of Ramadan*. The source of data is taken from <http://archive.org/details/shaykhabubakrhalbaghdadi> which is released on 2014. The data involve sentences, phrases, and words. Alongside with these data, Heigham and Croker (2004: 320) assert that such data is to be analyzed within qualitative method since the data is not in a form of numbers. The instrument of the research is researcher himself because in qualitative method of analysis the researcher is the fundamental research instrument. The researcher, then, collects the data and interpret it (ibid: 11). Perry Jr. (2005: 149) asserts that “the analysis of verbal data is not quite straightforward because that analysis of the verbal data is initiated at the beginning of the data-collection process continues throughout the study, and this process involves the researcher interacting with the data in a symbiotic fashion”.

Content analysis is being employed in analyzing the data in the article following Creswell’s (2009) steps of analysis:

1. Organizing and preparing the data for analysis,
2. reading through all the data,
3. coding the data or beginning detailed analysis with a coding process,
4. using the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis,
5. interrelating theme/description, and
6. making an interpretation or meaning of the data.

To carry out the analysis of Al-Baghdadi message, an eclectic model is adopted based on the works of van Dijk (2000 & 2008) and Fairclough (1989, 1995 & 2003) in addition to Halliday’s SFL (1985 & 1994). The analysis is carried out through the qualitative approach to identify the personal deixis and interpreting their meaning in context to identify power relations and ideologies.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The power relations and ideologies manifested in the use of personal deixis in Al-Baghdadi's radical message can be shown in the following details.

### **1. Power Relations:**

#### **I. Between Allah Almighty and Al-Baghdadi**

Al-Baghdadi believes that Allah Almighty is the founder of this world and He forms the fates of humans and everything in this world where they live. Therefore, Al-Baghdadi, in his messages, always asks for help, guide, and protections from evils from Allah Almighty. He frequently repeats the name of Allah Almighty throughout his messages. Throughout these three messages, the name of Allah Almighty has been mentioned for eighty-nine times. Hence, Allah Almighty is being represented as the reference of Al-Baghdadi's ideas, beliefs, hopes, dreams, and actions.

The pronoun 'I' and the pronoun 'we' refers to Al-Baghdadi (the speaker) and to ISIS (his group) respectively, the pronoun 'Him' and the pronoun 'He' represent Allah Almighty. In this context, the pronoun 'we' has no power over anyone, while the pronoun 'Him' is the powerful one. In this respect, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi has no power in front of Allah Almighty, and he only represents a normal man who cannot do anything without the aid of Allah Almighty. This belief in the power and supremacy of Allah Almighty is the fundamental ideological concept that formulating Al-Baghdadi's ambition in the coming of the days. Here, the power relation clarifies how Al-Baghdadi asks to get the blessing and the grace from Allah Almighty. Hence, he wants to show the power relation between Allah Almighty and himself to the listeners.

#### **II. Between Al-Baghdadi and Non-Muslims**

The relationship between Al-Baghdadi and non-Muslims (including unbelievers, apostates, Nusairies, Rafidha, Jews, and Crusaders) is to be best described by different pronouns as they are involved through in many phrases and sentences. Those non-Muslims are being referred to as "the enemies of Allah Almighty", "them", "they", and in the same time Al-Baghdadi employs the pronoun 'We' to represent himself and other 'true' Muslims-including ISIS members, and to show that he is not alone. In his view, Al-Baghdadi has the same position with equal level with the other Muslims.

#### **III. Between Al-Baghdadi and The Muslims**

This relation is double phase one; in one, Al-Baghdadi has portrait himself as the one with more power than other Muslims. In other phase, he is equal with them. Among Muslims, Al-Baghdadi has positioned himself as the supreme leader (Caliph) in controlling and leading Muslims and 'jihadist' troops. However, in one occasion he puts himself in the same position with them.

Concerning the types of ideologies that have been revealed, Al-Baghdadi introduces his ideologies basically through the use of pronouns in his message discourses. Those ideologies can be classified as the ideology of divinity and political ideology.

## **I. Ideology of Divinity**

As for as the ideology of divinity is concerned there is a common belief of Al-Baghdadi and members of ISIS organization on Allah Almighty which motivates them in creating opposition against non-Muslims. It consists of two kinds:

### **A. The ideology of principle belief**

This ideology is aimed at giving a comprehensive explanation about the nature of being a Muslim. It needs a clear declaration by stating that there is only one God for this world and His last messenger if the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny all); that God is Allah Almighty. This ideology can be shown in the following statement “*I testify that there is no god except God and I testify the Muhammad is His slave and messenger*”. This statement is called ‘Shahadah’, which is considered as an obligatory requirement for everyone to declare his or her converting to Islam. By using the pronoun ‘I’, Al-Baghdadi reflects his position in the sentence as the one who does the activity: saying the ‘Shahadah’. The lexeme ‘God’, with a big ‘G’, refers to Allah Almighty as the greatest one in this world, while the lexeme ‘god’, with small ‘g’, refers to the gods existing in this universe. The pronoun ‘His’, which is an anaphoric reference to God, shows that Allah Almighty is the owner of the messenger. This statement, Shahadah, is considered a crucial requirement for anyone who wants to be a Muslim, thus, it becomes a ‘principle belief’ for all Muslims to ratify that the God is only one, Allah and Al-Baghdadi wants to show that he is a true Muslim and one of the majority of the Muslims.

### **B. The ideology of believers’ duty**

Once you become a Muslim, you have a duty in this life. Muslims should back every action the perform in the life to the creator and the owner of the universe; Allah Almighty. It is prohibited for any Muslim to refer anything except to Allah Almighty, otherwise he or she will be a non-Muslim at all. Thus, it is a common belief owned by all Muslims and Al-Baghdadi is introducing himself as one of them. This ideology can be clearly via the following quotation which is presented in all messages of Al-Baghdadi as an opening statement: “*Truly all praise belongs to Allah. We praise Him, and seek His help and His forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evils of our souls and from the consequences of our deeds. Whomever Allah guides can never be led astray, and whomever Allah leads astray can never be guided.*” The statements clarify that Muslims should ask Allah Almighty for help and protection from all kinds of evildoing in their life, so Al-Baghdadi, who believes in the supremacy and power of Allah Almighty, calls the Muslims to request Allah for protection, guide, support, and the correct path and only from only Allah Almighty and also to refer everything in their life to Him. The pronoun ‘we’ and the pronoun ‘our’ represent Al-Baghdadi and other Muslims. Al-Baghdadi uses those two pronouns to show the unity of all Muslims and their brotherhood. This means that he is the Muslim and he refers to other Muslims by using the pronoun ‘we’. To sum up, Al-Baghdadi uses the pronoun ‘we’ to refer to himself and his group; ISIS and it has a duty to do everything and every action by referring to Allah Almighty. The pronoun ‘His’ expresses the belonging, i.e., the religion belongs to Muslim and it gives an impression that any Muslim should keep his or her religion with all possible efforts, death or alive.

## **III. Political Ideology**

As for as the political ideology is concerned with the use of declarative sentence and material process, the use of the pronoun ‘we’ here indicate directly the political ideology that is being

reflected throughout the message under investigation. Here Al-Baghdadi explicitly announces the establishment of his political arm and calls for all the 'jihadist' groups to be under one 'banner', which is the banner of 'Khilafah'. Here and in many occasions, Al-Baghdadi distinguishes himself from all the terrorist group leaders who preceded him, like Osama ben Laden, Abu Musaab Al-Zarqawi and others, in that he has all the authority among all Muslims, religious as well as governmental authorities. The Caliph, in the Islamic conventions, is the one who controls everything that he is considered as a religious successor of the prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his progeny all) and the supreme leader of the entire Muslim community.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

It can be concluded that personal deixis can be employed to clarify and illustrate power relations and ideologies. In Al-Baghdadi's message, the personal deixis are utilized in order to imply them by various usage. The pronouns (I, We, and Our) refer to Al-Baghdadi and his organization (ISIS), whereas, the pronouns (Them, They and Their) belong to Rafidha, Jews, Crusaders, Christians, and even Sunni Muslims who do not follow him. However, the use of personal deixis sounds to be not symmetrical in its nature. The power relations are classified into three types: i. between Allah Almighty and Al-Baghdadi, ii. between Al-Baghdadi and non-Muslims, and iii. between Al-Baghdadi and the Muslims. The ideologies of Al-Baghdadi consist of five types which are then classified into two ideologies: ideology of divinity and political ideology.

After dealing Al-Baghdadi's message, it can be seen that language has an important role in constructing and solidifying an ideology when it is employed effectively, and this is amply maintained in those messages. From a discursive perspective, CDA conducted to examine the messages can significantly contribute to the study of 'radicalization' and in scientific researches that deal with the intensification and convergence patterns of non-Arab volunteers joining ISIS from different countries of the world. Such powerful messages contribute strongly to this massive, unexpected incensement of support within 'radicalized' Muslims worldwide. However, the current study confirms the theoretical position that political discourse is being consolidated by words, phrases and sentence structures that are systematically selected in order to have a particular influence on the audience. Without a critical demonstration of the semantic knowledge of the 'jihad', it would be out of the question to understand the existing global 'radicalization stream', that is because of the truth that language co-forms reality. The radical Islamic discourse that helps constructing an unlimited identity, plays an effective role in the immense propaganda of ISIS recruiting campaign of those susceptible and secluded Muslims for joining 'jihad'.

The suggestions for further studies is that power and ideology can be analyzed applying SFL as a main tool for analysis with another toolkit, not only the personal deixis. It will be very challenging to use another element of SFL in analyzing the data, such as information structure: new-given, theme-rheme, etc.

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