

Legitimization Strategies in the Tweets of President Barham Salih from January to October, 2021

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the legitimization strategies in the Tweets of the Iraqi president Barham Salih's from Jan.2021 to Oct.2021. This article is an attempt to explore language at the diplomatic level. It explores how language can be a medium of legitimization in society. It aims to highlight the linguistic strategies that are used to (de)legitimate various political issues in President Barham Saleh's tweets. The analysis relies heavily on the framework of the Legitimization strategies by Van Leeuwen (2007) that identifies and interprets the strategies used. The data involve 13 tweets to be analyzed qualitatively. The article concludes that president Salih utilizes the authorization and rationalization strategies in his tweets. The most frequent types of the strategies applicable are goal-orientation and definition types (for rationalization strategy); and personal and expert authority (for authorization strategy). Such strategies show no improvising which is a kind of ideology that is based on systematic plan.

KEYWORDS: Barham Salih, CDA, Legitimization strategies, President, Tweets.

1. Introduction

Social media plays an important role in our lives nowadays. They spread wide and fast. But there is a tendency to abuse others through the social media. Thus, this twitter account is used a- to investigate the legitimization strategy and b- to explore a non-bias official account and C- what is the most used pronoun in the tweets such as personal pronouns application which they are related to identity and ideology (Fairclough, 2003). In fact, most politicians have a power and capability to manipulate language which has a role in getting the public attention and support.

2. MEDIA

Media is a term that refers to the communication means that accumulate/ transport data and information. BrPain (2019) states that, "Media refers to elements as television and radio etc. Media, plural form of medium, describes general communication channels. Al-Mnaseer (2013) indicates that mass media stand to all means of spreading cultural knowledge to the audience and recently have become the most powerful vehicles in the moulding of beliefs, attitude, and value since they can reach every individual. According to Alison and Hanson (1999) Media is considered as source of both information and entertainment for audience, source of transmitting information and values for the society, and profit and political power for the owners.

Social media is well-desired type of media nowadays and it is considered as affective global communication that makes life easier. There is so much interest in searching social media as it interacts all life levels. The use of social media can reduce meaningful activities, encouraging more screen time, and finally creates addiction (Christakis & Shakya, 2017). Social media makes individuals argue, criticize, comment (positively and negatively). However, this leads people to ignore manners, perform freely, use unacceptable structures (Christakis & Shakya, 2017). As the social media is a sheer environment, the used language spread rapidly. Unfortunately, the negative uses of language whether cover or overt spread more. Additionally, any uses of covering, deleting these negative comments are spotted by users and cause insults (Ramsay, 2010).

3. TWITTER

Twitter is one of the well-known social media platforms that was introduced in 2006 by Noah Glass, Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams and Biz Stone. According to High field, twitter is a highly visible part of the digital landscape that gives variety of purposes (High field et al., 2013).

Twitter's easy use provides possibility of sharing various events, news, personal feelings, and information related to the emergency (Muralidran et al., 2011).

The comments should be written using civilized language and avoiding words that constitute hate speech, racism, and violence. These types of comments are examples which indicate that the language used on Twitter may be rude, irritate, cause offend, and frustrates others.

The blue badge next to the names on the accounts refers to an authentic and verified account. Otherwise, the account is not verified. A verified account is determined by public interests. Usually, such a kind of account involves songs, sports, religious, social and political issues, etc. According to the Twitter's policy, this verified badge can be removed, also previously verified accounts might not restore this status again.

4. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) addresses power issues in linguistic interactions between individuals/ groups. CDA examines how discourse is created, reproduced, questioned or deconstructed (Giorgis, 2015). Recently, the expression 'critical' discloses the way the language is used, how it affects us and its political and social control over our life. Blommaert and Bulcaen (2002) believe that discourse consists of a power entity in which it becomes more observable by the CDA. CDA is considered a tool where it goes beyond what we get from the surface-level. According to Fairclough and Wodak CDA forms as social practice (1997). It has significance when it links language and power. It is commonly agreed that CDA is viewed as an approach rather than a single method. It contains methods and perspectives to study and analyze the use of language and social context and the relationship they have.

According to Norman Fair clough, CDA aspires "to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony" (1993: 135). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) set many principles of CDA including: A-CDA addresses social problems, B-power relation is discursive, C- discourse is about culture and society.

5. VAN LEEUWEN'S (2007) LEGITIMIZATION FRAMEWORK

Legitimization is a discourse process that involves conscious use of language to justify a decision, an idea, an action, process or behavior while seeking approval or support from audience (Cap, 2008; Reyes, 2011). Legitimation is essential politically to justify actions which are intended to be achieved within the range of interests of the target (Cap, 2006). The most noticeable performance of legitimation is to discursively construct and justify certain facts, orders and values (Fairclough, 2003b; van Dijk, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007). Legitimation presupposes values implicitly and explicitly, and states that some of actions or decisions are acceptable within a given legal/political system (van Dijk, 1998). The legitimation process is achieved through argumentation whereby a powerful person /group presents an argument to explain their actions or to seek approval for their actions (Rojo & van Dijk: 1997). Thus, "it is making sense of power, ... to those who exercise that power; to those who are subject to the exercise of power; or to both" (cited in Braker,2004:37). Van Leeuwen (2008) explains that legitimation is a linguistic model that investigates how speakers construct their discourses, specifically arguments, to explain why certain practices happened. De-legitimation analysis represents opponent actions and social practices through authorization, moralization, rationalization and mythopoesis strategies (van Leeuwen, 2008).

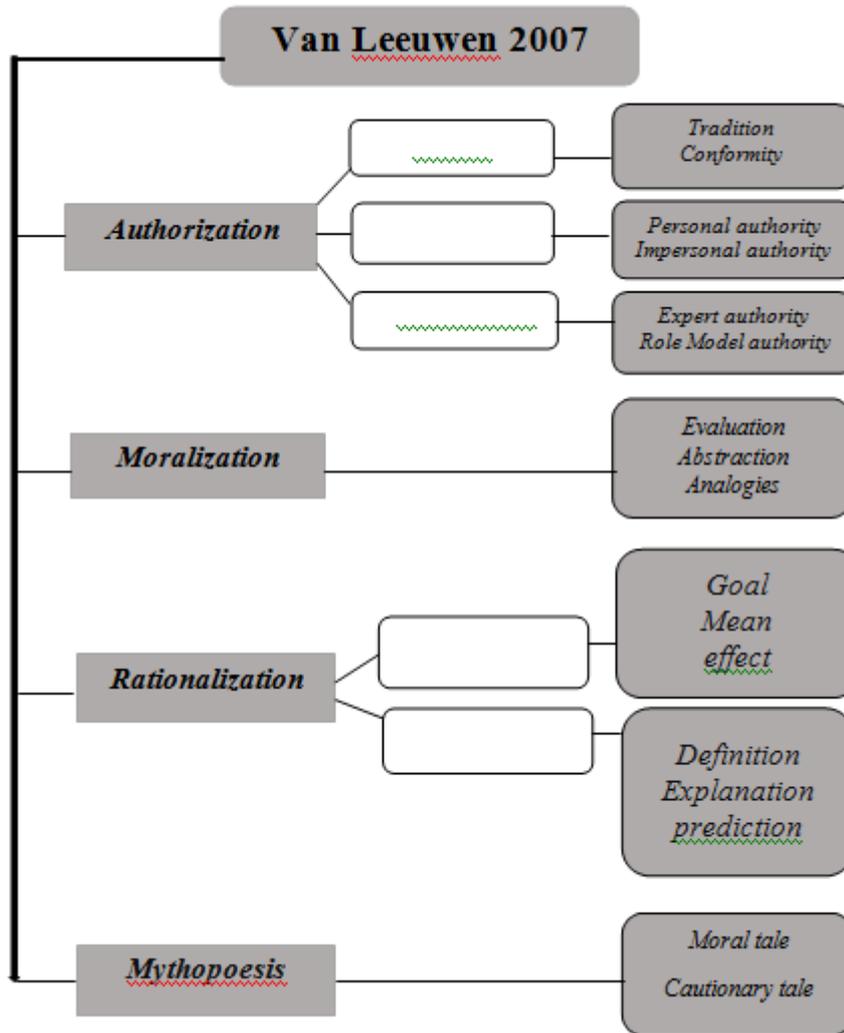


Figure (1): conceptual Framework of Van Leeuwen's Theory (2007).

6. LEGITIMIZATION STRATEGIES

6.1 Authorization

Authorization is defined as the authority that is stated by law, and society (traditions and costumes), and this involves the persons with the institutional authority. This discursive strategy is subdivided into subcategories (authority, commendation, custom). According to Van der Houwen (2015) authorization contain: personal authority, expert authority, impersonal authority, role model authority, tradition authority, and finally conformity authority. The answer to why here is “because authority X says so”.

A- Personal authority is a kind of authority that is granted to person(s) with role in an institution or their role in certain context. Such as, "That’s what the mother says" can reveal personal authority (Van Leeuwen, 2008).

B- Impersonal authority, it comes under the name of impersonality of things, matters, or even ideas. this strategy involves laws, traditions, rules, or regulations. Thus, the answer of “why?” is “because the rules say so”. Often this type makes use of adjectives like obligatory and comes in form of verbal processes usually.

C- Expert authority refers to one’s expertise and not by status, it can be stated explicitly by providing qualifications for instance, or implicitly if the individual was well-known.

D- the authority of role model involves individuals such as politicians and celebrities. In some cases, it requires more justification, for example in positive descriptions.

E- Tradition authority implies the relationship with tradition, habits, practice, and customs. The answer to the "why" question is constructed on what we do always, not because the doing of obligatory thing.

F- Conformity authority, this type does not deal with the reason why something emerges but simply because that is what always done and every one does (Van Leeuwen, 2007). It provides an answer to why? As “most people are doing it, and so should you”. This type can also be revealed through a comparison form.

6.2 Moralization

Moralization is defined as a kind of evaluation that highlights moral outline. It contains the following types: evaluation, abstraction, and comparison. According to Davies evaluation is about contrast of values center on concrete qualities for mentioning entities (2014). It can be expressed through adjectives as "good", "bad", "natural" and "normal" (Van Leeuwen, 2007). Abstracting indicates abstract ways ‘moralize’ practices. This type links the practice to discourse as it refers to the practice in abstract way to moralize it by a quality that links it to discourse of moral value (Van Leeuwen, 2008). Comparison is a sample of analogy (Davies, 2014), where it is like another activity which is associated with positive and negative values. It answers the why? question by "it is similar to X that is considered as a practice with moral value, positive one".

6.3 Rationalization

Rationalization provides purposes to social and traditional practices. As the previous strategy, this one has two types that can be found, they are instrumental and theoretical. The first sub-category is instrumental rationalization in which it involves goal-, effect-, means- orientations. Such as:

- a- Goal-Oriented can be expressed through intentions, motives, or goals. The followed form can be as " I do X in order to do/ be/ have Y".
- b- Mean-orientation can be realized through reaching higher goals. As it follows the form of " I achieve doing/being/having Y through X-ing".
- c- Effect-Oriented can be realized by concentrating on accomplished activities/practices results.

The second sub-category is theoretical rationalization, Van der Houwen (2015) stated that it shows that legitimation is formed on a kind of reality that usually subordinated with meaning, it is instituted on a kind of truth, rather than on purpose. Theoretical rationalization come in three types explanation, definition and prediction. As:

- a- Definition is described in terms of another, moralized practice. These practices usually can be expressed through significative "mean" or attributive "is".
- b- Explanation, the followed form here can be expressed as doing this is suitable for these actors. The actors are characterized in this type instead of the practices.
- c- Prediction, this type is constructed on experience, and opposing practice/ action can prove it wrong.

6.4 Mythopoesis

Mythopoesis is the last strategy which is achieved via story telling or narrative. this strategy has main categories come under the following titles (moral and cautionary tales):

- a- Moral tales: where there is a reward to the main characters because of engaging in legitimate actions.
- b- Cautionary tales, kind of tales that inform the consequences if a person doesn't obey the social practices' norms. in other words, it related to the reward and punishment beliefs.

7.DATA COLLECTION

The data collected from the official twitter account of the Iraqi president Barham Salih. The data involves 18 tweets (Jan – Oct, 2021). These tweets tackle various issues as (Yazidi victims, the Pope visit, International Women's Day and terrorism).

8. THE ANALYSIS

The tweets are analyzed according to Van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimization strategies including authorization, moralization, rationalization, mythopoesis. Legitimization can come in form of one strategy , individually, or a combination of more than one strategy, some tweets involve more than one strategy but the study tackles the main one.

Authorization

a-Personal authority is assigned to the individuals who has role in specific institutions or power status, the following tweets contain this type of strategy.

Tweet (1)

... @BarhamSalih ✓ **Barham Salih** 
 In Baghdad, at the "Martyrs Monument", we mourned 104 Yazidi victims massacred by ISIS. On Saturday they will be buried in Kocho, Sinjar. We cannot rest until all Yazidis & Iraqis massacred by terrorists lie in peace, justice is served & extremism is eradicated. Never again!

The prominent theme in this tweet is mourning Yazidi victims massacred by the members of ISIS. The President Barham Salih employs the use of authorization strategy through the personal authority.

The President uses the pronoun "we" to refer to himself and the people, sharing the personal authority with people. Moreover, using "we" intended to polarize the audience attention and evoke their feelings. The tweet legitimizes the Yazidi minority and de-legitimizes ISIS actions. The tweet starts with "In Baghdad" that is a deictic expression refers to the location which is the capital of Iraq to give more formality to the tweet. As the expressions of "Kocho" and "Sinjar" legitimizes the Yazidi's right in these areas and indicates that these areas faced terrorism. Additionally, the Martyrs Monument indicates the victims value.

Tweet

(2)

... @BarhamSalih ✓ **Barham Salih** 
 On the occasion of this visit, I welcome the initiative to establish the House of Abraham for Religious Dialogue. I also hope to create a permanent conference for dialogue, headed by representatives from the Vatican, Najaf, al-Azhar, al-Zeituna among other religious centers.

The President Salih employs the personal authority in the above tweet. He legitimizes the personal authority of "the Vatican, the Shia, the Suna" inviting them all to create conference in purpose of enhancing understanding and dialogue between the religious parties. The pronoun "I" refers to the President and it is used to indicate his personal authority showing different types of leadership by using it instead of the pronoun "we".

Tweet (3)

... @BarhamSalih ✓ **Barham Salih** 
 On #InternationalWomensDay, I am proud to sign the bill for Yazidi Female Survivors into Law, an important step to help survivors of atrocities by ISIS against Yazidis, Christians and Turkomen. Justice, restitution are crucial to ensure such horrendous crimes never happen again.

This tweet tackles minorities sacrifices, particularly the women. The tweet is announced in the International Women Day. The tweet is an attempt to support women specially Yazidis, Christians and Turkmen victims. The use of the personal pronoun "I" make the tweet looks more genuine. The president de-legitimizes the consequences of ISIS actions and encourages women to look forward and get their rights and he is the one who supported them using his own authority.

Tweet (4)

... @BarhamSalih ✓ **Barham Salih** 
 Today I received a group of brave Yazidi women. The Yazidi Survivors Law we passed was the start of the process to bring Yazidis justice; we must continue to work with the international community to free our abducted daughters & rebuild their homes and prosecute the criminals!

The president employs the personal authority again in a tweet concerning the Yazidi Survivors law. This time the president wants to globalized this minority case as he involves the international community and focusing on the female victims specifically. He uses the personal pronouns "I" and "We" to refer once to his authority and once to himself and other governmental members. Therefore, he is using the expert Authority which is assigned to the individuals with certain qualification and who can through their authority achieve certain political and social goals.

Tweet (5)

... @BarhamSalih  **Barham Salih**
 We welcome His Holiness, Pope @Pontifex in Baghdad. Your presence in Mesopotamia after the violence that swept our country will remain impressed in the consciousness of Iraqis of all faiths, who sacrificed to preserve peaceful coexistence despite difficulties and tribulations.

The President Salih employs the expert authority as the Pope is a well-known figure. The qualifications of the Pope are realized in the President's reference of the "Iraqis of all faiths...". The deictic expressions of the locations are used to show formality by using " Baghdad" and the ancient heritage by using " Mesopotamia". The plural pronoun "we" indicates that the President speaks on the behalf of the nation, as the people share his view towards the Pope.

Tweet

(6)

... @BarhamSalih  **Barham Salih**
 Iraqis take pride in protecting churches. We witnessed the Muslims rush to help their Christian brethren after terrorists attacked Sayyidat al-Najat church, or the unforgettable images of Iraqi soldiers carrying a fallen cross on their shoulders back to the church.

The president employs a use of evaluation of the Iraqi people and their roles in protecting holy places and helping people from different religions specifically after 2003. He gives examples of the honorable actions of Muslims to support the Christians. The positive description of the Iraqi citizens is a way of legitimizing their practices. The pronoun "we" is used by the president again on the personal and the Iraqi people. He is using the moralization authority which is based on one's common sense of cultural knowledge.

Tweet (7)

... @BarhamSalih  **Barham Salih**
 Healing Iraq's deep wounds demands that we ensure Iraq is a stage for cooperation among the countries of the region not a theater for their conflicts and rivalries. An independent and fully sovereign Iraq can be a pillar of a regional order based on mutual respect.

The prominent theme here is clearing Iraq's situation. The president Barham Salih uses the goal-oriented rationalization to de-legitimize the region countries conflicts in Iraq and emphasizes Iraq's situation in the cooperation stage will help healing Iraq's deep wounds. In this tweet, the purpose is changing the situation from conflicts case to cooperation. The president justifies this through revealing the positive result of it, as this result would motivate the readers.

Tweet (8)

... @BarhamSalih  **Barham Salih**
 5/5 The region must come together to pursue sustainable development based on economic integration & combating #ClimateChange. The status quo is truly untenable, we need to move the region towards environmentally sound economic cooperation & integration, away from conflict.

The President Barham Salih emphasizes on the climate change in this tweet through the goal-oriented strategy. The personal pronoun "we" is used here to refer to himself and other political figures in the country representing the definition type of the theoretical rationalization strategy.

Tweet (9)

...

٦٠ أكتوبر @BarhamSalih ✓ Barham Salih



3/5 Iraq is classified as the 5th most vulnerable nation in the world because of water and food shortages and extreme temperatures.

Our water deficit will be 10.8 billion cubic meters by 2035 while our income will decrease as the world converts from oil to sustainable energy.

The employed definition type is used here to introduce certain facts about Iraq's climate. This tweet is directed to the Iraqis. It provides them with the needed facts to support the other president's tweets that deal with the same matter. The use of the personal pronoun "our" in "our water" and "our income" stands for the President and Iraqi people as a whole.

Tweet (10)

...

٦٠ أكتوبر @BarhamSalih ✓ Barham Salih



4/5 The revitalization of Mesopotamia is vital for Iraq and the region, brings us together to face shared climate change challenges. The includes reforestation, modernization of water management, sustainable energy & CO2 reduction encourages the private sector to take lead.

This tweet shows the continuation that deals with the climate changes. Again, the President defines and moralizes the practices due to the use of attributive "is". This tweet aims to make people pay attention to the private sector in Iraq.

Tweet (11)

...

٥٠ مارس @BarhamSalih ✓ Barham Salih



Sadly, we live in an era of division and polarization, caused by terrorism, incitement to violence and hate speech. This is a threat to all of our futures. We must continue the efforts to counter extremist thought, and stamp out the roots of terrorism.

The prominent theme is the violence in Iraq. The President Salih de-legitimizes terrorism strongly as he explains the cause and effect of this violence. The use of the personal pronoun "we" here indicates that all Iraqis are responsible and must take actions. He uses the explanation strategy which focuses on the actors and how actions are suitable, to the point that it may even become strange if these actors didn't perform these actions.

Tweet (12)

...

٥٠ مارس @BarhamSalih ✓ Barham Salih



Iraq has been through a most trying period. More challenges lie as we commit to fulfil the demands of our citizens for fundamental government reforms, and for growth, social justice, job opportunities for our youth, and freedoms, and for bolstering the country's sovereignty.

The president Salih makes a commitment towards the citizens demands on the different levels. The use of the explanation type of strategy shows what is important to be mentioned in the reforms of the government. The tweet can show the lack in the necessary matters as the social justice and job opportunities. The use of the personal pronoun "we" stands for the President and the government members who have commitments.

Tweet (13)

...

٦٠ أكتوبر @BarhamSalih ✓ Barham Salih



2/5 Iraq's population will be 80/M by 2050 while desertification affects 39% of our country and 54% of our agricultural lands are degraded because of salination. Reduced water flow of the Tigris & Euphrates has also resulted in increased salinization of Shatt al Arab & the Gulf.

The President Salih predicted that the facts of climate would also include more claim that they already have an international research position, and they make the prediction that this position will be

reinforced in the future the by establishment of the mentioned research facilities. The university is presumably basing their prediction on expertise and experience, and can therefore in principle be denied by contrary experience. Nevertheless, the readers should be convinced that the university's practice of research will only keep improving.

9. CONCLUSION

This article concludes that President Barham Salih tends to use the personal pronoun "we" in his Tweets when he is legitimizing actions and provides positive description and explanations of different political and social issues. Further, he de-legitimizes and uses negative descriptions through using names and practices. The use of the personal pronoun "we" indicates sharing the president his personal authority with the people especially in positive practices. Yet, leadership in some cases requires the personal pronoun "I " instead of the pronoun "we" as in crisis time or certain situations that takes an institutional authority to pave the path of success, security, and plans.

Deictic expressions are used heavily to indicate formality and reveal people relationship through discourse. The English tweets focus on the following issues: religion, minorities, terrorism and its victim, Iraqi forces, climate. Additionally, the main focus relies on the world-wide issues as the climate and the Pope's visit to Iraq. The lack of emphasis on the elections reveals that he won't be nominated again.

The President Barham Salih tends to use the rationalization strategy (goal-orientation/definition) followed by the authorization strategy (expert authority/personal authority) to (de)legitimize sides/practices. As a president, Salih understands the behaviors of Iraqis who expect assertiveness, loyalty and leadership. The various use of legitimization strategies in a systemic way that reveals the president's efforts that develop a good image and reflect his capability as president to the Iraqi people.

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