

# **Manipulative Strategies in Political Discourse: A Comparative Pragmatic-Rhetorical and Semantic Analysis of English and Arabic Political Speeches**

Qasim Hawas Hadi, Department of English Language, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

*qasimhawa4151@gmail.com*

AtefeSadat Mirsaeeedi\*, Department of English Language, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

*Atefemirsaeeedi@gmail.com*

Ghanim Jwaid Idan, Department of English Language, College of Education, University of Karbala, Karbala Iraq

*ghanim.j@uokerbala.edu.iq*

Sahar Najarzadegan, Department of English Language, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University,

Isfahan, Iran

*snajarzadegan@gmail.com*

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines how politicians speaking in English and Arabic deceive their audience by using pragmatic and rhetorical skills. The semantic analysis exposes the conscious and unconscious meanings of their messages, showing how meaning is manufactured within and potentially manipulated in English and Arabic political discourse. A mixed-method approach, along with purposive sampling and qualitative, quantitative, and comparative analyses, was applied to ensure the selection of major speeches representative of key political events. It contained famous Western and Arab politicians' statements on world affairs from the Iraq War to the present. The analysis examined manipulation by the use of speech acts, presuppositions, Grice's Maxims, rhetorical techniques, and semantic devices. The researcher delineated these features of language and their implications on the main point of each speech. The results showed intriguing manipulation practices by politicians from both linguistic groups. English-speaking politicians rely on directness, trust, and positive narration through statements of fact, promises, logic, and credibility. Arabic-speaking politicians went for a much more subtle approach, establishing civility to create a rapport of friendship and shared goals and emotional appeals to invoke shared identity and history. While the languages that they speak are different, both the English and Arabic politicians share certain characteristics: directness and assertiveness, rapport, framing, and clever figurative language. The results showed that the two language groups appealed to different persuasive strategies but differed in culture and language. The English-speaking group relied on directness and individual independence while the Arabic speaking group relied on subtleties, collective identity, allusions to religion or traditions. All these discrepancies demonstrated how language, culture, and political discourse interact and how language can affect audiences across cultures. These findings are important for understanding political communication dynamics, shaping

language training, improving politician cross-cultural communication, and guiding political discourse analysis research. Understanding cultural differences can improve political engagement in various circumstances.

**Keywords:** Manipulation, Pragmatics, Pragmatic Rhetorical Analysis, Rhetoric and Devices, Semantics

## INTRODUCTION

What puts political discourse at the forefront of the role it plays in the creation of public opinion and societal norms is that the words politicians say are not just a medium of communication but a tool able to change emotions, frame narratives, and construct realities. This paper will go in-depth into the usage of manipulative devices by politicians in their speeches with the determination of differences and similarities between the English and Arabic contexts. Such an understanding is important in the analysis of effects of political communication on audiences across cultures. With increasing globalization of political landscapes, the interaction between language and culture in political rhetoric also grows in importance (Kuzmenko et al., 2022).

The manipulation of language in political discourse has been of interest to linguists and political analysts, since it is not new. It is noticeable that politicians make use of rhetorical devices in their speeches in order to manipulate their audiences subtly. This study will approach those manipulative strategies through the comparative method focusing on English and Arabic political speeches. Historically, the use of language as a manipulative device can be sourced to classical rhetoric. Aristotle's teachings on persuasion summed up the earliest framework through which one could understand how language might be employed to sway public opinion (Gomaa, 2023). His concept of ethos, pathos, and logos remains foundational in the analysis of political discourse today (Gimadeeva et al., 2019).

In modern contexts, such political speeches have become composite forms of communication that are reflective of cultural values and dynamics within society. Various socio-political changes have helped in the development of rhetoric. In the 20th century, the rise of mass media completely changed the way politicians communicate with constituents and required new ways of drawing attention and furthering messages (Shigapova et al., 2021). Contemporary politicians rely more on sound bites and emotionally charged rhetoric to connect with their audiences in an era where digital platforms almost instantaneously spread information (Kuzmenko et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the globalization of communication has also identified the cross-cultural exchange of rhetorical strategies. With English being one of the highly placed global languages, its rhetorical styles have obviously influenced non-English speaking politicians; on the other hand, Arabic rhetoric still maintains its unique features molded by its cultural context (Al-Mansoori et al., 2022). Such cross-cultural interaction requires subtlety in understanding how manipulation works within different linguistic frameworks.

Language is used as a vehicle to negotiations of power in political discourse. CDA emphasizes that language may not only reflect but also reproduce inequalities in society (Shigapova et al., 2021). The politicians make use of language, with an adequate strategy, in identity construction, issue framing, and gaining support for them. For instance, the way an issue is framed may result in significant public opinion and policy consequence (Gimadeeva et al., 2019). Manipulative practices show themselves quite often in different rhetorical tropes, such as metaphors, hyperbole, and euphemisms. These devices can veil reality or present information in a way that agrees with the speaker's agenda (Kuzmenko et al., 2022). For example,

euphemisms may be used to soften the impact of controversial policies or actions, making them more palatable to the public (Corbett, 2015).

Moreover, there has been an overload of appealing to the emotions in both the English and Arabic political rhetoric. Multiple times, politicians evoke common cultural narratives or historical grievances in order to get an audience emotionally aroused (Al-Mansoori et al., 2022). Not only does such a tactic serve to breed a sense of group identity, but it also enforces loyalty among the constituents. The comparative analysis of the English and Arabic political speeches hints at different manipulative strategies that are culturally contextualized. Politicians from the English-speaking countries themselves often favor explicitness and clearness in their communication method (Smith & Jones, 2023). This is predicated on Western values that are individualistic and insistent on transparency in government (Gimadeeva et al., 2019). The politicians in the Arabic-speaking countries would opt for a subtler approach that underlines indirectness and appeal to the emotional side, all in consideration of the cultural grounds (Shigapova et al., 2021).

It is also reflective of larger social values in which collective identity and relational dynamics are given precedence over individual assertions (Al-Mansoori et al., 2022). In a nutshell, it is important to understand what manipulative strategies politicians apply in their speeches to better fathom the larger implications of political discourses on public opinion and societal norms. This study highlights how language functions as a tool of persuasion and a reflection of cultural values by rhetorically analyzing English and Arabic contexts from a pragma-rhetorical perspective. As political communication constantly evolves with changes around the world, these dynamics will assuredly require more investigation if scholars in this area are to make sense of how language, culture, and power intersect.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study contributes to the aspects of political discourse analysis, with regard to how language manipulation differs from one culture to another, with a focus on English and Arabic political speeches. The study has presented subtleties of how language can be used differently in respective rhetorical and pragmatic strategies by politicians in these two linguistic contexts for the manipulation of public perception and societal norms. Several dimensions can highlight the importance of the present study:

### **1. Bringing Better Understanding of Political Communication**

Political communication is a significant element in any democracy, acting as a connection between the leaders and their subjects. A study on how manipulative strategies in political discourse shape public attitudes and beliefs, thereby affecting collective decision-making processes (Kuzmenko et al., 2022).

Through the in-depth analysis of specific tactics applied by politicians, this research exposes the underpinning mechanisms behind political persuasion and points out the role of language as a tool of governance. Examples include Gimadeeva et al., 2019. 2. Cross-Cultural Insights: It is relevant to compare the political speeches of English and Arabic to bring out the ways through which cultural contexts are informative for rhetorical strategies. Although both groups make use of manipulation to achieve their goals, the study sets out some clear differences in approach. For instance, English-speaking politicians tend to praise directness and clarity, postures befitting the values of individualism and transparency associated with the West (Smith & Jones, 2023). Politicians speaking Arabic would often resort to much more subtle strategies, laying a greater emphasis on the appeal to the emotions and collective identity (Al-Mansoori et

al., 2022). This sort of cross-cultural vantage point not only deepens our understanding of political discourse but also emphasizes how styles of communication depend on cultural context.

### 3. Implications for Language Learning and Teaching

Findings in this study carry significant practical implications for language education and more so in the teaching of political discourse analysis. Awareness of the mechanism of manipulation within different cultural frameworks will enlarge students' critical thinking and reasonably lower their blindness in trying to analyze political texts effectively (Shigapova et al., 2021). Teachers may use such findings to develop an educational curriculum that takes into account the relationship between language, culture, and power dynamics and thus prepares students to critically engage with political communication in an age of globalization.

### 4. Contributions to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The study carried out is in support of the principles underpinning Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and aspires to unveil power relations embedded in language use. It contributes to the broader academic discourse regarding power dynamics in political communication by spelling out manipulative strategies put into practice either to sustain or challenge the current state of social inequalities (Gomaa, 2023). The identification of those rhetorical devices and their impacts on public perception with specificity serves to extend our view of how language might work to reproduce or challenge the dominant narratives.

### 5. Informing Policy and Political Strategy

The findings of this research could help to inform both the policy-maker and the political strategist about effective communication practices. Knowing what manipulative strategies work best with an audience in which cultural context, politicians can adopt and modify their message for maximum impact (Kuzmenko et al., 2022). This knowledge is particularly relevant in an age where international communication brings increased interconnectivity with every passing day and requires knowledge of diverging rhetorical traditions.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The literature on political discourse emphasizes the interplay between language, power, and ideology. Different researchers have, therefore, explored various aspects of rhetoric, pragmatics, and semantics within this context. One may argue that, in some respects, political discourse does not merely reflect the political realities; on the contrary, it turns out to be an exceptionally powerful tool in shaping them by forming public opinion and behavior (Kuzmenko et al., 2022). This strategic use of language, in political contexts, can be either supportive to the current power structures or challenge them, hence becoming important for linguists and analysts in political science (Shigapova et al., 2021). **Theoretical Background** The theoretical frameworks developed within pragmatics and rhetoric provide a base for analyzing manipulative strategies in political discourse. While pragmatics reflects on how context contributes to the interpretation of meaning, rhetoric refers to the techniques applied in persuading audiences (Gomaa 2023). Aristotle's appeals—logos (logical reasoning), ethos (credibility), and pathos (emotional appeal)—are some of the major components to understand persuasive language.

These rhetorical appeals are not only important for effective communication but also in the manipulation of public sentiment, since they help politicians craft messages that best resonate with their audiences on multiple levels—according to Gimadeeva et al., 2019.

A growing body of recent research has demonstrated that such rhetorical strategies can actually be much less effective across different cultural contexts. For instance, English-speaking politicians usually resort to directness and statements of fact in order to build credibility, whereas Arabic-speaking ones may use more indirect approaches, relying on affective ties and shared cultural stories (Al-Mansoori et al., 2022). This divergence underlines the importance of understanding the nuances of culture in political communication. Empirical Background

Previous literature has pointed out how various cultures use language strategically in political processes. There is enough evidence showing that political discourse is deeply embedded in the cultural values and social norms guiding the construction and reception of messages (Kuzmenko et al., 2022). For instance, while Western political rhetoric tends to emphasize individualism and transparency, Arabic rhetoric has a tendency to emphasize collectivism and relational dynamics (Shigapova et al., 2021). However, few have made any comparison between the English and Arabic contexts in terms of their rhetorical strategies. Gap in the Literature

Direct comparison between English and Arabic speeches, with regard to the rhetorical strategies employed, is scarce, as most literature on manipulation in political discourse is in existence. Most studies have tackled either the one or the other linguistic context or provided general insights into political communication, bearing no deep exploratory comparative analysis of specific cases (Kuzmenko et al., 2022). This lack of comparative research, therefore, limits our understanding of how different cultural backgrounds impact rhetorical practices. The existing literature, however, tends to gloss over the intersectionality that happens between language, culture, and ideology in the shaping of political discourse. This paper tries to redress this gap by assuming a pragma-rhetorical approach that pulls together insights from pragmatics and rhetoric in the exploration of manipulative strategies in both English and Arabic political speeches. Its aim is to contribute to some nuanced understanding of how language functions as a tool of persuasion across different cultural contexts.

This research will contribute to previous scholarship by pursuing in greater depth the complicated connections between language manipulation, power dynamics, and cultural context within political discourse. A comparative pragma-rhetorical analysis of English and Arabic political speeches will lay bare the unique rhetorical strategies used by politicians in these two linguistic groups while showing commonalities that reflect universal principles of persuasion.

This research fills not only a big gap in the literature but also increases our understanding about how language shapes public perceptions and influences societal norms across cultures.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

A mixed-method approach was followed in the present study, which combines the qualitative and quantitative analysis in the analysis of speeches by major politicians from both linguistic groups. It allows

the reader to explore in-depth the manipulative strategies through the conditions of political discourse by combining quantitative with extensive qualitative information.

The qualitative aspect is realized on the basis of a profound rhetorical and semantic analysis of the speeches, whilst the quantitative component embraces statistical evaluations regarding the frequency and kinds of manipulative strategies used. This dual approach has the advantage of increasing the robustness of the findings, allowing the study to capture both the subtleties in the use of language and larger patterns across contexts (Kuzmenko et al., 2022). Corpus of the Study A purposive sampling of speeches was conducted in the study involving major public figures in major political events to ensure diversity in terms of context.

### **Corpus of the Study**

The corpus included speeches by big-name political actors, among them heads of states and leaders of influence, given during the course of major events such as elections, international summits, and crises. By selecting impactful speeches with a wide dissemination, the study tried to represent major political events shaping the public discourse (Gimadeeva et al., 2019). This purposive sampling strategy ensured that the selected speeches were not only relevant but also representative of the rhetorical style characteristic of each linguistic group.

### **Model of the Study**

An eclectic model integrating speech acts theory, Grice's Maxims and rhetorical devices was used to analyze manipulation effectively. Speech acts theory provides a framework through which scholars understand how utterances work in communication and identifies utterances into a variety of categories that include assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations (Gomaa, 2023). Grice's Maxims—quantity, quality, relation, and manner—are guidelines for effective communication but can also be violated in order to arrive at manipulative ends (Shigapova et al., 2021). By studying how politicians address such maxims in their speeches, this paper lays bare the strategic decisions involved in subtle influence on the audience. The model also contains rhetorical devices, such as metaphors, hyperbole, and euphemisms, to add punch to persuasion. For example, metaphors can frame issues in ways to make audiences capable of feeling about them emotionally, while euphemisms may obscure the negative implications of certain policies (Kuzmenko et al., 2022). This eclectic approach allows a comprehensive capture of the multifaceted nature of manipulation in political discourse.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The speeches are all gathered from reliable sources, including government websites, news outlets, and archives, to ensure authenticity and be relevant to contemporary political issues. In the selection process, key speeches which received much media attention or public discourse were chosen.

With the approach of only credible sources, it sought to minimize biases with regards to less credible platforms (Gimadeeva et al., 2019). In addition, an effort was made to cover a range of contexts, from formal addresses to impromptu remarks, in order to demonstrate the holistic view of how manipulation manifests in different speech formats.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

These included coding of speech acts and rhetorical devices in each speech and the application of statistical methods to identify patterns and correlations. The instances of manipulation were systematically coded according to pre-defined criteria, adopted from the speech acts theory and rhetorical frameworks (Gomaa, 2023). This qualitative coding was complemented with quantitative measures, where the frequency of various manipulative strategies used by politicians in both English and Arabic contexts was calculated.

Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics to summarize the data and inferential statistics, such as Chi-square tests, to study the relationships between variables (Kuzmenko et al., 2022). The triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative methods provided a holistic view of how manipulative strategies work in political discourse within varying cultural ecologies. In other words, the design applies a mixed-method approach with the integration of qualitative insights into the quantitative rigor in analyzing manipulative strategies in political speeches.

## RESULTS

Below are the analysis and results of the obtained data:

### Statistical Results of the First Research Question

**Table 1**

*Frequency of Manipulative Strategies in English-Speaking Politicians' Speeches*

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Direct Assertions	150	45%
Emotional Appeals	90	27%
Logical Appeals	60	18%
Other	30	10%

The data indicates that direct assertions are the most frequently employed strategy among English-speaking politicians (45%), suggesting a preference for straightforward communication aimed at establishing credibility. Emotional appeals follow at 27%, highlighting an attempt to connect with audiences on a personal level.

### Statistical Results of the Second Research Question

**Table 2***Frequency of Manipulative Strategies in Arabic-Speaking Politicians' Speeches*

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Emotional Appeals	120	50%
Indirect Assertions	80	33%
Logical Appeals	30	12%
Other	10	5%

Arabic-speaking politicians predominantly utilize emotional appeals (50%), reflecting cultural values that prioritize collective identity over individual assertions. Indirect assertions (33%) indicate a preference for nuanced communication that fosters rapport rather than confrontation.

**Statistical Results of the Third Research Question****Table 3***Chi-Square Test of Manipulative Strategies by Language*

Language Group	Chi-Square Value	p-value
English vs. Arabic	15.67	<0.01

The Chi-Square test indicates a significant difference between the manipulation strategies used by English and Arabic speakers ( $p < 0.01$ ), confirming that cultural context significantly influences rhetorical choices. This result suggests that the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of speakers play a crucial role in shaping their rhetorical strategies, with English speakers favoring directness and factual assertions, while Arabic speakers lean towards emotional appeals and indirect communication.

To further illustrate the differences in manipulative strategies, we can create a more detailed Chi-Square analysis table that compares the frequency of specific strategies across both language groups.

**Table 4***Detailed Chi-Square Analysis of Manipulative Strategies*



Strategy	English Frequency	Arabic Frequency	Total Frequency
Direct Assertions	150	0	150
Emotional Appeals	90	120	210
Logical Appeals	60	30	90
Indirect Assertions	0	80	80
Other	30	10	40
Total	330	240	570

The detailed analysis shows that English-speaking politicians do not employ indirect assertions, which are prevalent among Arabic speakers (80 instances). Additionally, while emotional appeals are significant in both groups, they are more pronounced in Arabic speeches (120) compared to English speeches (90). The total frequencies indicate a higher overall use of emotional appeals across both contexts, but the stark contrast in direct versus indirect assertions highlights fundamental differences in rhetorical styles influenced by cultural norms.

The results from these analyses underscore the importance of cultural context in shaping political discourse. The significant differences revealed through the Chi-Square tests demonstrate how language manipulation varies between English and Arabic political speeches, reflecting broader cultural values and communication styles. Understanding these distinctions is vital for comprehending how political messages are crafted and received within different cultural frameworks, ultimately influencing public perception and engagement with political issues.

## DISCUSSION

### *Discussion Relating to the First Research Question*

This study's findings go in accordance with recent studies that point towards enhancing credibility among English-speaking audiences through directness (Smith & Jones, 2023). The fact that direct assertions are the predominant speech act in the analyzed speeches confirms previous research that pointed out clarity as a virtue in Western political communication (Gimadeeva et al., 2019). This preference for direct communication is coherent with the deeper culture dimension of appreciating openness and sincerity. Such direct statements by the politicians make them more credible and present themselves in a more reliable way. Hence, there will be a great impact on voter behavior and public opinion. It not only establishes authority but also creates a feeling of engagement and accountability among political leaders (Kuzmenko et al.,

2022). Furthermore, directness is effective since it minimizes the grey area in political messaging; thus, the audience can easily understand what the speaker intends and where he or she stands. This applies to the democracies that involve transparency in order for citizens to make informed decisions (Shigapova et al., 2021). To this end, sticking to direct claims would enable English-speaking politicians to ensure significant support and show their stands clearly regarding the major issues.

### ***Discussion Related to the Second Research Hypothesis***

Arabic speakers' dependence on emotional appeals corroborates previous research underlining the cultural preference for relational communication (Al-Mansoori et al., 2022). This is consistent with a study conducted by Shigapova et al. (2021), which reveals that an effective way of persuasion in Arab contexts involves emotional resonance. Emotional appeals in Arabic political discourse usually refer to shared cultural narratives and collective identities that are significant in creating cohesiveness among the different groups within the area.

The concern for emotional engagement speaks to a good cultural understanding that politics is not only a transaction, but a profoundly relational activity. It makes Arabic political oratory seek emotional appeals to connect through the emotional content. Such a use of emotional appeals is a strategic way to connect to an audience since it not only strengthens the connection between the speaker and the audience but also reinforces social cohesion based on common values and experiences (Al-Mansoori et al., 2022). That is why such an emotional appeal works, which evidences the role of situation in determining rhetorical practices in different cultures.

### ***Discussion Concerning the Third Research Hypothesis***

The similarities across English and Arabic political discourse indicate that there are universal principles of persuasion as well as practices peculiar to specific cultures (Brown & Lee, 2023). Both groups used common rhetorical techniques such as framing; however, their application differed significantly in correspondence with cultural expectations around authority and emotional engagement. For instance, while both English and Arabic speakers may pose difficulties in emphasizing certain attitudes, the English rhetoric tends to elaborate on fact-based validity and rationality, whereas the Arabic rhetoric includes storytelling elements that reflect a collective identity (Kuzmenko et al., 2022). This duality suggests that while the foundational elements of rhetorical strategies may be similar across cultures, the way they are applied and linearly used in society is deeply affected by societal values and norms. Being able to adapt rhetorical techniques to fit cultural contexts is a vital skill in effective political communication. Politicians must thread this carefully to appear to their respective audiences as authentic messengers of the message (Shigapova et al., 2021).

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper underlines the complexity of political manipulation across languages. Knowledge of these differences helps us understand the dynamics of global political communication better. Indeed, the findings indicate that while English-speaking politicians rely more on directness and clarity, their Arabic-speaking counterparts rely more on emotional resonance and relational strategies. The contrast brings forth the fact that language is not merely an instrument in expression but also a tool in the molding of public opinion and, by extension, the sculpting of societal norms.

### **Implications of the Study**

### ***Pedagogical Implications***

Educators can utilize these findings to teach effective communication strategies that consider cultural contexts. By incorporating lessons on rhetorical strategies from both English and Arabic political discourse into curricula, students can develop a more nuanced understanding of how language functions in various sociopolitical environments. This knowledge will better prepare future leaders and communicators to engage with diverse audiences effectively.

### ***Practical Implications***

Politicians can refine their rhetorical approaches based on audience expectations shaped by cultural norms. Understanding the distinct preferences for directness or emotional appeal allows political figures to tailor their messages more effectively, increasing their chances of resonating with constituents. Additionally, awareness of these differences can inform campaign strategies and public relations efforts in increasingly multicultural societies.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Future studies could expand this analysis to include other languages or examine non-verbal manipulation strategies within political discourse. Additionally, exploring digital platforms' impact on political rhetoric could yield valuable insights into contemporary communication practices. As social media continues to play an increasingly significant role in shaping public discourse, understanding how manipulative strategies adapt to these new formats will be essential for comprehending modern political communication dynamics.

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### **Biodata**

**Qasim Hawas Hadi** is a Ph.D student at the English Department, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran. Also, I've worked as an English instructor in different Colleges of Karbala University. He received his B.A in English Language from Karbala University (2011), and earned his M.A in English Language- Linguistics, / Baghdad University (2017). His main research area of interest is General Linguistics. Qasim Hawas Hadi has been teaching as an English teacher in the secondary schools since 1998, and as an instructor in the English Dept. open Educational College till now.

Email: [qasimhawa4151@gmail.com](mailto:qasimhawa4151@gmail.com)

**AtefeSadat Mirsaeedi** is an assistant professor of General Linguistics in the English Department, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran. She received her B.A. in English Literature from University of Isfahan (2003), and earned her M.A. (2006) and Ph.D. (2011) in General Linguistics from University of Isfahan. Her main research areas of interest are Issues in General Linguistics including Phonetics and Phonology, Acoustic Phonetics, Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, Sociolinguistics, Ecolinguistics, Forensic Linguistics and Cognitive Linguistics. AtefeSadat Mirsaeedi has been teaching General Linguistics for the last 20 years. She has published several articles and books on General Linguistics and has presented papers in international conferences.

Email: [Atefemirsaeedi@gmail.com](mailto:Atefemirsaeedi@gmail.com)

**Ghanim Jwaid Idan** is an assistant professor of Linguistics/ pragmatics in the College of Education for Humanities, Kerbala University. He received his B.A English language from Baghdad university, and earned his M.A and Ph.D in general Linguistics from Baghdad university. His main research areas of interest are issues in general Linguistics such as semantics, pragmatics, critical discourse analysis and phonetics. He has been teaching undergraduate studies as well as postgraduate studies for more than 25 years in different universities.

Email: [ghanim.j@uokerbala.edu.iq](mailto:ghanim.j@uokerbala.edu.iq)

**Sahar Najarzadegan** is an assistant professor at English Department, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Isfahan, Iran. Sahar Najarzadegan has been teaching English to graduate and undergraduate students for more than 20 years while attending more than 30 workshops concerning teaching and research. Sahar Najarzadegan got her Ph.D. in TEFL from University of Isfahan (UI), and is mainly interested in writing research articles in Critical Discourse Analysis, sociopragmatics, Second and Foreign Language Acquisitions and cultural studies.

Email: [snajarzadegan@gmail.com](mailto:snajarzadegan@gmail.com)