RESEARCH ARTICLE

THREATENING AS AN IDEOLOGY IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A CRITICAL STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

Assist. Lect. Wafa' A. Sahan M.A.[1]   **Assist. Lect. Sabrina Abdulkadhim M.A.[2]**

[1] AlZahraa University for Women, Iraq.
  Email: Wafaa.alsahan@alzahraa.edu.iq

[2] AlZahraa University for Women, Iraq.
  Email: Sabrina2912020@gmail.com

Published at 01/11/2021   **Accepted at 01/09/2021**

Abstract

The current study aims at extracting the hidden ideologies of the text producer through the formal aspects of language. Critical stylistics seeks under the surface of language to uncover the political ideologies of threat. The textual-conceptual tool *implying and assuming,* proposed by the model of analysis is employed with exploiting the *implying* part of the tool to uncover the ideologies lie underneath the speech act of threatening exploited in political discourses. In an attempt of extracting the speech act of "threatening" in political discourses, the study undertakes an investigation in the previous USA president Donald Trump's selected political discourses and the current US president Joe Biden. Models adopted in the study are Jeffries (2010) Critical Stylistics, Austin (1962), and Searle (1969). The study came to the conclusion that the use of threatening as speech act in political discourse is loaded ideologically. It expresses power imposition as well as dominance over the opponent and this is naturalized by the authoritative position the text producer (politician) occupies.

Critical Stylistics

Critical stylistics proposed by Jeffries (2010) as a field of analysis to fill the gaps between critical linguistics and stylistics. It tends to bring a comprehensive analysis toolset to excavate the hidden ideologies and their impacts on the reader through the formal linguistic level of the text. The stylistic choices made by the text producers are of ideological effects (Jeffries, 2010: 1). The expression *critical* in critical stylistics take a rather diverse signification than that of critical discourse analysis; whereas the one in the former proposes a method of finding the ideology in texts, whether recipients agree or disagree with it, the one in the latter has a specific socialist (Marxist) view of the language analysis (Jeffries, 2014: 417).

Critical stylistics refers to stylistic products that study the ways in which language reflects social meanings. Critical linguistics along with critical discourse analysis paved the way for the emergence of critical stylistic forms of study and analysis. Since the textual meaning is an intermediate between *langue* and *parole*, then it meets Austin's *locution/illocution/perlocution* forces in the speech act theory; Hallidayan *interpersonal metafunction* hold them altogether. The fundamental textual constructions in *ideational* are paralleled to *locution;* the naturalized intended meanings are paralleled with *illocutionary force.*

The critical stylistic proposes a textual model which is prompted by the text and context where text is placed at the heart of the theory. The model draws on the works of Halliday, Fowler, Simpson, and Fairclough. Ten tools of analysis are proposed to examine the world-view as portrayed by the text producer. They are: naming and describing; Representing Actions/Events/States; Exemplifying and Enumerating; Prioritizing; Negating; Presenting the Speech and Thoughts of others; Equating and Contrasting; Assuming and Implying; Hypothesizing; and Representing Time, Space and Society (Jeffries, 2010: 1-15).

Implying and Assuming

This work is mainly concerned with the implying section of the tool since it aims at uncovering the implicature made in political discourses along with the ideological implications made. Implicature as a pragmatic phenomenon in critical stylistics concerns itself with the way ideologies are projected and naturalized, to influence the receptors. Threatening as a speech act can be perceived as an ideology implied within the political discourses as a means of power imposition.

Ideology

Due to the various approaches studying the concept of ideology, no unified definition can be given. What is common among all of the approaches is that it is essentially a social phenomenon. To van Dijk (1998) it is the dominant ideas of an age/ society. Weber (1992) perceives it as "a system of knowledge and beliefs or a set of assumptions used in the inferential processing of text". Eagleton (1979) provides a long list of definitions, some of which are in contradiction with each other. To him ideology is forms of social consciousness which embrace political, ethical, religious, and aesthetic consciousness. No text/discourse is ideological free; the textual production and interpretation is ideological with the aim of reinforcing a particular way

of thinking. Ideologies are mostly implicit and therefore uncovering it requires a close analysis of the context along with the social background as well as examining all levels of text.

Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory, first introduced by John L. Austin (1962), was initially proposed as a distinction between constative and performative sentences. To Austin (1962) statements function as acts (performatives) rather than merely descriptions (constatives), i.e. by saying something, the speaker does something. For instance, in saying "I name this ship Elizabeth" the speaker is not only asserting or describing some events or states, rather performing the action of naming the ship (ibid : 7-8).

Focusing upon the performative acts, Austin believes that certain conditions must be satisfied for a speech act. He suggests three **felicity conditions**:

1.   There must exist an accepted conventional procedure, having a certain conventional effect. The procedure is the uttering of certain words in certain circumstances by certain persons.

2.   The certain persons and circumstances in a particular case need to be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

3.   The procedure must be done by all participants both correctly and completely (ibid: 26, 34-36).

Coulthard (1985: 14) nicely provides an example in this respect. In a marriage ceremony, there must exist certain conventional procedure in fulfilling the ceremony. The answer to the priest's question "do you take this woman as your lawfully wife?" one must say either "yes, I do" or "No, I don't". Using any other forms of wording like merely "yes or no" is not appropriate. The ceremony has particular sequence of events that must be performed completely by its participants; otherwise, it would case a misfire.

Later on, Searle (1979: 12) refined the theory of speech act by stating that speaking is performing acts on the basis of certain conditions. He proposed felicity conditions according to which illocutionary acts are considered felicitous. Here are Searle's felicity conditions (ibid: 62) for all speech acts:

1. **Propositional content rule**: the utterance of threat must predicate a future action of the speaker, and it must be uttered in a certain context.

2. **Preparatory rule**: the speaker is aware of the fact that the act of threatening is not preferred by the listener , and that action has not already been done.

3. **Sincerity rule**: the speaker should have the intention, the will, and the ability to carry out the terms of threat.

4. **Essential rule**: by uttering threat, the speaker persists on having hearer to do action in virtue of his authority over the hearer. The speaker is committed by his utterance to do action.

Searle (1969) categorized the speech act into **assertive, directive, commissive, expressive,** and **declarative**. The speech act of threat lies under the category of

commissives. A list of commissives is provided by Searle and Daniel (1985: 192): commit, promise, undertake, pledge, engage, **threaten**, hypothecate, guarantee, vow, avow, swear, assure, certify, accept, agree, consent, acquiesce, abide, reject, refuse, renounce, offer, counter-offer, bid, rebid, tender, dedicate, bet, covenant, wager, contract, , subscribe.

Speech Act of Threat

As reviewed by Vanderveken (1990:183)."to threaten is to commit oneself to doing something to someone with the perlocutionary intention of intimidating the hearer and with the presupposition (preparatory condition) that it is bad for him." Threatening is not necessarily a speech act. Neither does the threatener have the obligation he would have in the case of a promise. The word threat invokes in mind pictures of risk, injury, harm, or loss. Threat, as examined by Leviton (1991: 33), can be defined with regard to two dimensions: consequences and probability. It is the state through which the individual believes him- or herself to be in a great chance of experiencing something that entails harm, pain, or cost. Thus, threat is great when the level of probability and-or consequence severity is great. Many speech act verbs have multiple uses and can name different illocutionary forces. The verb "swear", for instance, has both an assertive and a commissive use. people can swear that a proposition is true (assertive) and they can also swear to a hearer that they will do something in the future (commissive) (ibid: 168). Furthermore, (ibid 196) demonstrates that normally the verb threaten cannot be employed to make a threat; rather, promise or warn can be used to perform a threat or to only report a threat, as in " I promise I'll kill you". The act of threat assumes an obligation and involves an indication of a future act:

1. S(speaker) promises A(addressee) to execute the action;

2. A believes that S can do the action (authority);

3. S wants to do the action of his own volition; and

4. S intends that utterance is a reason for A to believe that S intends to do it (ibid: 195).

It is asserted by Leech (1983: 226-7) that "threaten" denotes a conditional speech act in the sense that " the speaker threatening the hearer with x" is roughly interpreted as something unpleasant (x) would happen to hearer, **if** he/she doesn't not perform some act asked by speaker. Searle and Daniel (ibid: 180) add that all hearer-directed acts where the hearer is not identical with the speaker demand a public performance. Threat is essentially hearer-directed and must involve a public performance when the hearer is not identical with the speaker (ibid: 193).

Political Discourse

Political discourse is counted as the formal exchange of reasoned views where numerous alternative courses of action should be taken for the purpose of solving certain societal issues (Hult, 2015: 217). Political discourse is recognized through its authors or actors, i.e. politicians. Politicians are those who are elected or appointed and receive payment to undertake political activities. Recipients such as the public, citizens, the masses, etc. in political communicative events participate in the political even from the interactional perspective. The context of discourse is decisive to categorize discourse as political or not. Although actions and participants are the

corner stone of political discourses, yet other conceptual elements such as communicative events and encounters, intentions, occasions, goals, legal or political implications, and functions are of significance. Therefore, politicians' discourse is regarded political when contextualized in communicative events like parliamentary sessions, cabinet meetings, election campaigns, interviews, etc. The political text and context define and integrate one another mutually. A parliament session, for instance, is regarded political only when the elected members are gathering and debating in parliament building during the official schedule. Outside this context the session is not counted political. The text-context integration in political discourses can be interpreted in terms of doing certain political goals like impacting political decisions such as the regulation of law, the change or setting up of official rules, and so on.

Most political actions are discursive; actions such as: decision making, passing laws, meeting, ministerial or governmental regulations, debates, etc. which can be broadcast on political talk shows, media interviews, political speeches and advertising (van Dijk, 1997: 14,18).

Methodology

The speech act of threatening is investigated qualitatively under the model of critical stylistics set forth by Leslie Jeffries (2010) drawing upon one of the ten textual-conceptual tools of the model (implying and assuming) to expose the hidden ideologies underneath the text. It is aimed at uncovering the ideologies in forms of assumptions presented to the reader/hearer. Data selected for the analysis consists of the following political discourses:

1. Donald Trump's The remarks of the American president Donald Trump 2018 about Iran nuclear deal

2. Donald Trump's Remarks by President Trump on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

3. Joe Biden and Donald Trump's Final Presidential Debate on 2020

4. Joe Biden's Relationship Reassessment with Saudi Arabia 2020

Data Analysis

The analysis of data draws on two basic sections:

A. The analysis of the threatening speech act based on Searle's felicity conditions of the speech act of threatening listed in the theoretical section of the work.

B. The analysis of hidden ideologies of the act relying upon Jeffries *Implying and assuming* textual-conceptual tool of analysis.

Extract 1: "**I made clear that if the deal could not be fixed, the United States would no longer be a party to the agreement.**"

Extract 2:   "**I am announcing today that the United States will withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal.**"

Extract 3: "Any nation that helps Iran in its quest for nuclear weapons could also be strongly sanctioned by the United States." (Transcript: Trump's Remarks on Iran Nuclear, 2017).

A. The utterance of the threat predicates a future sanction by Donald Trump to Iran or the countries that help Iran (propositional content rule). Trump is aware of the fact that the act of threatening is not preferred by the opponent and its supporters (preparatory rule).Trump has the intention, the will, and the ability to carry out the terms of threat (sincerity rule). By uttering threat, Trump, as the president of the United States, persists on having Iran to do action in virtue of his authority. The action is that Iran stops its nuclear program (essentiality rule).

B. the implicature detected in the extracts reflect the threat made by the speaker. In extract 1 making clear that "**the United States would no longer be a party to the agreement**" implies that the US is going to be the rival while it has been an ally which ultimately implies declaration of war. In extract 2 announcing from a deal signifies disagreement or contract termination. Disagreement in this context implies waging war or political conflicts. The obvious threat in extract 3 implies that the US is going to impose penalties on those parties who violate its instructions. The speaker employs threatening speech act as a tool for power imposition.

Extract 4: "The United States no longer makes empty threats. When I make promises, I keep them." (ibid)

A. Donald Trump here is exposing his intention and sincerity of threatening. This piece of discourse meets Searle's sincerity condition of threatening and that Trump has the will and preparatory to fulfil his words. Moreover, the use of the word "promise" clearly doesn't refer to the speech act of promising; rather it refers to the speech act of threatening.

All the other felicity conditions are similar to the previously analyzed datum.

B. The implicature made in this extract is that of threat. The first sentence of the extract implies that in the future the threats made are real, unlike the threats made before. Within the context of the discourse addressed to the opponent, the word *promises* in the second sentence of the extract cannot be interpreted as the act of promising since the whole context expresses threatening; whereas if the discourse is interpreted to be addressed to the president's nation, the act of promising makes more sense.

Extract 5: "If the regime continues its nuclear aspirations, it will have bigger problems than it has ever had before."

Extract 6: " we are taking to confront the Iranian regime's hostile actions and to ensure that Iran never, and I mean never, acquires a nuclear weapon. " (Remarks by President Trump on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, 2018).

A. The utterance of the threat predicates a future action of Donald Trump that, in Extract 5, Iran is going to face bigger problems than it ever had, if they do not give up their nuclear program. In Extract 6, Trump threatens to stop Iran's nuclear activities (propositional content rule) and this is not preferable to Iran (preparatory rule).

All the other felicity conditions are similar to the previously analyzed datum.

B. The extract 5 implies threats in forms of *bigger problems* as penalties imposed by the US government on Iran's regime in case they haven't stopped their nuclear activities.

Extract 6 implies a rather more tangible perception of doing things with words; the future act of threat implies that the US government is an authority and has the right to deprive any regime they feel to be hostile. The ideology of power imposition is obvious in these extracts.

Extract 7: "**First, we will work with our allies to counter the regime's destabilizing activity and support for terrorist proxies in the region. Second, we will place additional sanctions on the regime to block their financing of terror. Third, we will address the regime's proliferation of missiles and weapons that threaten its neighbors, global trade, and freedom of navigation. And finally, we will deny the regime all paths to a nuclear weapon.**" (ibid)

A. All the sentences in the extract are marked by future references. To the researcher, they all imply a hidden "if" conditional clause:

we will work with our allies to….if Iran doesn't stop their nuclear program

will place additional sanctions ….if Iran doesn't give up its nuclear weapon

we will address the regime's proliferation ….if the regime ignores USA's previous threatens.

we will deny the regime all….if the regime continues their nuclear program.

All the other felicity conditions are similar to the previously analyzed datum.

B. The sentences presented successively in this extract carry a number of implications: first the US government is fighting terrorism and this is obvious in the first two sentences with the employment of words such as *terrorist,* and *terror* attributed to the opponent. The implicature in these sentences is that the US government's decisions are legitimized and legal since it is waging war against terrorism. The other implicature is that of threat; the discourse forms a threat to the regime of Iran to stop nuclear activities which otherwise will be penalised.

Extract 8: "It is why we are determined that the world's leading sponsor of terrorism will never obtain nuclear weapon. we will do what we must to keep America safe." (ibid)

A. The future act of threatening is promised implicitly by Donald Trump. In this extract Trump promises not to have Iran obtain nuclear weapon and this piece of discourse is actually a threaten since it is not preferred by Iran. In Extract 15 Trump promises to do what he must "to keep America safe". Trump considers Iran's nuclear program a threat to his country among other countries, so to keep his country safe he threatens that he would do undesirable things to Iran if they won't give up nuclear weapon.

All the other felicity conditions are similar to the previously analyzed datum.

B. The implied ideology of terrorism which is attached to the Iran regime is repeated in this extract as a means of US domination; this domination and power imposition is legitimized and naturalized and become less subject to query since USA is regarded as an authority. The other implicature is that USA has no other choice than penalize Iran since it is a threat. Keeping America safe is the legitimation exploited by the US government to threaten Iran's regime to impose sanctions.

Extract 9: "These are the rules. You play by them, <u>or you're doing to pay the price</u> for not paying by them economically" (Welker, 2020**).**

A. The future act of threatening is stated explicitly through the employment of the structure *going to* referring to future time by Joe Biden. In this Extract Biden threatens to make China pay a price if they don't follow the rules set forth by USA. This meets Seal's propositional content rule. The act of threaten is not pleasant for the opponent sine there is a sense of obligation and control imposed by the USA and this fulfills Searle's preparatory rule. Joe Bien as a president of USA finds himself to be authoritative to threaten in an act of dominance and control over the opponent and this fulfills Searle's sincerity and essentiality rules.

B. The implicature hidden underneath the words chosen by Bien tells the reader that there Bien, as a US president allows himself to be the ruler not only on his domain but on other domains as well through imposing rules and committing them to follow the rules or they will face punishment. Ideological reflections show the exploitation of the political state to fulfill certain ends like dominance and power imposition.

Extract 10: "I've spent my entire career fighting domestic abuse-and will continue that fight as president" (ibid**)**

Extract 11: "Because North Korea is a problem, and we are going to continue to do it so we can control them. <u>We are going to make sure they can not hurt us</u>" (ibid**)**

A. The act of threatening is implicitly formed through the choice of future aspect with the formal realization *going to* to refer to an act that is about to happen unless North Korea stops being a problem. The implicit threaten provides no details of the future act; still the sense of threat is felt in the last sentence of the extract. The US government would definitely take serious precautions to stop the threat of North Korea. This meets the propositional content rule of Searle's theory. Other rules are also fulfilled similar to the previous extract.

B. The ideological implications found through tracing implicature echoes the ideologies in the previous extract. The power imposition and dominance can be touched from the very first sentence of the extract. Stating an issue as a matter of fact which is presupposed already leaves the content less subject to query and therefore taken as it is by the receptor. This reinforces the authoritative position of the speaker and leaves his words less arguable. This gives Bien's speech legitimation and power.

Extract 12: "Any country that interferes with us will, in fact, pay a price, because they are affecting our sovereignty." (ibid**)**

Extract 13: "I made it clear and ask everyone else to take the pledge. I made it clear that any country, no matter who it is, that interferes in American election will pay a price. And it's been overwhelmingly clear this election…that Russia has been involved, China's been involved to some degree, and now we learn that Iran is involved. <u>They will pay a price if I'm elected.</u> They are interfering with American sovereignty." (ibid**)**

A. The future act of threatening is undertaken by means of the formal future aspects *will* to refer to an action that is yet to happen in a political context (propositional content rule). Bien is aware that the act of threatening is not pleasant for the receptors (preparatory rule) and the act of threat is done with full consciousness and intention with the authoritative occupation (sincerity rule). In virtue of the authority of Biden, the receptors are pushed to performed according to Biden's rule with otherwise future punishments (essential rule).

B. The ideological implications are similar to those discussed in the previous two extracts.

Extract 14: "We will reassess our relationship with the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia], end US support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, and make sure America does not check its values at the door to sell arms or buy oil." (Al-Shamahi, 2020)

A. The future act of threat is implicitly stated though the choice of formal aspect future modal verb *will* to refer to an act of future (propositional content rule). The end of US military support for Saudi Arabia and stop buying oil from them is not preferred by Saudi Arabia (preparatory rule). The speaker (Bien) has the intention, the will, and the authority to undertake the act of threat (sincerity rule) and by means of this authority Biden persists on punishing Saudi Arabia and making it pay for the war they waged against Yemen (essential rule).

B. The ideological implications expose the US authority over the Kingdom [Saudi Arabia] and the obvious dominance and control they have over this country. The war against Yemen has been administrated by Saudi Arabia with the US army support during the presidency of Donald Trump. When Biden occupies the presidency he decides to impose punishments on Saudi Arabia for what was done in support of Trump. This implies that Bien is passively threatening Trump (and his political activities) by actively punishing Saudi Arabia to be a region for political account settlements.

It is worth adding that Bien expresses his dissention with Donald Trump's policy in different Tweets:

1. **If we give Donald Trump another four years in the White House, he will forever alter the character of our nation. We can't let that happen (3 Nov. 2020).**

2. **I promise you this: I'll end Donald Trump's chaos and end this crisis (1 Nov. 2020).**

This reinforces the idea that Biden is actually waging a war against Trump and his chaotic governing than on other countries. To Biden Donald Trump is a threat which will ruin the future of American if people vote for him in his second election.

Conclusions

Threatening as a speech act is traced as a hidden ideology in political discourse. Depending on Searle's felicity conditions of threatening, the study has come to the conclusion that the speech act of threat may be implicitly performed through using other speech acts such as promising, urging, and warning. In order not to mix up the speech act of threat with others, one needs to focus on the fact that threat is a future act undertaken by an authority and it is unpleasant for the addressee. Only few cases of

explicit threatening are spotted in the data analyzed; the majority type of threatening found in the data is of implicit type. The implicature created by the implicitness of speech acts carry a number of hidden ideologies such as dominance, and power imposition over the opponent. Other implied significations can be those of legitimation; the politicians legitimize the policy of their dominance and authority through presenting a negative picture of opponent(s). The hidden nature of ideology keeps it in the safe side and leaves it less subject to question and argument. The sample shows that the text producer expresses his ideologies through employing a procedure in which the opponent is portrayed as terrorist or terrorism supporter and the sanctions imposed by the US government is rightful and fair. Such choices of nouns imply that the decisions of the US government are legitimized since the opponent is the source of threat to the world. Furthermore, the political discourses can expose certain conflicts between politicians apparently appearing in forms of sanction displacements on countries while in fact hold conflicts on internal political levels, namely between two US politicians: Biden and Trump.

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