

(تحليل خطاب نقدي للكلمات العامية في مقالات الرأي)

(A Critical Discourse Analysis of Colloquial Words in Opinion Articles)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the marked use of colloquial words in Iraqi opinion articles whose language is Standard Arabic. It examines the attitudinal potential of colloquial words in newspaper opinion articles. The objective is to discover how colloquial words implicate attitudinal meanings, and how they are motivated by ideological ends. Accordingly, the main question this study raises is: Why do writers of Iraqi opinion articles use colloquial words? To achieve the goals of the study, the researcher adopts an eclectic model that consists of concepts from Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory, van Dijk's (2006 & 2011) socio-cognitive approach, and Machin

and Mayr (2012). After applying a qualitative method of analysis, the study finds that the colloquial words are motivated by the strategic ideology of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. It also finds that those informal words connote authorial attitudes, and are strategically employed in texts which abound in ironic expressions.

Keywords: attitude; colloquial words; critical discourse analysis; ideology; opinion articles

المستخلص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة الاستخدام الملحوظ للكلمات العامية في مقالات الرأي العراقية التي تُكتب باللغة العربية الفصحى. فهي تفحص الإمكانيات التقييمية الموقفية للكلمات العامية في مقالات الرأي الصحفية. وعليه، تهدف الدراسة إلى اكتشاف كيفية إضفاء الكلمات العامية لمعانٍ موقفية، وكيف تُوظف لخدمة غايات أيديولوجية. وبناءً على ذلك، تطرح الدراسة السؤال الرئيس: لماذا يستخدم كُتّاب مقالات الرأي العراقية الكلمات العامية؟ لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، يتبنى الباحث نموذجًا انتقائيًا يتكون من مفاهيم من نظرية التقييم لمارتن ووايت (٢٠٠٥)، والنهج السوسيو-معرفي لفان دايك (٢٠٠٦ و ٢٠١١)، وماشين وماير (٢٠١٢). بعد تطبيق طريقة التحليل النوعي، توصلت الدراسة إلى أن الكلمات العامية تُستخدم لأغراض أيديولوجية استراتيجية تتمثل في تقديم الذات بنحو إيجابي وتقديم الآخر بصورة سلبية. كما وجدت أن هذه الكلمات غير الرسمية تعكس مواقف المؤلف، وتُوظف بنحو استراتيجي في النصوص التي تزخر بالتعبيرات الساخرة.

INTRODUCTION

Media discourse, particularly opinion discourse, both reflects and shapes social reality. The powerful argumentative nature of opinion articles has garnered significant academic interest. Many studies have analyzed various aspects of this genre, focusing predominantly on explicit evaluative linguistic features. However, these studies often overlook the subtle evaluative invocations embedded in colloquialisms. While some research has examined colloquialism, it typically addresses its role in achieving native-like proficiency. The current study aims to delve into the attitudinal

potential of colloquial words. Notably, formal language is standardized in the Iraqi opinion articles. Interestingly, these texts provide typical examples of how colloquialism is ideologically employed. Iraqi writers markedly employ colloquial expressions, thus defying the maxim of formality for an effect.

Opinion articles reflect the democratic space in which writers have freedom to employ and deploy various linguistic tools that serve their ideologies. Thus, writers relay arguments and viewpoints that echo the interests of the public and the contentious issues that reverberate in social reality. Political opinion texts, in particular, illustrate the relationship between linguistic choices and underlying ideologies. In addition, opinion writers employ colloquial expressions to infuse informality into their texts.

The current study builds on previous research by disclosing the role of colloquial expressions in shaping readers' perceptions and highlighting their function in conveying underlying ideological motives. To effectively influence readers' emotions and cognitions, opinion writers utilize specific linguistic styles and choices. These choices help shape the relationship between the writers and their readers. In their attempt to construct relations of solidarity and co-membership, opinion writers use colloquial wordings and expressions for persuasion and manipulation purposes. Typically, the attitudes in opinion articles are explicitly expressed using an inscribed attitude lexis. However, the researcher seeks to explore features of ideational/propositional language that implicitly embed attitudinal meanings. Thus, the current study aims to analyze the colloquial words in terms of the writer's ideological preferences, using Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory alongside van Dijk's (2006 & 2011) socio-cognitive approach.

The study is structured around two main hypotheses: colloquialism implicates authorial attitude, suggesting that informal language choices reflect and reinforce the writer's stance and biases. The study also postulates that colloquial words in opinion articles are motivated by the ideological strategy of Positive Self-Presentation and Negative Other-Presentation. Each hypothesis will be tested through a detailed examination of the linguistic choices and their discursive functions within the selected articles. Hence, the present study sets out to answer the following question: Why do opinion writers use colloquial language as a persuasive technique?

By linking colloquial expressions to their ideological underpinnings, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how colloquial language influences reader interpretation and authorial intent in opinion discourse. The study will hopefully enhance readers' critical thinking and enrich the Iraqi literature. It invites researchers, especially those in Iraq, to pay more attention to the use of colloquial expressions in formal settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA) is a discourse analytical apparatus that focuses on how text and talk in social and political contexts are used to enact, reproduce, legitimize, and resist social-power abuse and inequality (van Dijk, 2011). According to van Dijk (2011), "CDA may be seen as a reaction against the dominant formal (often asocial or uncritical) paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s, for instance in structural and generative linguistics as well as later text grammars and Conversation Analysis" (p. 467). The approach of CDA is rooted in the influence of the Frankfurt School, or Jurgen Habermas. Most critical discourse analysts would adopt Habermas's view that language is a medium of domination and social power (Wodak,

2001). As long as the legitimation of power relations is not articulated, language can be said to be ideological (Habermas, 1977, cited in (Wodak, 2001). Hence, critical linguistics was devised in response to problems of “invisible ideology permeating language” (Fowler, 1991, p. 67). Although it's possible that the word ‘critical’ is meant to imply a negative assessment, critical linguistics does not always strive for this negativity. Simply put, critical linguistics is the application of a specific kind of linguistic analysis to examine the relationships between signs, meanings, and the social and historical contexts that shape the semiotic structure of discourse (Fowler, 1991).

CDA can be done using any method from the cross-disciplinary field of discourse studies, as well as other relevant approaches from the humanities and social sciences. Therefore, CDA is not a special method for undertaking discourse analysis (Wodak and Meyer, 2008; Titscher et al., 2000, cited in van Dijk, 2011). Furthermore, all fields of discourse studies, including discourse grammar, Conversation Analysis, Discourse Pragmatics, Rhetoric, Stylistics, Narrative Analysis, Argumentation Analysis, and Multimodal Discourse Analysis, among many others, might benefit from the CDA as critical analytical research (van Dijk, 2011).

Choosing the right words to convey the reference and force that each party intends is not the only thing that goes into communication. It also entails selecting words that will produce the intended effects, or, to put it another way, words that are strategically useful in controlling one's own position in respect to another. Every communication is, in one way or another, a control exercise, an effort to state one's own opinion and persuade the other to agree with it. When someone writes or says something, they are trying to influence the addressee—the other person—to feel, think, or behave in a certain way (Widdowson, 2007). Additionally, the general question that arises in the framework of CDA is “what motivates the use of one

expression rather than another.” (Widdowson, 2007, p. 68). Every use of language involves choices, thus any text can be recreated using other terms – terms that could have been used but were not, for one reason or another.

The linguistic paradigm of CDA is concerned with the fact that texts could be related to a broader backdrop of ideologies and social beliefs (Widdowson, 2007). The concept of ideology refers to an abstract system of evaluative beliefs held by social groups (van Dijk, 2006). “Critical discourse analysts enquire into the role played by schematic knowledge” (Widdowson, 2007, p. 70). Schematic knowledge refers to the ideational and interpersonal schemata which represent what people know of the world they live in and the way they are structured in texts, whether spoken or written. However, the schemata CDA analysts concentrate on are more closely related to socio-political values and beliefs, not only to the ideational representations of reality but also the ideological ones. Furthermore, CDA theorists hold that people are not only impacted by ideology but they actively construct it in what they say and write, in an effort to persuade others to share the same ideology (Widdowson, 2007). Hence, CDA can be seen not just as an academic quest but as a campaign to expose the attempts of those in power to control opinion to their advantage. Widdowson (2007) suggests “we therefore have a norm of usage against which we can establish the relative (ab)normality of the occurrence of a word or structure in a particular text” (p.78). For example, the slangy words are uncommon or rare in formal texts but any potential abnormalities are intended by the writer to achieve a particular effect upon the reader. Widdowson (2007) refers to the fact that “certain words mark particular genres or discourse domains” (p. 79). The abnormality or the “departure from what is expected” (p. 82) is the focus of CDA, “and the question would naturally arise as to what the motivation for such non-conformity might be” (p. 79).

Following is an elaboration on van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach. A central notion in this approach is the concept of mental models. This notion revolves around the dynamic, personalized, and situational representations that individuals construct during discourse processing. Mental models are essential to the interpretation and memorization of discourse because they enable speakers and listeners to relate discourse to their personal experiences, emotions, and social understandings (Discourse Analyzer AI Toolkit, n.d.). Among the central notions in CDA is the relation between social macro-micro structures, and how powerful groups control text and context and consequently the mind. The micro-level of the social order covers the notions of the language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication. On the other hand, the macro-level of analysis covers concepts like power, dominance, and inequality between social groups. The major facets of CDA and discourse studies are, therefore, discourse, cognition, and society. Language users as social actors have both personal and social cognition (personal memories, knowledge, and opinions) in addition to those they share with other people in their group or culture. Due to language users' mental representation and connection of both levels as social actors, the real interaction between society and discourse is socio-cognitive (van Dijk, 2011).

Van Dijk (2011) defines social power in terms of control. Groups have varying degrees of power depending on their ability to control the acts and minds of other groups or members of other groups. As far as opinion arguers are concerned, they have privileged access to public discourse and thereby control the recipients' minds and indirectly their actions, thus, exercise this social power. The more or less persuasive power of professors, parents, or journalists is based on information, knowledge, or authority. According to van Dijk (1996), "Access to specific forms of discourse is itself a power resource" (cited in van Dijk, 2011, p. 470). As demonstrated by classical rhetoric and modern persuasion research, certain discourse

structures such as topics, metaphor, arguments, lexical choice, and rhetorical figures, among many others may affect the contents and structures of mental models in ways speakers find most advantageous (Dillard and Pfau 2002, cited in van Dijk, 2011).

Speakers of powerful groups may seek to control not only specific knowledge and standpoints represented in the subjective mental models of particular recipients – as is the case in parliamentary debates and news reports. Speakers may also strive to control the generic knowledge, attitudes and ideologies shared by whole groups or all citizens, for example through the argumentative structure of opinion articles or editorials. This general cognitive influence may serve the interests of the recipients, as is the case of education or beneficial social information, yet, it could also work in favour of the speakers and against the best interests of the recipients, as is the case of ideological manipulation and indoctrination (van Dijk, 2011).

Thus, CDA aims to bridge the gap between discourse and context in the sense that the target is not only the mere connection between discourse and context, it is not only the analysis of language in use. But the focus is on the mediating level that embeds ideologies of how and why this correlation comes in the way the discourse reaches out to the audience (van Dijk, 2011). In the same vein, Wodak (2001) stresses “There is no direct relation between text and society but they are mediated by social relationships of power and dominance and are legitimated by ideologies of the powerful groups” (p. 3). In discourse analysis, context is relevant to the investigation of discourse practices. The wider social and cultural context “must be attended to because it shapes discourse practices in important ways and is itself cumulatively shaped by them” (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 50). This means that discourse shapes social realities and reflects them. Fairclough (1995b) has extensively studied how social changes influence language and vice versa, particularly in the context of increasing informality in various genres of discourse such as opinion writing.

The primary strategy of dominant discourse and mind control often follows the basic intergroup polarization of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The second basic ideological strategy is “Emphasizing Our good things, Emphasizing Their bad things, Mitigating Our bad things, and Mitigating Their good things” (van Dijk, 2011, p. 474). Van Dijk typically labels this strategy as ‘the ideological square.’

OPINION ARTICLES AS MORAL ARGUMENTS

Newspapers contain ideas, opinions, values, and theories in a very broad sense rather than facts about the world (Fowler, 1991). Opinion sections of newspapers consist of both editorials that express the publication's position, and opinion pieces which express the opinion of an individual, a regular, or a guest columnist (Nikolaev & Porpora, 2007). Alternative viewpoints and arguments can be found in these newspaper pages, where a range of individuals share standpoints and arguments. Those arguments may not always comply with a given editorial board's viewpoint. This does not, however, imply that the editorial goals of the newspaper in which they appear never has any influence at all on those pages (Wilson et al., 2012).

Opinion articles represent what Habermas (1989) labelled as ‘the public sphere.’ Habermas defines the public sphere as a key mechanism for democracy where public opinions can be conveyed. Opinion writers represent powerful elites like journalists, politicians, generals, writers, academics and others, discussing matters of public interest (Nikolaev & Porpora, 2007). In Habermas' view, the public sphere should represent the perfect arena for free speech, where all members of a community have the right to express their opinions and beliefs regardless of their social status or other distinctions. But as Habermas states, there is a concern that this kind of

communication in the public sphere is "systematically distorted by agenda setting" (Nikolaev & Porpora, 2007, p. 9).

One of the main interpersonal resources found in opinion articles is the appraisal meaning (attitude lexis and modality) (Lihua, 2009). Writers of this genre draw on this dialogistic repertoire to employ their strategies of manipulation, legitimation and domination. Thus, the scope for social evaluation is maximized in these texts since the authorial voice is free to employ all evaluation resources, whether they are inscribed (explicit judgments) or invoked (implicit judgments) (White, 1998). Different linguistic assortments are open to the author of this kind of discourse being an elite individual or institution with a privileged access to public discourse and a privileged social status (Lihua, 2009). Thus, the authorial attitude towards someone or something may be invoked indirectly. Negative feeling and moral outrage inside readers can be provoked through the mode of narrative and storytelling in which factual content and personal experiences are presented, hence, exercising manipulation (Martin & White, 2005). It is worth noting that there are other linguistic strategies that implicate the meaning of evaluation and the authorial attitude. One of these strategies is the use of colloquial expressions.

When a given journalist writes a report or an opinion piece, they almost instinctively adopt a style suited to the genre of article – be it an opinion piece, TV review, or news report. This style aligns with the specific newspaper's characteristics and broadly mirrors the social and economic dynamics the paper is involved in (Fowler, 1991). Fairclough (1995b) proposes that "the mergence of various forms of public-colloquial discourse, are striking features of the modern media which invite historical analysis" (pp. 73–4). According to Fairclough (1995b), the recent changes in the generic structure of media discourse is a result of the sociocultural changes. The communicative style that is in part based on conversation properties is set to

project the writers/speakers as living in the same commonsense world as their audiences.

There is a general trend in the media and many other public discourse domains, including medical consultations, towards more conversational and informal (public–colloquial) discourse (Fairclough, 1992a; Mishler, 1984, cited in Fairclough, 1995b). This shift is a part of broader shifts in cultural values that have been explored in terms of individualism, detraditionalization, and informalization. These shifts have an impact on the construction of self–identity, authority relations, and relations between public and private spheres of social life (Fairclough, 1995b). The media discourse platforms endeavor for the alignment with the putative audience’s assumed cognitive and affective preferences by presenting texts in ways that seem informal, authentic and entertaining (Molek–Kozakowska & Wilk, 2021). Consequently, opinion writers are part of this general social trend.

MODEL OF ANALYSIS

COLLOQUIALISM

The concept of colloquialism comes from the Latin word ‘colloqui’ (to speak). It is a linguistic phenomenon that is linked to the informal use of language on the one hand, and also more associated with the verbal interactions than the written ones on the other hand, according to Partridge (1990, cited in Fattah & Salih, 2022). Colloquial language is considered as the simplest and the most natural form of language adopted in daily communication by interlocutors of different social, political, economic and academic backgrounds, and of different age and gender (Barzegar, 2010, cited in Fattah & Salih, 2022). Linguists use the term colloquialism or colloquial language to refer to the informal interaction which incorporates all the varieties of

informal language such as slang, vernacular, vulgar and jargon (Fattah & Salih, 2022).

While linguists generally agree that colloquial language is the informal use of language, colloquial expressions can also be found in formal interactions and texts but with a restricted degree of occurrence. It can be observed in political statements, formal debates, academic texts, mass media, and educational discussions (Fattah & Salih, 2022). While colloquial language is traditionally associated with spoken communication, it is increasingly present in written language as well (Paranta & Fadilah, 2021). According to Fairclough (1992, cited in Fairclough 2003), "Societal informalization and the move away from overt hierarchies, can be textually researched in terms of the 'conversationalization' of public discourse" (p. 68). It entails communicating like ordinary person, as a citizen. Informalization is "a marked feature of recent public life" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 182). Machin and Mayr (2012) propose that "Conversational style is both private and suggests dialogue between equals" (p. 44). This makes it a useful technique for politicians, advertisers, and journalists. Thus, conversational style is a replacement of formal words by others that are more emotive or simplistic. Fairclough (1995a) explains that mixing these two lexicons (formal and informal) aids in infusing official discourse with a populist voice. So, a writer who uses less formal words knows he is writing for an audience of varied level of education and varied intelligence. This sense of bond between the writer and reader makes it easier for the reader to accept the writer's point of view (Engage Education Foundation, n.d.).

Crystal (2003) refers to the concept of individual difference, where a linguistic effect does not conform to an established rule or norm. It is often associated with what is generally referred to as *deviance*. In its extreme form, deviance results in linguistic usage which is totally unacceptable. But there is nothing inherently

unacceptable about the concept of linguistic deviance. In fact, unusual or unconventional uses of language can be highly effective and broadly appreciated, much like any form of art. In the context of the present study, the use of colloquialism stands for a stylistic deviance, not a grammatical, phonological or a graphological one. "For the most part, though, people who are 'being deviant' or 'strange' are being so for a purpose, and the effects are specific and noticeable" (Crystal, 2003, p. 395).

Duguid (2010) suggests "An increase in conversational and informal styles emerges, along with a notable increase in a particular kind of evaluative and promotional language" (p. 109). According to Fairclough (2001), informality can be seen as part of a hidden agenda. Fairclough (2001) confirms that this synthetic personalization, represented by an informal conversational style, is used as a strategy to exercise power in more subtle, indirect and less explicit ways. Inspired by the perspective of Machin and Mayr (2012) about the use of colloquial expressions in the press, colloquialism is motivated by "the moral outrage stance" (Manning, 2007b, cited in (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 42). Moral outrage turns a given text into a sensational piece and moral evaluation, instead of rational debate with a mention of statistics or facts, making newspapers more appealing to a broader audience.

To achieve their communicative aims, authors make choices in individual linguistic resources. These choices allow them to highlight some kinds of meanings and background others. The specific definition of CDA given by van Dijk (2001, cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012) is the study of implicit or indirect meanings in texts. These are the kinds of meanings that are alluded to but not explicitly stated. Although they are not explicitly, directly, completely, or precisely expressed, implicit meanings are connected to underlying beliefs. Within this framework, this study intends to explore the meaning invocations of the semantics of the colloquial words.

To sum up, colloquialism serves multiple purposes: it bridges the gap between formal written language and spoken language, engages readers, and reinforces cultural identity. By adopting a conversational style, writers can establish a direct connection with their audience, making complex issues more approachable and relatable. This linguistic strategy reflects broader societal trends towards informalization and the conversationalization of public discourse.

AUTHORIAL ATTITUDE

Discourse analysis seeks to provide an adequate understanding of the ways in which language is used and abused for the objectives of persuasion and control. However, without taking into account the co-textual relations that lexical and grammatical features contract with other features, it is illogical to attribute ideological significance to the mere occurrence of these features (Widdowson, 2007). Disclosing the authorial attitude necessitates investigating the lexical realizations in terms of their connection with the broader co-textual features. The notion of macrostructure is pivotal to the analysis of thematic structure. The macrostructure refers to the overall organization of themes or topics in a text. On the other hand, the microanalysis refers to syntactic and lexical characteristics of a given style and the rhetorical features in a text (Fairclough, 1995b).

It happens that some words are conventionally marked for negative or positive evaluation. Adjectives such as idealistic, self-assured, and single-minded are generally interpreted as positive, while words like doctrinaire, narrow-minded, and cocky are typically interpreted as negative. However, not all vocabulary is neatly marked for attitude in this way. In texts, words are employed in conjunction with lexical and grammatical patterns rather than being used in isolation. Texts themselves establish unpredictable and complex relations with context. Therefore, there are significant differences between what individuals mean when they use a word and

what it means by convention. Thus, a particular textual choice is often driven by a persuasive or other specific purpose (Widdowson, 2007). Therefore, the unpredictable use of colloquial words in formal texts is often motivated by a specific purpose, whether persuasive or otherwise.

In their appraisal theory, Martin and White (2005) discuss the language of attitude in terms of its interpersonal function in discourse. The following are the roles of the attitudinal reservoir, according to this theory: The attitude resources aid in revealing the speaker's/ writer's feelings and values, as well as their status or authority. They also function rhetorically to build rapport and alignment between the writer and reader. Additionally, the type of attitude markers writers use in texts tells something about their identity (personae). Thus, attitude resources are used in texts to construct communities of shared feelings, values, and assessments, as well as shared emotions.

As far as discourse semantics is concerned, Martin and White (2005) contend that the structure of an overall attitude of a speaker or a writer does not materialize only from actual elements of the text, but it is a kind of prosody. Prosodic structure is a basic feature of interpersonal meanings, including attitude. The general attitude of the writer can be understood from the general mood of the text. And the lexico-grammar of attitudinal markers identified in a text serves just as a means to support this realization and make it clear to the recipient. Martin and White (2005) quote Halliday's (1979) proposal regarding the prosodic structure of interpersonal meaning, suggesting that interpersonal meaning is "distributed like a prosody throughout a continuous stretch of discourse" rather than being limited by actual components in text (p. 19).

In opinion texts, attitude is mostly instantiated explicitly (inscribed attitude markers) through lexicogrammar semantics rather than being implicit. It can also be constructed through attributing positions of external sources. However, attitude can be operated with reference to states or events, that is, projected between the lines rather than being expressed explicitly by means of attitudinal lexis (Lihua, 2009). Martin and White (2005) add that the prosodic structure of attitude can be realized by means of 'intensification' which takes various forms like repetition, exclamation, or superlative configurations of *most*, *the greatest*, etc. The attitudinal meaning can also be intensified through infusing, that is, intensification from low to higher value in the core words as in ('I like,' 'I love,' 'I adore,' and so on). Thus, the appraisal approach examines the overall meaning of a text, extending beyond the clause. According to Martin and White (2005), the realization of attitude may involve connotation (implied meanings) rather than direct denotation (explicit meanings). In other words, attitudes can be hinted at through choices of ideational meaning, such as strategies of intensification, nominalization (e.g., 'this accomplishment,' 'this progress'), the use of adversative conjunctions like 'however,' 'only,' 'actually,' or lexical metaphors. These techniques can also work rhetorically to evoke an attitudinal response in readers. Therefore, the selections of ideational meaning are integral to formulating attitudes and play a significant role in this process.

In conclusion, authorial attitude in discourse is a multifaceted construct that goes beyond mere lexical choices. It encompasses the strategic use of language to convey emotions, values, and persuasions effectively. By understanding the interplay between lexical, syntactic, and contextual features, discourse analysts can uncover the underlying attitudes and rhetorical intentions embedded within written texts.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT STUDIES

After inspecting a substantial body of work related to the use of colloquial expressions, the researcher finds that few studies have examined colloquialism's implications for attitude. It is either the case that some studies have examined attitude meaning conveyed by inscribed attitude lexis and modality, or that others have explored colloquialism in terms of its significance for improving a second language acquisition.

For example, Al-Rickaby (2020) presented a study titled '*A Critical Discourse Analysis of Stance and Engagement Markers in English and Arabic Newspaper Opinion Articles in 2016.*' It explored the patterns of stance and engagement markers in English and Arabic newspaper opinion articles. The study assumed that all written texts involve some level of interaction between writers and readers, facilitated by these markers. This study revolved around the assumption that stance and engagement markers are crucial for constructing persuasive arguments and expressing the writers' attitudes.

Sabir Rasul (2021) also conducted a study over the language of evaluation in media reports, titled '*Evaluation in Media Reporting: A Comparative Analysis in BBC, CNN and Aljazeera Reports.*' All the news reports analyzed tackled the same topic, namely, the fifth anniversary of the 2003 war against Iraq. The objective of this study was to figure out the perspective of each media agency, drawing upon Martin's (2008) appraisal model. Adopting the attitude categories of judgement, appreciation and affect, Rasul classified appraisal realizations in terms of 'for' and 'against' to determine each agency's stance on the war whether supporting or opposing it.

Bradford (2010) carried out another study titled '*The Acquisition of Colloquial Speech and Slang in Second Language Learners of English in El Paso, Texas.*' The

study investigated how Spanish-speaking learners of English at the University of Texas at El Paso acquire colloquial terms and slang. It aimed to determine whether second language (L2) learners can achieve native-like proficiency in colloquial speech and to what extent they comprehend and produce this type of language. The study focused on the specific challenges faced by L2 learners in acquiring phrasal versus lexical colloquial items.

Hasanah (2019) also conducted research titled '*The use of Colloquial Words in Improving Students' Speaking Through Teacher's Daily Assessment.*' The study's claim was that nowadays, there are many ways to learn English and expand vocabulary, with watching YouTube being a popular method among students. Students often imitate the colloquial language used by their favorite YouTubers in daily conversations. This research aimed to analyze whether colloquial words can enhance students' speaking skills and how teachers assess this improvement in classroom activities. Using a qualitative method, the research included class observations, interviews with teachers, and rubric analysis.

Thus, previous studies have paid little attention to the evaluative significance of colloquialism. This is not to diminish the contributions of the previous research. For example, Pounds (2010) suggested that colloquialisms can convey attitudinal meaning, though they are not included in the appraisal system. In her study '*Attitude and subjectivity in Italian and British hard-news reporting: The construction of a culture-specific 'reporter' voice,*' Pounds identified colloquial expressions in the analyzed corpus, demonstrating that colloquialism maybe employed to elicit a particular response from the reader. Additionally, Ononye (2017) conducted research titled '*Lexico-stylistic choices and media ideologies in newspaper reports on Niger Delta conflicts.*' The researcher proposed that media reports on Niger Delta (ND) conflicts show a link between lexico-stylistic choices and media ideologies. He

argued that previous studies often used pragmatic, stylistic, and discourse analysis to present participants and ideologies but overlooked how media ideologies manifest through lexico–stylistic choices. Two main types of lexico–stylistic choices were identified: paradigmatic (including synonymous, antonymous, hyponymous, colloquial, register items, and coinages) and syntagmatic (including collocations, metaphors, pleonasms, and lexical fields). The study revealed that these lexico–stylistic choices serve three ideological purposes: framing participants as perpetrators of violence, evaluating specific entities and their roles in the conflicts, and minimizing the impact of the activities of the news actors.

The current study aims to fill this gap by linking colloquial expressions to their ideological motives and demonstrating how colloquialisms can evoke attitudinal meanings.

METHODS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Notably, colloquialism is not restricted to lexical manifestations consisting of single words, like ‘cool’ in English or (ماكو) in Arabic. It also includes idioms, clichés, jargon, slang, proverbs, contractions, acronyms, and so on. But the colloquial words chosen for the analysis are the colloquial semantic equivalents of formal ones.

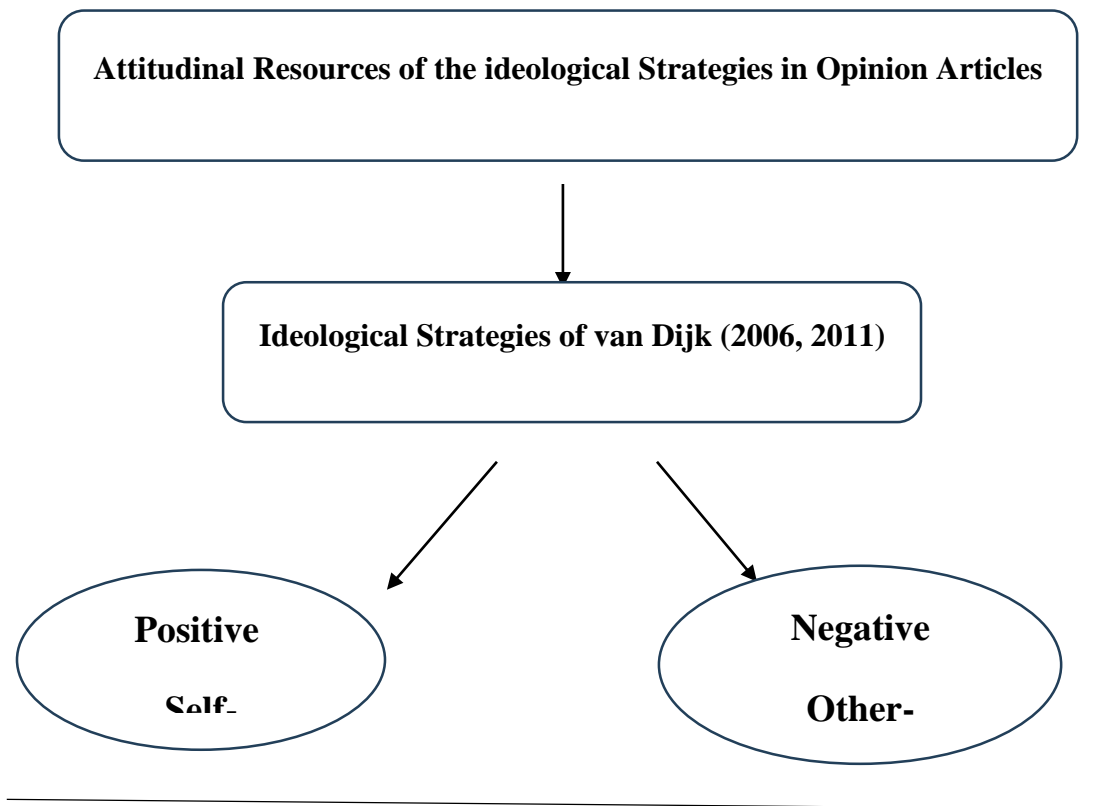
Since colloquial words are set to implicitly invoke attitudes rather than explicitly, the research will examine both the micro level of the linguistic realizations and the macro level of the analyzed texts. The macro level refers to the general characteristics of the text and its overall argument. For example, whether the writer is with or against the subject matter being discussed in a given text. And this can be understood from the general colouring of the text and the argumentative points that are raised by the writer. The matching of these two levels is necessary to better understand how colloquial words could implicate attitudinal meanings and how they

are ideologically motivated. Thus, the researcher will relate the meanings of the lexical choices under scrutiny to the general mood of the text, owing to the fact that the overall attitude of speakers/writers is a kind of prosody.

The selected opinion articles (online versions) fall within 2023 and 2024. They are randomly retrieved from two authoritative, elite Iraqi newspapers, namely, the independent *Azzaman* Newspaper, and the independent *Almadah* Newspaper.

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the role of colloquial words in Iraqi opinion articles and their function in activating authorial positions and ideologies. The research is guided by the principles of CDA, which provides a framework for examining the relationship between language, power, and society.

The diagram below presents the eclectic model proposed for analysis.



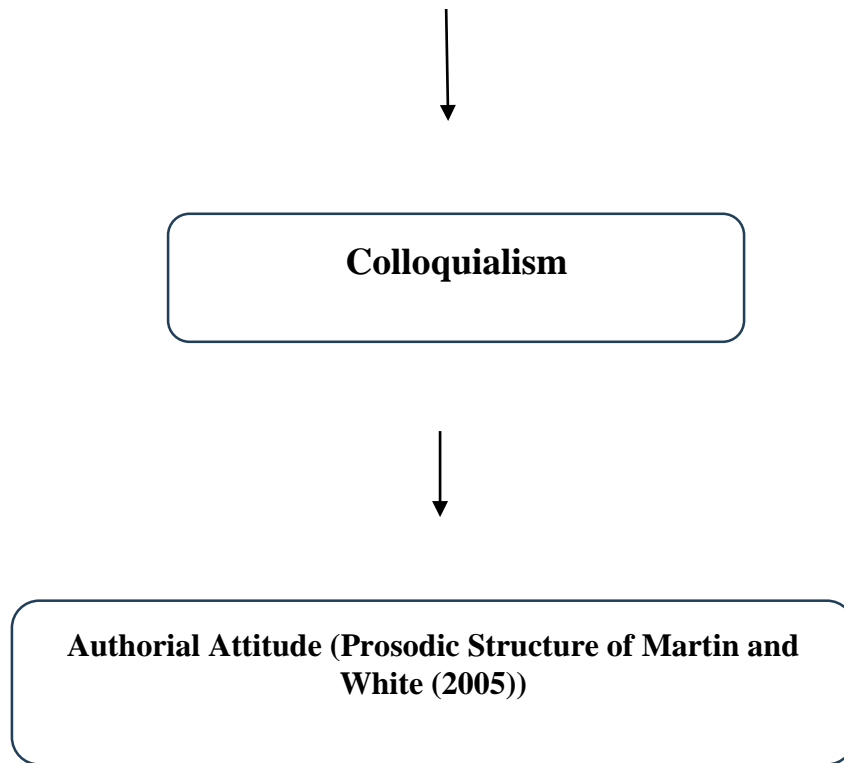


Diagram 1: the eclectic model proposed for data analysis

DATA ANALYSIS

The selected articles will be analyzed according to the eclectic model developed for this study, which primarily focuses on Martin and White's (2005) concepts related to the prosodic structure of textual attitude, as well as van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and the ideological strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation.

In what follows is a discussion of concrete instances of colloquial wordings manifested in the selected articles. The parenthesized detail next to each excerpt

represents the order of the article in the Appendix. Under each excerpt there is an English translation:

(Article 1) "احذروا البزازين لأنها خطر على أمن الدولة" (1)

[‘Beware of **cats** because they are a threat to national security’]

The above is title of an article. Here, the author uses the colloquial word البزازين instead of the formal word القطط which means (cats). This statement is simply an irony. According to Alan Partington (2007), irony involves a discrepancy between appearance and reality, or between what is said and what is meant. Hence, the author seeks to make the reader infer the intended criticism and sarcasm, for it is impossible that a cat represents a threat to national security. He mocks the security measures adopted by the police to protect the public institutions’ buildings. The author tells readers that one day a policeman stopped the author’s car at a checkpoint because the (k9) dog waved its tail and nodded its head. The policeman attributed the dog’s gesture to the possibility that it could have smelled the scent of a cat on the car’s wheel, the author maintains. The author implicitly suggests the illogicality of such security measures. The use of this colloquial word, which recurred four times in the text, is motivated by the ideology of adding point to the sarcasm and irreverence. These informal words also function rhetorically to appeal to the readers and persuade them of the authorial attitude.

(Article 2) "مستقلون ماكو" (2)

[‘**There are no** independents’]

This is also a title of an article. The author uses the colloquial word ماكو rather than the formal equivalents لا يوجد / ليس هناك, which means (there is/are no), for ideological ends. In this article, the author argues that the slogans of “no partisanship, no

sectarianism” raised by the independent MPs in the recent elections are fake. He explicitly argues that the promises to fight corruption and set up rehabilitative and constructive enterprises are just words. The citizens realized that they were entangled in a lie called the independents, the article continues. Thus, the general colouring of this text and the overall argument suggests that this colloquial word carries attitudinal implicatures of heightened negative critique. It is worth noting that the text is replete with ironic expressions, one of which is "بعد عشرين عاماً على تجربتنا الديمقراطية الرائدة التي أدهشت القاصي والداني، وجعلت دولة مثل اليابان تتمنى أن تنقل هذه التجربة المثيرة،" meaning "After twenty years of our pioneering democratic experience that amazed everyone near and far, it has made a country like Japan wish to adopt this exciting experience." The author implies the opposite, so what is said is counterfactual to what is really meant. Hence, colloquialism serves to foreground this criticism and is driven by the negative–other presentation’s ideology.

(Article 3) "شركة تركية تتبنى المشروع واماراتية لتكملته والثلاثين مليار وين؟؟" (3)

[‘A Turkish company was undertaking the completion of the project, and an Emirati company is to finalize it. Where are the thirty billion dinars??’]

"إذا ما تم انتخاب مجلس محافظة جديد ... ستبرز على السطح المواجهة الحقيقية بين فريقين أو أكثر، (4) بمعنى اننا سنرجع الى المربع الاول... ويخبط هذا من ذاك ما أمكنه من المشاريع"

[‘If a new provincial council is elected, the real confrontation between two or more teams will emerge, meaning we will return to square one, and this group would try to snatch from the other whatever projects they could.’]

Both of the excerpts above are taken from (Article 3). In this article, the author articulates his position that despite the fact that the experience of provincial councils has proven to be an absolute failure, Iraqi politicians still insist on holding elections

for them. In excerpt (3), the question word **وين** is the colloquial equivalent of **أين** which means (where). In this rhetorical question, the author tacitly accuses the otherness of stealing the public money and the funds assigned to the major public projects. By using the casual language of the layman, the author seeks to arouse moral outrage and elicit attitudinal response in readers. As for the colloquial word **يخبط** (snatch) in excerpt (4), it is set to saturate the overall attitude and present the textual other negatively. On the face of it, this colloquial word has a comic effect because it is trendy and more associated with young people. However, using colloquial words instead of the formal equivalents implies heightened sarcasm, thereby manipulating readers cognitively and emotively. So, colloquial expressions function within the ideological framework of negatively presenting the textual otherness.

"عندما اصدر رئيس الجمهورية مرسومه قلت حينها يبدو يعتقد أن سبب مشاكل هذه البلاد وغياب الكهرباء (5) وارتفاع سعر الدولار والتصحّر...، وارتفاع نسبة البطالة. سبب كل هذه "**البلاوي**" هو الكاردينال لويس ساكو"

[‘When the President issued his decree, I said at that time that it seems he believes the reason for the country's problems, the absence of electricity, the rise in the dollar's exchange rate, desertification..., and the increase in the unemployment rate. The cause of all these 'calamities' is Cardinal Louis Sako’]

The above excerpt is extracted from (Article 4). In this article, the author holds that the decision of the President of the Republic to withdraw the presidential decree appointing Cardinal Louis Sako as the Patriarch of the Chaldean Church in Iraq is damaging to the reputation of the Cardinal. The article’s author describes this decision as empty and flimsy because, one year later, the Prime Minister issued an order appointing Cardinal Louis Sako as the Patriarch of the Chaldean Church in

Iraq. As the text unfolds, the author raises this question: why does His Excellency the President remain silent regarding the Prime Minister's decision? In excerpt (6), the author sarcastically and ironically says that it seems the President believes Cardinal Louis Sako is responsible for the country's troubles, including the lack of electricity, the soaring dollar exchange rate, desertification, and the increasing unemployment rate. He uses the colloquial word بلاوي in place of the formal words مشاكل/مصائب which means (troubles/ calamities). These colloquial words are employed to intensify the severity of the criticism and the effect of sarcasm. They reveal the author's presence and intersubjectivity, especially since they appear in a text filled with ironic expressions and an overall negative attitude. Again, colloquial words are markedly used to reinforce the ideology of negatively presenting the other.

CONCLUSION

Addressing the study's central question – why do writers employ colloquial language as a persuasive tool in opinion articles? – the research concluded with the following findings.

Evaluatively, opinion writers use informal language as a persuasive tool to intensify the severity of the criticism and the sarcastic effect. By using everyday language, the author aims to provoke moral outrage and evoke a response from the readers. Hence, colloquial language can make the text feel more relatable and engaging, which might amplify the emotional and moral impact of the message. Colloquial words are used in the analyzed data to serve these functions of activating or intensifying the writer's attitude and maintaining relations with readers to align them into a community of shared positions. They are used for evaluative and affective purposes of sarcasm, severe criticism, irreverence, contempt, and irony.

Rhetorically, colloquial words are used for effect. Opinion writers use colloquial words to sound authentic, as readers tend to respond positively to terms that reflect their everyday speech. This approach enhances persuasiveness and builds rapport with readers.

The study has explored the use of colloquial words in Iraqi opinion articles through the lens of CDA. The analysis supports two key conclusions: firstly, that this linguistic phenomenon is driven by Positive Self-Presentation and Negative Other-Presentation ideologies. Through linguistic choices, authors subtly construct favorable self-images while implicitly critiquing others. Thus, the use of colloquial language often serves to strengthen the ideological stance of portraying the 'other' in a negative light. Secondly, the study emphasizes that colloquial words serve as linguistic tools that implicate authorial attitudes, shaping reader perceptions and fostering a sense of shared values within the discourse community. These findings highlight the nuanced ways in which language shapes and reflects socio-political power dynamics in media discourse. By unpacking these mechanisms, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how language functions as a tool of persuasion and ideological positioning in public opinion discourse.

In light of the above-mentioned findings, the study has found that colloquial words are predominantly used in texts that are laden with irony and a generally negative tone.

To sum up, colloquial words are utilized for these ideological ends: negatively present the other, evaluate specific entities and their actions, and mocking the otherness. Thus, colloquial words are motivated by their ideological goals to change the readers' outlook on the issues being discussed.

DISCUSSION

This study has revealed significant insights into the strategic use of colloquial words in Iraqi opinion articles.

The findings demonstrate that colloquial words are not mere linguistic deviations but are deliberately employed to achieve specific rhetorical goals. This strategic use of language underscores the importance of colloquialism in the ideological framing of opinion articles. Since these articles emphasize local values and local issues, the use of colloquial language in this formal context is not a sign of a lack of sophistication or professionalism but a deliberate choice to create a stronger appeal to the reader.

Moreover, the use of colloquial language enhances reader engagement by resonating with their everyday communication patterns. This rhetorical strategy not only appeals to the reader's emotions but also fosters a sense of solidarity and co-membership between the writer and the reader. In other words, the writer uses colloquial words to give populist force to his voice. Thus, colloquial language makes opinion more accessible to a broader audience. It bridges the gap between formal written language and spoken language. By employing colloquialism, writers aim to naturalize their viewpoints and make them more palatable to a wider range of readers. This linguistic strategy reflects broader societal trends towards informalization and the conversationalization of public discourse. It aligns with van Dijk's (2005) assertion that media discourse shapes people's knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies (Ononye, 2017).

In conclusion, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the evaluative and ideological functions of colloquialism in media discourse. It highlights the necessity for readers and researchers to critically examine the use of informal language in formal settings, recognizing its potential to shape public opinion and

reinforce ideological ends. Future research should continue to explore this dynamic, particularly in different cultural and linguistic contexts, to further elucidate the complex interplay between language, ideology, and reader engagement in opinion journalism.

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APPENDIX

Azzaman Newspaper

Article 1: احذروا البزازين لانها خطر على أمن الدولة (September 25, 2023)

Translation: ‘Beware of cats because they are a threat to national security’

Almada Newspaper

Article 2: مستقلون ماكو (September 24, 2023)

Translation: ‘There are no independents’

Article 3: البصرة بعودة المجلس لا سامح الله (August 29, 2023)

Translation: 'Basra in case of Provincial Council's return, God forbids'

Article 4: "فاشوش" جمهوري!! (June 13, 2024)

Translation: 'Empty presidential decree'