

**BLOGGING AS A SPACE FOR RHETORICAL POSTURING ON
ISRAELI-HEZBOLLAH WAR**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

CA	Conversational Analysis
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
CNN	Cable Network News
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
SFG	Systemic Functional Grammar
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
http	hypertext transfer protocol
HTML	hypertext mark-up language
PDF	Portable Document Format

ABSTRACT

Blogging, as a social medium, serves as a platform for individuals and organisations to produce rhetorical discourses that deserve scholarly attention. This rhetorical outlook of blogging features significantly in Middle East conflicts, as instanced in the Mideast blogs that cast their focus on the Israeli-Hezbollah war of 2006. Existing studies on blogging as a social practice seem to concentrate mainly on its social roles without paying much attention to its rhetorical outlook. This study explored the ideological nature of rhetoric in blog posts in order to establish how a comprehension of such rhetoric helps to create a better understanding of the role of blogging in the social process, especially in the context of conflict.

A combination of socio-linguistic, semiotic and discourse analytic approaches, as expounded by M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistic theory, Teun van Dijk's Triangulated Approach to discourse and Charles Sander Peirce's semiotic theory, was adapted as the theoretical framework for the study. Ten Mideast weblogs, characterised by personal, collaborative and corporate blogs, which address the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah conflict, and seven hundred and fifty posts, with two hundred and fifty readers' comments, evenly distributed between the blog types, were purposively selected. The data, which are in three modes of signification - language, pictures and cartoons - were content-analysed.

Bloggers employed three discourse structures - surface, schematic and dialogic - to pursue Zionist, anti-Semitic and Arab nationalistic ideologies in the posts. These three structures were arranged in a manner that got the blog readers into believing that they had made appropriate choices of response to the postings read, whereas their behaviours and opinions had been controlled through rhetorical strategies such as overstatement, understatement, metonymy, euphemism, mitigation and repetition, which all have a closer relation to underlying ideologies and belief systems of the bloggers. The surface structure contained nationalistic ideologies that were not overtly expressed but located in the linguistic and non-linguistic expressions that characterised the surface structure. The schematic structure defined the canonical order of the discourse through which topics were organised by conventional schemata such that subordinate topics were upgraded by assigning more prominence to them as headlines. The dialogic structure engaged the blog readers in imagined conversation, in which they were assigned passive role as mere commentators, whereas readers' support was required for the credibility of the published news stories. The pattern of rhetoric in the posts was such that blog readers were made to tilt their views in support of the opinions expressed by the significations in the posts through the discourse strategies, a situation that made most comments in the posts align more with the viewpoints expressed by the bloggers.

The nature of rhetoric in the Mideast posts indicates that bloggers conceal their opinions in various significations in an attempt to create strong persuasion for ideological support. The study has therefore provided the ground for establishing the Mideast blog posts as a site for readers' manipulation in political communication, which is realised through rhetorical strategies embedded in the discourse.

Key words: blogging, conflict, signification, conflict discourse, Israeli-Hezbollah
Word count: 494

CHAPTER ONE

General introduction

1.0 Background to the study

The study of rhetoric has been in existence for ages. Some cultures have some form of rhetorical tradition; others have a tradition of commentary, critique and oratory as well. According to Bloor and Bloor (2007: 67), traditional approaches to rhetoric are valued greatly in the Arab world, in spite of the fact that new approaches are equally being developed. In Europe too, rhetoric has been receiving attention for centuries. Scholars on rhetoric observe that classical Greek, for instance, placed so much emphasis on rhetoric that schools of rhetoric were established to teach students the art of persuasion and argument. One of the famous Greek rhetoricians that emerged from these classical schools of rhetoric, according to Bloor and Bloor, was Aristotle.

In the Aristotelian tradition, rhetoric is described as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject. Bloor and Bloor observe that, apart from the initial target of rhetoric, which was to discover means of enhancing public speaking, Aristotle probably wanted to see rhetoric as an intellectual field in its own right, and more importantly, as a component of communication. This latter concern of rhetoric therefore underscores the relevance of the art to the present study on the rhetorical posturing of communicators in conflict discourse, as it would be able to reveal the rhetoric adopted by bloggers in the attempt to influence the readers to own side of argument. This is in consonance with Spencer's (1970: 612) view that rhetoric is part of

the weapons of political struggle, more so that its deployment within text requires a thorough knowledge of rhetorical tactics. Rhetorical structures, according to Spencer, play such an important role in audience manipulation, as rhetoric is essentially a key towards persuasive communication of preferred models of social events. Not only that, rhetoric even manages how discourse recipients understand and evaluate communication in reaction to authors' goal, interest or ideology.

The motivation for this study derives from the observation of Huffacker (2005:1) that the Internet (technology) continues to generate new applications that foster individual expressions, cohesive virtual community development, as well as ideological 'netizens' (citizens of the net). According to him, research in computer-mediated communication (CMC) environments such as chat rooms, newsgroups, e-mails and other multi-user domains have revealed interesting trends in the way individual identity is presented, language is used and interactions are transpired.

One of these computer-mediated communications is blogging. A blog (which is a portmanteau of 'web log') is, according to Brady (2005:2), a website where entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. He observes that some blogs provide commentaries or news on a particular subject; others function more as personal online diaries but a typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic, and gives the readers the ability to leave comments, in an interactive format. Blogging is a social practice that takes place in the virtual world. It incorporates reader-feedback as an integral part of the discourse. In fact, every blog post ensures that the reader is involved in the news story by calling for his/her comments, responses or reactions, and by so doing, the reader gets involved in the conversation.

Some of the features of a blog, according to Coates (2003), include instant publishing of text (or graphics) to the web, even without sophisticated technical knowledge, and the space created for readers to leave comments on each blog post visited. Readers also have opportunity to archive past blog posts by date and, above all, blogs serve as portals or links to other bloggers. These features of a blog, according to Coates, make it stand out as a unique medium, distinguishing it from other forms of CMC.

Brady (2005:8) discovers that in the emerging trends of blogs built around global events, there is a trend which became noticeable around the 9/11 tragedy in USA in 2001, when many people found blogs a useful means of sharing their thoughts and perception about the tragic incident. Likewise, the 2003 US-led war in Iraq sparked a new wave of blogging, just as did the 2008 US presidential election that saw Barack Obama become the first African-American president of the United States of America. Apart from the seemingly 'naturalised' crises in Iraq, Afghanistan and Gaza Strip, presently, there is a wave of protests, demonstrations and civil unrest, spreading like fire across the entire Middle East region.

The crisis, which has been described as Arab Spring, started from Egypt in March 2010. It later spread to Tunisia, Algeria, Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Libya. The crisis is currently taking its toll on the lives of people in Syria, albeit, spilling over to neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Turkey. Media report shows that the populace in each of these countries is demanding change of government and better condition of living. The issues have attracted global attention and as expected, many blog communities have emerged in quick response to these crises, but the focus of this

research is on the 2006 Israeli- Hezbollah war, which took place in Lebanon, a small country in the Mideast region. This study explores the ideological nature of rhetoric in blogs that cast their focus on this war with the aim of finding out how the blog readers have been made to agree or disagree with viewpoints expressed in the posts. But before this investigation, It is necessary to take a look at the Middle East, as a region in the global map, in order to see why issues in the region usually attract international attention, bloggers' focus and, consequently, research interest.

1.1.1 Background information on the Middle East

The Middle East is a region of the world located within the Asian and North African lands that lay west of India. The trend of politics in the region is set by developments, whose main motivating forces are nationalism and cultural assertion as manifested in various ideologies that permeated through the entire region. Such ideologies include Zionism, anti-Semitism, homogeneity and ethnocentrism. Two major religions in the world today (Islam and Christianity) usually trace their emergence to certain locations in the region, using various portions from their holy books to support their claims, hence, concerned each time there is crisis in the region. In other words, conflicts in the Middle East region usually have (and attract) global attention.

Since 1948, when the State of Israel was formed, there have been incessant clashes in the Middle East, especially between the Arabs and the Jews, over what they both claim to be the right to occupy the ancestral land. In recent times, other issues such as those relating to borders, the Palestinian autonomy, Israeli blockades, settlements and prisoners' swaps, etc., have emanated, and there is no doubt that these issues might have exacerbated the Arab-Israeli conflict. One of such clashes took place in Lebanon in July,

2006 between Israeli soldiers and Hezbollah, purportedly over the latter's seizure of two of the former's soldiers. This war, which officially came to an end through the UN's Resolution of August 9, 2006, has so far proven 'unstoppable'.

The war has ironically provided fodder for many inter-blog discussions on the Internet, through which several blog communities arose, especially in the Middle East. Some of these blogs have become unofficial peace-brokers between the Arabs and the Israelis. This trend by bloggers to interfere in the crisis, including possible motives for such interference, provides the motivation for the current study, as it would afford us the opportunity to see how rhetoric is at work in order to make readers agree with viewpoints being expressed on the crisis. It may therefore be necessary to provide contextual clue to the Mideast blog posts that provide most of the data used in our analyses in this study, in order to acquaint us with more background information on the subject of our investigation.

1.1.2 Mid East Blog Posts

Blogs that focus on the crises in the Middle East include *Middle East Report*, (www.MiddleEastDesk.org) whose editors are Robert Blecher and Mouin Rabbani; *Middle East Policy*, whose blogger is Nassim Yaziji; *Anderson Cooper Blog 360^o*, powered by CNN.com; *Mideast Web Middle East Web Log* whose blogger prefers the tag 'moderator' and *MidEastWebforCoexistence* (<http://www.mideastweb.org/log/archives0000491.htm>). It may be assumed that the blogs about the Middle East are attempts at proffering solution to the long-standing crisis in the region, or perhaps, to say the least,

the battle seems to have ‘shifted’ from the physical combat of the real world to the ideological ‘combat’ of the virtual world.

In the current study, van Dijk’s (1995a) theory of ideology is particularly relevant. It posits that ideology is articulated within a conceptual triangle that connects society, discourse and social cognition within the framework of critical discourse analysis. This triangular connection is briefly examined below in respect of ideology, blogging and critical discourse analysis (CDA).

1.1.3 Ideology, CDA and blogging

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) seems to be preferred where broader issues such as the social context of discourse, social practices or social functions of specific texts are considered alongside a close analysis of text. Perhaps, this is why Ayoola (2008:5) opines that most linguistic investigations on power and ideology fall under the aegis of CDA. In fact, Wodak and Busch (2004:108) have observed that the roots of CDA lie in classical rhetoric, text linguistics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics and pragmatics. In CDA, the notions of ideology, power, hierarchy, gender and so on, are considered relevant for text interpretation.

CDA provides the searchlight and offers access to the motifs and assumptions behind the linguistic choice that a writer makes. For instance, Wodak and Meyer (2001:10) observe that the ultimate aim of CDA is to provide enlightenment and emancipation, thereby demystifying discourses by deciphering ideologies. Ayoola (2008:5) observes that a linguistic study of conflict discourse usually entails an elicitation of the contending ideological and power strategies that are often manipulated in discourse production by representatives of institutions and groups, which are diametrically opposed

to each other. This is, perhaps, with the ultimate goal of winning public affection or sympathy.

One might say that the beliefs or attitudes that stem from ideology may not always be held consciously by members of the group. But van Dijk (1998a) opines that one need not be a discourse analyst to conclude that a news report, textbook fragment or conversation is conservative, sexist or environmentalist, as one's knowledge of language, discourse and society usually allows one to make such inferences rather correctly.

Ideologies may inform and reproduce discourse and communication, including non-verbal semiotic messages such as pictures and photographs. This is because, apart from few exceptions, the surface structure of a text or talk may not have explicit meanings of its own, rather, in line with van Dijk's (1995a) observation, it may be the conventional manifestations of some underlying meanings, which control the ways particular events are interpreted.

If surface structures are marked, may be for one reason or the other, such 'marked' items that are usually regarded as variations or deviants, may be quite significant for ideological gains. For instance, a large banner headline (or some other graphic devices) may uncover a biased summary of a news presentation. Even, when surface structures are not marked, ideologies of groups can still be constructed through group-based selection of relevant self-serving social values and norms that reveal ideological interests.

In conflict situations, the media, especially the traditional media organisations, usually get involved in a particular conflict, and in the twinkling of an eye, they become actors not only in the propagation of the conflict, but also in its management. This, of

course, is understandable. Newspapers, for instance, are noted for their insatiable need for attention-grabbing stories, since stories sell newspapers, while the television relies on 'breaking' news or other captivating stories to increase their audience, a situation that may lead to increased funding and advertisement revenues for the television proprietor. In this way, economic reason becomes part of the motives behind the traditional media's intervention in conflict.

One may not be able to give such verdict on blogging for now, especially, as most bloggers purportedly claim neutrality in news reporting, just like their journalist counterparts in traditional media. Though, in conflict situations, bloggers are probably aware that media reports have considerable influence on public perception of conflict; hence, there could be the need to satisfy both personal and public motivations. However, self expression and creativity may not be the ultimate drive for blogging as we are likely to discover in the course of analyses.

In other words, the motivations that drive people to invest personal time into sharing their knowledge might not be for public satisfaction alone. We still hope that there are other considerations that underlie blogging as a social practice which may not exclude ideological motives and other hidden drives. In other words, it may be true that the nature of this computer mediated communication could be driven by internal discourse considerations, such as the need 'to put the record straight', through the provision of first hand information in a well constructed story, perhaps with a view to educating the public on some burning issues. But, one may not also rule out bloggers' desire for prominence, attention and recognition. This is because the popularity of a blog post depends largely on the number of visitors it is able to attract to itself. Hence, it could

be assumed from the onset that blogging could be strategy by bloggers to gain popularity or to shoot themselves into limelight.

Blogging is, however, not without criticisms. One of these criticisms is that blogs provide personal opinions of their authors and there seems to be no way of knowing whether each (blog) entry has been fact-checked or that its arguments are lucid or relevant. This, of course, is part of the problems identified in the blog discourse, and it bothers on the question of objectivity and balance in various blog reports on the 2006 Lebanon war, and it is the more reason why our investigation is set on the theoretical premise that, apart from knowledge creation and knowledge sharing, which blogs claim to be pursuing, blogs can be an important site where ideologies are expressed and reproduced, especially, through the use of verbal (language) and non-verbal semiotic devices such as pictures, cartoons, videos and photographs, for rhetoric and other persuasive forms of communication.

We believe that the *Lebanon Post* (featuring blogs on the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war), which brings together many points of view in different articles, postings and other forms of representation, through which bloggers engage in persuasive communication, is indeed an important site for rhetoric and ideological analysis. In other words, the discursive reports as well as the readers' comments (and issues emanating thereof) are suitable objects of critical discourse analysis. It is assumed that bloggers use expressions and representations that reveal their ideological biases and they construct biased and stereotypical mental model of other participants in the blog discourse, especially non members of their ideological group, thus re-enacting the 2006 Lebanon war in the virtual space.

It is also assumed that bloggers use rhetoric and other persuasive techniques to win sympathies of the (blog) readers and solicit their support in demonising opponents, while hiding these ideological tendencies in language and other semiotic devices and representations. All these theoretical assumptions have, therefore, provided the basis for the current investigation as clearly stated in the next section.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Academic researches into rhetoric and ideologies in political communication are wide-spread. Linguistic scholars, for instance, have studied rhetoric and ideologies from various angles. In studying communication (in different speech situations), some analysts have directed their attention towards the speaker(s) of varying speech events, while some have placed their focus on the news stories of the communicative events.

Among scholars that have focused on the speaker(s) of speech event(s) are Waudag (1990), Oha (1994), Chilton (1996), Cap (2002), Yusuf (2003), Adegaju (2005), Lieber (2005), Cheng (2006), Babatunde and Odepidan (2008) and Adetunji (2008). Most of these studies examine rhetoric as well as ideological leanings of speech event producers. Also, linguistic scholars have investigated speech events from the perspective of the news stories of the communicative events. Scholars in this regard include Fairclough (1989, 2000a), Fowler (1991), Gruber (1991), Hall (1977, 2000a), Nichols (1981), van Dijk (1988a, 1988b, 1991, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1998a, 1998b and 2006), Wetschanow (2003), Wodak and Busch (2004) and Ayoola (2008), among others.

We observe that little or no attention has been paid to audience participatory role in terms of comments on (and reactions to) political communication, despite the fact that some scholars (Wilson, 2001; Chimombo and Roseberry, 1998; Fatusin, 2005)

acknowledge the relevance of the audience in this regard. This is probably because most of the data used in their analyses were obtained from the traditional media, especially, from the press (radio, television and newspapers), which, undoubtedly, has its limitations. Part of these limitations is that the discourse creates little or no room for reader-feedback that is crucial to effective communication. The design of the old media is such that the readers or viewers are denied the necessary participatory role in terms of comments, responses, expression of opinion or interest (in a topical issue or public debate) or critique of the published news story.

What this implies is that there is a missing link between the media text and reception. The missing link has been very conspicuous in the earlier studies on rhetoric and ideology in media discourse, even where some of the studies acknowledge the importance of the audience in the production and reproduction of beliefs, opinions, stereotypes, prejudices and ideologies by the media. Perhaps, this is why Lemke (2001: 80) advocates the need for more researches on new genres, such as the Internet, which incorporate freedom and boundless opportunities for reader's participatory role.

Blogging provides analysts the opportunity to assess, examine or analyse various contributions from different angles. Thus, blogging could be an avenue for discovering whether the audience has been manipulated or cajoled into taking decisions against their will. By manipulation, we mean interference with the process of understanding to the best interest of the discourse producer(s) and against the best interest of the discourse recipient. If manipulation is discovered to have taken place in the discourse, then, some questions are likely to be raised. These include: to what extent is the news story manipulated? What strategies are involved in the manipulation and what is the goal of

such manipulation? Who are the beneficiaries and who are the victims or the vulnerable? These are pertinent questions that analysts must attempt to answer but which earlier studies in rhetoric and ideology did not address.

Likewise, some of the existing works on blogging have not been able to harness the reader-feedback potential in blogs. Some studies on blogging focus on providing appropriate definitions for the concept, blog (Brady, 2005; Coates, 2003 a;), some cast their attention on features of blogs (Gumbrecht, 2004; Huffacker, 2005; Roell, 2004) and some concentrate on the communicative functions of blogs (Wijnia, 2008; Rezaee and Oladi, 2008; Darisipudi and Sharma, 2008). From this foregoing, therefore, it is observable that studies on blogging from the perspective of its rhetorical outlook are still very few, if at all they exist. This is the missing link that the current study of rhetorical posturing in Mid East blog posts and commentaries over the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War attempts to supply.

1.3 The purpose of the study

The major purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which ideologies typically influence and reproduce discourse and communication, including non-verbal semiotic messages such as pictures, cartoons and photographs, with particular reference to blogs on the Lebanon conflict. In pursuit of this aim, we would consider the following specific objectives: to

- (i) critically analyze the linguistic features that speak about alignments and interests in the conflict;
- (ii) examine representations of views in the two sides of the conflict as a way of identifying the ideological leanings of the bloggers.
- (iii) examine the way the select images interact with language in the blog, with a view to determining the relationship between the linguistic structures/non-linguistic

- strategies employed in the communication processes and the extra-textual world of events.
- (iv) systematically link the structures of discourse with the structures of ideology.

1.4 The need for this study

Conflict is so common-place that it is sometimes conceptualised as a fundamental social process. This is probably because of its link with social welfare, social structure, social practice and social change. It also explains why the phenomenon has been attracting scholarly attention for quite some time now, as a result of which many illuminating studies have been done on conflict (and conflict management) in various disciplines.

Viewing conflict from the linguistic approach, Teun van Dijk, for instance, has analysed conflicts in political discourse. His analysis of ethnic prejudice in cognition and conversation (1984) could be regarded as his pioneer work in his early incursion into conflict emanating from racist, ethnic, power or class differences. In the work, he maintains that there is a broad and complex range of mental factors that influences discourse production and comprehension, and that these factors abound in the prejudice that characterise the racist discourse.

Van Dijk's subsequent works, (1987, 1991, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2006), later show that he is interested in a theoretical model that explains cognitive discourse processing mechanisms, especially, in discourses that encode prejudice. In other words, issues of ideology and racism have been his major focus in political discourse (see: Wodak and Busch, 2004:110). Paul Chilton is another scholar interested in social conflict and political discourse. For instance, Chilton (1997) is able to justify the role of language in the emergence and management of social conflict. Before this, his book, *Language and*

the Nuclear Arms Debate: Nukespeak Today (1985), as well as his work on contemporary nukespeak (1988), and “Security Metaphors” (1996) mark him out as a political discourse analyst. His goal has probably been to seek the ways in which language choice is manipulated for specific political effect.

D’souza (1995) argues that social conflict is cognitively represented, enhanced by polarization, discursively sustained and reproduced by derogation and demonisation of the opponent. The work, described as a prototype of conservative elite discourse (van Dijk, 2001: 362), situates him alongside van Dijk and other social conflict analysts that cast their focus on ethnic and racial discrimination. Oha’s (1994) stylistic study of the war speeches of Yakubu Gowon and Emeka Ojukwu reveals the language in conflict situation, especially ethnically based conflict, as that which is characterised by statements that threaten the face of ethno linguistic and cultural groups in Nigeria. Similarly, Idowu’s (1999) linguistic study of power conflict describes the nature of political conflict in Nigeria as that which resides in the structure of power and the various attitudes or social behaviours that determine access to power. Also, Adegaju’s (2005) stylistic study of the speeches of some key actors of the ‘June 12’ crisis in Nigeria reveals a composite approach to the analysis of conflict rhetoric, which emphasises the place of language in conflict studies.

Attention has also been focused on conflicts and the media discourse. For instance, the work of Fowler, Kress, Hodge and Trew (1979) has been one of the early foundations of critical linguistic analysis of media discourse (Wodak and Busch 2004:110). The study of Wetschanow (2003) analyses media reporting on violence against women and the reporting of rape cases in Austrian print media as well as TV,

while Wodak and Busch (2004) demonstrate some linguistic approaches to conflict, especially, as focused by the media.

We observe that these linguistic approaches to conflict (reported by the media) have so far been focusing on the moment of the text. In which case, the news genre has been the main beneficiary of research focus, especially linguistic approaches that employ critical discourse analysis framework in media research, of which the press has been given more attention than the television, and, sadly enough, radio has almost been neglected, while the audience has been pathetically marginalised. In short, studies that link media text and reception are still very few (see: Wodak and Busch, 2004: 107).

The current study, which has responses and comments as part of its contextual focus, is intended to show how the New Media address the issue of ‘missing link’ between text and audience. In this case, the influence of the medium (the Internet or cyberspace) in the production and reproduction of beliefs, opinions, stereotypes, prejudices and ideologies, which the study sets out to investigate, is expected to establish, as part of its submission, the link between media text and reception.

As Lemke (2001) observes, research is needed on new genres, such as the Internet, that incorporate freedom and boundless opportunities for reader’s participatory role, through hypertext and hyperlinks, which ensure readers’ accessibility, responses and comments. This technology transcends the traditional media approach where responses of the audience are limited, denied or disallowed. This observation points out the relevance as well as the importance of this current research in our contemporary ICT situation, as unveiled in the next section.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study identifies and describes the linguistic and extra-linguistic features that play prominent roles in the production and interpretation of the blog. It is expected to assist in interpreting the communication and linguistic challenges in discourses that centre on the Lebanon crisis. The study also reveals the extent to which the linguistic approach of critical discourse analysis can be applied to arrive at a clearer appreciation of the complexity and depth of a social conflict, such as the Israeli-Hezbollah war.

Linguists have examined the use of language in media discourse, concentrating, especially, on the news story, perhaps, because of the undeniable power of the news story to inspire critical studies in many areas such as pragmatics, semiotics, discourse studies and linguistics. This study is significant because of the extra-linguistic events upon which it is based, as it clearly shows how ideologies influence the ways social attitudes, social conflicts and other social practices, are expressed in discourse structures through both linguistic and non-linguistic means .

The study is also expected to show the peculiarities and features of language use in conflict situation by revealing the correlation between the linguistic structures/non-linguistic strategies and the extra-textual world of bloggers. The study equally reveals style, creativity and storytelling (both in individual expressions and collaborative effort, of which blogs signify) as appropriate site for the manipulation of language, to protect not just the interest of the main actors, but possibly, certain associations or ideological groups that bloggers represent such as the West, the Jew, the anti-Semitist, the Jihadist, reformist, conservative, leftist and so on.

Above all, the study presupposes that blogs can be an important addition to education technology initiatives because they promote literacy through storytelling, allow collaborative learning, provide unhindered access, and remain fungible across academic fields, hence, the study of blogs could be highly illuminating, especially, for blog discourse that is yet to receive the much needed attention.

1.6 Scope of the study

The study is largely restricted to the rhetorical approaches employed by bloggers in reporting the 2006 Lebanon war between Israel and Hezbollah. The study is aware that other reporters or journalists must have reported the conflict in other media organisations, from different angles. However, we believe that the Internet can avail us of the opportunity to examine personal intervention in the crisis, in which case, the leanings of respective bloggers are revealed as they attempt to shape the attitude of the readers through rhetorical tactics and manipulation of language in the process of narrating their stories.

We believe that our decision to restrict the scope of the study mainly to blogs gives contextual focus and a personal angle to the story about the conflict, since blogs are regarded as modern means of independent reporting, whereby an individual blogger has the opportunity to contribute his/her own specific idea or personal experience, information, etc; to media reports. We hope that within the context of the Internet, which guarantees freedom of expression and freedom from intimidation or censoring and unimpeded access to stories, information, comments and reactions, bloggers have the opportunity to freely express themselves, thereby giving us the advantage to closely monitor their positions and ideological leanings.

1.7 Definition of operational terms

It is deemed necessary to clarify some concepts used within the context of this work to give the study a clear focus and avoid ambiguity. These terms, from different fields, are widely employed in this study and are thus considered basic to the study. Some of the key concepts are; *blog or weblog, blogger, blogosphere, blog rolls, collaboration, computer mediated communication (CMC), New Media, virtual team, RSS, post, posting, discourse, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, rhetoric, ideology, identity, power, Other and conflict.*

(a) **Blog:** A portmanteau of Web log or Weblog. It is an online journal intended for general public consumption. Blog readers can view (or post comments to) the bloggers' posts. The activity of updating a blog is 'blogging'.

(b) **Blogger:** One who maintains or keeps a blog. This could be an individual, or a group of individuals or a corporate body.

(c) **Blogosphere:** The community (usually called the universe) of bloggers of all types. It is also used to refer to the totality of web logs or blog-related webs.

(d) **Blogroll:** A list of blogs that a user frequently reads or admires, with a clickable links to the general URLs (uniform resource locators or Web addresses) of those blogs.

(e) **Virtual Collaboration:** The interaction and information interchange between people working at physically disparate locations with the purpose of accomplishing the same mutually beneficial task.

(f) **Computer Mediated Communication (CMC):** The act of using networked telecommunication systems for synchronous, asynchronous or real time exchange of information. Basically, CMC includes e-mail, Instant Messaging (IM), Internet forums,

list serfs, blogs, bulletin boards, video-conferencing, SMS text messaging, chat room or any form of communication through separate computers, either online or a network connection.

(g) **New Media:** All the devices (that make use) of modern technology. They include the Internet, GSM, DVD, Digital audio and Digital camera, and so forth.

(h) **Posting:** putting a message or computer document on the Internet for others to see. **Post:** short writing bits or articles authored by the blogger and published online.

(i) **RSS:** This is an acronym for Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary. When users subscribe to it, it alerts them with favourite blogs that have been updated with new posts. This will save the time of the readers visiting blogs and Web sites to find out the latest news or information.

(j) **Virtual Team:** This is a group of individuals, who work together, irrespective of temporal, geographical, national or cultural boundaries, using information and communication technologies such as groupware, e-mail, an intranet or video-conferencing to collaborate from different locations for a defined work, with a defined objective.

(k) **Discourse:** All types of symbolic interactions and communications through text and visual representation.

(l) **Discourse Analysis:** The description of discourse beyond the sentence, language in use, and a broader range of social practice that includes non linguistic or non-specific instances of language.

(m) **Critical Discourse Analysis:** A new cross-discipline that comprises the analysis of text (or talk), images, picture or video in virtually all disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. Being 'critical' does not imply the common sense meaning of 'being negative'. Rather, the word 'critical' as used in conjunction with discourse analysis means 'not taking things for granted, opening up complexity, challenging reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies'. It equally means "being self-reflective in research and making opaque structures of power relations and ideologies manifest" (Kendall, 2007).

(n) **Rhetoric:** Language used to persuade or influence people to one's side of an argument or a story. This language might sound impressive but not necessarily sincere or useful. Rhetoric incorporates many devices such as repetition, exemplification, the use of maxims, gestures, figures of speech and all that speakers and writers use to construct their messages. Rhetoric also involves the use of non-linguistic semiotic devices such as films, video, pictures and so on, for persuasive or manipulative communication.

(o) **Ideology:** A set of beliefs or attitudes shared by members of a particular social group. It also includes an overall, coherent system of thought, political programmes or manifestos, economic systems or policies, philosophical orientations or religious codifications, shared by members of a group and used by them to accomplish everyday social practices.

(p) **Identity:** The qualities and attitudes that a person or group of people have, which make them different from other people. It is a feeling of belonging to a particular national, cultural or

(q) **Power:** The capacity to produce effects on others or the potential to influence others. This capacity involves the ‘control’ by a dominant group and the tendency for such control to be condoned, accepted or resisted by the other group, hence generating ‘conflict’ between the groups.

(r) **Conflict:** A state of disagreement or argument between people, groups, countries, etc. It may also be seen as a tussle between two parties over the distribution of power, resources, wages, interests and so on. In other words, the nature of the goals of conflict is significant for differentiating different types of conflict.

(s) **Political discourse:** Political discourse is conceived here as an example of discourse type. In other words, there is no explicit reference to political context or political content. Our goal in considering political discourse in this delimited sense is to see political language, first, as discourse and, then, as politics. Our focus is on how the bloggers represent and present events in the 2006 Lebanon war, with emphasis on language issues, such as language manipulation and the goal of such manipulation.

(t) **Israel:** In this study, ‘Israel’ is used to refer to one of the disputants in the Lebanon conflict, which is the ‘State of Israel’. This is a nation-state in the Middle East. The State of Israel was created on May 14, 1948. The state operates a parliamentary system of government, with Binyamin Netanyahu as the current Prime Minister and Head of Government. The use of the adjective ‘Israeli’ is also in relation to the State of Israel or its people as may be found in such expressions as ‘the Israeli government, Israeli army, towns, or cities and so on, which feature prominently in the study.

(u) **‘Other’:** ‘Non-member’ or ‘someone who does not belong to a group’. This is the same sense in which reference is made to ‘self and other’, ‘us and them’ or ‘ours and theirs’ as the case may be.

1.8 The organisation of subsequent chapters

We have, so far, provided the background, the purpose, the significance and the scope of the study, as well as clarification of some concepts used in the study. At this juncture, it is necessary to highlight the organisation of subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two is a review of scholarly perspectives on the concepts and issues relevant to the study, including the theoretical framework adopted for the study, explaining the major tenets of the chosen linguistic models and non linguistic strategies and assessing their relevance to the ideological posture of the bloggers. Chapter Three discusses the methodology and procedure for data analysis. The analysis of the data covers Chapters Four, Five and Six. Chapter four discusses the coding of linguistic items in the blogs. Chapter Five focuses on the analysis of other semiotic devices, such as pictures, cartoons and photographs that are significant for meaning in the discourse, while Chapter Six centres on the discourse strategies deployed for ideological gains in the discourse. Chapter Seven concludes the study, summarises the findings and observations made in the course of the study and identifies areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature review and theoretical background

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing works that are related to the study. Also, it attempts a review of some fundamental issues relevant to the study in order to establish and evaluate the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The issues include language and ideology; discourse and ideology; ideology and conflict; media discourse and ideology.

2.1 Preamble

It is necessary to state from the onset that much has been written about the Internet and Computer Mediated Communication and the literature keeps expanding daily. It is therefore practically impossible to exhaust all the available works in this field; hence only works that are directly related to the blog discourse, which is the focus of this study, are reviewed.

2.1.1 An exploration of the blogosphere

According to Darisipudi and Sharma (2008:720), the universe of blogs is conventionally referred to as the blogosphere and this means that blogs exist within the blogosphere. A blog is usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentaries, description of events, or other materials such as graphics, video, etc. The blogosphere therefore is the idea that all blogs are part of an interconnected web on the Internet. McKenna and Bargh (2000) observe that the Internet is a technology that has changed the nature of human social interaction by reducing the importance of physical

appearance, attenuating physical distance, allowing relative anonymity and exercising greater control over the time and pace of interactions.

Guadagno, Okdie and Eno (2007:20) notice that, as the Internet evolves, the degree of anonymity decreases and the personalisation of the Internet increases tremendously. They also observe that at the forefront of these two changing trends are blogs. Blogging, which, according to Herring, Scheidt, Wright and Bonus (2005b), is the act of authoring, maintaining or adding content to an existing blog, is one of the newest forms of online self presentation and self expression that have been facilitated by the current age of the Internet. A blog has, therefore, become an interactive dialog for online users who can read blogs and submit their own comments, thoughts, opinions and links to related news articles, other blogs and Web sites (Darisipudi and Sharma, 2008: 720).

According to Lenhart and Fox (2006), blogging began as an American pastime. It involves a regularly updated and personalised web page that contains entries dated in reverse chronological order. They observe that eight million Americans keep a blog (and most blogs have a single author) but up to fifty seven million read blogs. The main reason for maintaining a blog, according to Lenhart and Fox, is to express personal content. These scholars believe that the motivations for blogging within and outside the United States are similar, except that bloggers in the United States, according to their findings, are younger, better educated and more likely to be urban dwellers and avid online shoppers.

However, this conclusion has been questioned by Guadagno, Okdie and Eno's (2007) study which observes that people who are high in openness to new experience and high in neuroticism are likely to be bloggers, even though the study admits that the

neuroticism relationship could be moderated by gender difference. This opinion seems to affirm our earlier statement (see: page 8) that there are other considerations that underlie blogging as a social practice, apart from self expression, creativity and public satisfaction, which blogging claims to be pursuing. Indeed, blogging can be an important site where ideological powers are enacted and readers become recipients and victims of manipulation and persuasive communication.

This position can therefore be said to have provided a sharp contrast to the views of Darisipudi and Sharma (2008) which present blogging as a tool for virtual team collaboration, and Rezaee and Oladi's(2008) perception of blog as a new opportunity for people to express their thoughts through the Internet. While it may be admitted that all these reasons are apparent part of the drives towards blogging, there could also be some motivations that are not that conspicuously transparent, but obviously taken for granted. Part of these is the desire to influence readers to own side of the argument or news story through rhetoric, persuasive communication or even manipulation. The next section discusses the communicative function of blogging with a view to establishing the claim of (disguised) ideological potential of the social practice.

2.1.2 Blogs as computer mediated communication

A large body of work has been inspired by the communicative impact of blogs. Worthy of mention is the study of Yu-ping (2007) which analyses the power in discourse (and behind discourse) of the language of the web-news headlines. In the study, Yu-ping argues that the power in discourse of the web-news headlines is disguised in lexical choice, grammatical form and the graphic elements of the web-news headlines. These

elements, according to her, are the distinctive formal features that serve the purpose of masking the real intention of the web-news authors.

The power behind the discourse of the web-news headlines, according to Yu-ping's analysis, is concealed in the social orders of the discourse. She observes that, just like the headlines in traditional media, the writers' of the web-news embody their ideology or world view and belief system in the web-news headlines. She concludes that news headlines, as part of the organ of the politics and social communication, exercise their influence and power on the readers through language in a much less conspicuous manner.

Yu ping's observation can be considered relevant to the current discussion of ideology in blogging as some representations in blog posts can be invested with the ideologies of the blog writers. However, while Yu-ping's study suggests that the discourse practices in the web-news headlines are more likely to be ideologically oriented (as she claims that they contribute to sustain power relations between authors and readers), the study is silent on how the news writer's ideologies are expressed through language to serve (own) purposes of spreading the news and how the news recipients fall victim of such manipulation. For this inadequacy, we are going to examine the work of another scholar, Elmine Wijnia (2004) on the same issue.

Wijnia (2004) studies weblogs from a communicative perspective. Using Habermas' theory of 'ideal speech situation' as reference point, she investigates the form of communication made possible through weblog in order to determine whether such form of communication satisfy Habermas' (formal) conditions stipulated for ideal speech situation. These formal conditions include; the objective reality of things and

occurrences; the social reality of norms (inter-subjective reality) and the inner reality of intentions (subjective reality). The first reality deals with the rightness that the speaker claims, the second reality is about the truthfulness which the speaker claims for the expression of subjective experiences and the third reality is concerned with the truth that the speaker claims for making a statement.

Wijnia's (2004) conclusion reveals that weblogs offer a platform for the ideal speech situation. In fact, it shows that, in comparison with the traditional home page, a weblog not only transmits information through the Internet, but also takes on a receiving role as many bloggers create space for their readers to respond to the different postings and, as such, get involved in the on-going conversation. We must point out that Wijnia's claim is predicated on the inherent features or the assumed attributes of a weblog, such as allowing equal access to communication; free publication on the internet; removal or moderation of power differences and the claim of truthfulness or objectivity of a news story publication.

It should however be realized that van Dijk (1999b) has earlier questioned the so-called equal access offered to the people by the Internet. According to him, only a minority of the world's population has access to the Internet. In developing countries such as Nigeria, for instance, only few individuals can afford the high cost of purchasing internet facilities and even the few individuals will still have to grapple with the problem of electricity in the country. Also, the so-called unhindered access to publication is not usually guaranteed. The Weblog author (blogger) has the right to shape the two (or more) sided communication to his own liking through manipulative devices made possible by the technology itself and lastly, people do not always tell the truth as required by the

discourse. For instance, Thomas (1995: 55-84), while discussing Grice's (1975) felicity condition, proves that people do not always tell the truth, may be for some obvious reasons. According to her, some people say the exact opposite of their intention or say things that leave listeners to grapple with accurate interpretation to what has been said. Wijnia's (2004) submission reveals that, in blogging, people keep (parts of) their identity secret, while some even lie about theirs.

It is important to note the usefulness of weblogs, as acknowledged by Wijnia (2004) "that weblogs meet the criteria for ideal speech communication"; Thorpe's (2008) observation; "that web story can be used in building online group relationships", Darisipudi and Sharma's (2008) opinion; "that blogs can be an effective tool for virtual team collaboration" and Rezaee and Oladi's (2008) discovery of blogging as "a meaningful medium that can improve students' social interactions and writing proficiency". It should also be recalled that Yu-ping (2008) directs attention to the manipulative and ideological tendencies in blogging as a social practice, which is also what the current study sets out to investigate.

Meanwhile, it should be observed that scholars have demonstrated that blogging as a medium of discourse and context of discourse can be a very useful tool in advancing the social process, but the contention is that the blog discourse can also be a form of dominant discourse whose functions (may) manufacture such things as consensus, acceptance and legitimacy or naturalisation of discourse. This becomes, especially, possible if power and dominance of groups are measured by a group's' control over (access to) the discourse, and as van Dijk (1996) points out, discourse control implies the conditions of control over the minds of other people. At this juncture, it is necessary to

examine some other issues that may provide insight into the theoretical foundation upon which our contention could be based. This is the focus of the next section.

2.2 Language and ideology

Language has had a long relationship with ideology. The early philosophers pointed out that human thought and communication function with language (Sapir-Whorf hypothesis). For instance, Prodicus (440-396 B.C.E), was said to have based his teachings on the idea that properly chosen words are quite fundamental to effective communication (see: Ryder, 2004). The Aristotelian tradition also recognises the instrumental nature of the linguistic sign, as it posits that human thought proceeds by the use of signs, just as spoken words are symbols of mental experience (Aristotle, (Reprinted) 1959). To Aristotle, what makes humans unique and different from other primates is the possession of language. He contends that language is used to indicate what is useful or harmful, evil or good, just or unjust. In other words, Aristotle believes that humans alone have the perception of right or wrong and all other indications of values, attitudes, experiences and ideologies, as permitted by language.

This belief system was enacted in the Middle Ages by William Shakespeare (1564-1616) in one of his plays *The Tempest* (1613: 68), through which a character in the play, Prospero, considers 'language' as the best gift (of all the gifts) that he had offered Caliban, his servant, to save him from savagery. Roger Bacon (1214-1293) is another scholar of the Middle Ages who directs our attention to the connection between language and ideology. He distinguishes natural signs (as when smoke signifies fire) from signs that involve human communication. This distinction is made through a triadic semiotic model that describes the relationship between a sign, its referent (object) and the human

interpreter. The triad later serves as a fundamental concept for the cultural and psychological patterns that underlie language. Van Dijk (1995:21) advocates the adoption of these patterns as specific basic frameworks of social cognition, with specific internal structures and specific cognitive and social functions that are capable of linking social structures with social practices.

John Poinsoot (1589-1644) also elaborates on Bacon's triad by presenting signs, through his *Tractatus de signis* (1632), as relative beings whose existence is meant to draw human attention to those things which humans themselves are not aware of. Poinsoot's observation seems like an eye opener, as it opens up new vistas for scholars in the study of signs as a fundamental science. In fact, John Locke, through his *Essay concerning human understanding* (1690), advocates the inclusion of 'semiotike doctrine of signs' as one of the three major branches of science, with natural philosophy and practical ethics being the others respectively. This idea probably lays the foundation for today's modern semiotics, which is part of our focus in the current study.

Modern semiotics concretises the relationship between language and ideology as it makes vivid the role of sign system in the construction of ideas and world views. In other words, modern semiotics shows ideology at play and demonstrates that 'reality' can be challenged. Two major traditions emerged in modern semiotic theory. One of them was led by the Swiss-French linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Saussurean semiotics sees language as an underlying system of communication by virtue of what a sign can mean (see: Prince and Waugh, 1996:5). The theory believes that elements of a language should be taken as components of a larger system of language in use.

In this way, language is not considered a mere tool devised for the representation of a pre-existent reality, but rather, a constitutive part of reality. This suggests that language, in Saussurean conceptualisation, is a system of signs involved in the construction of ideas, myths and general world view, a situation which does not preclude ideology. The basic tenet of Saussurean theory is that sign is the basic unit of meaning (Saussure, 1959: 118), and there is arbitrary association between a sign and its referent. The theory posits that the smallest unit of analysis is the sign, and that a sign is made up of the signifier and the signified. While the signifier is a sensory pattern (form), the signified is the concept elicited in the mind of the signifier.

This therefore suggests that the signifier does not alone constitute a sign until it is interpreted. That is, the signifier and signified work together to produce meaning in a relationship described as arbitrary. In other words, the signifier does not resemble or cause the signified, meaning that there is no logical connection between both of them. Uwasomba (2007) however believes that in spite of this arbitrary relationship, what sustains the signifier and the signified is largely a matter of convention, that is, both are related by convention. We shall examine the adequacy or otherwise of the Saussurean theory later in this discussion. At this point, it is necessary to take a look at the other tradition in modern semiotics. The tradition, which emerged out of American philosophy, was led by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914).

To Peirce, it is true that signs are both symbolic and arbitrary, but he also calls attention to some signs, such as the iconic signs that physically resemble their referents (as in the figure of a holy person used in (Greek) worship) and indexical signs which possess some logical connections to their signified, as exemplified by the Parisian

holidays signified by a picture of the Eiffel Tower, a landmark in the city that is frequently associated with it. Even, the costume worn by an actor may stand as an indexical sign for a social position or a profession. With Pierce's observation, it is evident that there are rudiments of a conventional bond between the signifier and the signified. This connection is further illustrated in some representations whereby people like caterer, judges, policemen, footballers or doctors are sometimes used (especially in advertisements) to mobilise feelings associated with the job or profession in consumers.

Rather than tying the relation of sign and its referent to convention, Pierce, on the contrary, believes that such relation exists in the mind of the interpreter, where it operates as a mental tool known as interpretant. In other words, the signifier elicits in the mind, an interpretant, which is not the signified, but a mediating thought that promotes understanding that will cause the signified. This mediating thought can manifest as a schema, a mental model or a recollection of prior experience, which enables the subject to move towards understanding.

What can be observed from this analysis is that the process of sign interpretation, which Pierce (1955:104) calls 'semiosis' is an iterative process residing with the interpreter and it involves multiple inferences, as the interpretant (mediating thought) becomes a sign that elicits another interpretant, thus giving way for an infinite series of unlimited semioses. In the view of Ryder (2004), Pierce (by this analysis) seems to have shifted the focus of semiotics from a relational (structural) view of signs and their referents to an understanding of semiosis as an iterative, mediational process in which a thought is a sign, requiring interpretation before meaning can be achieved. In other words, Pierce analysis seems to have expanded the scope of semiotics to an

understanding of it as an iterative process that can involve both verbal and non-verbal signs. We observe that, even though Saussure and Pierce have different foci, their theories are quite significant for a better understanding of the triadic relationship between physical signs, the objects to which they refer and the human interpreter.

The two traditions (Saussure's and Pierce's) must have provided a foundation for subsequent theories as emerging semiotic scholars continue to lean towards either of these two traditions. For instance, Roland Barthes (1915-1980) adopts Saussurean model in a structural analysis (Barthes, 1957) that attempts to deconstruct the excessive rhetorical manoeuvres within popular culture in Europe, after World War II. His publication, *Mythologies* (1957), is highly critical of the journalistic excesses that characterised the French-Algerian war. This work is an attempt to deconstruct French journalism rendered by writers who, in the words of Ryder (2004) "have perfected the art of taking sides while disguising behind airs of neutrality"

Through Barthes, the connection between language and ideology is brought to the fore as he reveals how language masks the hidden ideologies (described by him as myths). To Barthes, myths are signs that carry with them larger cultural meanings. He believes signs are made sophisticated in order to serve the ideological aims of the dominant class. According to him, myth is a mode of signification in which the signifier is stripped of its history, the form stripped of its substance and adorned with artificial substance that is made to appear natural. Hence; in his words "deeply partisan meanings are made to seem well established and self-evident."

This argument is highly significant for the understanding of the relationship between language and ideology. This is because myths and ideologies have a function of

recruiting popular support for actions and policies of the ruling class. Myth, for instance, is greatly exploited by the elite group because it is (generally) assumed to be more understandable (and more believable) than even the story it supplants, due to its self-evident truths which, perhaps, conform to the dominant historical and cultural positions, giving it a kind of naturalisation. In the same manner, ideology makes artificial social constructs look like realities and lends credence to social actions that, ordinarily would have been considered inimical to the people's condition.

While writing about the "control processes", Nader (1972) directs our attention to the ways in which the powerful (especially, those who control the conduits of language) use linguistic and other devices to get electorates and consumers to believe that they have made a free 'choice', when actually, their behaviour and opinions have been manipulated and controlled by forces beneath their awareness. Lakoff (2001:310) also writes on how language choice legitimises power. He observes that power permits 'the blanketing of all conduits with the messages of one group, to the exclusion of others. The fact that the group has power and social authority, he explains, means that the form of language in which it communicates will be accepted (without much hesitation) as the preferred, authoritative mode of communication.

What Lakoff's observation implies is that the form (of language) used in non-dominant communities, which might even be more comfortable to the speakers and hearers in those communities, will be excluded from authority and acceptance, with the justification that such language is illegitimate, illogical and irrational, and therefore, whatever ideas expressed by it should not be taken seriously. In this way, he opines, power provides its possessors with language authority and the language authority, in turn,

provides its possessors with power. The powerful ability of language to produce rhetorical effects therefore clearly underscores what a political figure can do with a public language used to address everyone at once through the mass electronic or print media, all of which allow the scripted or recorded public utterances of those in positions of high power to be tinged with greater ornaments than the addressers themselves can ever imagine.

This is not to say, however, that language manipulation for ideological effect is limited to the media. In fact, manipulation cuts across all spheres of human endeavour, even in science. For instance, Lemke (1990:129) describes the mystique of science as a set of harmful myths that favour the interest of small elite. According to him, a belief in the objectivity and certainty of science is usually seized by anyone in power who may use science as a justification for imposing policy decision they support. In Lemke's view, science is usually presented as authoritative and unquestionable. This, he believes, is a step towards making it authoritarian. In other words, the supposed air of objectivity and certainty in science discourse lends itself to an authoritarian culture which serves to undermine student's opinion rather than promoting understanding.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have blamed the linguistic practices that place artificial barriers between the pedagogy of science and common knowledge. They also criticise the myth of objectivism in science writing which portrays a world of objects as possessing inherent properties and fixed relations that are independent of human experience. Such view, according to them, could not account for our thoughts, our experience and our language that is largely metaphorical. They contend that metaphors

play a key role in identifying whose realities are privileged in the society, not physical or materials objects.

In this era of Information and Communication Technology (and corporate greed), there is a tendency that the media get involved in the business of promoting the ideology of the dominant class. Baudrillard (1988:166), for instance, observes that the post-modern culture, with its rich and exotic media, is a world of signs that have made a fundamental break from reality. A close look at the printed advertisement, for instance, reveals that it creates its meaning out of the ways different signs are organised and related to each other, both within the advertisement and through external references to wider belief systems. In Baudrillard's view, our contemporary mass culture is now passing through a world of simulation, having lost the capacity to comprehend an unmediated world.

What this observation suggests is that there is hardly anything humans do in the course of social practice without the manipulation of reality, of which language is heavily implicated. The symbolic manipulation of reality, especially, for the actualisation of personal and political goals have been attracting the attention of scholars from varying fields over the years, as people now begin to see reality from different perspectives. For instance, Orwell's (1969) article; *Politics and the English language*, points our attention to the political potentials of language. Orwell relates the language of politics to extra-linguistic events and proves that most political speeches and writing are largely geared towards "defending the indefensible, to make lies sound truthful, murder respectable or give solidity to pure wind" (Oha, 1994).

What Oha's (1994) remark indicates, in our contemporary world, is that most of what is presented to us as reality (especially by the media) is actually artificial social

constructs, which Baudrillard (1988:166) calls 'manufactured reality'. Bretton (1976) has earlier directed attention to the need to see the nature of language beyond its common function as a 'direct' means of communication. According to him, language is an issue or a foil to achieve socio-political goals. Fowler (1991:1) confirms the assertion while investigating the language of the news. His study reveals that language plays a key role in the construction of ideas in the press. According to him, language is a highly constructive mediator in media discourse, as it not only reflects social reality, but also intervenes in the social construction of reality. To Fowler, all meanings are socially constructed and discourse can only be better understood when it is subjected to critical (linguistic) analysis

From these observations, one cannot but agree with Fairclough (1989:45) that language connects with the social, either through being the primary domain of ideology or through being involved in the expression of power relations, and by extension, the manipulation of reality. This position therefore creates a bipolar view of language and ideology. One, that language is, indeed, an ideology and two, that language is a means of expressing ideology. The theory that sees language as epitomising ideology argues that putting a line between language and ideology is not only unnecessary, but a fruitless effort, as both concepts are two different ways of perceiving the same phenomenon. That is, language is ideology and ideology is language. Some of the scholars who hold this view include Marx and Engels (1943) Berger and Luckman (1976), Fowler (1981), Eagleton (1984), Uwasomba (2007), among others.

The group perceives language as a social practice through which its use becomes effective in the construction and reproduction of ideology. Uwasomba (2007), for

instance, believes language provides labels for all objects in a culture for the existence of the culture. That is, without language, no culture can survive, as the labelled objects become quite significant to existence and functioning within the culture. This is to say, in essence, that an existing ideology presupposes and determines the signification system used by all members in the culture. In other words, to negotiate and participate meaningfully within a given culture, one must be part of the language system, that is, the convention which the culture has created for itself.

This assertion therefore makes language an integral part of a group's culture and a reflection of many features of a given culture. Among the many features of a group's culture is the group's ideology which is encapsulated in language usage. In other words, language and ideology manifest in the same way within a culture. Perhaps, this is why Fowler (1981:26) describes ideology as a system of belief that is constructed by a group, within a culture, as a way of comprehending the world. He opines that no one can engage with the world without the cognitive support of ideology which manifests in language. To him, just as language determines the totality of a person, ideology allows the person to totally comprehend his/her world. The major tenet of this theory is that ideology is set as foundation of every practice, whether social, political, economic or spiritual, and this (foundation) provides space for which thoughts, opinions, perceptions and general world view are constructed.

The other school of thought agrees that language provides labels for objects through the signification system, as words only have meanings by their referents. The school opines, however, that it is not enough to equate ideology with objects and their associative meanings as this can only point to denotation, the basic meaning of objects,

whereas ideology is highly connected to underlying assumptions (meanings) and various dimensions of interpretation, which denotative meaning alone cannot address.

Ideology, according to Ryder (2004), is embedded in deep-seated rhetorical forms and underlying codes which fundamentally shape our realities, hence: it is doubtful whether the world can be represented in a neutral fashion as professed by denotative semantics. According to him, viewing realities from only denotative semantic lens can even blur the semantic lens of human communication, thus making it impossible for people to read between the lines. In other words, while denotative semantics operates mainly at the surface structure level, ideology is present at the deeper level of analysis.

It is for this reason that other views of language as an expression of ideology will be examined. In this connection, ideology may not be considered mainly as a group's belief, but also as a set of mediated views of the world, which circulate in a culture. As societal institutions function to create social reality, which they do through various institutional discourses, it can be claimed that all sources of discourse (sermons, books, newspapers, radio, television, the Internet etc) exist mainly to give legitimacy to existing social structures and participate in the construction of ideologies. This is because, through language, the discourses give impression that those who wield power in a society are justified in their behaviour (and practices) and that no other form of social reality is conceivable. Fowler (1985:62) opines that language, in this sense, can be said to be ideological as it becomes reality-creating social practice. But then, the other tradition believes that language is a means of expressing ideology as ideology itself is a function of interpretation.

A close look at Saussurean description of sign shows that a sign has two parts; the signifier (which is a form that is observable) and the signified (an idea or a mental construct of the signifier), and both the signifier and the signified combine to produce meaning or interpretation. In other words, a signifier has potential but not actual meaning, whereas the signified is the concept or meaning which the signifier refers to. Language, as a system consisting of distinct signs, is also a system of differences and options, similarities and identities which are all crucial in the transfer of meaning; hence, language alone cannot constitute meaning, but, may contribute to the process of creating meaning. Through this, language becomes the means of expressing ideologies.

As sign is opened to infinite richness of interpretation, the denotative relationship between a signifier and its signified may not be adequate to serve this infinite richness of interpretation, hence there is the need for an approach that involves a critical shift from the simple literal or denotative) interpretation of objects and forms of communication, to an investigation of the organisation and structure of cultural artefacts in a discourse and how they produce meaning. This is where connotative semantics becomes relevant.

According to Chandler (2009), connotative semantics operates at a second order level of meaning as it shows that interpretation is constructed in the mind of the interpreter, and not the text producer, with his/her (objective) representations. Connotation is interested in the new usages produced by the language group. That is how the sign system is used in a message, and this process allows meaning to be negotiated by the addressor, with his individual values and intentions. In other words, connotation aligns more with the addressee as it allows him/her to interpret and perceive text more than its basic meaning.

In modern semiotics, connotative meanings are developed by the culture and they do not represent the inherent qualities of the object or concept originally signified as the meaning. Culture, on the other hand, determines the individual's place in a group and the group's perception of the world. Chimombo and Roseberry (1998:7) observe that the way an individual in a society can achieve self-fulfilment or perceive the world is limited by that society's cultural norms and practices. The additional meanings provided by each group within a culture allow the interpreter to match the intended meaning of the addresser to one of the various possible meanings held in memory by the addressor.

Chimombo and Roseberry (1998:6) notice that every text is based in a context of culture and out of the cultural context arise discourses concerned with, for instance, ethnicity and solidarity, power and exploitation, prejudice, sexism, ideology, territory, history and so on. It can therefore be said that discourse and ideology are interrelated, as both are context-dependent. This relationship shall be examined in the next discussion, but before then, it is necessary to establish the relationship between the concept, connotation and the object of discussion, ideology.

Chandler (2009) makes an analytic distinction between two types of signified: a denotative signified and a connotative signified, even while believing that meanings are generated from both. According to him, denotation is described as the definitional, literal, obvious, or commonsense meaning of a sign. For instance, in the case of linguistic signs, the denotative meaning is what the dictionary attempts to provide while in representational visual image, such as art, the denotation is what all viewers would recognise the image as depicting.

“Connotation”, on the other hand, is used to refer to the socio-cultural and ‘personal’ associations (ideological, emotional, and so on) of the sign. These associations are typically related to the interpreter’s age, class, gender, ethnicity, status, profession and so on. Chandler believes that signs are more polysemic, that is, more open to interpretations in their connotations than their denotations. Barthes (1957:89) observes that one notable weakness of Saussure’s model (of the sign) is that it focuses on denotation at the expense of connotation. He argues that in photography (as well as other visual representations), connotation can be analytically separated from denotation, as denotation is what is photographed (or depicted in the case of art) while connotation is how it is photographed (or depicted).

To Chandler (2009), connotations are not purely ‘personal’ meaning but are determined by the codes to which the interpreter has access, and these codes are located within each culture. He believes that cultural codes provide a connotational framework, since they are organised around key oppositions (and equations) and each term aligns with a cluster of symbolic attributes. This is, however, not to say that denotation does not make use of codes. In semiotics, both denotation and connotation involve the use of codes, since code is a learned rule for linking signs to their meanings. In other words, a code, for semiotics, is the framework, a learned, shared conceptual connotation at work in all uses of signs, be it language or visual, and codes also function at the symbolic and ideological level (see Irvine, 2005).

Fiske (1982:19) believes why denotative semantics is accorded priority over connotative in semiotics is probably because denotative meaning of a sign is broadly agreed upon by members of the same culture, whereas no one is ever taken to task

because their connotations are incorrect. Barnard (1996:83) is of the view that connotation is an open ended system as no inventory of the connotative meaning generated by any sign could ever be complete, although he stresses that connotations are not purely personal meanings as they are determined by the codes to which the interpreter has access. In other words, through convention, certain connotations would be widely recognised within a culture, for instance, in African culture, most adults would know that the animal pig connotes dirtiness when used in relation to humans. Another reason why denotation seems to have been given prominence is that it is foregrounded at the expense of connotation. Hall (2000a:132) uses photography to illustrate that the photographic signifier that seems to be identical with its signified is not really so, because the photograph which appears to be a 'natural sign' produced without the intervention of a code is misleading. Through connotation, one is able to see that this belief is illusory, especially when one critically examines *how* the picture is taken.

Connotation, in other words produces the illusion of denotation, that is, the illusion of language as being transparent and of the signifier and the signified as being identical. This is where connotation is synonymous with ideology. Just like connotation, ideology is so much invaluable, especially to socially-oriented semiotics, because it identifies a unitary object that incorporates complex sets of meanings with the social agents and processes that produced them (Pratt 2009). In fact, Williams (1977:55) describes 'ideology' as a system of illusory beliefs or the general process of the production of meanings and ideas.

Georgij Yu (2006) believes that connotation relates to ideology as both are context dependent. In other words, the addresser and the addressee both process the

codes to relate meanings to the communication import of a particular text. For instance, the meanings as to health or illness (probably signified by a rise in a patient's temperature as recorded by the clinical thermometer) are selected from the connotative framework, which the interpreter (the doctor or nurse in this regard) has constructed through training and experience. In the same way, text results from the dynamic interplay of various semiotic, aesthetic, social and ideological processes within them. These processes form the codes and conventions which organise and release the meanings of a particular text while reading or viewing it.

According to Farr and Moscovici (1984), the processes that release the meaning of a text take place at a connotative cognitive level. This means, in essence, that connotations and ideologies are at the basis of the socio-political cognitions of groups (and individuals) for use in social representations and interpretations. This is perhaps the reason why van Dijk (1995a: 138) believes ideologies organise social group attitudes. These group attitudes consist of schematically organised general opinions about relevant social issues and depending on the position of the group, each group selects from the general cultural repertoire of social norms and values, those values that optimally realise its goals and interests. Having done this, the group now uses the selected social values as building block for its ideologies. This, according to him, may explain why, for instance, the value of 'equality' or the norm of 'non discrimination' is paramount in the ideologies of women, minorities or other groups that feel dominated or unjustly treated in the society, as manifested in their use of language.

In every human society, just as dominated groups have ideologies that effectively organise the social representations needed for resistance and change, which are expressed

in discourse and communication, dominant groups also possess ideologies used to legitimise their power or to manufacture consent and consensus. In fact, Thompson (1984) and Pratt (2009) observe that the term 'ideology' is largely used in connection with the dominant group far more than it is (associated) with the dominated. This may perhaps be because the dominant group seems to 'control' the discourse through the sources of discourse in their possession (e.g., sermon, media, history, text-books, technology, science, etc) that have earlier been mentioned (see page 39). In other words, what a discourse means depends on how it operates, that is, how signs and their ideological effects are organised internally (within the text) and externally (in relation to its production, circulation and consumption). Through this process, language can be said to be enacting ideologies in (these sources of) discourse.

At this juncture, the relationship between discourse and ideology will be examined. This may provide insight into why most discourses used by members of a social group are ideologically oriented.

2.3 Ideology and discourse

Reisigl and Wodak (2001:383) define discourse as a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of actions as thematically interrelated semiotic (oral or written) tokens that belong to specific semiotic types (genres). Though this definition encompasses semiotic principles and approach, it does not take into cognizance the fact that semiotic types (or token), being referred to, are beyond linguistic acts alone.

Semiotics is concerned primarily with any manner of representation. As Mick (1988:120) observes; "no discipline concerns itself with representation as strictly as

semiotics does". Even Hodge and Kress (1988:1) corroborate this when they observe that semiotics provides us with a potentially unifying conceptual framework and a set of methods and terms for use across the full range of signifying practices, which include gesture, posture, dress, writing, speech, photography, film, television, radio and lately, the Internet (see: Chandler, 2009:1). To Chandler, semiotics foregrounds and problematises the process of representation.

Apart from the Saussurean traditional (structural) semiotics, which seems to restrict the scope of semiotics to (oral and written) linguistic acts, the other school, that is, contemporary semiotics, seems to have dumped structuralist approach and embraced social concerns. This development has therefore made the role of the reader or viewer paramount in social semiotics, as it is now increasingly concerned with how the same text may generate different meanings for different readers / viewers.

Any definition of discourse, therefore, that is not cognisant of the role of the reader (as well as the viewers) in the construction of reality, especially with regard to non-verbal signs, could be described as inadequate. Bloor and Bloor (2001:6) seem to bear this in mind when they view discourse as all the phenomena of symbolic interaction and communication between people, usually through spoken or written language and / or visual representation. But what could be described as a more embracing definition is provided by Scollon and Scollon (2003:538) when they describe discourse as a way of being in the world, or form of life which integrates words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as, gestures, glances, body position, clothes and so on.

Within the context of this study, discourse is conceived in the same sense as Chimombo and Roseberry's (1998: ix). These scholars view discourse as a process that

results in a communicative act, while the communication act itself takes the form of a text. In this sense, a text does not consist of only written or printed words but includes other communicative acts such as visual signs and spoken words. Apart from viewing text as encapsulating the thoughts of a writer (or speaker) or a reader (or listener), it can also be viewed as consisting of other symbols, sounds, gestures or silences in any combination that is intended to communicate information such as ideas, emotional states, feelings and attitudes.

Viewing text in this manner presupposes that any act of communication will qualify as a text. We also align with Chimbombo and Roseberry's (1998: x) view that even if communication fails in a piece, a text is still realisable as long as the intention to communicate is there. This perception of text and discourse corroborates Brown and Yule's (1983:27) opinion of text. To Brown and Yule, there might be no clear-cut distinction between 'text' and 'discourse', other than the fact that discourse is used to embrace all language units with a definable communicative function. They view the unit of discourse as supra-sentential (above the grammatically defined sentence) to include the use of language by a speaker or writer in a context.

If it is arguable that 'context' is viewed in terms of the communicative process that defines discourse, then the communicative act realised in this process is 'text'. In other words, text results from the dynamic interplay of various semiotic, aesthetic, social and ideological processes within it, which also operate in the culture outside it (i.e. the text). This means that 'text' results from various overt, manifest content (appearance, form or signifier) and inner mechanisms (the codes and conventions which organise and release the meanings of a text in the process of viewing it). It also proves that the viewer

or reader is involved in the 'creation' of the text as well as the production of its meaning, since his or her own knowledge, social position and ideological perspective are brought to bear on the construction and deconstruction process.

Since most texts are goal oriented, Chimombo and Roseberry (1998: x) are of the opinion that the purpose of discourse analysis is to enable people to recognise the intended goal of the text-producer (who may be writer, speaker, journalist, photographer and so on) for the purpose of discovering any power relationship between the producer and consumer(s). This discovery is intended to achieve some form of control over the discourse. For instance, an analysis of professional discourse may reveal power relationships and the goal that may be hidden in them. Understanding such power relationship can thus help to equalise the power relationship or provide an escape route for the text consumer (i.e. the intended victim).

This situation also applies to other types of discourses, such as advertisement, politics, gender, minority group, women and children, job interview and so on, whose discourses have the possibility of exploiting consumer(s). Through analysis, the consumer can feel protected, having discovered the hidden meaning elicited by the discourse analysts. Then it may be necessary to ask how discourse connects with ideology or vice-versa. According to van Dijk (1995:19), ideologies express control and reproduce discourse (and discourse structures) at various levels of text and talk. He observes that both in graphical and phonological (surface) structures, as well as in syntactic and semantic structures, there are similar patterns and strategies of expression and management of biased mental models through which preferred, consistent or self-

serving information is emphasised, highlighted, focused, made explicit or prominent, and dispreferred information de-emphasised and made less explicit.

What this strategy implies in persuasive communication is that such discourse structures have clear a purpose in the management of the minds of the recipients (text consumers). In other words, there are possibilities that the recipient will activate preferred old models or construct new models in agreement with the goals or interests of the text producer, especially if no alternative information is provided. To this end, discourse becomes the instrument of verbal formulation, non-verbal formulation and the persuasive communication of ideological propositions.

It is a common knowledge that ideologies are acquired by members of a group or culture through social practices and socialisation. In this process, members of a group, society or culture share the same socio-cultural knowledge, socio-political knowledge and so on, and they also share evaluative beliefs, opinions, etc., which are organised into social attitudes. In this way, ideologies thus become the overall, abstract mental systems that organise such socially shared attitudes. In other words, ideology becomes the mentally represented, basic social characteristics of a group, manifesting in self-serving selection of values, positions, identity, tasks, goals, norms, and so on by the group and group members, for use in their discourses. Van Dijk (1995b:18) observes that feminist attitudes, for instance, are internally structured in this manner and mutually related by general principles or propositions that together define a 'feminist' ideology.

According to him, the group (feminist) selects and attaches special importance to such values as 'independence' 'autonomy' and 'gender equality', just the same way racist focuses on self-identity, superiority of own group (emphasising inequality) and primacy

of own group (emphasising self-importance). In this way, ideologies control evaluative beliefs, that is, social opinions shared by members of a group, and this is reflected in their (text) productions.

Apart from influencing the general social attitudes of a group, ideologies also control the personal cognition of group members. These include the planning and understanding of their discourses and other forms of interaction (see: Johnson-Laird, 1983, van Dijk, 1987). Through models, that is, the mental representations of events, actions, or situations people are engaged in, ideologies control and influence the general (social) cognitions that members share with other members of their group. These include socio-cultural values such as intelligence, honesty, solidarity and equality, personal attitudes, personal knowledge and representations of specific current actions, which are all expressed in the process of discourse creation.

The process of discourse creation involves two constituent processes (i.e., the production process, and the interpretation process) which work together to create a text. In the creation of text, there is usually an attempt to relate structures of discourse with the structure of society, through social properties of relations such as class, gender, status, ethnicity and so on, that are associated with the structural units, levels or strategies (of talk and text) contained in social, political and cultural contexts that are exposed by discourse analysis.

This situation perhaps informs van Dijk's (1995:135) conclusion that ideological analysis is, simply, one specific type of socio-political analysis of discourse. Nevertheless, van Dijk (1995:136) himself believes that socio-political approach to ideological analysis is inadequate to describe, explain or show how group members

express their social positions, that is, what discourse processes are involved in expressing such positions. In other words, social political approach alone could not account for how social positions of language users affect text or talk. He therefore proposes a theoretical interface, where the social and the discursive can 'meet' and relate to each other. This, he calls situated social interaction. To him, situations would represent social members, categories, relations, processes or forces, while the talk of social members would instance one type of social relations such as politeness, dominance, assistance or solidarity, from which expressions signalling such social relations can be examined.

An encounter between doctor and patient, for instance, is taken as enacting (more abstract structures of) medical discourse, in general and relations between doctors and patients, in particular; whereas the talk of social members in such a context will signify one type of social relation, which can be that of dominance or politeness. This will afford the analyst the opportunity to examine the type of control that the discourse producer exercises over the form and content of the text, which can be what Chimombo and Roseberry (1998:32) describe as staging.

Chimombo and Roseberry (1998:34-45) identify 'staging' and 'monitoring' as specific relational devices for expressing power relationships between text producer and interpreter. They observe that any choice in form and/or content that the producer makes to cause a text to be interpreted one way rather than another is called staging. These devices include word choice, clause structuring, the ordering or reordering of words or information, intonation, choice of register and/or genre, emphasising or de-emphasising of information, etc. According to them, 'staging' may draw in such techniques as the

repetition of key words, use of 'loaded' synonyms, unsubstantiated interpretation and so on.

Staging is a device that is greatly utilised by the media, especially in news reports, where texts believed to be stating facts, or a point of view, may be staged to bring them in line with personal or institutional biases, ideologies or political leanings. Even in literary discourse, texts that purportedly tell stories or narrate experiences often employ staging device through the perspective of the narrator or story teller. For instance, the narrator may appear to be omniscient, whereas the deep thoughts of the author/protagonist are betrayed to the reader when critically examined.

In association with staging is the monitoring device. 'Monitoring', as a rhetorical device in discourse, is used to clarify the situation of a text or to identify it as being in some sense, acceptable or unacceptable to the interpreter, especially when there is a perceived violation of the assumed normality of the world (Chimombo and Roseberry, 1998:36). Normality is assumed when all variables of a situation conform to an individual's understanding, based on experience of the world and how the world behaves. Assumed normality, Chimombo and Roseberry further opine, is based on two principles: analogy and local interpretation. The principle of analogy states that things will behave according to people's expectations, based on their experience of the behaviour of similar things, while the principle of local interpretation states that the smallest situational context needed to form a reasonable conclusion is the correct one.

Within text, violation of assumed normality occurs whenever something improbable or contrary to the expected pattern occurs. An interpreter thus responds to such text through monitoring it by constant reference to the offending element of the

situation. Through monitoring strategy, the interpreter is thus able to determine that the text is inconsistent with the social reality. This enables him to identify a text as political propaganda, popular journalese, fable or ideologically imbued.

Van Dijk (1987) identifies 'style' as another device that the text producer uses to exercise power over the text consumer. Styles, to him, are personal choices that express who people are, (or probably, who they think they are) or who they want others to think they are. In other words, styles are deliberately chosen by the text-producer to achieve personal goals such as status, affirmation of group membership and so on, which are made known with greater prestige, or formality, through the choice of one personal alternative rather than another. Chimombo and Roseberry (1988:40) include gestures, body language, facial expression and so on as characteristic of spoken styles, while the choice of certain expressions, structures, phrases, and so on, may be an indication of power, order, determination, prestige, insistence and so on in written expressions.

We can therefore believe that ideological orientations may inform the use of relational devices such as staging, monitoring or style by the text producer in the process of text production in order to exercise control over a discourse. Some text producers usually do this to manipulate the intended recipient of the text. That is, some producers are aware of the intended audience of the text and are able to make certain assumptions about their knowledge. Such assumption of knowledge is subsequently used to maintain power differential in text. However, in some cases, this taken-for-granted knowledge often runs contrary to expectation.

In some discourses, the ability to understand or interpret texts depends largely on the cultural knowledge of the world, possessed by the readers or viewers of the texts, and

this cultural knowledge is derived from the organised bodies of information stored in their mind. The organised bodies of information are known as frames. Chimombo and Roseberry (1998: 43), for instance, observe that frames enable the interpreter to highlight and supply the 'missing' pieces of a text, which the producer deliberately or inadvertently omits, as no conscious thought about frames on the part of the text producer is required in the process of text production because frames are situated in the context rather than in the text itself.

Frames and scripts, derived from the cultural knowledge, thus become the working tools of the interpreter. A script, like frame, also highlights the missing pieces of a process, but it is expressed in terms of verb phrases, as against frames that are expressed in noun phrases. For instance, a person who hears the utterance: "she ironed the clothes" can fill in the missing phrases such as: "she plugged the iron into (an electric) socket": "she switched it on": "she allowed it to become hot" and: "she ran the hot iron across the clothes"; and so on, making the ironing of clothes a scenario. This information items are not present on the surface structure of the text, but they are assumed by the interpreter as part of the required knowledge for meaningful interpretation of the text.

Thus, when frame and scripts are combined and placed within a situational context, they produce scenarios or schemata that describe the situation. Frames and script, therefore, form structured sequences that provide the interpreter with the tools of viewing the continuity of a thought or an action and help the interpreter to see what has occurred before or what may occur next in a text.

So far, we have observed how discourse can be an important tool in defining power bases within a culture and how the cultural knowledge of the interpreter can assist

to unmask the hidden ideologies of the text producer. In the process, we discovered how discourse or text producers can be exploitative through the supposed air of objectivity that characterise some discourses such as medicine, law, education, advertising and the media. This exploitation is usually made possible through the sources of discourse like editorials, advertisements, sermons, myths, manifestos, propaganda, selective reporting of news, laws, periodicals, bulletins and other structured processes that encapsulate staging, monitoring, styles and so on in a text.

Next, we shall examine how discourse is exploited by a cultural in-group to separate itself from certain out-groups in the society. This is, perhaps, what van Dijk (1984:137) refers to as “discourse of prejudice”. According to him, psychological and social forces usually interact to produce a stereotypical image of members of the out-group, perhaps, as a result of misunderstood cultural practices, cross cultural communication, economic uncertainty, fear of change and so on. When any of these happens, those who share stereotypical belief selectively use observation, rumour, blackmail, propaganda or innuendo to support and maintain the negative image (of the out-group), even if it has no basis in reality.

This observation is corroborated by Keen (1988:10) when he opines (from the psychological angle) that most cultures create sense of social solidarity in part, by simultaneously creating divide (enemies). According to him, the corporate identity of most cultures depends on dividing the world into this basic antagonism: **us** versus **them**. Hence; the idea of (tribal) loyalty and patriotism, as a normal human condition, brings about polarisation that manifests in the desire to reserve love for those who belong (or are familiar) to **us** and the urge to direct vitriolic hatred towards (**them**) strangers, under the

crippling assumption that: what is **strange** or unknown is **dangerous** and intends us **evil**.
“The unknown is untrustworthy,” Sam Keen (1988: 18) echoes.

Perhaps, this is why van Dijk (1984:137) believes that myth, history and ideology, besides defining who members of a culture are, where they came from and what their destiny is, armed group members with these crippling assumptions that attribute truth, purity and righteousness to **self** (in-group) and evil and hostility to the **other** (stranger or out-group). According to him, evidence of desirable traits and actions on the part of the out-group is usually ignored in favour of news about undesirable traits, and any little negative evidence (whether real or imagined) is usually seized and used to build a complex negative stereotype. Such stereotypes, van Dijk further claims, are built on the following hierarchy of cultural categories, such as:

- (a) national origin and / or appearance;
 - (b) socio economic position;
 - (c) socio cultural norms, values, religious beliefs, language, etc;
 - (d) (typical) actions or interactions and ;
 - (e) assigned personal properties (intelligence, honesty, etc)
- (van Dijk, 1984: 137)

Chimombo and Roseberry (1998: 15), while corroborating this view, notice that prejudice begins with the higher category in the hierarchical arrangement. That is, national origin or appearance is the most significant object of discrimination in most cultures, as exemplified by the discriminative practice by White against Black in many racist countries. Chimombo and Roseberry further observe that the discourses prevalent in racist environments reflect the stereotypes that derive from the above prejudice-building hierarchy, and that the style of the discourse is characterised by contrasting the

in-group and out-group, exaggerating, generalizing and enumerating qualities that centre on four basic categories, namely, they

- a) are different (*culturally and mentally*)
- b) do not adapt themselves
- c) perform negative acts and;
- d) threaten our interest/existence

(Chimombo and Roseberry, 1998:15)

The above descriptions of the out-group, which usually crystallised into metaphorical forms of conceptualisation such as ideologies and belief systems, usually serve as underlying model for conflict. In fact, Chilton (1986) argues that what constitutes 'war' is a function of prevailing conceptualisations realised in discourse. In other words, an underlying conceptual model, such as the need to preserve or maintain the homogeneity of a population (by specifying those who 'belong' and those who do not, on the basis of features of difference in language, custom, religious belief etc) usually results in violent conflicts such as civil war, genocide or ethnic cleansing.

From this discussion, it therefore becomes necessary to briefly examine the relationship between ideology (as epitomised by language and text) and conflict. This will, perhaps, provide the opportunity of examining the underlying conceptual models for blog discourse participants over the 2006 Lebanon Conflict, which is a reference point in this study. The next section takes care of this.

2.4 Ideology and conflict

Chilton (1997:174) is able to argue the role of language in the emergence and conduct of social conflict. According to him, abstract forms of conceptualisations, realised through language and discourse and manifesting in ideologies and belief system, are used in the construction and maintenance of sovereign states, in the sustenance of war

between states or even in war within the state itself. He further claims that the nationalist violence and warfare seeking to restore and liberate territories or inhabitants that allegedly 'belong' to some supposed homogeneity are not usually categorised as 'war' (by the in-group) but considered normal and legitimate. According to him, what constitutes (a legitimate concept of) war is usually established in linguistic activities, such as the declaration of war or military operations set in motion by verbal activity. Hence, to the in-group, war has not been engaged if it is not declared, regardless of any atrocity that might have been perpetrated by own (in-group's) soldiers.

What Chilton's remark suggests is that an action to liberate 'the people' (or 'our' people) from the 'infiltrators' is not usually regarded as war (in the ideological sense of it) but normal and necessary for (us) the in-group, as long as war has not been declared, even though the same action may be perceived as genocide or ethnic cleansing by (them) the out-group. D'souza (1995) argues that the ideology or conceptualisation of the political elite is concretised through this type of propaganda technique. According to him, social conflict is cognitively represented, enhanced by polarisation, discursively sustained and reproduced by demonising, derogatory and connotative semantics. He further observes that lexically and semantically, others (out-group) are thus associated not simply with difference, but rather, with defiance (illegitimacy) and threat. This is done with such a vitriolic hatred, which is like excluding 'others' from the community of 'us'.

What seems like a concrete manifestation of D'souza's observation is contained in the February, 2001 B'Nai British-Canada's report on the rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Canada. The report indicated that rhetorical devices such as metaphor and hyperbole were largely employed to orchestrate and emphasise the contrast between the in-group

(regarded as ‘the civilised’) and the out-group (considered as ‘the barbarians’). As expected, this remark resulted in the increase of assaults and fire-bombing, vandalism, death-threats, arson attacks, cemetery desecration and many other violent acts in the region during the year in question. This significantly points to the role of language, not only in creating a divide (which is a ‘normal’ human phenomenon), but also in cementing the divide and ensuring the continuance and perpetuation of such systemic discrimination.

Perhaps, that is why van Dijk (2005: 361) submits that social conflict is the product of mental conceptualisation, language manipulation and ideological propaganda. He is of the opinion that the in-group usually takes advantage of the opportunity provided by connotation and other linguistic devices to exhibit supremacist or power-oriented behaviour by continually stressing the out-group’s moral, intellectual and biological inferiority, while at the same time emphasising own superiority, especially in the construction of social reality.

We have seen that discourse and language can be used to make unbalanced power relations (and portrayals of social groups) appear to be common-sense, normal and natural when, in actual fact, the reality is prejudice, injustice and inequities. Gregor (2003) believes that a major means through which the dominant forces shape issues, manipulate reality and set the boundaries of legitimate discourse is the media.

Some earlier studies of media language have revealed biased, stereotypical, sexist and racist images in texts, illustrations, photos and so on by the media, through their manner of presentation. For instance, Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew’s (1979) study provides insight into the language of media discourse as it shows how the tools offered

by standard linguistic theories can be used to uncover linguistic structure of power and dominance in news discourse. Likewise, Adegaju (2005) exposes media language with regard to its biased and partisan use of words, especially along socio-political divides. van Dijk's (1988a, 1988b) analysis of international news reveal syntactic variations that are a function of the underlying involvement of actors, their agency, responsibility and perspective. According to van Dijk, linguistic tools such as transitivity in syntax, lexical structure, modality, speech acts and so on, provide leverage to achieve those goals.

Hence, rather than seeing news as a reflection of reality, which people believe news represents, Fowler (1991) describes news as a product shaped by political, economic and cultural forces. In his analysis of news discourse, he observes that systematic grammatical devices function in establishing, manipulating and naturalising social hierarchies in the news. He therefore advocates the need to devise a method of language analysis that would respond to the problem of fixed, indivisible ideology in media discourse, as he concludes that language is a crucial factor in the construction of ideas in the press.

In what seems a corroboration of Fowler's view, Van Dijk (1998b) describes opinions and ideologies in the press as a product of prejudice, just as Wetschanow's (2003) critical discourse analysis of media reporting of violence against women in the Austrian print media laments the biased, stereotypical manner of reporting such incidence in the press. This is further supported by Ayoola's (2008) findings that the manner of reporting some Niger Delta issues in the Nigeria newspapers by the press has neither been fair nor balanced.

From these observations, it is obvious that the manner of reporting in the media is an important variable in social conflict as it proves that the media play such a key role in conflict causation, management and escalation through their representations. Therefore, the next line of discussion will take us to media discourse, which shall be examined from the ideological perspective. Thereafter, we shall restrict the discussion to a specific aspect of the discourse, that is, the New Media (the Internet) which accommodates the blog discourse that is our primary focus in this study.

2.5 Media discourse and ideology

According to Cotter (2001:416), the discourse of the news media encapsulates two key components: the news story (which can take the form of a spoken or written text) and the process involved in producing the text. The news story has been a major focus of most media researchers over the years, especially those working within the frameworks of linguistic and social theories, whereas the second dimension, that is, the process of media text production, including the norms and routines of the community of news practitioners has not been enjoying the kind of attention given to the news story.

Wodak and Busch (2004:107) seem to corroborate Cotter's view when they opine that linguistic approaches to media text have been focusing largely on the moment of the text (i.e., the news story) and lament that studies that link media text and reception are still very scarce. The paucity of work on the process of media text production therefore significantly points attention to further areas of research, especially as factors in the process of news text production largely influence and define news discourse. Such factors include participants of the news discourse, including news recipients and the angles of reporting (i.e., their perspectives, ideologies and point of view).

Wodak and Busch (2004) observe that media institutions often purport to be neutral in their reports as they claim to merely provide space for public discourse, reflect states of affairs disinterestedly and give unmediated perceptions and arguments of news makers. Fairclough (2000a: 308) has criticised this so called neutrality of the media. He points out the fallacy of such assumptions in a critical analysis that questions the purported neutrality of the media. Through various illustrations, he is able to reveal the mediating and constructing role of the media.

We have also pointed out how other studies of language of the news media have also proved the media practitioners' claims to the contrary. We believe investigation of factors involved in the process of media text production can help the analyst to figure out the real meaning behind the spoken or written text of the media and provide useful insight into the underlying ideologies of the text. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) propose an analytical framework for studying the language of the media in relation to power and ideology. They reveal how Critical Discourse Analysis is useful in disclosing the discursive nature of social and cultural change. In their work, the language of the mass media is scrutinised as a site of power and social struggle, as well as a site where language role is apparently conspicuous.

Van Dijk's (1986) socio-cognitive model is based on the aspiration that cognition mediates between society and discourse. His subsequent works (1988a, 1988b, 1991 and 1998) provide a reflection on communication in the mass media by examining critically, different kinds of discourse that encode ideology, prejudice and racism in the news media. His argument is that long term and short term memories and certain mental models shape the perception and comprehension of discursive practices, which may also

imply stereotypes and prejudices if such mental models become rigid and over generalised.

Many studies of the news media have traditionally employed Critical Discourse Analysis and Cultural Studies approaches, emphasising the production and reproduction of stereotypes through print media, the Internet and television. According to Wodak and Busch (2004:112), the recognition of the contribution of all aspects of the communicative context to text interpretation, as well as a growing awareness in media studies of the importance of non-verbal aspects of texts, has turned attention to semiotic devices in discourse other than linguistic ones.

Semiotic devices in the media provide the means through which signs give meaning to the events of everyday life and this is achieved through the medium of print and the electronic medium. A medium is what transforms experience into knowledge. In other words, the news discourse derives its strength from the general craze, thirst and huge demand for news. Anderson (1997:39) describes 'news' as a commodity everybody wants but, ironically, news is such a commodity that grows old and goes bad immediately there is some new information. This may therefore suggest that the challenge to remain relevant and the need to remain afloat can govern the selection of news item, and consequently, the building blocks for the construction of ideology in the news media.

What this implies is that, if something does not exist to be fed in by the media as news story, then, it can be made up or speculated (even tinged with sensationalism), taking into account cultural considerations such as world view, place in the world, self development and self preservation of participants in the news discourse. Hence, corporate greed and economic reasons become important variables underlying

sensationalism of the news media. With this knowledge, it may require searching elsewhere; perhaps, looking up to the New Media, if, indeed, credible news story is the goal of the news consumer.

The news discourse relies on both print and electronic media to communicate news, information, ideas, events and knowledge to the people. In other words, the mass media traditionally involve all the people and organisations that provide information and news to the public, including television, radio and newspapers, which have been described as the old media. Chimombo and Roseberry (1998:308), however, observe that the media now include a range of technological innovations from telephone, photographs, fax, e-mail, laser print, to the global technology, the Internet, which has been described as the 'New Media' (Inglis, 1990:117).

The Internet is perhaps described as the New Media because of the technology's ability to conflate all other media types in its operation. In other words, the Internet encapsulates all the activities of the traditional mass media, together with other communicative practices, in a context of freedom, modern and global communication. Since our focus in this study is blog discourse, which is one of the Internet practices, it becomes necessary, therefore, to briefly examine 'the Internet' within the context of the New Media, in order to compare its practices with the traditional mass media, especially in relation to production of news story. This is with a view to observing ideological tendencies among practitioners in the context of their practices within the New Media. This might provide us with useful insight into blogging, as a (new) media practice and bloggers, who may be likened to the independent or freelance journalists of the old (traditional) media.

2.6 The Internet discourse

Information and communication Technology has no doubt taken away the media from the absolute control of the government. Giddens (2006:855) observes that the Internet is a powerful, democratising force which the media have greatly exploited because of its ability to facilitate the spread of ideas around the globe. Through the internet, the people, especially those under repressive regimes are beginning to agitate for freedom of expression, human right, equity and justice. According to him, more and more people in countries across the globe access the Internet regularly, browsing for information day and night, perhaps more than they listen to radio or watch the television. Some media organisations have thus seized the opportunity offered by the Internet, to construct their various websites on the Internet for easy access.

One basic advantage that the Internet has over the traditional mass media is that it facilitates exchange of information among users in the fastest possible ways. This unique opportunity has been seized by right activists, opinion leaders, agitators, campaigners and so on in a bid to attract sympathies to their side. For instance, Giddens (2006:841) attributes the success of the global protest that took place in February 2003 against the then impending war in Iraq to effective use of the Internet. According to him, anti-war groups were able to mobilise supporters from a range of different backgrounds through e-mails and announcements on websites.

However, online activities are not confined to the organisation of demonstrations alone. Redden (2001) observes that other benefits are derivable from the use of the Internet. He cites some independent media sites such as indymedia.org, which provides alternative and (somewhat) corrective coverage of politics as well as discussion. Others

include mediachanel.org, which is a huge alternative media portal established by disaffected journalists, with over six hundred affiliate organisations. Zmag.org is also a site that features commentary and analysis of left-wing, anti-globalist intellectuals and the site records over nine million hits every week.

In fact, campaigns vary on the net. Some online activities are aimed at exposing the misdeeds of some transnational corporations; others kick against the exportation of western styled democracy to other countries, especially, the Middle East region, while some expose the hypocrisy and the ideologies of countries purportedly championing some global movement against issues such as climate change, AIDS, poverty and disease, conflict, human trafficking, human right and so on. All these are enacted through the net, as the Internet transcends the limitation of the traditional (mass) media by providing free space for opinions, responses or reactions (as feedback) from the audience, especially on media reports. This is a unique attribute of the Internet that is lacking in the old media. Through the net, millions of users comment on vital public issues such as talk, debate, on-going war, environment, natural disasters and so on.

In fact, the Internet is a medium where opinions of the audience are prioritised, as there is hardly any site that does not give room for feedback on a wide range of issues. In recent times, the Internet continues to generate new applications that foster individual expression as well as cohesive community development: Weblog (blog) is one of the latest developments in CMC, and the discourse can be likened to the traditional media's way of independent journalism, but this is done in a context of freedom, as no charge is often made on entry. At this juncture, we shall attempt to explore the blog discourse, which is one of the computer-mediated practices. This is with a view to finding out its

description, operations and purposes, especially with regard to participants in the discourse and their ideological dispositions.

2.7 The blog discourse

There are many types of blogs, and they are largely defined by type of content and the way the content is delivered for each blog. The most common blog is the personal blog, which can be an on-going diary or commentary by an individual, perhaps as a way of reflecting on life, passing comments on environmental or socio-political issues or simply admiring works of art. In this way, the personal bloggers just publish their feelings in their blogs (even if the blogs are never read by anyone other than them) but create space for reactions and comments of the readers.

Another type is collaborative blog. This is a blog with more than one author. A single blog, in this way, can incorporate the writings of many people, usually with each post having a signature at the end, designating the author. In a collaborative blog, contributions are updated frequently, with the most recent at the top of the page. Topical issues such as war, history, philosophy, language or current affairs can provide avenue for the creation and sharing of knowledge in a collaborative blog. Also, there are corporate blogs, which are usually private, and may be essentially for business purposes. For instance, a corporate blog may be used internally to enhance communication in a business enterprise, or externally for such things as marketing, branding (or rebranding) and public relations.

There are different purposes for which blogs are created, but blogging generally, is a way of collecting links to webpage and sharing thoughts and ideas with people online. The practice actually originated from personal diary that is meant for public

consumption, but it is now common in reports, political diary, registers and new journalism. This is probably an indication that bloggers have seized the freedom opportunity provided by the Internet to contribute their own specific ideas to media reports, and in this process, export information freely to people, irrespective of their locations.

As noted in chapter one, we believe that the actual purpose for creating blogs might not be unconnected with ideological gains. This assumption seems to be moving closer to reality as bloggers.com defines blog in multifarious ways: as a personal diary; a daily pulpit; a collaborative space; a political soap box; a breaking news outlet; a collection of links; one's own private thoughts; memos to the world, etc. Each of these definitions reveals how blog functions within the context of communication in its attempt at advancing the society.

Blogging, as a new entrant in CMC, has, perhaps, entered computer practice unnoticed. This probably accounts for why few researches have been carried out in this area of Internet practice. The few available are in the fields of education, social science and environment, and we can rarely point to any in linguistics. Huffaker's (2005) study, for instance, demonstrates how weblogs can be used to promote literacy in the classroom. According to him, reading and writing can be enhanced through the opportunity made available by blog software. He argues that Mentor blog can be used to advance literacy through its story telling and dialogue components.

Working within the context of ethnographic study, Gumbrecht (2004) examines the use of blogs as a communicative medium through which bloggers maintain a delicate balance between satisfying themselves and their audience with their content. We should

not forget that the initial drive for personal blogging is self satisfaction in a context of free expression, while another drive, such as the need to gain prominence through the number of visitors attracted by the blog emerges in the process of seeking that satisfaction. However, as Gumbrecht further explains, even if the equilibrium is disturbed, bloggers are still protected because of the limited interactive nature of blog. Brady (2005) investigates personal participation in public knowledge-building through blogging. His study shows that there are a lot to be learned from collaboration and research in the blogosphere, especially, through the opportunity offered by blogs for collaboration and knowledge sharing in a fast and convenient manner.

There are other scholars that have studied blogging and its practices, but some of these studies concentrate on the description of structure, type and/or content of blogs. For instance, Rowse's (2005) study explicates different types of blogs. It shows that even though most communication online is enacted textually, blogs manifest in forms other than text. Some focus on art (art log), photographs (photo blog), sketches (sketch blog), videos (vlog) music (MP3blog), audio (podcasting) and many other media. These blogs (defined by media type) are in addition to personal, corporate, or collaborative blogs earlier mentioned, which are defined by purpose.

Some blogs are defined by device. These include Mob log (written by a mobile device such as mobile phone) and Wearable Wireless Webcam (an online shared diary of a person's personal life which combines text, video and pictures transmitted live from a wearable computer device to a website). Also, some blogs are defined by genre. These are blogs that focus on particular subjects of interest, such as politics (political blog); travelling (travel blog); housing (house blog); fashion (fashion blog); education

(education blog); law (legal blog or blawg) and other topical issues like war, history, philosophy and language. Blogs defined by genre, in this way, provide forum for the creation and sharing of knowledge in a collaborative form. These blogs are sometimes created to allow like-minded people to speak with one another or to reinforce existing convictions.

The opportunity created by the Internet and the interactive nature of the technology offer all who have access the possibility of not only being heard, but also sharing knowledge and ideas in a communicative context devoid of censorship and profit making, through a space where limitations of geography or time (which would have otherwise imposed constraints on communication) are rendered useless. This unique opportunity makes it possible for several online communities to exist and they connect people to blogs, and bloggers to other bloggers.

As noted above, blogs defined by genre have created opportunity for many online groups to be formed, as people who share the same social and cultural values, interest, experience or aspirations are bound together as a group by these shared values which may eventually serve as building block for the group's ideologies, as we shall later find out. Poster (2001) illustrates the way the speed, rhetorical traits and the connectivity of the net can be harnessed to organise social movement, but Brady (2005) opines that blogging can sometimes have unforeseen consequences in politically sensitive areas through its activities. This is probably because blogs are harder to control than the traditional media, hence, totalitarian and repressive regimes often seek to suppress blogs and punish those who maintain them. He notices that another risk of engaging in blogging is the

possibility of attacks or threats against the blogger, sometimes through Internet trolls emboldened by anonymity.

We notice, however, that in spite of the political dangers and the threat to personal safety, blogging has rapidly gained in popularity as blog usage spread tremendously over the years. In fact, Brady (2005) observes that since 2002, blogs have gained increasing notice and coverage for their role in breaking, shaping and spinning news stories. This therefore raises the issue of drive or motivation for blogging. In other words, the increase in blog activities suggests that there could be other purpose(s) for blogging, other than the ones earlier specified, such as online keeping of personal diaries or public knowledge-building, as claimed by Huffaker (2005). This observation, therefore, calls attention to the fact that bloggers, through the opportunity offered by the Internet, may not only be attempting to create a context of freedom for modern communication as well as the possibility of disseminating information from a wider source, but equally have hidden ideologies, probably buried in rhetoric and other disguised form of communication .

Even their effort at dispensing information 'cheaply' to the people might be connected to a hidden motive (or ideology), although this is bound to create crisis (of rivalry, sabotage or trust) with the old media practice, as some (blogs') new stories may conflict with accepted or mediated accounts usually presented by the traditional media. Also, just as the Internet equalises and liberates space for information consumers, blogging may be perceived by the political class as heading towards liberalising traditional media practices, thus setting it on a collision course with the old media, whose dominance may feel threatened. For instance, while bloggers see blogging as a means of

‘getting around the filter’ and to push message directly to the public, the mass media have often accused them of neither respecting the copyright nor presenting the society with credible news.

Blogging, therefore, has no doubt posed a challenge to both political and power structure in its attempt to provide a liberal space for news story. It might also be creating problem simultaneously for the traditional media whose ideologies centre on censoring, classifying and mediating news to the public. We recall that the traditional mass media have been accused of news mediation and manipulation of reality (see Orwell, 1969; Baudrillard, 1988; Fowler, 1991; Van Dijk; 1991; 1998a, 1998b; Fairclough, 1995, 2000a, McGregor, 2003), but scholars are yet to come out with any verdict or pronouncement on blogging, as a news practice.

We are of the opinion that even though bloggers differentiate themselves from the mainstream (old) media by trying to present news from a personal or an independent angle, there is no neutrality in news presentation as observed by Fowler (1991), not even where language and other signifying practices are involved, as in the case of blogging. The bloggers’ attempt to create modern means of independent reporting by connecting on public issues and information through audio, video, text and other visual devices may also be creating a context of discourse that encapsulates diverse opinions, perspectives and ideologies, thus making manipulation, persuasion or rhetoric inevitable.

Bloggers are perhaps aware of the fact that an index of popularity is the number of visitors attracted by each blog post, hence, news making through sensational publication could not be ruled out, entirely, if it will help to realise this goal. Also, apart from the assumed practice of bringing creativity into play, within the context of new

journalism, blogging could, after all, be a means through which we come to grips with personal interventions in a crisis and the attempt to shape the attitude of readers through persuasive communication. To sum up, the historical antecedents of media intervention in conflict or politics are predicated upon satisfaction of interest within the old journalism, which may also be creeping into the New Media. The New Media, on the other hand, through blogs, combine linguistic and semiotic devices within the modalities of text, video, picture and images to report conflict stories from a purportedly neutral angle.

Bloggers deploy language, rhetoric and other persuasive techniques to attract visitors to their posts, and achieve popularity through readers of their blogs, who are persuaded to take positions through their comments on the blogs. All these observations have, therefore, positioned this study on a sound footing. In other words, the review has presented us with a clear picture of the antecedents of rhetorical manner of reporting news in traditional media discourse, even though attempts are yet to be made at finding out similar patterns in the New Media. This is the focus of this research and the review has thus provided the background against which we can study rhetoric and ideology in blog posts on the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war. Let us, at this juncture, shift our attention to the theoretical framework of the study.

2.8 Theoretical framework

A brief examination of some linguistic approaches that have been adopted in media text analyses is necessary at this stage to provide us with insight into some of the approaches used so far. This will help us fashion out an approach that will best suit the

purpose of the study, and it may also make the approach adopted to stand out uniquely from others.

Wodak and Busch (2004) observe that Conversation Analysis (CA) represents a generic approach to the study of social interaction. Some of the media text researches in this field focus on relevant aspects of broadcast news, interviews (Greatbach, 1986; Heritage, 1985), talk radio (Hutchby, 1981) and talk show (Gruber, 1991; Kotthoff, 1997). This approach (CA) describes the formal structure of conversations (e.g. opening, turn-takings, topic control, closing, interruptions, and so on) and analyses how they operate in discourse, especially within the institutional media.

The strength of CA, according to Schegloff (1998), lies in its detailed (linguistic) description of the organisation of interaction, while its major weakness is its neglect of context, which is an important feature within the text. Such a model may not be appropriate for the purpose of this study. This is because, apart from being relatively concerned with verbal interactions as against our virtual interactions, its silence on context, which is also a major argument against it, has rendered it unsuitable to our goal, more so that our emphasis is on socio-political and socio-cultural context of virtual discourse.

It has been observed that discourse analysis (as earlier practised) does not present a critique of social practice (see: Chadwick, 2000; van Dijk, 2001: 351; Bloor and Bloor, 2007: 12; Ayoola, 2008). According to these scholars, discourse analysis either identifies how people use language to communicate, reveals the categories of discourse or builds theories about how communication may or may not take place. This probably explains why early works on discourse analysis merely provide basis for proposing a descriptive

framework for the study of discourse. For instance, Halliday and Hassan's (1976) approach, which scholars such as Beaugrande and Dressler (1981); Edmonson(1981); Ventola (1987); among others, later build on, focus on the study of formal signals that hold a text together as a unified whole. This approach has been described as text linguistics because of its extensive description of features that make a text cohesive and coherent.

Text linguistics has been described as inadequate (see: Fatusin, 2005), even in its attempt to describe what makes a text cohesive. For instance, Fatusin argues, formal features alone do not determine discourse coherence, but that coherence can still be achieved in a text through what Grice (1975) calls 'shared knowledge of the world'. In other words, interlocutors often rely on mutual contextual beliefs to interpret the message of a communicative piece. The shortcoming observed in text linguistics has therefore ruled out the model as a suitable framework in the investigation of socio-cultural beliefs which aid the understanding of social practices, exemplified by blogging. In fact, shared knowledge of the world is the spine of meaning in blog practice, as it elicits in the minds of the discourse participants the shared socio-cultural knowledge. This common background knowledge is what makes interlocutors understand each other in any communicative event.

Having seen that the concerns of discourse transcends textual considerations, which is part of the argument in this study, then we need an approach that will relate specific structures of text to structures of the socio political and cultural contexts. This search for an ideal model will therefore lead us to examine some critical approaches to discourse analysis. Chadwick (2000) observes that during the last two decades, discourse

analysis has sought to forge links between mainstream linguistics and critical social theory in order to comprehend the role played by language use in producing asymmetrical power relations and socio-political identity. In other words, emphasis seems to have gone beyond the analysis of formal properties of language use to matters of intense concern in contemporary life.

Employing a practical focus on language use in action, Chadwick maintains, typically seeks to link the formal features of texts with social and political contexts, and often broadens the definition of texts to include symbolic representations that may appear alongside written or spoken discourse. Fowler (1991: 67) observes that this method of applied language analysis, which he later refers to as critical linguistics, is devised in response to the problems of fixed, indivisible ideologies permeating language. Critical Linguistics, according to him, pays attention to the minute details of linguistic structure in the light of the social and historical situation of the text, to display to consciousness, the patterns of beliefs and values that are encoded in language. According to Fairclough (1989: 20), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an offshoot of Critical Linguistics. He observes that the seminal book on Critical Linguistics, exemplified by Fowler, Kress, Hodge and Trew's *Language and Control* (1979) must have provided basis for the development of critical approaches to discourse analysis.

By critical approach, we do not intend to perceive the word 'critical' in its common sense meaning of 'being negative'. Rather, we want to see it from the perspective of Wodak and Reisigl (2001: 17) in which 'being critical' means 'not taking things for granted, challenging reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies'. To the scholars, it also means being self-reflective in research and making opaque structures of

power relations and ideologies manifest. Proposing alternatives is also part of being critical, they argue further. In van Dijk's (2001: 352) view, we may find a more or less critical perspective in such areas as pragmatics, conversation analysis, narrative, rhetoric, stylistics, socio-linguistics, ethnography, media analysis and so on. From this observation, it is evident that CDA is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse. CDA views language as a form of social practice and focuses on the ways social and political domination is reproduced by text and talk (see: Fairclough, 1989: 20).

CDA is an approach founded on the idea that there is unequal access to linguistic and social resources, which are controlled institutionally. The patterns of access to discourse and communicative events, therefore, form an essential element of critical analysis. Over the years, the media have been used as agents of ideological propagation by the ruling elite, especially through the state owned media. This has therefore inspired many critical studies that we find quite relevant to the present study. The Glasgow University media group, for instance, carried out a research in media language in 1976. The study revealed biased, stereotypical, sexist and racist images in texts, illustrations and photos of the media. This alarming revelation must have informed other interests in critical studies of media language. Van Dijk's (1998b) study is another instance that provides insight into the media language with regard to biased or partisan use of words along socio-political lines. This study exposes events and actions in media discourse as a function of the underlying involvement of actors and agents of ideological propaganda.

Fairclough (1995) proposes a three dimensional framework for studying discourse, which are quite relevant to the present study. These include; the analysis of language texts (spoken or written); analysis of discourse practice (process of text

production distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of socio-cultural practice. His earlier work (Fairclough, 1989) has shown that language connects with the social through ideology. Van Dijk (1995a) advocates a socio-cognitive interface between social structures and discourse structures. This interface, according to him, reveals ideology and identity as the basis of the social representation of groups. His subsequent work, van Dijk (1999) emphasises context as the mentally represented structures of those properties of the social situation that are relevant for the production and comprehension of discourse. These properties include such categories like situation, setting (time and place settings), processes and participants in their various communicative, social or constitutional roles, including their mental representations like goals, opinions, attitudes ideologies and knowledge.

The linguistic approach proposed for data analysis in this study is Critical Discourse Analysis, (CDA). This is because CDA provides tools that make analysis transcend mere formal (linguistic) analysis to include eliciting the social function of such analysis. Apart from this, van Dijk (2001:351) Wilson (2001:401), Wodak and Busch (2004), Bloor and Bloor (2007) among others, have proved that CDA, is a new cross discipline that comprises the analysis of text, talk, images, pictures video and so on, in virtually all disciplines of the humanities and social sciences.

We also observe that CDA is often preferred where broader issues of discourse, such as the social context of discourse, the role of discourse in social practices, the cultural context of discourse or the social functions of specific texts are considered alongside a close analysis of text. In fact, Ayoola (2008) observes that most linguistic research on power, identity, rhetoric and ideology usually fall under the aegis of Critical

Discourse Analysis. Apart from this, CDA takes analysis beyond the asocial and uncritical paradigms identified with the earlier practices of discourse analysis and presents discourse as a product of society and a dynamic and changing force that is constantly influencing and re-constructing social practices and values, either positively or negatively (see: Bloor and Bloor, 2007:12).

CDA is committed and highly sensitive to social concerns, hence, it addresses and analyses discourse practices in critical ways. That is, it questions the texts and processes that produce them. Bloor and Bloor (2007:12) summarise the main objectives of CDA as follows, to:

- analyze discourse practices that reflect or construct social problems;
- investigate how ideologies can become frozen in language and find ways to break the ice;
- increase awareness of how to apply these objectives to specific cases of injustice, prejudice and misuse of power
- demonstrate the significance of language in the social relations of power;
- investigate how meaning is created in context and;
- investigate the role of speaker/writer, purpose and authorial stance in the construction of discourse.

From these practical objectives of CDA, it can be seen that the model aligns more with the specific objectives identified under section 1.3 of the current study. This makes it more relevant and preferable to any other linguistic approach. However, we cannot ignore the interdisciplinary nature of CDA. We are aware that the approach shares interests (and sometimes methods) with disciplines that study social groups and social structures, such as anthropology, sociology, ethnography and other disciplines concerned with human cognition and behaviour, such as linguistics, cognitive psychology and social psychology.

In fact, while attesting to the interdisciplinary approach of CDA, Bloor and Bloor (2007:10) observe that the branch of linguistics that is often preferred in CDA is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). This branch of grammar, according to them, stresses the importance of social context (which involves the context of culture and the culture of situation) in the production and development of language. They believe Functional Linguistics is different from other models of linguistics because it is concerned not only with words and sentences, but also with longer texts and collection of texts above the level of sentence, which is the domain of discourse.

Linguistic analysts employing CDA model are interested in the way in which language and discourse are used to achieve social goals, and in the part this use plays in social maintenance and social change. In other words, the purpose of analysis in CDA is to investigate an on-going communicative event and see whether the conclusion maintains the existing social structure or it is likely to change or revise it. Having seen that CDA is interdisciplinary and multi-dimensional in nature, it is expected that its analytical procedures and choice of theoretical framework will be interdisciplinary and multi-methodological. However, Wodak (2006) suggests that any explicit method in discourse studies, the humanities or social sciences may be used in CDA research as long as such approach is able to adequately and relevantly produce insights into the way discourse reproduces or resists social and political inequality, power abuse or domination.

In the present study, we propose to adopt CDA. This means that we are going to combine discourse analytical approach with linguistic and semiotic methodologies, thereby giving the analysis a three-dimensional framework. Ryder (2004) observes that though semiotic analysis is rarely considered a field of study in its own right, it is used in

a broad range of disciplines such as art, literature and the mass media. According to him, semiotic analysis searches for the cultural and psychological patterns that underlie language, art, image and other cultural expressions. In fact, he sees linguistic and cultural semiotics as a branch of communication theory that investigates sign systems and the modes of representation that humans use to convey feelings, thoughts, ideas and ideologies.

We believe the adoption of a multi-methodological approach is necessary to handle complex social phenomena, like rhetoric and ideologies, which are inherently inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary. These phenomena, we believe, may not be studied by linguistics alone, especially when adequacy is aimed. There are other scholars in CDA that have employed inter-disciplinary approach to investigate various ways through which discourse structures reproduce or challenge relations of power and dominance in society.

Van Dik's (1995b) theory of socio-cognitive interface between social structures and discourse structures provides an instance of inter-disciplinary approach in CDA. In the study, he opines that ideology and identity could be regarded as the basis of the social representations of groups and that scholarly discourse is part of, and influenced by, social structure and ideologies are enacted in the process of (social) interaction. Fairclough's (2001, 2003) studies propose a three-dimensional framework for studying discourse. These include; the analysis of language texts (spoken or written); analysis of discourse practice (process of text production, distribution and consumption) and; analysis of discursive events, as instances of socio-cultural practice. Through this framework, he concludes that language connects with the social by having a stake in the struggles for

power. His work represents another instance of inter disciplinary approach in CDA, as his theory draws heavily from the social theory, especially contributions from Karl Marx, Jurgen Habermas and Michael Foucault in the areas of ideologies and power relations.

Wodak's (2001a) Discourse-historical approach is also inter disciplinary, even while advocating strict implementation of inter-disciplinarity in critical discourse analysis. In the interview granted Gavin Kendall in 2007, Wodak claims that her Discourse-historical approach is influenced greatly by teamwork with historians and sociologists, even though she has text analysis, argumentation theory and rhetoric as her focus. In her words, "the intention behind Discourse-historical approach is largely connected with the need to integrate macro-social theories with linguistic analysis".

Wodak (in the interview) emphasises that CDA does not rigidly stick to a single approach as virtually all CDA approaches have their own theoretical positions that are combined with specific methodologies and methods. According to her, every theoretical approach in CDA is inherently interdisciplinary because of the complex social phenomena it is poised to investigate. She argues that what is important in any CDA approach is that critical self-reflection must accompany the research process continuously, from the choice of the object under investigation, to the choice of methods of analysis, the sampling, and the construction of a theoretical framework, up to the interpretation of results.

It is our belief that adopting the approach of CDA to investigate media texts, exemplified in blogging and other internet practices, follows the pattern of analysis where meanings are negotiated by actively participating readers or viewers. In this new paradigm, media texts are perceived as dialogic, and readings depend on the receivers

and the settings (see: Wodak and Busch, 2004). Having adopted this multi-dimensional approach, we can thus proceed to the methodology of carrying out the analysis. Before then, we need to clarify the three-dimensional framework being proposed in this study. It is a blend of discourse analytical approach with text-linguistics and non-linguistic (semiotic) significations, as they exemplify ideologies in the blogs. In other words, the CDA interdisciplinary approach being proposed for data analysis will be a hybrid of existing frameworks in discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics, semiotics and ideology. Let us briefly take a look at the triangular framework in the next section in order to see what it entails.

2.8.1 Discourse analytical paradigm

According to Cotter (2001:417), discourse analytic approach addresses discourse level matters relating to larger stretches of talk and text beyond the word or sentence level. It includes the questions of participants, topic, function and discourse structure, as well as a range of topics featuring news, interviews, quotations and reported speech, register, politeness, positioning, authorial stance, and angle of reporting, framing and so on. Van Dijk (1984) outlines a theory of discourse schemata modelled after Labov's (1972) narrative framework. In the schemata, discourse functions are described relative to ideologies. The model shows how ideologically controlled positions/opinions about in-groups and out-groups have a broad range of structural possibilities to emphasise or de-emphasise information in discourse. In the same manner, discourse structures have the double functions of enacting or executing underlying ideologies on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of acting as a powerful means of persuasion, to influence preferred mental models, and indirectly, preferred attitudes and ideologies.

Van Dijk (1995b) summarises those properties of discourse that express or signal opinions, perspectives, positions, interests or other properties of groups as; surface structures, syntax, lexicon, local semantics, global semantics, schematic structures, rhetoric, pragmatics and dialogic interactions. Five of these discourse properties would be quite useful in the analysis of bloggers' manner of reporting issues regarding the 2006 Lebanon war. These include: dialogical interaction, schematic structure, rhetoric, surface structure and lexicon. However, we do not dispute the relevance of other properties such as syntax, pragmatics and semantics. We believe some of these would be subsumed under linguistic analysis, hence; to avoid unnecessary duplication of category, they will be treated under Functional Linguistic paradigm. Let us begin with the dialogic interaction.

2.8.1.1 Dialogical interaction

Dialogical interaction refers to the ideological structures of discursive interaction. Van Dijk (1995a) believes that ideologies define and explain the social practices of members of a group. Even though social practices or discourses are needed to acquire social knowledge, attitudes and even ideologies, ideologies partly control what people do and say through attitudes and models. Ideologies, for instance, define relationships of power, which may in turn control interaction. That is, ideologies define who has more or less access to the use of specific dialogical features such as agenda setting for meetings, making appointments, opening or closing dialogues, turn management, initiation, change and closure of topics and so on.

Van Dijk maintains that dialogical interaction may reflect ideologically based power of interaction strategies in which normal rules of conversation are broken by

regular interruptions, not yielding the floor or taking very long turns, avoiding or changing ‘undesirable’ topics, negative comments about the other’s style (or choice of words), ideologically based inferiorisation of others, leading to inferiorisation of speech partners, such that normal rules of politeness are violated. All these negative evaluations and relations of inequality between speech participants in discourse may control speech act productions such as comments, threats, advice or plain assertions. We may need to examine another discourse property, rhetoric, which is also significant in this regard.

2.8.1.2 Rhetoric

Argumentation is another major way through which ideological points of view are expressed. This is done through specific rhetorical structures of discourse where repetition or semantic figures may be a function of ideological control. For instance, within rhetorical structure, information that is less favourable to the in-group is made less prominent, whereas negative information about out-group is emphasised. Rhetorical strategies include over-statement, under-statement, hyperbole, euphemism, mitigation, litotes and repetitions. All these have a closer relation to underlying ideologies and belief systems. Van Dijk, (1991) exposes how racist, sexist and other in-egalitarian ideologies are expressed in discourse through demeaning metaphors that belittle, or dehumanise the ‘other’ discourse participants. This is what rhetoric has in stock as far as ideological gain is concerned. The next section takes a look at schematic structure, which is another discourse strategy that is quite germane to ideological discussion.

2.8.1.3 Schematic structures

The mental structure of retaining the knowledge of the world is referred to as schema, hence: schematic structures may not be directly controlled by ideology. It is assumed, however that the link between macro-structures and super-structures may be ideologically manipulated. Van Dijk (1995a) observes that topics (macrostructures) may be organised by conventional schemata (superstructures) such that semantically subordinate topics (i.e. topics that organise little or local information in the text) are upgraded or made the headline, thus assigning more prominence to them (and vice-versa). A main topic of a news story may be down-graded to a lower level of the schema and realised as a subordinate topic in a background category of the news. All these manipulations are usually for ideological gains.

Van Dijk (1995a) observes that variations of relevance or importance of a news item are open to ideological control. For instance, information that is inconsistent with the interests of powerful groups may be downgraded, while information about out-groups (especially negative information) given more prominence by assigning it to more prominent category, such as headline. He notices that even in argumentation techniques, powerful arguers may manipulate their audiences by making self-serving arguments more explicit and prominent, whereas other arguments may be left implicit. This is however not peculiar to the schematic structure. Let us also take a look at another discourse property, the surface structure.

2.8.1.4 Surface structure

The 'surface' structures of discourse refer to various forms of expression at the level of phonological and graphical 'realisation' of underlying syntactic, lexical,

semantic, pragmatic or other abstract discourse structures. Phonological and/or graphical forms may be conventional manifestations of hidden ‘meanings’ conveyed by special devices such as the variation of the level of intonation, stress, or volume in speech, while large printed type may be used to emphasise or attract attention to specific meanings in writing. Surface structures control or express the ways in which producers want their texts to be interpreted. They also have the additional function of signalling ideologically controlled models of events. For instance, a large banner headline may emphasise the biased summary of a news event, just as insulting volume or intonation may signal social inequality between discourse participants.

Van Dijk(1995a) opines that even though the meanings of a text may not be explicit in the expression of prejudice, or social inequality, surface structures may let transpire such hidden meanings when they are marked for special purposes. In other words, surface structures contribute to special processing of interpretations of text and talk, as ideological surface structures marked against ordinary communication rules provide ‘deviant’ surface structures that signal or convey ‘deviant’ properties of models. The next section takes a look at a similar strategy, lexicon, through which ideological posture is expressed.

2.8.1.5 Lexicon

A major domain of ideological expressions and persuasion is lexicalisation. This is a discourse strategy that is largely utilised by the producer in the representation of participants, actions and events. The preponderant use of this strategy by the text producer may be attributed to the opportunity offered by an array of lexical choices opened to the discourse producer, depending on discourse genre, personal context (mood,

opinion, perspective, ideology etc), social context (formality, familiarity, group membership, power relationship, etc) and social cultural context (language variants, socials, norms and values).

Van Dijk (1995a); Wodak (1996a), for instance, observe that political ideologies are variously expressed in differential lexicalisation of political actors. While the in-group may represent political actors as ‘freedom fighters’ for instance, the same phenomenon may be represented as ‘terrorists’ for the out group. All these expressions are however not usually direct, they are actually coded within the structures of discourse. This act may compel the need to take a cursory look at the strategy for ideological expression in discourse which, incidentally, is the focus of the next section.

2.8.2 Coding

A code, according to Irvine (2005), is a learned rule for linking signs to their meanings. Signs comprise both linguistic and visual techniques deployed in text production. A code represents the framework, the learned and shared conceptual connection at work in all uses of signs. From the general perspective, a code may be described as a set of rules prescribing how to act or what to do (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, (2003; 288). Within the context of discourse, however, a code is the key to open the door to interpretation. In other words, a code is a semantic lens of reading or viewing information in a text.

Every text contains linguistic or semiotic information that are encoded by the producer(s) in their bid to communicate messages, ideas, feelings, knowledge and so on. The coding of such information can be done linguistically, visually or by other devices expected to encapsulate such information, and this may even be part of coding (the

message) in the text. Linguistic coding refers to a system of signs which allows language users to consistently reference the signified by means of their signifiers. Voloshinov (1986:25) describes visual signs as components of human activity. According to him, it is within human activity that signs take on their form and meaning. Wilden (1987:137) observes that ‘all language is communication but very little communication is language’, as imagistic as well as linguistic signs, particularly within the context of photography, advertising, cartoon and audio-visual media, constitute a substantial part of the world of communication.

In other words, coding takes place in different semiotic modes; visual, verbal, gestural, photographic, literary and artistic. As Pierce (1955:58) puts it, “the universe is perused with signs; it is not composed exclusively of signs”. To Nichols (1981:8), as long as signs are produced, we will be obliged to understand them. Decoding either linguistic or non-linguistic signs, therefore, entails looking for the cultural and psychological patterns that underlie such cultural expressions.

In this study, coding is viewed from these two angles (linguistic and non-linguistic). The linguistic decoding shall be undertaken by a close analysis of linguistic strategies opened to language users for manipulative intents and purposes. These strategies cut across various linguistic categories such as phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics. However, for the purpose of this study, the phonological devices are not focused on because most of the activities of bloggers are carried out via textual and visual modes. This does not give room to access what could have been encoded through phonological strategies such as levels of volume, pitch, intonation, stress, and so on. Nevertheless, other linguistic categories such as lexis, syntax and semantics are given

adequate considerations, using the insight offered by Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Bloor and Bloor (1995, 2007:183-190) opine that Halliday's (1985) model, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), is probably one of the most applicable theories for the analysis of text/context relationship in language. According to them, the model has the potential to expose not only what is in texts, but also what is absent or omitted from texts.

Egins (2004; 2) views SFG as a functional semiotic approach to language which explores how people use language in different contexts and how language is structured for use as a semiotic system. This view seems to buttress Butler's (1989) claim that SFG is explicitly sociolinguistic in its orientation, since the meaning potential of language (which is located in its system networks) is also the most important form of realising higher behavioural potential. Ayoola (2008) relies on SFG in an interdisciplinary approach of CDA, to prove that the reporting of some Niger Delta issues in the Nigerian Newspapers has neither been fair nor balanced.

Let us briefly take a look at the SFG model in order to see why it is relevant to the present study. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a product of SFG; it is a study of functions and semantics which form the basis of human language and communicative activity. Halliday (1985) has sought to create an approach to linguistics that will treat language as a foundation for the construction of human experience. This approach stresses that language cannot be dissociated from meaning; the way structural approaches privilege syntax above other considerations in language.

As noted above, SFL has its root in grammar but its primary concern is not only with the form a word takes, but how the selection of the form creates message in the text.

In other words, SFL takes into consideration the purpose of a message as well as the process of building words to create the message. This shows that the category of text occupies a central role in SFL model. The notion of text in SFL is hung on the belief that texts are produced and received in the context of situation. SFL argues that the relationship between text and context is systematic, and that it obtains through a systematic relationship between the social environment on the one hand, and the functional organisation of language on the other hand (Halliday, 1985: 11). In SFL, analysis begins with social context and, then, it looks at how language acts upon, or is constrained and influenced by the social context. According to Halliday (1985:12), the analysis of context is broken down into field, tenor and mode, which collectively constitute the register of a text.

“Field’ refers to what the text is about, including what is happening by the nature of the social action being reflected in the text. That is, what the participants are engaged in, such that language figures as an essential component. Tenor is about the participants in a discourse, their social roles and relationships, their relative status as well as their roles in the discourse. Mode deals with the symbolic organisation of the text, including what the language is used for (purpose of the text, such as persuasive, didactic, expository etc.); the channel of communication (such as spoken/written, monologic/dialogic, plus or minus visual contact, computer-mediated channel, telephone, video, art etc).

Butler (1989) claims that field; tenor and mode variables have a selective activating effect on meaning choices within systemic semantics: textual, interpersonal and ideational components of language. Within Hallidayan model (SFG), grammar is

considered from these three components, which have been described as metafunctions (Halliday, 1995: 112; Halliday and Hassan, 1989; Bloor and Bloor, 2007: 183). SFG believes that knowledge about language consists of recognising the observable effects of linguistic choices in the context, and that every linguistic form derives from a function. This is based on the assumption that language has evolved to satisfy human needs (as against Saussure's claim of language being arbitrary) and this is done in three distinct, but related ways (metafunctions).

The idea that grammar is functionally organised in terms of ideational, interpersonal and textual components (metafunctions) is a key issue in SFL, as it is based on the idea that all languages are organised around three main kinds of meaning: the "ideational" (to understand the environment): "interpersonal (to relate with or act on the others in the environment), while the third metafunction, "textual", breathes relevance into the initial two as it involves 'text' or 'utterance' constructed to serve the decoding needs of the hearer. Hence, within the context of SFL, each element in a language is explained by reference to its function in the total linguistic system.

Therefore, a functional grammar is one that construes all the units of a language: its words, phrases, clauses and so on, as organic configurations of functions. That is, each part is interpreted as functional with respect to the whole. With the introduction of the functional model, it is evident that Halliday is interested not simply in language, in itself and for itself, but also what linguistic theory can offer to the applied study of texts, and in the feedback which such application can offer to the theory itself. In application, the field is generally expressed through the experiential (ideational) function, the tenor through the interpersonal function and the mode through the textual function.

In this study, it is our belief that the adoption of the Hallidayan (SFL) model would be quite engaging as it would assist tremendously in exposing the hidden meanings that underlie the use of language in blogging. However, the model would be expanded to accommodate insights from critical theory, especially those from Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), van Leeuwen (2000) and van Leeuwen (2005) which recognise other media of communication, apart from language, which text producers deploy to hide intended meanings and ideological tendencies.

A strand of Systemic Linguistic theory is outlined by Martin (1985, 2001), which he describes as connotative semiotics. A major part of this Martinian model is the modelling of social context by redefining the relationship between register, genre and ideology. For instance, Martin (2001:45) identifies additional level of context, above and beyond tenor, field and mode which he refers to as 'genre'. According to him, this is a level concerned with systems of social processes, where the principles for relating social processes to each other relate to texture, the ways in which field, mode and tenor relate to a text.

Martinian model places texts in their social contexts and looks comprehensively at the discourse semantics, lexico-grammar and phonology/graphology that realise them. In other words, Hallidayan metafunctions, in relation to Martinian model, may have been collapsed in genre, register and language. Language still retains its metafunction of ideational, interpersonal and textual functions, while register still has Hallidayan concept of mode, field and tenor, but they are all redefined by the additional level of context, introduced as 'genre'. According to Martin (1985: 250), genre is how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them. Genre, in this sense, is the driving force

underlying both register and the linguistic system. In relation to ideology, this will indicate taking up of options to challenge or defend particular world views.

Martinian connotative semiotics recognises the contribution of all aspects of the communicative context to text interpretation. There is also a growing awareness in media studies generally of the importance of non-verbal aspects of texts. (See: Wodak and Busch, 2004). These observations must have therefore informed the new attention being turned into semiotic devices in discourse, perhaps to complement linguistic analysis.

Pioneering work on the interaction between the verbal and visual in texts and discourse as well as the meaning of images, is attributed to Theo Van Leeuwen and G. Kress. For instance, Kress and Leeuwen (1996) provide a useful framework for considering the communicative potential of visual devices in the media. The book, *Reading images*, demonstrates how Hallidayan linguistic model can be useful in the study of film and television productions.

Leeuwen's subsequent publications (2000, 2003) are concerned with topics such as the language of television interviews, and news paper reporting; semiotics of visual communication and music; intonation of disc jockeys and news readers, and so on. The relevance of Leeuwen's theory to the current study cannot be denied. For instance, Leeuwen (1996) distinguishes two kinds of relations: First, it sees discourse as a social practice, that is, a form of action or something people do to, for or with each other. Secondly, Leeuwen's theory considers discourse as a way of representing social practices, that is, a form of knowledge or what people express about social practices.

Since it is part of the purpose of this study to examine the way in which discourse and communication typically express and reproduce ideologies. The model that will

incorporate all forms of representations (linguistic and non-linguistic) will be quite useful in this regard. It is for this reason that we shall examine a branch of communication theory that investigates sign systems and the modes of representation that humans use to convey feelings, thoughts, ideas and ideologies. This is known as semiotics.

Ryder (2004) believes that though semiotic analysis is not considered a field of study in its own right, it is quite useful as a supplement in a broad range of disciplines such as language and mass media. In mass media, for instance, semiotics throws light on how advertising organises and constructs reality, how ideology and meanings are produced within the advertisement discourse and why sonic images are the way they are. Semiotics looks at any system of signs, whether the substance is verbal, visual or a complex mixture of both, in order to examine how it operates. In other words, semiotics examines how signs are organised internally, within the text, and externally, in relation to its social relations.

Having established the need for the linguistic decoding of ideological postures of bloggers to be carried out in Hallidayan Systemic Functional model, it may also be necessary to defend the purpose for adopting van Leeuwen Social Semiotic paradigm to deconstruct the rhetorical as well as ideological structures of the discourse producers, exemplified by the bloggers. A particular reason put forward by Leeuwen (2005: 10) himself is that social semiotic approach provides insight into how media content, especially visual material such as pictures, photographs, videos and cartoons, can be dematerialised in order to objectify ideological and political analysis. This is in consonance with our earlier assumption that bloggers typically encode rhetoric and ideologies in media communication by the virtue of the opportunity provided by the

Internet for visual devices, through which bloggers maximise the (un)willing consent of readers, visitors and other bloggers.

We have also assumed that the motive behind such practice might not be unconnected with either the need to maintain ideological stance, perpetuate status quo of power, position, wealth, resources, etc. or it could be a way to maintain hegemony and ideologies of the ruling class through the Internet opportunity that guarantees free speech. Based on these reasons, therefore, it is necessary that ideology forms part of the proposed triangular framework for the current study.

2.8.3 Ideology

Just like coding (both linguistic and non-linguistic), ideological analysis also occupies a central position in the triangular framework. This is because most discourses tend to be ideologically based. Van Dijk's (1998b) multidisciplinary approach to the study of ideology will be quite relevant in this regard. In this multidisciplinary approach, ideology is studied in relation to its effect on discourse forms and meanings, and how discursive structures may, in turn, contribute to the formation and transformation of ideologies. But before examining how ideologies are developed or influenced by discourse or how they control or influence text and talk, van Dijk (1995b: 1) suggests that we need to relate structures of discourse with structures of society.

In other words, social properties of relations such as class, gender, status or position, ethnicity and so on, should be associated with the structural units, levels or strategies of talk and text, embedded in their social, political and cultural contexts. It is in this way that language users are defined as members of communities, groups or organisations, and are supposed to speak, write or understand from a specific position.

Ideological analysis therefore will involve examining what ideologies are typically associated with such position, so as to defend or legitimise that position by discourse. If 'dominance' is associated with a position, for instance, ideological discourse analysis may serve to question or challenge such relationship of dominance in the discourse.

To carry out effective ideological analysis in discourse, the analyst is expected to identify what discourse production processes are involved in expressing positions, which, van Dijk opines, is situated in the social interaction itself. From this situated social interaction, expressions that may be intended or interpreted as signaling social relations like dominance, politeness, solidarity, assistance and so on, would be instantiated, as in the case for pronouns as markers of dominance or politeness.

Van Dijk argues further that cognition or mental models allow for many personal experiences and opinions, which also combine with context constraints, to influence or reproduce discourse. These are exercised in six descriptive ways: self-identity descriptions; activity descriptions; goal descriptions; norm and value descriptions; position and relation descriptions and resource descriptions. Let us take a brief look at how these factors determine, influence or control discourse structures.

Self-identity description: According to van Dijk (1995: 147), identity answers the questions who are *we*, where do *we* come from, what are *our* properties, values and potentials, and why are *we* different from *others* (pronouns pointing to self is emphasised). With these questions answered, then, self-identity descriptions will now include some boundary statements that define *our* relationship with *others*; including those who could be admitted into *our* territory; the criteria for admission, who may immigrate, etc. Van Dijk also observes that self-identity descriptions will generally be

positive for those who are self - or other-defined because of their more or less permanent, inherent or attributed characteristics, such as those of gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, language or origin. The group whose identity is threatened, insecure or marginalised (e.g. women, minorities, immigrants, etc) usually reproduce these kinds of identity descriptions in their discourses.

Activity description: Activity description is typical of groups who are identified by what they do. In other words, professionals or activists in their professorial, medical, journalistic, legal or environmental obligations have their ideologies focused on the 'good' things members do, and continue to emphasise these in their discourses. For instance, teachers would emphasise literacy or eradication of illiteracy while journalists may claim they fight ignorance through awareness.

Goal description: As in activity description, ideological discourse of groups focuses on the 'good' goals of their activities. Perhaps, this is the more reason why people like journalists describe themselves as 'watchdog of society'; teachers as 'builders of a nation'; environmentalists as 'saviours of environment'; professors as 'educating the young' and so on. Van Dijk (1995a) opines that such goal descriptions are, by definition, ideological, and not necessarily factual. In other words, they are just the ways members see themselves or want to be seen or evaluated.

Norm and value description: Ideological discourse expresses actions and meanings that involve values and norms, including what is good or bad, just or unjust, legitimate or illegitimate, right or wrong, and what actions and goals trying to respect or realise. For instance, professors and journalists may emphasise their special focus on truth, factuality and reliability in their accounts of the facts. Minorities and women may

emphasise equality, justice or egalitarianism; corporate managers cherish a liberalised market or free economy, etc.

Position and relation description: Van Dijk(1995a) notices that groups define their identities, activities and goals in relation to other groups. For instance, professors are defined with respect to students, journalists defined with respect to the public or their news agencies, anti-racists defined with respect to racists, feminists defined with respect to chauvinist men, etc. In these types of descriptions, we may expect emphasis on group relations, conflict or negative other presentation.

Resource description: Access to general or specific resources may be the focus of group description. For instance, the minority may emphasise unequal access to valuable social resources like position, respects, jobs, housing, income, equal pay or opportunity and so on. Some social groups are primarily defined in terms of their access or non-access to resources as in “the rich and the poor”; “the literate and the unlettered”; the “ruler and the ruled”; “the elite”; “the less privileged”; “the homeless”; “the unemployed” and so on.

The above descriptions, therefore, present the analyst with a focus, as the analyst will be concerned with investigating ideological tendencies in all the discourse participants. The discourse analyst is expected to make explicit those implied, taken-for-granted meanings in discourse. In the same way, discursive structures and strategies involved in ideologically based descriptions may be the means through which ideologies reproduce discourses.

Van Dijk (1995: 154) identifies some ways (which can also be called strategies) in which discourse structures enact ideologies. These include: negative lexicalisation,

hyperbole, compassion move, negative comparison, generalisation, concretisation, alliteration, warning, norm and value violation, presupposition and so on. We expect the critical analytical paradigm, which is also part of the triangular framework proposed in this study, to expose all these in the structures of discourse identifiable in our data. Below are some of the ideologies existent in the world. However, not all of them are utilised in the analysis of the data, as some have been delimited in the study because of their non-relevance to the Middle East discourse, which is the focus in this study.

2.9 Some ideologies in the world

Basically, the ideologies of the world can be viewed from five different perspectives, these are; religious ideologies, social ideologies, political ideologies, government ideologies and conflict ideologies. This is an arbitrary classification, however, which is made in order to give the study the basis upon which we can locate our argument, especially with regard to the analyses of data. Let us examine them in turns.

2.9.1 Religious ideologies

This is a belief or an idea based on the existence of God. However, this belief varies in terms of principles, tenets and practices of each religious sect. In terms of practices, we identify three types of ideological groups:

i) Those who believe in the existence of God: Five major groups are identifiable in this category, they include;

- a) Judaism: This is a religious belief of the Jews which is based on the Hebrew Scriptures. The sacred book of the religious sect is Torah.
- b) Christianity: This is a religious belief that is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The sacred book of the religious sect is Holy Bible.

- c) Islam: This is a religious belief that is based on the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. The sacred book of the religious sect is Holy Koran.
 - d) Buddhism: This is a religious belief that is based on the teachings of Guatama Buddha.
 - e) Hinduism: This is a religious practice based on the belief in (or idea of) reincarnation.
- ii) Those who believe in the non-existence of God: This is an ideology based on atheism or non-belief in the existence of God.
- iii) Those who are uncertain about the existence of God: This is an ideology that is hinged on substantive evidence to prove the existence of God. The ideology is popularly referred to as agnosticism. Its major tenet is that people cannot know whether God exists or not.

2.9.2 Social ideologies

These are the beliefs adopted by groups from societal practices and belief systems. They are picked from societal beliefs or groups' opinions on societal issues. Five of these societal practices/beliefs are considered as ideologies because of their influence on the opinions and attitude of members of the groups. These include anti-Semitism, supremacist belief, racism, libertarianism and sexism. There are, however, some sub-group ideologies that derive from, similar to or align with some of these practices. They are also categorised according to their relationships with the five major groups identified:

- i) **Anti-Semitism:** An anti-Semite is someone who hates the Jewish people. This ideology probably began during Nazi's regime (1933-1945) when the Jews were said to have been maltreated by the Germans, or probably due to Israel's return to their present place which they claim is their ancestral land, but which the original inhabitants (Palestinians) describe as a false claim.

- ii) **Zionism:** This ideology must have derived from the Biblical reference to Israelites as God's chosen people. This must have informed the reference to Israel as Zion and Israelis as Zionists. (See: Bukarambe, 1986: 141 and Ogbeidi, 2005: 86 for historical details about the State of Israel)
- iii) **Racism:** Racism derives from the belief in the supremacy of one's race and that the different races of people have different characters and abilities. This ideology usually gives rise to other ideological sub groups such as; xenophobia (strong fear or dislike of people from other countries or races), ethnocentrism, tribalism and homogeneity which all encapsulate the idea of being concerned with own identities and the basis for excluding out-group.
- iv) **Sexism:** This is the belief that one sex is weaker, less intelligent or less important than the other, resulting in the unfair treatment of the perceived weaker sex. Associated with this belief is the ideological practice of chauvinism, which is usually described as male chauvinism because of the tendency to be prevalent among the male sex.
- v) **Libertarianism:** This is the ideology borne out of the need to wriggle the media free from (absolute) control by the state and the promotion of human right, equity and justice. It also entails freedom of expression (free speech), unhindered access to public information, non/declassification of document and non-manipulation of (public) opinion. (This ideology is said to derive from the ideas of Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826); James Madison (1751-1836) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)).

2.9.3 Government ideologies

These are ideologies based on systems of government by nations of the world. The list is, however, not exhaustive but mention is made of some that are common place. These include democracy, theocracy, monarchy, plutocracy, oligarchy, autocracy and aristocracy.

- i) **Democracy:** This is a system of government in which every citizen in the country that has attained the rightful age of voting can vote or participate in an election scheduled to elect government officials. This system of government operates in a republic or country which is governed by elected representatives of the people, led by a president or prime minister.
- ii) **Monarchy:** This is a system of government in which a country is ruled by a king or queen.

- iii) **Plutocracy:** This is a system of government in which only the rich are in government.
- iv) **Autocracy:** This is a system of government in which one person has unlimited power with which she or he controls the government.
- v) **Oligarchy:** This is a system of government which only the few or a small group of people are in control of government.
- vi) **Aristocracy:** This is a system of government in which people of the highest social class run the government.
- vii) **Theocracy:** This is a social system or state controlled by religious leader(s).

2.9.4 Political ideologies

By political ideology, we mean the ideology that is based on the economy policy of a state. This policy is usually fashioned after the idea of a political figure or a charismatic leader who, perhaps, has ruled the state one time or the other, or unable to rule before he died but left a vision of how the state should be run and this idea is usually pursued by the government, even long after the visionary leader has died. Examples of these politico-economic ideologies include Socialism, Capitalism, Marxism, Trotskyism, Communism, Conservatism, Totalitarianism, and Reformism.

- i) **Socialism:** This is a political and economic system in which large industries are owned by the government and taxes and levies are used to take some wealth away from rich citizens and give to the poorer citizens.
- ii) **Capitalism:** This is a political and economic system in which businesses belong mostly to private owners, and not to the government.
- iii) **Communism:** This is a politico-economic system in which government controls the production of all food and goods in the country, and private ownership of property is disallowed.
- iv) **Marxism:** This is a political ideology named after its chief proponent, Karl Marx, which explains changes in history as the result of a struggle between social classes.

- v) **Trotskyism:** This is a political ideology that is based on the ideas of Leon Trotsky that the working class should take control of the state.
- vi) **Conservatism:** This is a political ideology that believes that the society should either maintain the status quo or strive for as little change as possible.
- vii) **Reformism:** This is a political ideology that believes that there should be a change in political ideas, system, law or organisation in order to improve the society.
- viii) **Totalitarianism:** This is a political system in which ordinary people have no power and are completely controlled by the government.

2.9.5 Conflict ideologies

Some ideologies are in place because of some prevailing conflict situations. The perception of each of these ideologies usually depends largely on the angle or the side of conflict to which an individual belongs. In other words, while some people may be perceived as terrorists by an out-group, this same set of people may be described as freedom fighters by the in-group. We may however describe some activities in conflict situation that usually inform the perception of certain group by the other. These include militancy, militarism, jihad, activism, terrorism, guerrilla warfare and militia campaign.

- i) **Militancy:** This is an ideology, idea or a belief that strong or violent action should be used to achieve political or social change.
- ii) **Militarism:** This is a belief that a country should build up its military forces and use them to protect itself and get what it wants.
- iii) **Jihad:** This is a holy war fought by the Muslims.
- iv) **Activism:** This is a belief that one should fight against an unfair or dishonest government, army or social system.
- v) **Guerrilla warfare:** This is a small unofficial military group that fights in a small group, usually on the mountains and in the forest.
- vi) **Terrorism:** This is a belief in the use of violence such as bombing, kidnapping or shooting to obtain political demands from government or making government do something.

- vii) **Militia campaign:** A militia group contains people trained as soldiers, but not part of the State's army. They are usually restricted to maintain security at their local areas.

2.10 Summary

All issues focused in this chapter are quite fundamental as they provide the necessary framework for this study. As a result, it gives the study the necessary background against which views and arguments can be located in the analyses of data in this study and see where and how issues and features emerge, merge, differ from or subvert others. However, it is necessary to point out that some issues discussed in the chapter, especially under ideologies in the world, are based purely on literal understanding of the concepts as obtained from their dictionary descriptions, which do not involve the opinion or ideological position of the researcher.

CHAPTER THREE

Research methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the milieu/setting of the study, the subjects of the study, the sampling and the research design. It also presents the data and spells out the methodology adopted in carrying out the data analysis.

3.1 Milieu of the study

The study is set within the cyberspace of electronic media, featuring online interactions within the confines of the Internet technology on the political landscape of the Middle East region (of the real world), with particular focus on the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war in Lebanon.

3.2 Subjects of the study

The subjects of the study are ideological 'netizens', whom we have earlier described as 'citizens of the net' (see: page 2). The netizens can be classified into two categories, based on their power and control over the discourse. In the first category are netizens, comprising those who own blog posts, keep and maintain the posts on regular basis. They are also referred to as bloggers in this study. The second category of netizens includes those who regularly visit the blog posts for latest updates. They are regarded as blog readers or surfers. This category of netizens also participates actively in the discourse as blog reader(s) and they sometimes leave comments after visiting the posts, through the space created for such purpose by bloggers.

3.3 Sampling

Efforts were made to ensure that the sampled data are collected from both sides of the conflict but it is somehow difficult to ascertain the actual (national) identities of bloggers or blog readers as most of them conceal this information, perhaps for security reason. Some bloggers (and commentators, as well), post entries under the guise of anonymity, while some use acronyms (that are somehow indecipherable) as names or titles of blog posts. Some refer to themselves as; ‘moderators’, while some prefer ‘editors’ or ‘contributing editors’. Virtually all of them claim to be reporting the news stories from independent (neutral) perspective. Hence, we could not actually determine which blogger or commentator represents which side of the conflict. However, we rely on ideological leanings obtained from their communications to draw inferences on their possible identities and positions on the conflict.

In all, ten Mideast weblogs, characterised by personal, collaborative and corporate blogs that address the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah conflict, and seven hundred and fifty posts, with two hundred and fifty readers’ comments, evenly distributed among the three blog types, were purposively selected. The three blog types are explained below:

- i. Personal blogs
- ii. Collaborative blogs
- iii. Corporate blogs

Personal blogs: These are blogs created by individual bloggers, perhaps, as a way to communicate personal feelings and opinions on matters relating to the Lebanon war. Most personal blogs are channelled through text, hypertext, images and links. This means that linguistic and non-linguistic items were sampled. These items include articles,

comments, commentaries and all forms of visual representations such as pictures, cartoons, photographs and clips posted during and after the war.

Collaborative blogs: Blogs that arose over the Lebanon war which feature discussions, talks and any other forms of collaboration by groups of bloggers are sampled here. In other words, blog communities created through collaborative discussions and arguments form part of the data bank. Examples of collaborative blogs whose data were sampled include: *MidEast Web for coexistence*, *One voice*, *Gulf Reporter*, *Blue Truth* and so on.

Corporate blogs: As pointed out in chapter two, some corporate organizations establish blogs to enhance communication in their respective domains. It is common nowadays that even some traditional media organisations, both print and electronic, are also using websites to create blogs on contemporary issues of diverse interests. Most blogs in this regard are textual, hence, articles, comments, news stories are regular features. Some postings in this regard were sampled in this study.

Altogether, one thousand postings were sampled, out of which seven hundred and fifty were used for the analysis of blog contents, while the remaining two hundred and fifty were utilised for the analysis of the blog (readers') comments. The division was done on an equal basis, that is, two hundred and fifty postings for each category of the blog types. Thereafter, the selected postings were categorised according to the channel of representation. These channels are in five different categories which include: articles, news stories, photographs, pictures and cartoons. Each of these five categories featured fifty postings so as to accommodate the two hundred and fifty allocated to each category. The breakdown of the total postings sampled and their distribution are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Breakdown of samples

TYPE OF BLOG	PERSONAL	COLLABORATIVE	CORPORATE	READERS' COMMENTS
DATABASE TITLE	PDF HTML	<i>MEWNEW.com</i>	<i>Middle East Report</i>	HTML
Articles	50	50	50	50
News reports	50	50	50	50
Pictures/video clips	50	50	50	50
Photographs	50	50	50	50
Cartoons	50	50	50	50
Total	250	250	250	250

3.4 The data

The data include both linguistic and non-linguistic postings. The linguistic data comprise articles, news stories, comments and commentaries, especially postings that solely involve the use of language; whereas, other data include pictures, photographs, cartoons and other visual representations that may or may not involve the use of language.

3.5 Sources of the data

The data for this study were drawn from the following blog posts:

1. *Beirut Live*: http://beirutlive.blogspot.com/2006_08_01_archive.html.
2. *Anderson cooper Blog 360*: CNN.com
3. *MideastWebforcoexistence*: www.mideastwebforcoexistence.org
4. <http://www.Mideastweb.org/log/archives/00000491.htm>
5. *One Voice*: www.onevoicemovement.org
6. *Gulf Reporter*: www.huffingtonpost.com
7. *Blue Truth*: www.bluetruth.net

8. *Mew New*: www.mewnew.com
9. *Middle East Report*: www.MiddleEastDesk.org

3.6 Data authentication

There is no way to fact-check the authenticity of each blog entry, as blog, by nature, is freely posted and usually devoid of control, censorship or editing that characterise the practice of old media. However, blogging makes information public through online publication, which makes the information available for viewing by anyone with internet access. Many bloggers are experts in the respective topics of interest, and it is common for bloggers to provide links to articles and papers they consulted to support their claims. This enables the readers or other bloggers to verify the authenticity of claim by going to the sources of such information. This is however not to say that such verification even guarantees authenticity, as some of the claims could be untrue.

Nevertheless, the contentious issues surrounding the Lebanon war provided fodder for inter blog discussions, which gave room for spontaneous construction of blogs, leading to the creation of blog communities. Hence, it is a matter of just a click to have information authenticated, arguments refuted and unsubstantiated claims dismissed by blog readers or contemporary bloggers. This public display of information usually lends credence to each blog entry as it allows blogs to mobilise and respond rapidly around a topic, especially to contribute and obtain new information towards a common goal of authenticating claims (see: Brady, 2005: 8).

We rely on the opportunity provided by this public viewing of blogs, which must have ensured that blogs relating to the Lebanon war are fact-checked and arguments within them are countered, thus making each entry on the subject matter a candidate that

has automatically passed the test of screening, verification and authentication by bloggers, readers and visitors.

3.7 Grouping of samples

Based on the above categorisation in section 3.3, it became evident that purposive sampling technique was required as a suitable method for qualitative research of this kind, more so that what could be described as constituting the Israeli-Hezbollah issues are too vast for the scope of this research. Hence, we identified some issues in the samples, which could be described as major (while some are minor) and these major issues were used as the basis for selection and grouping of the samples. The major issues include: land, security, governance/democracy, freedom and religion.

These five main issues in the blogs serve as the major motivation for most of the postings sampled, although some other minor ones could be discovered, even from the major ones that were identified above. The (blog) readers' comments were grouped together for easy description, and the readers' comments formed the sixth category. For the purpose of the study, the samples were grouped and coded as shown in this table:

Table 2: Distribution of data according to major themes

Theme	Code	Mode	Uni modal Type	Multi modal Type
land	LND	textual	articles	pictures, cartoons clips.
security	SCT	textual	articles	pictures, cartoons
governance	GVN	textual	articles	pictures, cartoon .
freedom	FRD	textual	articles	photo, cartoons.
religion	REL	textual	articles	cartoons,

				pictures.
Comments	CMT	textual	print	pictures, photo, cartoons

We also believe that the minor themes, some of which evolve from the major themes above should also receive attention. Hence, their own distribution is contained in table 3 below:

Table 3: Distribution / classification of data according to major and minor themes

S/No	Major themes	Code	Number	Minor themes
A	Land	LND	1 2 3 4	Ownership Building settlements Buffer zones Borders/partitioning
B	Security	SCT	1 2 3 4	Terrorism Taliban Sectarian violence Suicide bombing
C	Governance	GVN	1 2 3 4	Middle East democratisation Western styled democracy Palestinian government Sovereignty
D	Freedom	FRD	1 2 3 4	Prisoner swap Hostage release Fundamental human right Ethnocentrism
E	Religion	REL	1 2 3 4 5	Fundamentalism Jihad Sectarianism Secularism Anti-Semitism
F	Comments	CMT	1	-

3.7.1 Purposive sampling technique

Based on the above classification, purposive sampling technique was adopted to select postings that focus on the major and minor themes in the discourse. Postings that correspond to the grouping in Table 3 were selected from the three blog types earlier identified in Table 1 and labelled according to the codes and numbers in Table 3 respectfully. However, other relevant samples that illustrate theoretical issues and notions featured in the literature review were also classified and analysed as part of the data.

Purposive sampling method was considered appropriate for this kind of research, in which blogs that may constitute data for the study were too large to analyse one after the other. Hence, apart from saving a lot of time and resources, purposive sampling technique makes it possible to undertake a safe and systematic selection of samples from a large corpus of data.

3.8 Procedure for data analysis

Data analysis opened with linguistic coding in Chapter Four. This chapter examined information, messages, opinions and viewpoints that were coded through the language (deployed) in the posts. It was followed by Chapter Five, which examined other semiotic devices, such as pictures, cartoons and photographs, which also encoded ideologies, through the insight offered by social semiotics and the sign systems. Finally, the discourse strategies that concealed rhetoric, as well as ideological posture were examined in Chapter Six. In all these, attention was focused on ideological elements in the data that influenced or informed the rhetorical structures and language of the discourse. However, it is necessary to point out, at this juncture, that the analyses in this study are only fragments of the possible interpretations, as other analysts may express

different views about the analysed data. The analytical framework adopted to facilitate the findings of the study is presented below:

3.9 A discourse-semiotic model for ideological analysis of blogs and commentaries on 2006 Lebanon war

We relied on the interdisciplinary, as well as, the multi- methodological nature of CDA to fashion a multidimensional approach that we adopted for the analysis of data for the study. This interdisciplinary approach derives from Halliday's (1994) *Systemic Functional Grammar*; Fowler's (1991) *Linguistic Criticism*; Chimombo and Roseberry's (1998) *Power of Discourse*; van Leeuwen's (2005) *Social Semiotics*; Halliday and Martin's (1993) *Connotative Semiotics* and van Dijk's (1998) *Multidisciplinary approach to ideology*. Our decision to opt for the interdisciplinary model was informed by the need to ensure that the analysis transcends pure linguistic considerations in line with the specific objective of the study, as spelt out in section 1.3 (iii). We also believe that any chosen analytical framework must be capable of enabling the reader / analyst to interpret the content of any given text, as well as the motive behind the production of such text.

Again, a multi methodological framework, such as the one adopted in this study, is capable of exposing hidden ideological meanings residing in a multi-faceted discourse like blogging, because of its ability to consider issues/meanings from different theoretical perspectives. In the process of analysis, prominent and significant features of blog discourse were identified, classified and analysed within the Discourse-Semiotic framework illustrated in the figure below:

Figure 1. Coding in relation to semiotics, discourse and ideology

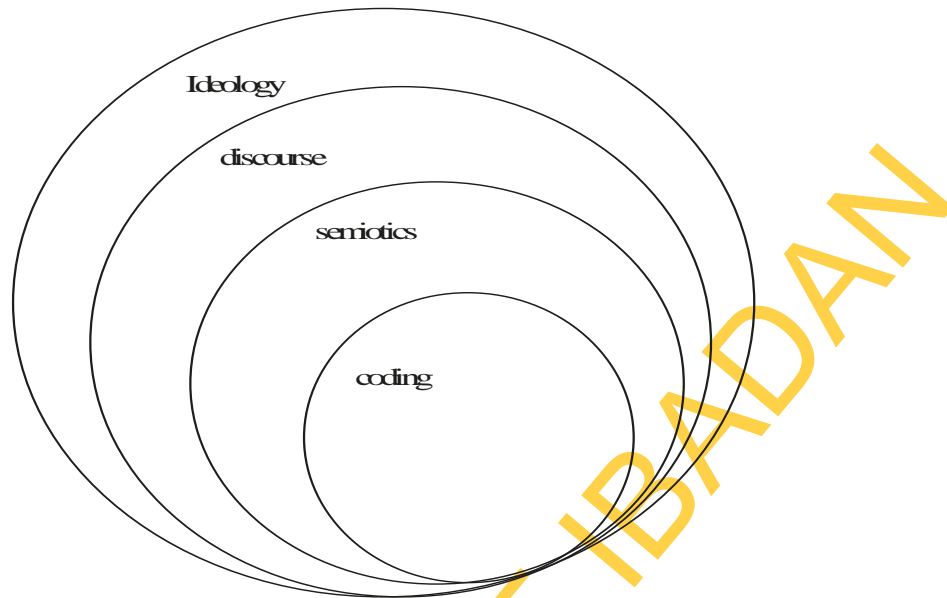


Figure 1: A Discourse-Semiotic Model of analysis. (*Source:* After Halliday and Martin's (1993) connotative semiotics)

3.10 A brief illustration of the discourse-semiotic framework

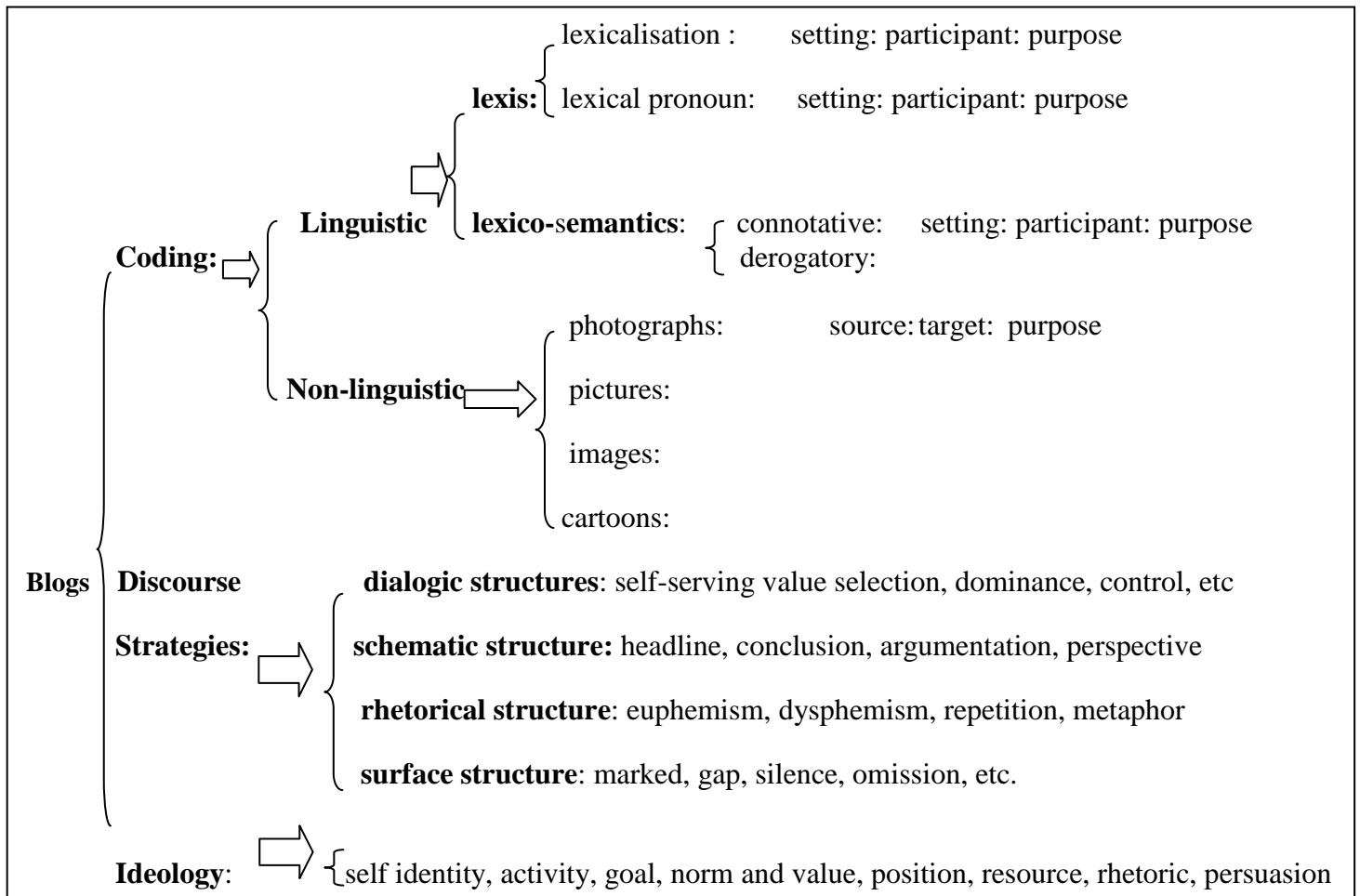
The discourse-semiotic framework in this study is capable of facilitating a systematic and detailed critical discourse analysis of blogs and commentaries on the 2006 Lebanon war between Israel and Hezbollah, because of its focus on the hidden ideological orientations in the discourse. We shall, at this juncture, illustrate the steps that are needed to realise the purpose of this study through the discourse-semiotic model, as contained in the contextual focus of figure 1 above: coding; semiotics; discourse and ideology, in which ideology is subsumed in the analysis of the other three. In other words, ideology is perceived as a mega norm which can be reached through a systematic

scrutiny of the language (coded), other semiotic devices and discourse elements that hang it together.

1. Coding: Communication (Semiotics)
 - 1.1 Linguistic coding
 - 1.1.1 Coding of lexis
 - a) Lexicalisation: Setting; participants; purpose
 - b) Lexical pronouns: setting; participants; purpose
 - 1.2 Non-linguistic coding
 - 1.2.1 Photographs: source; target; purpose
 - 1.2.2 Pictures: source; target; purpose
 - 1.2.3 Cartoon: source; target; purpose
2. Discourse: Discourse strategies
 - 2.1. Surface structure
 - 2.1.1 Marked items and purpose of marking
 - 2.2 Schematic structure
 - 2.2.1 Headline
 - 2.2.2 Conclusion / summary
 - 2.3 Dialogic structures
 - 2.3.1 Self-selection of values
 - 2.3.2 Dominance
 - 2.3.3. Perspective
3. Ideology
 - 3.1 Self- identity
 - 3.2 Activity
 - 3.3 Goal
 - 3.4 Norm and value
 - 3.5 Position and relation
 - 3.6 Resource
 - 3.7 Rhetoric
 - 3.7.1 Persuasion
 - 3.7.2 Manipulation

The framework is presented in the figure below:

Figure 2: Discourse-semiotic framework for data analysis



In the schema (Figure 2) above, the left brace and the block arrow indicate the focus and the direction of analysis respectfully.

CHAPTER FOUR

Linguistic coding in Mideast blog reports

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the Mideast blog posts, using the method and procedure proposed in chapter three. As noted in section 2.8.2, linguistic coding comprises information, messages, ideas and so on, that are encoded in linguistic forms at various levels of language description. While we acknowledge in this study that linguistic coding cuts across linguistic categories such as phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics, the emphasis in this chapter is on lexical coding in the blog reports. This is to give the analysis a clear focus, in line with the objectives of the study spelt out in section 1.3. However, lexical decoding is usually carried out in conjunction with the contextual meanings expressed by the selected lexical items or lexical choices. This means that such analysis combines two linguistics categories (lexis and semantics) in what is usually described as lexico-semantic analysis.

4.1 Lexical coding in Mideast blog reports

According to Chandler (2009), codes generally are interpretive frameworks used by both producers and interpreters of texts and there may be no intelligible discourse without the operation of a code. This is because a code is a set of practices familiar to users of the medium operating within a broad cultural framework. As pointed out in section 2.8.2, coding of information, ideas, messages and so on may be done through linguistic means, non-linguistic means and/or a combination of both linguistic and non linguistic means. Lexical coding, which is a focus in this chapter, is part of the overall

linguistic means of coding. It involves tactical deployment of lexical items within a text for various reasons. For instance, a skilful deployment of lexical items in a text could be part of coercive, persuasive or manipulative strategies to protect interests, propagate ideas or influence reader's opinion or attitude on issues in the text. This is usually done to either make the reader agree with certain viewpoint (usually that of the discourse producer) or convince the reader to sway to own (producer's) side of argument.

To achieve this effect, the discourse producer requires the lexicalisation of events, participants and actions of the news story being presented. By lexicalisation, we mean the representation of events, participants and actions of a discourse in linguistic forms in the course of narrating or reporting a news story. Van Dijk (1995:155) believes that a major domain of ideological expression and persuasion is lexicalisation. This is because, to refer to same issues, person, groups and so on, language users generally have a choice of several words which are influenced by discourse genre, personal context (mood, opinion, perspective, etc.) and social context (formality, familiarity, group membership, dominance relations and so on). Since many of these contexts are ideologically based, they consequently manifest in the representation of speech events, participants and actions.

Lexicalisation is however not the only tactical instrument in lexical coding. As part of persuasion or manipulation techniques, the language user (or story teller) may engage in an unusual deployment of lexical pronouns, modifiers, tropes and so on. These lexical properties, which are usually coded in the published news story, require being decoded through an interpretive framework, as some of them could have been deployed to mask ideological benefits, satisfy interests or achieve certain (unusual) effects.

In this chapter, we also consider as part of (the analysis of) lexical coding, the use of opinion words by bloggers to describe events, participants and actions in news story. This is because some of these opinion words are usually expressed in differential or polarised lexicalisation of political actors and, as such, quite significant for ideological investigation. For instance, the terms (deployed by bloggers in the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict news stories), such as; terrorists as against (freedom) fighters; militants versus military; or suicide bombers as against jihadists, etc. are quite significant for ideological postures. In other words, such opinion words are capable of indicating positions, perspectives, interests, values or attitudes that probably underlie the ideologies expressed by these choices of words. In addition to being the indicators of ideologies, opinion words are forms of social cognition that may allow us to link dominance and discourse.

Lexical decoding begins in this chapter with a close examination of lexicalisation in the news reports published by bloggers over issues in the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war, the Mideast conflict, such as the long-standing crisis between the Jews and Arabs or the intervention by the international community such as the United States. The examination of lexicalisation in this regard is considered in relation to the ideologies expressed by lexical choices in selected texts. The consideration (of lexical items and lexical choices of the news stories) is carried out using the following parameters:

- (i) Lexical items / choices indicating ideologically held beliefs.
- (ii) Lexical items / choices indicating (group) polarisation.
- (iii) Lexical items referring to action(s) performed by self (in-group).
- (iv) Lexical items referring to action(s) performed by other (s) (opponent or out-group).
- (v) Lexical items /choices displaying identities, positions, norms and values possessed by speaker (s), narrators (s) or commentator (s) in news stories.
- (vi) Lexical items /choices concealing or shielding identities, interests, positions, norms or values of speaker, narrator or commentator in the news story.

From a large corpus of data on the news reports published by bloggers on the Mideast conflict (or issues emanating thereof), we extract some news stories from blog posts that address the 2006 Israeli-Palestinian war, including attempts made by various groups to address the conflict through planned peace meetings. The contents of the news stories are presented for analyses. However, only the linguistic contents are focused in this chapter, while the non-linguistic (semiotic) elements will be analyzed in subsequent chapters. The linguistic content of each of the news stories selected for analysis is presented as text, and each text contains lexical items and lexical choices that are presented as excerpts in the adjoining table, which harbours lexical information, messages or ideas closely linked to each of the six analytical parameters highlighted above. The first text is hereby regarded as Plate 1, and the content of the plate is presented (below):

Plate 1: In Annapolis, Conflict by Other Means

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In Annapolis, Conflict by Other Means

Robert Blecher and Mouin Rabbani
November 26, 2007

(Robert Blecher, an editor of *Middle East Report*, and Mouin Rabbani, a contributing editor, are International Crisis Group analysts based, respectively, in Jerusalem and Amman.)

At an intersection in front of Nablus city hall, a pair of women threaded a knot of waiting pedestrians, glanced left, then dashed across the street. "What's this?" an onlooker chastised them. "Can't you see the red light?"

Not long after, his patience exhausted, the self-appointed traffic cop himself stepped off the curb and made his way to the other side of the boulevard. Such is life in the West Bank on the eve of the meeting in Annapolis, Maryland, where the Bush administration intends to create the semblance of a "peace process" between Israel and the Palestinians for the first time since it assumed office. There is excitement in Palestinian towns about the urban order newly emerging from years of chaos; there is a willingness to play by the rules even as many remain convinced that doing so will not get them very far; and, lastly, there is the reality that when the waiting grows tiresome, people will again take matters into their own hands. As for the Annapolis meeting itself, it is being greeted with indifference, with few believing it will lead to either meaningful change in their daily lives or substantive progress toward the end of an Israeli occupation now in its fifth decade.

For more detailed treatment of the issues discussed here, see International Crisis Group, *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Annapolis and After* (Amman/Denver, November 2007).

For background on the 2006 elections, see Graham Usher, " Hamas Rise," *Middle East Report* 238 (Spring 2006).

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are also once again playing by the rules, cajoled by the United States to return to the table following the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in June and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' subsequent formation of an interim government in Ramallah. This would be no small feat, as negotiations over the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for which the Palestinian leadership has long been clamoring, have been frozen for more than six years. But today, with Palestinians deeply divided and the international community deeply invested in perpetuating their division, negotiations have become a venue for struggle as much as a means for reaching a settlement. The current talk of peacemaking is thus an exercise in conflict by other means, raising opposition -- among Israelis and Palestinians alike, though in different ways -- to what was already a contentious process.

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Robert Blecher is identified in the (blog) post as Editor of Middle East Report Online, while Mouin Rabbani as a Contributing Editor. The duo are described as International Crisis Group analysts, with the former based in Jerusalem and the latter, Amman. Other information relating to their nationalities, goals, interests, political affiliations, values, norms, etc, is not provided. The content of the news story suggests that the publication is centred on scepticism (expressed by the bloggers) over successful outcome of the United States' proposed intervention in the Middle East crisis, through a planned peace-talk scheduled for Annapolis, Maryland (USA) in November that year (i.e., 2007). This is based on the announcement by the then America's Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice in June, 2007. The scepticism probably derives from the bloggers' perspective (or viewpoint), which is largely built around perceived failure of similar peace talks in the past, especially, the Oslo Peace Accord of 2003, and their distrust about the United States' intention, sincerity and seriousness in announcing a new peace talk.

4.1.1 Lexicalisation of ideologically held beliefs in Plate 1

As observed in chapter two, ideology is a set of beliefs or attitudes shared by members of a particular social group and used by them to accomplish everyday social practices. Ideology can also be socially shared representations of members of a particular social group which influence the goals, interests, perceptions, norms or values of members of the group. The manifestation of ideology is usually observed in group members' selection of self-serving fundamental socio-cultural values in (their) viewpoint, argument and worldview.

In plate 1, we can notice that references made directly or indirectly by the bloggers to persons, issues and events in the news story significantly attest to the

bloggers' ideological orientation. These ideologically held beliefs manifest in the bloggers' position (and mind set) on issues, participants and events in the news story, and, perhaps, inform the angle (perspective) from which the news story is relayed. We contend that all the above-mentioned variables have influenced the lexical selections in the news story, as we analyse the lexical choices in the text for ideologically held beliefs. The lexical choices are extracted from the text (as they are quite significant for substantiating the above claim) and presented as excerpts in Table 4 below:

Table4. Lexical choices indicating ideologically held beliefs

S/N	Coded elements	Ideology	manifesting attitude
1	<i>a pair of women</i>	sexism, male chauvinism	contemptuous or derogatory remarks on the opposite sex
2	a <i>knot</i> of waiting pedestrians	racism	contemptuous remarks on Others
3	glanced left ... <i>dashed</i> across the street	racism,	inferiorisation (of out-group)
4	an onlooker <i>chastised them</i>	racism	inferiorisation (of out-group)
5	his patience exhausted	racism	exposing out-group's intolerance
6	<i>the self-appointed traffic</i> cop himself	racism	contemptuous remark on out-group
7	such is life in West Bank	racism	generalisation of negative act
8	create the <i>semblance</i> of a "peace process"	racism	indifference to initiative by out-group
9	<i>doing so</i> will not get them very far	racism	pessimism over out-group's action
10	with few, believing it	racism	pessimism over out-group's plan
11	when the waiting grows tiresome	racism	confidence over failure of out-group's plan

12	take matters into their hands	racism	indicating out-group's 'impatience'
13	Israeli <i>occupation</i> now in its fifth decade	racism	accusing out-group of illegality
14	<i>cajoled</i> by the United States	racism	alleging insincerity of out-group
15	Hamas' <i>takeover</i> of the Gaza strip	racism	accusing out-group of illegality
16	core issues of the conflict <i>frozen</i> for... more than six years.	racism	accusing out-group of frustration
17	negotiations...a venue for struggle,	apathy	opposed to any move for peace
18	opposition... to what was already a contentious process.	apathy	indifference to progress

The lexical choices in Table 4 are extracted from Plate 1 and numbered for easy reference in the analysis. Some of them (1&2, 5&6, 9, 10 &11) are taken together and analysed as a group (i.e., within a single analysis), while the rest are analysed individually, in turns. All the analyses are based on the contextual meanings that are expressed by the lexical choices (in the news story) in relation to ideologically held beliefs. We begin the analysis with a close look at items 1 and 2 on the table:

1. ... a pair of women
2. ... a knot of waiting pedestrians

These two items of lexical choices are grouped together as they point to the same ideologically held belief, that is, racism, together with its sub types; sexism and chauvinism. The first item "a pair of women" is a lexical 'invention' by the bloggers to

describe probably two (a pair) women (that are possibly Palestinian women, from the authors' description of the place setting of the news story) who attempt to cross the road "at an intersection" in an unnamed street in Nablus, the commercial city of West Bank (in real world).

By taking a close look at this lexical 'creation', the first thing that crosses the mind of the reader is the choice of 'a pair', deployed in relation to humans. This is a lexical item that naturally collocates with non-human objects such as scissors, shoes, clothes, trousers and so on, in expressions like: a pair of scissors, a pair of shoes, a pair of trousers and so on. Its usage within the context of the news story (i.e., in relation to humans), therefore, suggests that such usage is a deliberate violation of principle of collocation, which is often termed 'collocation clash' in linguistic parlance. The deployment, in this regard, is artificial and it probably has ideological undertone. The English dictionary (*Longman Dictionary of contemporary English New edition 2003* : 1187) suggests that the lexical items 'a pair' can be used, especially in its denotative sense, to refer to two items that are in similar relationship; or an object made from two similar parts that are joined together as in the examples provided above.

The dictionary describes nine different ways that the lexical items can be used in reference to non-human objects that are joined together, belonging together or connecting with each other. None of these nine ways points to its usage in relation to person. The only instance of possible usage with (two) humans is when they have some types of connection with each other, such as dancers (a pair of dancers), photographers (a pair of photographers), artists (a pair of artists) and so on. This is in the fourth category of usage as provided by the dictionary. Even then, such usage is permitted because of the

connection they have (through the job they do) together. It describes as wrong, the use of 'a pair' to talk about a husband and wife, even though they are connected somehow (by marriage contract), and suggests the use of 'couple' instead, which it describes as a more standard usage. Describing two humans who are in no way connected to each other as 'a pair', therefore, leaves a cause for concern.

However, any lexical item can be freely used in a connotative sense, as connotation operates at a second order level of meaning. For instance, the word 'a pair', when used in its connotative sense in relation to humans, may depict the state of being extremely angry, as instanced in the spoken expression of the British English (Br E): "Oh, get out, the pair of you !" or when it is deployed in American English (Am E) to indicate that one is so busy that one cannot do more than what one is already doing at the moment, as in this expression: "I've only got a pair of hands!"

Having observed that the lexical item 'a pair' collocates with humans more in its connotative sense than its denotative, then the reader is left to infer that the word must have been used in its connotative sense in the news story. This is in line with Chandler's (2009) observation that connotative interpretation becomes relevant when denotative relationship between the signifier and the signified cannot produce the necessary interpretation of objects and forms of communication. This is because connotation, in this regard, has the advantage of allowing meanings to be negotiated by the addressor (or reader), using his/her individual values (and knowledge) which are derived from the cultural milieu. In other words, connotative meanings, which are developed and nurtured by culture, allow the reader to interpret and perceive text more than its basic (denotative) meanings.

Relying on this unique opportunity offered by connotative semantics, therefore, we can regard the lexical choice of (a pair) used in relation to two Palestinian women, as expression used by the bloggers in a state of annoyance. This alternative interpretation is necessitated by the chastisement that accompanies the 'act' of (the two women) trying to cross the road at an intersection. Also, why it may be necessary to view the lexical choice, 'a pair', with such connotative lens is that 'connotation' is usually deployed relative to socio-cultural values and personal associations (like emotion, belief and ideology) of the sign.

In this regard, it may not be totally out of place to consider the choice of 'a pair of women' as deployed in the text as both emotional and ideological, if only these two phenomena can lead us to the motive behind such deployment. We have explained the emotional attachment to the lexical choice as that which culminates in the admonishment witnessed in the utterance of the onlooker and his/her subsequent chastisement. The second option that the lexical choice is 'ideologically motivated, is necessitated by the bloggers' contemptuous remarks: "what is this?", which is a remark transferred (or attributed) to a faceless agent, 'an onlooker'. This remark demonstrates the bloggers' total disregard and gross contempt for others (out-group) who are perceived as having committed a crime (of crossing road at an intersection) or inability to read (meaning to the traffic red light, and therefore deserve to be contemptuously chastised, using admonitory tone.

The use of admonitory tone to castigate members of the out-group is usually part of the strategies of a dominant group in the (re) production of dominance and inequality. A close-observation of the use of such expression within the context of the news story

therefore reveals a linguistic form that is coded. This code tends to encapsulate the two forms of social ideologies identified in section 2.9.2. These are racism and sexism. Racism is a belief in the supremacy of own race, nationality or ethnicity, while sexism is a belief that certain sex is weaker than the other and the unfair treatment of the perceived weaker sex. It is therefore possible that a racist could also hold a sexist ideology. The consequence of possessing these two ideologies can include inferiorisation of others (out-group) which is, perhaps, what we have witnessed of the two women. This inferiorisation usually derives from lack of respect for other people's race, sex, ethnicity or nationalities. This is probably because the person who holds a racist ideology (and perhaps, adding sexism to it) is invested with both supremacist and egotist idea which, he believes, allows him the inferiorisation of others, negative comparison of others, direct abuse or chastisement of opponents, including concretisation and generalisation of a single act of others, warning and threatening of others and so on.

The linguistic evidence that the choice of 'a pair of women' deployed in Plate 1 has both racist and sexist and chauvinistic tendencies is tied to the features of racism, sexism and chauvinism identified in subsequent choice of words in the plate. For instance, the inhabitants of Nablus city of West Bank (represented by the two women described as 'a pair of women') are perceived and depicted by the bloggers as very rash, impatient and chaotic. These opinion words also manifest in subsequent expressions that are used to lexicalise the actions of the two women: '*threaded* a knot of waiting pedestrians' (2); '*...glanced left* *dashed* across the street' (3). All these manners of description portray the inhabitants of the city (personified by the two women) as unruly and disorganised. That is, they are depicted as people with no regard for comportment

and orderliness. An act which perhaps frustrates the effort of the self-appointed traffic cop (the only 'sane' person who is probably trying to inject some sanity to a chaotic system).

Such negative portrayals of the two women are just enough for the bloggers to generalise, as witnessed in the following expression: "such is life in West Bank" (7). We can thus observe that biased judgment, stale altruism and vague generalisation of out-group members are part of the characteristics of someone who holds a racist ideology, apart from the supremacist and egotistic tendencies that he/she may equally possess. It is possible that these characteristics also influence the bloggers' emphasising of the negative acts of the (Palestinian) people, lexicalised in the detailed description of the action of the two women in concrete and visualisable terms, for which the bloggers claim incur the wrath of "an onlooker" who "chastised them" (4), perhaps, when the onlooker could no longer overlook this act.

By presenting the self-appointed traffic cop as the only one with sense of (maintaining) orderliness is both sexist and chauvinistic as the succeeding expressions, such as "*his* patience..." (5); "traffic cop *himself*"...(6), reveal the sex of the traffic cop as male, even though the racist tendencies in the bloggers do not allow the (male) character to sustain this positive role. He is said to possess a little patience that completely fizzled out or exhausted in just a moment, that is, after the dashing across of "a pair of women". Eventually, the little sense of orderliness in him is frustrated, as he has no option than "to step off the curb and make his way to the other side of the boulevard", perhaps, to join his 'chaotic' people or be part of the chaotic situation.

Also, there is a (negative) comparison (though tacit) of the chaotic city of Nablus with, probably, ‘serene and peaceful’ city of Annapolis where the proposed peace talk will hold. The two cities are juxtaposed in the news story (almost on the same line), perhaps, with the intention of bringing out their self-assessment. For instance, while the first city, Nablus (West Bank) has already been associated with chaotic people, chaotic traffic situation, missing queue-culture, lack of orderliness, comportment and organisation, Annapolis (Maryland) is (or, may be) associated with peace (talk) since the reader is made to imply that if the city (Annapolis) is not peaceful, peace talk cannot be proposed to take place there.

The choice of Annapolis as the venue of the proposed peace talk already suggests in the mind of the reader, even without being there, that such venue must be devoid of disorderliness and confusion witnessed in the other city (Nablus), earlier mentioned, especially, as it is expected to be ‘a neutral ground’, for it to qualify to bring two warring factions (or conflict groups) together. The reader also imagines that the city, Annapolis, must not only be neutral but perfectly serene, calm and conflict-free to perform such function as hosting the US Diplomats and other Third Party members (the interventionist group), even while it is not the capital city of the host country. In other words, the bloggers deliberately allow the reader to tacitly compare the two cities that are lexicalised in the text, a comparison which, in the end, is self-revealing and self-justifying.

Another characteristic of racism is the claim to uphold societal norms and values, while accusing others (opponents) as violators of these (social) norms and values. For instance, there is accusation of social norm and value violation when the inhabitants of West Bank are portrayed as people who have no regard for social norm (“glanced left...

dashed across the street, 3). This is an allegation that they are disobedient to traffic law or that they flagrantly disregard traffic light. An act that spontaneously draws swift condemnation and subsequent chastisement by an onlooker (4), through the following contemptible remarks: “what is this?” and “can’t you see the red light?” These are rhetorical questions that utterly condemn rather than begging for answers. But it is interesting to observe that much as the reader may want to see the identity of the questioner so as to, at least, ascertain whether he/she is not part of the depicted chaotic situation, such identity is concealed in the faceless agent; ‘an onlooker’.

Such concealment is tactically deployed to hide racist tendencies, as it would be too obvious if the onlooker is revealed as the authors and omniscient narrator of the news story. The argument for racist (ideological) tendencies can also hold for items 1-11 on the Table, although there are also some items that may not fall within this range but which harbour both racist and sexist slurs. Even, a particular item may incorporate the two, as instanced in the derogatory remarks made in respect of the two Palestinian women in West Bank (a pair of women), which we have argued as having both racist and sexist undertone. The sexist or chauvinistic claim is predicated on the revelation of the sex of the self-appointed traffic cop as male, who, we believe, has made the derogatory remarks, although masked in the lexical item ‘an onlooker’ by the story teller. The masking of the identity of the onlooker has been tactically done to hide the chauvinism that the remark may have brought to the fore.

By revealing the sex of the traffic cop in succeeding lexical choices, such as ‘His patience exhausted,’; “The traffic cop *himself*...” and so on, we are able to see that the authors demonstrate sympathy for him, (i.e. the male individual) in the news story. He is

positively represented in the news stories (as he is giving a little sense of orderliness, even though, for a short period) and this act can also be seen as representing their perception of male folk in the chaotic community. If the male folk (personified in the male 'traffic cop') are presented in this manner, then the claim of chauvinistic ideology can stand, as the authors will be 'guilty' of positively representing the male folk (who probably fall within their in-group), while representing negatively the women folk.

It is therefore arguable that the remarks made by the onlooker (who probably doubles as narrators of the story) in respect of women pedestrians in Nablus show serious disregard and lack of respect for the opposite sex (female) which is perhaps instigated by sexism, an ideological orientation which emphasises a belief in the superiority of own sex. Also, using the perceived negative act of just two Nablus women to generalise a conclusion on the entire life in the West Bank shows how deeply the authors are ingrained in this ideology which, most probably, must have metamorphosed into racism. The racist tendency finally comes to the fore when the authors 'withdraw' the little sense of orderliness earlier bestowed on the self-appointed (male) traffic cop, as he is tactically made to relinquish the 'honour' (his patience exhausted... 5), as he "stepped off the curb and made his way to the other side of the boulevard".

It can thus be observed that even the male folk (represented by the 'traffic cop') who are positively portrayed initially in the news story (as having a sense of orderliness, patience and organisation by trying to control the chaotic traffic situation in the city) are not allowed to sustain this positive role. It is as if the authors are saying that while the male folk in the city have a little sense of orderliness, the little sense is not enough to withstand the enormously chaotic traffic situation in the 'turbulent' city. The deployment

of the lexical choice; “Not long after, his patience exhausted” (5), is tactical. This is because the racist tendency in the narrators may not permit positive portrayal (representation) of any of the inhabitants of the city (Nablus) and the entire West Bank who had earlier been described as disorderly, disorganised and chaotic people.

Presenting the male folk as distanced from this problem (i.e., the crisis situation) will contradict the image the authors have created (or desired to create) in the mind of the reader and it may also unmask chauvinism in the authors which they intend to hide. Perhaps, that is why immediately after the traffic cop’s patience gets exhausted, he is made to step off the curb and make his way to the other side of the boulevard, a clever tactic which, perhaps, has the purpose of making the reader infer that he left because of his dissatisfaction with the chaotic situation that is inconsistent with his own principle or idea. This inference is necessitated by the awareness that the man is a self-appointed traffic cop who may not have been trained to do the job and who may not receive any commendation (or prize) for ensuring (unsolicited) orderliness and free flow of traffic, in a city where such task is neither valued nor recognised, hence, it is not considered necessary by both the people and the authority. This is probably the exact image that the bloggers attempt to create of Nablus city in West Bank.

The authors seem to suggest that if the authority had considered traffic control necessary at such an intersection, they would have appointed a substantive traffic cop to direct traffic in such a place, and as such, the issue of a self-appointed (or volunteered) traffic cop would not have been necessary. We should recall that the lexical choice, “At an intersection”, has been fore-grounded (in fact, first lexical item in the news story) for

this purpose, that is, to intimate the reader with its significance, relative to the events or happenings in West Bank.

Beside the indictment of the West Bank authority which has racist (ideological) inclination, the claim of sexism still holds, as what the bloggers have suggested (by implication) is that the male folk in West Bank believe in orderliness even though they lack the courage and the wherewithal to maintain the orderliness. This is in sharp contrast with the lexicalisation of the female who are said to cross intersection in pairs; threaded the knot of waiting pedestrians; glanced left (perhaps, ignoring right); dash across the street 'blindly' (i.e., traffic red light notwithstanding), among thousand and one negative (other) representations.

This is also part of the features of sexist ideology that we have identified in the theoretical background in chapter two, i.e., the belief that certain gender (usually the female) is weaker, less intelligent, less organised and perhaps less important as the other (usually male). Sexism or sexist ideology usually manifests in gender bias, which is an unfair treatment of the perceived weaker sex (female), as evident in the portrayal of the women folk (personified by the two West Bank women) in the news story of Plate 1. It is also typical of holders of racist ideology to draw attention to a government that is disorganised, confused and inept, and compare such government with the ideal.

This is witnessed in the news story, as West Bank authority is (accused of) folding its arms while the traffic situation in West Bank becomes so chaotic that it invites the solo effort of a (sensible) volunteer, who tries his best at fixing the problem but lacks the wherewithal to succeed in this task. We may also recall that the news story begins with "At an intersection..." which can be regarded as a coded lexical choice and, as

mentioned earlier, a foregrounded item in the context. This foregrounding has both literal (denotative) and symbolic (connotative) meanings, both of which also create significant impact for the ideologies expressed by its (the items') coding. For instance, if we consider the denotative meaning, an 'intersection' can just be a place where roads, lines, etc., cross each other which, in British English (Br E), is regarded as 'a junction' (see *Longman Dictionary of contemporary English New Edition*, 2003: 852). Thus, in a city such as Nablus (the commercial city of the Palestinians in real world), it is necessary that such an intersection would apparently require a traffic cop (at least) to direct or control the heavy flow of traffic so that vehicles do not run into each other.

Perhaps, this is exactly what the 'self-appointed' traffic cop in the news story considers necessary and volunteers to do, before he is frustrated (probably due to inexperience or lack of expertise). We have discussed how the frustration makes him to abandon the curb and join the 'maddening' crowd of "disorderly" pedestrians. The coded message of the bloggers has been supported by the foregrounding of the lexical item, 'an intersection', which simply suggests that the necessary authority (in West Bank) has failed in its duty to provide a substantive traffic cop in such a dangerous place, to the extent that a volunteer (who probably has no knowledge of traffic control, a situation that may further add to the danger already in place) takes it upon himself to do what the government should have done.

This is a way of revealing (to the reader) the type of authority that is in place in a territory (Palestine) seeking independence or autonomous state. The deployment (and subsequent foregrounding of the lexical item) probably has dual purposes. First, it may be a way of informing the international community (especially, the United Nations) that

such a place (Palestine) is not ripe for autonomous (independent) state (even while this is the aspiration of the Palestinians) because of the ‘chaotic’ traffic situation and the ‘disorderliness’ of its populace, witnessed, even in its supposed commercial city.

Secondly, the foregrounding of the lexical element could probably be a device or strategy to wake up the Palestinian authority from a perceived ‘slumber’ and invite their attention to such a dangerous place that requires immediate action to safe guard loss of lives. In other words, the authority is made to see the reason why the intersection requires a real traffic cop to be stationed at the point in order to direct the flow of traffic, rather than (foolishly) relying on the mounted traffic light whose function the people may not know, hence, flagrantly disregarding it, fortunately, with impunity.

Viewing the expression: ‘At an intersection’ from the symbolic point of view, the deployment of the lexical item could be metaphorical. In this case, the whole people in Palestine, including the supposed government (and even the onlooker who chastises) are likened to a stranger at a junction (intersection or cross roads) and there is a confusion (of the stranger) as to which way to go. The confusion emanates from the stranger’s lack of sense of direction and there is nobody (recall the absence of a traffic cop) to direct him/her accordingly. The onlooker could probably symbolise the international community which, perhaps, is surprised at the (stranger’s) loss of sense of direction, then gets infuriated and starts chastising the stranger.

The stranger can be taken to be Palestine in reality, probably perceived as fighting wars over the years without a clear purpose, a situation which draws criticism by the international community and perhaps, foolishly teased (or truly “cajoled by the United States”) to sheathe its weapon and embrace a proposed (road map to) ‘peace plan’. The

‘blindly’ (or dangerously) dashing of cross roads; “at intersection”, glancing ‘left’... (and perhaps, ignoring ‘right’) by two women (a pair of women) in the news story to join (or ‘thread the knot of’) waiting pedestrians (the maddening crowd) could symbolise the excitement of the Palestinian people and its government on hearing the news that there could be a solution to the persistent (fighting) problem or, the actualisation of their autonomous-status dream through the announcement of a peace process (scheduled to hold) in Annapolis.

In other words, the dangerous crossing of the road at intersection symbolises the attendant stampede that may have greeted the rush to the aforementioned venue of the meeting, perhaps without taking cognisance of the consequence(s) of such action. In that case, the chastisement by the onlooker may symbolize an attempt to warn them of the grave consequence(s) of their action. But this still leaves us with the question of the identity of the onlooker. Who is the faceless onlooker in this regard? Definitely, it could not be the United Nations in this circumstance, neither could it be the United States as both of them (i.e., if there is any ‘difference’ between the two) would be playing mediating role in the planned meeting, hence, there is no cause for chastising the Palestinian people (unjustly) to avoid the meeting being boycotted by a major player in the dispute (for highhandedness).

The search light may therefore be beamed on the media which often purport to be neutral in crisis situations. In fact, this is the natural politics (and rhetoric) of the media (see Fairclough 1995b: 44). Could it be that the bloggers actually foresee insincerity in the act and intent of the United States (lexicalised in the news story by the metonym ‘Bush administration’) in calling the Annapolis meeting, or is it the usual practice by the

media to display apathy because of a stereotypical (negative) perception of the US' involvement (interest) in Mideast crisis? Whichever way we view it, the fact is that the bloggers do not support the Annapolis meeting and they have demonstrated this in their lexical choices such as; “semblance of a peace process” (8); doing so will not get them very far (9); with few believing it (10); when the waiting grows tiresome (11) and cajoled by the United States (14) “, all these vituperations in relation to the proposed Annapolis meeting.

The bloggers (who are also the narrators of the news story) are not only rejecting the call for this America-initiated peace process, they are also urging the reader to display similar attitude. To succeed in the task of influencing the reader, the narrators probably engage the audience in a game of manipulation through rhetoric and choice of lexical deployment. This is, perhaps, because the bloggers believe that how recipients understand events, actions or discourse is, at times, quite important, as it (i.e., recipient's attitude) may lead to realising the mental models (ideology) they desire to form or create in the discourse recipient.

Influencing attitudes implies influencing a whole group (of people) and this, they hope to achieve through the instrument of manipulation such as fact distortion, biased opinion, creating and constructing fear of (envisaged) disastrous consequence(s) of a decision (or an action), even when it is yet to be taken, and so on. For instance, item 8 “...create the semblance of a peace process” which serves as a complement to the verb ‘intends to’, shows that the authors believe what has been referred to or announced as a ‘peace process’, is not actually a peace process, but a semblance of it, even when the meeting has not been held.

Such pre-emption on the part of the authors can be said to be ideologically biased, especially, as it is a conclusion on what has not taken place. This biased mental model must have informed subsequent ‘allegation’ of insensitivity levelled against the United States, represented by the metonym in this expression; “...*Bush administration* intends to create the semblance of a peace process... for the first time since it assumed office.” The expression is perhaps to create in the mind of the reader that such action is belated. The manipulation in this regard is that the time the Bush administration assumed office is concealed.

This information would have been very useful as it would have enabled the reader to actually see whether the recent action by the Bush administration to organize a peace process is belated or not. We should not forget that incomplete information, biased information, distorted facts are strategies of manipulation. Other strategies of manipulation include emphasising preferred or self-serving information and de-emphasising dispreferred information. In other words, any information that may enable the reader to get to the truth or the reality is usually deemphasised or concealed by the author(s) who intend to manipulate the reader. This is perhaps what happens in this context, if we agree that readers have a right to be duly informed.

Relative to information concealment is the issue of ideologically biased models which has been hinted earlier in this discussion. It usually forms the major input of discourse production, as biased models usually lead to biased topics, biased lexical items or metaphors and other semantic properties of discourse. There is no doubt that the mental model (about specific people and events) controls meaning production of text and, even talks about such events. In the excerpts above, it is clear that there is already a

mindset by the bloggers (as they do not regard the proposed peace talk as a real peace talk). This means that, even before the commencement of the meeting, its expected outcome is as good as rejected. It is also noteworthy that the bloggers do not hide this position as they express their opinions concerning the expected outcome of the proposed meeting in these lexical choices:

...Annapolis meeting itself
...will not get them very far. (9)
...greeted with indifference ... with few believing it... (10).
...when the waiting grows tiresome... (11)

All these, obviously, are expressions of doubt or scepticism, whose ideology (attitude of indifference) is being sold to the reader. We should not forget that it is quite possible that these mental models may turn out to become false ideology, especially if the Annapolis peace talks, eventually holds or becomes successful. Perhaps, that is why Williams (1977:55) describes ideology as a system of illusory beliefs.

Apart from prejudice, there are other ways through which the dominant group influences knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and indirectly, actions of the discourse recipients through lexicalisation. One of these is what van Dijk (1995:155) describes as apparent altruism move. This is a situation whereby the discourse producer displays understanding for the position of interests of others (i.e., opponent) and claims or declares his/her determination to identify with such position or interest. It is usually discovered that such argument or claim of empathy is not usually developed. It only has a disclaiming function, that is, the arguer disclaims his/her association with unpopular (or perceived negative) position or interest, and claims to identify with popular position through positive self-representation, such as when a racist openly condemns racial discrimination

but argues the need for ‘homogeneity in the country’. In public comment, talk or debate, such speaker often claims that the government’s (self-amended) immigration law, for instance, is in the best interest of immigrants and often ‘defends’ why such amendment is necessary for their (immigrants’) own good.

This same phenomenon is witnessed in the text under consideration, as we notice that the authors attempt to identify with Palestinians in this lexical choice: “There is excitement in Palestinian towns about the urban order newly emerging from years of chaos; there is a willingness to play by the rules...”, but, as usual, the argument is not developed more than this. The bloggers merely identify with the blissful happiness (that they acknowledge is newly emerging) but are quick to direct the attention of the reader to the impending danger (perhaps attached to such excitement) in the expression that follows: “Many remained convinced that doing so will not get them very far”. (9)

The deployment of the indefinite pronoun (many), which is another attempt at facelessness for the agent of the adjoining verb: “...remained convinced” is probably meant for the manipulation of the reader. For instance, the reader is denied the opportunity of knowing the number or identities of those that are convinced, so that he/she may ascertain whether they are actually many (or not) as the bloggers have made him/her believe. As indicated earlier, the reader deserves this full information to be able to take appropriate decision on the issue, but such useful information is not provided, perhaps, due to the manipulative intent of the discourse producers. It appears that what is important to the authors is the complement of the sentence: “...that doing so will not get them far”. This is the information emphasised, and as long as such information is ‘fore grounded’ in the mind of the reader, the question about the subject (agent) of the sentence

will remain inconsequential (as the authors know that the reader would not demand it), hence, it is 'needless' to supply information that is 'not required', no matter how useful. This is part of the bloggers' deployment of manipulation (and coercion) strategies to protect (their) own interest and influence the reader's opinions and attitudes.

It should also be pointed out that the interest of the discourse producers is not as hidden as their ideologies as some other lexical choices easily betray the interest. Consider the following expression: "...there is the reality that when the waiting grows tiresome, people will again take matters into their own hands". This appears to be the ideology (or attitude) that the authors are willing to create in the (Palestinian) people, as there are many lexical choices in this simple expression that are heavily coded (with vital information) to support this view. The first is "the reality". Obviously, we do not know whose reality, as the (dummy) existential pronoun, 'there', deployed as agent in the sentence where 'the reality' appears, does not provide the much needed clue as to whose reality the authors refer.

Actually, the authors seem (or want) to make the reader believe that they are talking about the people's reality, especially when the lexical item 'again' (deployed in the expression) points to action that may have been repeated. The personification of the nominalisation 'waiting' (i.e., made to assume human quality; "grows tiresome") in the expression is also very significant because of the succeeding lexicalisation of the personified action of 'waiting' (nominalisation), which is immediately allowed to wear its true colour as 'people' in the clause next to it; "...*people* will *again* take matter into their hands." In other words, even without lexicalising 'people', and placing it right immediately after 'tiresome', we have already seen the connection between 'waiting' and

'people', as one can easily replace the other appropriately in that context, a substitute which will perfectly be in order, both syntactically and semantically, to look like this: when the *waiting* (people) grow(s) tiresome. Why the authors decide to replace the lexical item 'law' in the cliché: 'take the law into your hands', with 'matters', to (now) make it read; 'take matters into their hands' (12) is also explicable.

First, this could be an attempt to distort linguistic facts so that the popular "take law into your hands" may not be viewed in the same perspective as its meaning suggests: 'doing something illegal in order to put right something perceived as unfair'. Secondly, it may be a ploy to divert the attention of the reader from viewing the expression in this real (or normal) meaning, so as to prevent the reader from seeing the phrase as an incitement. But this has been betrayed by the presence of the adverbial 'again', which literally suggests that something similar had been done before. In other words, the adverb has the tendencies to either function as a reminder of past action or as a need to repeat the same action. If it functions as a call for the action to repeat itself, then it could be a call on the people to (again) take law (or matters) into their hands, and this appears to be the crux of the whole news story.

We have so far indicated lexical choices that point to ideologically held beliefs. We can now move on, at this juncture, to examine polarisation in this plate, which is the basis for some of these ideologically held beliefs. The next section takes care of this.

4.1.2 Lexicalisation of polarisation in Plate 1

It is part of the ideological strategies of bloggers (and, indeed, of blogging) to create division in order to ensure that a particular conflict, whether long-standing, on-going or presumably ended, is sustained, consolidated or continued, perhaps as part of human life style. This is usually done by emphasising group popularisation as a topical issue within the context of blogging. Table 5 (below) contains excerpts taken from Plate 1, which indicate that participants in the news story are polarised, perhaps, on the basis of ideological divides:

Table 5: Lexical choices indicating polarisation in Plate 1

S/N	Lexical choices	Inherent polarisation
1.	...life in the West Bank	West Bank & Jerusalem (or Palestine & Israel) compared. ours vs theirs
2.	...meeting in Annapolis, Maryland...	Nablus(Palestine) & Annapolis(America) ours (+chaos)vs theirs (+peace)
3.	...between Israel and the Palestinians	them (Israel)vs us (Palestine)
4.	Bush Administration intends... since it assumed office.	America (they): +insincerity, +deceit
5.	...excitement in Palestinian towns...	Palestine (we): +humility, +cajoled
6.	...an Israeli occupation now in its fifth decade.	they (+illegality)
7.	...take matters into their hands...	we (chaotic if their insincerity discovered)
8.	... meaningful change in their daily lifes...	ours (+poor living condition

In D'souza's (1995) view, social conflict is cognitively represented and enhanced by polarisation. Polarisation is a metaphorical form of conceptualisation which is realised through ideologies, history, belief system and propaganda. It is usually deployed in the construction and maintenance of sovereign states and exploited to sustain war either between states or within the state itself. In Section 2.3, we discussed how discourse is exploited by cultural in-group to separate itself from certain out-groups in the society by creating divide in this basic antagonism: 'we versus **they**'. Polarization is derived from the ideology that manifests in the desire to reserve love for those who are part of '**us**' (the in-group), and the urge to indicate difference (or differential) which, at times, culminate in vitriolic hatred of '**them**', (the out group), who are perceived as alien, immigrants or strangers. In Plate 1, some lexical items deployed by the bloggers reveal the attribution of purity, truth and righteousness to **self** (in-group) and evil, hostility and hatred to **others** (out-group), in what seems a complex negative stereotype. For instance, the lexical choices such as:

- ...excitement in Palestinian towns (5)
- ...willingness to play the rules.
- ...change in their daily lifes (8)
- ...people will take matters into their hands (7)

identify an in-group, the Palestinian people, and tend to separate this group from the other group (or out-group), mentioned in the news story, for instance, the Israeli.

This is however normal in a conflict situation, as conflict itself is a system of relationship between two or more groups who pursue virtually exclusive, incompatible and opposed values. It is perhaps for this characteristic of conflict that some other lexical

choices equally identify Israel as another side (or group) of the conflict. For instance, lexical selections like:

...a 'peace process' between Israel and the Palestinians (3)

...an Israeli occupation now in its fifth decade'. (6)

confirm the polarisation-claim in the text which has been considered a normal phenomenon in conflict situation. However, there is another group (the Americans), represented by the metonym: "the Bush Administration", which is said to be purportedly playing a mediating role between the polarised groups in the conflict. This mediating role is confirmed in lexical selections, such as:

(4)...the Bush Administration intends to create the semblance of a "peace process" between Israel and the Palestinians...
...the Annapolis meeting itself... being greeted with indifference...

Even though the bloggers do not believe the peace-process is genuine or sincere as indicated by the use of the inverted comma (sign): "peace process" and its lexicalisation, 'semblance of' (a peace process). This situation does not prevent the reader from identifying America as the third group in the polarisation tactics, perhaps with a role that may be different from the initially identified two groups.

Furthermore, we can also identify the bloggers as another group, perhaps playing the role of neutrality, according to them, or acting as a mere commentator. Thus, this brings the member of the polarised groups to four that are connected to the conflict, either directly or indirectly, perhaps, in four different ways. The four different ways also culminate in the four different roles identified by participants in the discourse. These roles can be summarized thus:

- (i) **Israel:** The group that is alleged (by the bloggers) as occupying another group's territory for fifty years, through this lexical choice; "...now in its fifth decade", an occupation, which, perhaps, ignites the conflict in the news story.
- (ii) **Palestine:** The group, whose land (or territory) is allegedly occupied, and probably whose resistance constitutes the second party (group) to the conflict.
- (iii) **The United States:** The group that the bloggers claim is making an unserious attempt at mediating between the two groups, (i and ii), through a planned peace process in its own territory (Annapolis, Maryland).
- (iv) **The bloggers:** The group that claims to be reporting the conflict between groups i and ii, and the role of group iii (USA) in the conflict.

Polarisation, according to Keen (1986:12), is a normal human condition which manifests as a result of loyalty, nationalism or patriotism. This ideology derives from the feeling or tendency to create a sense of social solidarity and membership with people, organisation, country or the society one belongs. The consequences of these ideological beliefs are far reaching. Let us take a look at patriotism, as an ideology, for instance, It is a system of belief that ironically divides people into two opposing groups: 'them' and 'us', or 'we' and 'they', and it has the tendency (in the person who holds it) to exclude 'others' from the community of 'ours', as they (i.e., those who do not belong in 'our' group) are perceived as either alien, strangers or infiltrators. This can thus provide the focus for hatred, which, in the long run, may provide the basis for slur, hate, segregation and the eventual conflict.

In Plate 1, we have been able to identify four separate groups that are mentioned in the news story. These four different groups can be compressed into three different ideological groups based on the roles purportedly being played by each group. The first ideological group comprises the two opposing groups (Israel and Palestine) that are

directly involved in the conflict described in the news story. The second group (The United States) which intends to act as mediator in the conflict, while the last group (the bloggers) represents an on-looker or a mere watcher, claiming to be unfolding the (reported) news story on the conflict from a 'neutral' angle.

However, the supposedly neutrality of the last group (which, incidentally, is supposed to be a mere narrator) is betrayed in its lexical selections, such as:

...*semblance* of a "peace process"

...since *it* assumed office

...Bush administration *intends* to...

...Israeli *occupation*...now in its *fifth decade*.

The lexical choices (above) reveal the bloggers active participation through cynical remarks, contempt, scepticism and suspicion drawn by the italicised words over the planned peace process. Their remarks on both Israel and the US (the duo, which can now be considered as being in the 'other' side (opposing) of the news story) are quite significant for identifying a polarising structure. For instance; the lexical selection: "semblance of a peace process" suggests that the bloggers do not regard the proposed peace process as a real or normal peace process. This implies that the bloggers have rejected the idea of a peace process (by the Americans, who they regard as being in the other side of the polarising structure), even before it takes place. It also suggests that even if the 'peace process' eventually holds, they do not have trust in it. The scepticism over the proposed peace process is eventually lexicalised in concrete (linguistic) terms towards the end of the news story: "...it is being greeted with indifference, with few believing it..."

The introduction of the dummy pronoun 'it' by the bloggers to start the above extract is tactical. First, it is to conceal the real subject of the sentence, (which may have been 'we') but whose overt realisation may make their partisanship too obvious and their interest too glaring. Also, the representation of 'the United States' by the metonym; 'the Bush Administration', is intended to personify the country so that it can be indictable, as individual (usually, the leader) is usually held accountable for the action of a country. This indictment is lexicalised in the following expression: "...since it assumed office".

It is also supposed to be an allegation of insensitivity to a problem that is in its 'fifth decade'. Proposing a peace process for the first time (in the history of America or the tenure of the Bush Administration) may be implied by the reader as gross insensitivity and negligence by a country which, for many decades, claims to be championing the course of global peace. This is an apparent altruism move which seeks to emphasise understanding for the position of interest of the Palestinian people through positive self-representation of their plight and negative other-representation of the 'so-called' mediator (the United States). Through this, the bloggers have provided 'reason' why the United States (personified by the Bush Administration) should not be taken seriously, even in their latest call for a truce to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The information provided by the bloggers over the chronological age of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict (now in its fifth decade) is also quite significant for ideological analysis. Ideology, as described by Fowler (1981:26), is a system of belief constructed by a group within a culture as a way of comprehending the world. The construction of the chronological age of the conflict and its release as vital information in the news story (even though, it may not have been required by the reader) is another

strategy that is aimed at emphasising the belatedness of the proposed US' intervention, which the bloggers probably want the reader to see and be persuaded to agree with such viewpoint (i.e., 'belatedness' of the call by the US for a peace talk).

However, rather than the tact being persuasive, it is manipulative. This is because in persuasive argument, recipient or interlocutor is free to believe or act as they please, depending on whether or not they accept the argument of the persuader, whereas manipulation makes discourse recipients or interlocutors believe or do (without being aware) things that are in the interest of the manipulator, but against the best interest of the manipulated. In other words, discourse recipients are unable to understand the real intention of the discourse producer. For instance, by supplying the age of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict (even in subtle form, such as opting to render the age in decades other than years), the reader does not see the full consequence of the belief or action advocated by the discourse producer, that is, describing the proposed peace talk as a belated issue.

It is probable that the bloggers' choice of decade is to present the period in such a euphemistic term, as a period described in terms of five decades, can merely reduce fifty years into just five. The description that the Palestinians have endured or tolerated the supposedly illegal occupants of their land for so long a time (five decades) must have prompted the subsequent lexical choice: "when the waiting grows tiresome", which is also a pointer to the fact that the people have long been waiting for the intervention of an international mediator (or peace broker) such as the United States, which probably has dilly-dallied between those periods of long waiting.

This, perhaps, prompted the bloggers to quickly make the following remarks (perhaps to consolidate on the effectiveness of the sympathy drummed by the earlier

expression): “There is excitement in Palestinian towns...there is a willingness to play the rules...” This new remark has to immediately accompany the previous one in a bid to show ‘support’ for the Palestinian people in this euphoria of expectation: “that the intervention will lead to either meaningful change in their daily lives or substantive progress towards the end of an Israeli occupation...”

However, the attitude of the bloggers to such expectation which is predicated on distrust, scepticism and cynicism derived from ideologically biased models, is that of indifference towards the supposedly high expectation from the proposed peace talks. This attitude is summed up in this lexical choice: “The reality is that when the waiting grows tiresome, people will again take matters into their hands”. This is in addition to the initial pessimism and disbelief in the earlier expressed (Palestinian) excitement and willingness to play the rules. This scepticism is openly displayed in the following lexical choice: “...doing so will not get them very far...”

Suffice it, therefore, to say that the ideology being constructed by the bloggers is directed towards the Palestinian people on the need to reject the United States’ proposed peace talk and recourse to the status quo of “taking matters into their hands”. This is achieved by the bloggers’ ‘claim’ to identify with the plight of the Palestinian people. They probably hope to achieve this feat by constructing themselves as ‘patriots’ who knew the period the struggle (with Israel) began, the actions and inactions that had been taken in the past, the self-constructed vote of no-confidence between “many” (representing the majority) and “few” (representing the minority) over the proposed intervention by the United States and so on.

We need to recall that this self-constructed ‘voting’ gives the verdict to the majority (many) who remained convinced that: “believing in it (i.e. peace talks) will not get them very far”, while the minority (few), who probably might have believed in the planned peace talks, lost out. This is a strategy of using democratic principle of simple majority verdict (which, at times, proves to be mere ‘ideological fallacy’) to illustrate or prove why the proposed peace talks in Annapolis should not be taken seriously by the Palestinians, whose plight the narrators claim to identify with.

If we may rely on intuition, the expression: “when the waiting grows tiresome, people will again take matters into their own hands” may mean a call on the people (i.e. Palestinian people) to boycott the proposed peace talks (arranged by the Bush Administration), but this has been so indirectly suggested that they (the narrators) would be vindicated in any investigation of incitement. In fact, the intention of any discourse producer, according to Van Dijk (2006) is usually indirect and masked, especially if the goal is intended to be realised through manipulation, which, everyone, including the discourse producers themselves, considers a form of social power abuse.

However, the discourse producer is probably aware that ideological influence on discourse can, to some extent, influence social attitude and if social attitude is influenced, may be through manipulation, especially where persuasion proves ineffective, then it can shape the mental model of people about certain event, certain people or certain action as well as shaping talks about them. To achieve this purpose, the discourse producers, through manipulation, involves the usual forms and format of ideological discourse, such as emphasising ‘**us**’ and distancing ‘**them**’ or emphasising ‘**their**’ **bad things** and emphasising ‘**our**’ **good things** in the discursive situation.

This argument will be better illustrated when we examine how the bloggers represent the actions performed by perceived ‘enemy’ or out-group in the news story under consideration which will form the focus of our analysis in the next section.

4.1.3 Lexicalisation of actions performed by out-group

The logic of paranoia, especially consensual paranoia, according to Keen (1986:19), stems from the idea of claiming righteousness and purity to self, while attributing, hatred, hostility and evil to others (out-group, opponent, etc) who are considered ‘enemy’. In fact, many discourse structures are so conducive to this type of polarisation that one may be tempted to say that it is a normal human phenomenon. In blog news stories, for instance, we find semantic content which is full of lexical choices that entail negative evaluation of out-group members and positive evaluation of ‘ourselves’ and the people that we associate with (i.e., in-group).

We also find rhetoric and persuasive moves such as argumentation, rhetorical figures, lexical style (including angle of narration), and structural emphasis on negative acts of others relevant in this regard. Some news stories posted by bloggers give plausible details about negative features of the events, discourse participants and actions being described in the news stories that they post. In this section, we examine representations in text 1, and we begin with the examination of the way opponents’ actions are lexicalised in the news story. Table 6 (below) contains excerpts taken from the text that indicate actions by out-group, that is, discourse participants that are considered opponent in the narrators’ point of view. The United States and Israel are assumed as out-group in this category of description, going by the lexicalisation in the news story.

Table 6 Lexical choices indicating actions performed by out-group

1.	<i>Bush administration</i> intends to <i>create the semblance</i> of a “peace process...
2.	Israeli and Palestinian negotiators... <i>cajoled</i> by the United States.
3.	The international community <i>deeply invested in perpetuating</i> their (Palestinian) <i>division</i> .
4.	Hamas’ <i>takeover</i> of the Gaza Strip in June...
5.	<i>Core issues</i> of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict... <i>have been frozen</i> for more than six years (by the United States’ <i>neglect or abandonment</i>)

Item 1 (on the table) points to the bloggers’ disregard for the United States as a country, and, perhaps, they do not also wish to acknowledge it as a government. The metonymy; ‘the Bush administration’ suggests that the country is viewed from the perspective of its president then (George Bush). By personalising the entire government and hanging the entire country’s policy and ideology on the neck of an individual, because he is the president of the country, demonstrates nothing but a biased opinion about the country. This has been a mental model that might have informed the present ideology.

It is a matter of fact that when a mental model is biased, may be, towards an individual or the institution he/she represents, there is nothing such individual will do or engage in that will not be viewed negatively. It is not surprising, therefore, that the bloggers regard the actions by the United States with mindset, especially, as some of these actions may have been unilaterally taken by the president, who is just a part (or fraction) of the entire US government.

Prejudice can pervade discourse and it relies on derogative semantics as the vehicle to convey its message of hate, slur and, perhaps, calumny. This confirms why it is apposite to separate the United States into a group, within the context of the news story and make the group stand in opposition (out-group) to the in-group (the bloggers). Through this, we would be able to see why the actions of the out-group are represented negatively. Consider the following lexical choice from the table: “Israel and Palestinians negotiators...” (2) The word ‘negotiators’ derives from the base, ‘negotiate’, which is an action verb that depicts the act of the two supposed enemies.

From the lexical item, ‘negotiators’ (on both sides), we are able to observe that Israel negotiates and Palestine negotiates and that the two warring states have negotiators. This suggests that the two states in conflict situation are (going by the meaning of the word: ‘negotiate’) ready to discuss something in order to reach an agreement or a settlement. In fact, the predicate (to the subject: Israeli and Palestinian negotiators) reads: “...are also once again playing by the rules”. This confirms the fact that the two ‘feuding’ parties are, perhaps, trying to discuss, as the presence of the adjunct; ‘once again’, indicates that they probably had once been on the negotiating table before the one being proposed for Annapolis by the US. The predicator ‘to return’ (to the table) in the adjoining clause also attests to this. The information is however silent on whether the initial meeting was at the instance of the United States or not.

A cursory look at the following lexical choice may provide insight into this: “Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are also once again playing by the rules, cajoled by the United States to return to the table...” There seems to be ambiguity in the above lexical selection which lies in the use of ‘once again’. The lexical item can refer to “the

rules” being played by the two feuding parties or to “be cajoled by the United States”. If the latter is the case, then, it confirms why the United States has to stand alone in the polarised structure as a group.

The group will now be drawn in opposite relationship to the criticising group (i.e., the bloggers). This is necessitated by the fact that both groups are now playing different roles within the context of the news story. For instance, while the United States wants to be playing a mediating role (according to the authors), the bloggers claim to be playing a ‘neutral’ role (i.e., in relation to the conflict, between Israeli and the Palestinians, described in the news story). In such a polarised structure, ideologies are involved; moreover, that group relations and interests are present. As van Dijk (1995:140) puts it; “between ideology and mental management of discourse, there is a link, although, the link is often indirect”. In other words, personal cognitions which encapsulate experiences, personal beliefs and principles, motivations and emotions normally influence text and talk, besides the socially shared knowledge and attitudes.

It is therefore expected that the negative mental model of the United States, represented in the personal cognitions of the bloggers, reflect in the lexical choice of the news story tellers, as attested to by the following lexical choices referring to the actions of the United States in the news story: “... *create the semblance* of a “peace process” (1) and *cajole* Israeli and Palestinian negotiators (2) (a paraphrase of the original passive forms in the text). Perhaps, we could include the United States as part of the international community being referred to in item 3 on the table. This means part of the US’ action, together with the international community will be; *perpetuating* Palestinian division (3).

Item 5 on the table also suggests that the United States performs three (negative) acts in relation to the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

Frozen core issues... for more than six years;
neglected core issues... for more than six years and
abandoned core issues... for more than six years.

All these actions are lexicalised in their passive forms, with the adjunct 'by the United States' always there to indicate the agent of the three (negative) actions so described.

We may argue that the reference made to Hamas (as a group) and the reference to the interim government formed in item 4 are inconsequential, as both groups were not given definite role in the polarised structure, perhaps, mention was just made of them to adduce personal reasons for the United States' proposed meeting in Annapolis. We can observe that all the actions or inactions of the United States (which is the 'out-group' in this discussion) are negatively represented. Even the proposed peace meeting called by the United States which could have been regarded as a positive action is not considered a real peace process but as "semblance of a "peace process". The quotation marks on the lexical item; 'peace process', even suggest that it is actually a 'fake' peace process.

In line with van Dijk's observation, therefore, we can say that the ideological semantics underlying the lexical selections in Table 6 (above) follows a strategic pattern that, generally, in-groups tend to describe out-groups, enemies, or opponents in negative terms. It also agrees with the inter-group theory and theories of stereotyping and social cognition proposed by van Dijk that the mental representations of groups in terms of attitude schemata and underlying ideologies will display the overall evaluative concepts, which also influence lexical selections (van Dijk, 1995: 143), more so, that ideologically

controlled propositions often are opinion statements and expression of such opinions, as witnessed in the bloggers' remarks about the actions of the out-group (the US).

Next in our analysis is an examination of lexical items or lexical choices that reveal identities, positions, norms or values of the story tellers with a view to determining the ideologies behind such choices or lexical selections. Table 7 (below) contains excerpts (from text 1) on lexical choices that point in this direction.

Table 7 Lexical choices revealing identities, positions, norms and values of blog authors

1.	Robert Blecher, an Editor of Middle East Report and Mouin Rabbani, a contributing editor.
2.	... are International Crisis Group analysts
3.	...based respectively in Jerusalem and Amman
4.	In Annapolis, conflict by other means (headline)

Like articles or other publications in the real world, the names of the authors of the news story are displayed **boldly** on top of the first page, just below the headline, while their identities are also explained below the names, thereby supplying us items 1, 2 and 3 on the table, which centre on information about the bloggers. Item 1 provides the names of the assumed leader of the collaborating group (or, perhaps, owner of the blog post) as Robert Blecher and describes him/her as an editor of *Middle East Report*, as well as Mouin Rabbani, who is presented as a contributing editor.

The choice of the lexical item: 'editor' might be connected with the need to link the events in the virtual world with the happenings in the real world, so that the reader might not count as important any difference between these two worlds and, probably, in the process of suspending disbelief, he/she may assume a verisimilitude in handling the

publication. By assuming verisimilitude, we do not intend to downplay the validity (or otherwise) of any published news story, rather, we merely opine that the reader is being made to imagine that he is reading what is similar to life (that is, world of reality), as against a fictitious story that might have been created mainly for enjoyment or entertainment.

This idea, perhaps, explains why the authors of the news story are described in terms of the world of reality, where such lexical items as ‘editor’, contributing editor (terms in the traditional (old) media); Annapolis, Nablus, West Bank, Jerusalem and Amman (names of cities in real world) and so on, also feature prominently. The lexical choice ‘editor’ and its counterpart ‘contributing editor’ reveal the terminologies that describe very senior positions in the traditional media such as news paper or magazine. These are the officers that decide what should be included (or should not be included) in the newspaper or magazine before it is published. Thus, the choice of the lexical item, editor, as well as its subsequent open display (even before the story is read) points to an attempt to lend credence to the publication as well as ‘respecting’ the published news story by regarding it as a story that has passed the test of authentication (i.e. editing) and credibility.

Likewise, by tactically referring to the base of their activities as Jerusalem and Amman suggests an attempt to maintain the purported neutrality, because the two mentioned cities are places (though in the Middle East region) which are neither directly affected by the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah conflict, nor are they involved in peace talks or actions described in the news story. For instance, in the world of reality, Jerusalem is in the State of Israel, while Amman is in Jordan, a country in the Middle East region,

whereas the war took place in Beirut, which is the capital city of Lebanon. Describing the base of the editors is significant in the sense that it will support the purported neutral role of the media, represented by the bloggers.

In other words, the reader is made to believe the published news stories as real, bearing in mind the entire variable supplied above. This is expected to make the news story visible and remove any iota of disbelief from the reader. We have described this strategy as part of the manipulation techniques designed to win reader to own side of argument, as the reader may not bother to check the authenticity of the claims, but believe the news story on the basis of the 'information' provided by the authors, who also double as editors respectfully.

Also, the headline seems to encapsulate what the authors want the reader to believe. Through the headline; "In Annapolis, conflicts by other means", the reader is informed that, rather than seeing Annapolis as a place to broker peace between the warring parties (Israel and Palestine), Annapolis is to be conceived as a place where they (the negotiators) are likely to meet with more conflicts. Making this information a headline is also manipulative as it does not leave the reader with options. Just like any other form of manipulation, it targets the tactful construction, as well as the modification of a more generally and socially shared representation (i.e., an existing conflict, in this regard). Negotiators are 'rushing' to Annapolis to seek an end to the existing conflict, only to be told that what they will meet in Annapolis is not just a conflict but more conflicts.

This is a manipulative intent designed to water down the zeal and enthusiasm that might have greeted the prospect for conflict resolution in Annapolis. The bloggers do not

just water down this zeal but also create the fear (of meeting with greater conflicts) in the minds of the negotiators. We can now see that part of the strategies of manipulation is the creation of fear (especially, of disastrous consequences for a proposed action). The effectiveness of this strategy (in the news story) is further enhanced by making it a headline, which is the most important aspect of a news story, as a headline is expected to encapsulate the whole idea in a news story.

We have seen the ideology behind the display of posts or positions, identities and values through lexical deployment such as headline, fore-grounded position or occupation and partisanship denial and claim of neutrality. Next, we shall consider lexical choices that are deployed to hide identities, positions and interests. Table 8 (below) encapsulates some excerpts from text 1, which shall be relevant to illustrate this strategy.

Table 8 Lexical choices concealing interests, positions and values of blog authors

S/N	Lexical choice	Position/Interest/Value
1.	an onlooker chastised them	bloggers' condemnation disguised in 'an onlooker'
2.	...the first time since it assumed office	bloggers believe US' action is belated
3.	There is excitement in Palestinian towns	bloggers' creativity to sustain reader's attention
4.	Many remain convinced that doing so will not get them very far	bloggers' opinion buried in the dummy 'many'
5.	People will again take matters into their own hands	bloggers' desire and purpose of writing
6.	...it is being greeted with indifference	bloggers' attitude hidden under the dummy pronoun 'it'

7.	With few believing it will...	bloggers rejection of the peace talk, disguised in the dummy pronoun 'few'
8.	an Israeli occupation now in its fifth decade	bloggers' fury against Israel, concealed in the euphemism 'fifth decade'
9.	Negotiations are... cajoled by the United States	bloggers' distrust over US' plan
10.	With Palestinians deeply divided	bloggers urging Palestinian unity against the peace plan
11.	International community deeply invested in perpetuating the division	bloggers' discontentment with the US/UN
12.	Current talk... raising opposition	bloggers' own opposition

From the excerpts in the table, we are able to clearly observe the positions, interest and values of the narrators of the news story. For instance, item 1 “an onlooker chastised them” indicates that the narrator identifies with the chastisement just as we have argued in the previous sections. This assumption may be actually true as the narrators quoted verbatim, the content of the chastisement, even though they suppress (conceal) the identity and sex of the quoted onlooker, to whom the chastisement is attributed. This makes the reader suspect that the expressions; “What is this?” and “can't you see the red light?” might be those of the narrators themselves who consider it necessary to ascribe them to an onlooker, perhaps making it faceless in order to mask their interest, position and attitude to the remark.

Item 2; “...the first time since it assumed office”, is a demonstration of outright discontent with the US' policy in the Middle East, even while the country (USA) is

always represented in the news story by “Bush administration”, which we have described as an ideologically motivated metonym for (the name of) the country. The lexical deployment (item 2) is more of anger and complaint than a mere report or statement. It reveals the attitude of the narrators (and perhaps, their reaction) as dismissing the US’ intention (to organise peace talks) as something belated. This hidden position is clearly betrayed by the preceding choice of word; “semblance of a “peace process””, where the reader can really see that the authors believe (that) the proposed peace plan is camouflage and fake, especially, going by the use of the lexical item ‘semblance’ and putting the item; ‘peace process’, in quotes (symbol of doubt).

In the use of the lexical choice; “There is excitement in Palestinian towns” (3), the reader is made to see that this is an invention of the authors to create an environment or atmosphere in which the urge to attend the Annapolis peace process is high, i.e., a charged atmosphere that is quickly dampened by the succeeding clause; “many remained convinced that doing so will not get them very far” (4). This is a rhetorical ploy to provide reason why the initial enthusiasm to attend (excitement) is made to seem unpopular. By deploying the lexical item; ‘many’, to create the impression that those who deplore the idea of attending the proposed peace process are actually many, as against what might be considered the singular opinion of the authors, it has provided more weight to the coded message. The use of ‘many’ can thus be to deceive the reader (part of manipulation) and conceal (their own) singular opinion in the idea of ‘many’ (people).

Some other lexical items in the table also function to hide the position of the authors. For instance, item 5: “people will again take matters into their hands” reveals the intention of the authors (in writing the article) which could probably be an incitement for

the people to take a drastic action to stop the proposed meeting, going by the preceding clause; “...when the waiting grows tiresome” Item 6; and “...it is being greeted with indifference”, in which the dummy pronoun (i.e., a semantically empty pronoun), ‘it’, is deployed to hide the position of the authors. In other words, the concealment of the agent of “...greeted with indifference” in the dummy, ‘it’, is not convincing. It merely leaves the reader to imagine that the faceless agent could probably be the narrators themselves.

Item 8 serves as both a direct report of the ‘Israeli occupation’ and a direct complaint over the long period of occupation. The reader is made to see that ‘five decades’ is such a long period, and for an occupation to last as much as that calls for concern. This is a strategy of swaying the reader to own side of argument and at the same time, concealing the position of narrators. Items 9 to 11 show the attitude of the narrators with regard to the international community, especially the United States, as that of outright hatred and suspicion.

However, they are able to hide this position in the passive construction of the lexical choices, such that the adjunctive element of passive formation (by) contains the target of attacks, while the reasons for such attacks are carried by the action and recipient of the action (Palestinian people or negotiators) which are all fronted, being the information that is being thematised (foregrounded) for attention. Since adjunct is an optional element in passive construction, it makes the reader feel that such element is unimportant (at least, to warrant attention) but that greater attention must be paid to the fronted elements. This is also part of the strategy of manipulation, as the reader does not focus on the object of attack (carried by the adjunctive element) but the preferred information that is fronted, that is, the recipient of the action. Item 12 which can be

paraphrased as; “The current talk raises opposition’, is also intended to hide the position of the narrators as they are the opposing ‘candidates’ in this regard. This has been their position from the beginning of the news story as captured by the headline. It is therefore not surprising that they are lexicalising this position in the last clause of the news story, though indirectly, as they still covertly ascribe the opposition or rejection to those (people) in both sides of the conflict, that is, Israelis and Palestinians.

So far in the selected news story, we have been analysing how the ideologies of narrators are masked in the lexicalisation of events, actions and participants of the news story. We have also observed how information may be coded in lexical choices as reflected by lexicalisation in the news story. Next, we shall proceed to examine other lexical properties that are also engaged in the authors’ manipulation of language for ideological benefit. This is with a view to establishing the fact that lexicalisation is not the only instrument used in lexical coding of information.

4.2 Rhetoric in Mideast blog posts

Another strategy of audience manipulation may be through the deployment of rhetoric. Rhetoric, in Aristotle’s perspective, is the artificial proof of ‘ethos’ and ‘pathos’ (see: Adegaju, 2005). ‘Ethos’ originates when a speech is delivered in a way that renders the speaker worthy of confidence or trust, because the speaker is assumed to have presented a set of ideas and moral attitudes that accord him/her some respect, while ‘pathos’ takes place where the speaker tries to rouse his/her audience to emotion through the presentation. These two forms of rhetoric are usually deployed by bloggers in their presentations, mostly to gain the audience’s support in the propaganda game.

In the background to this study (Section 1.1), we indicated that rhetorical structures play significant role in audience manipulation and contended that rhetoric is the manipulative weapon that is usually geared towards the persuasive communication of preferred models of social events. In this section, we are concerned with the exploration of contextual elements that constrain the rhetorical choices made by bloggers in their various postings on the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War. By rhetorical choices, we refer to choices that are ‘consciously’ made either through word order, imagery or rhetorical figures. These choices are distinguishable from stylistic options, which are the choices imposed on language users by situational categories (such as field, mode and tenor) of the discourse.

Although we do not dispute the fact that both rhetorical choices and stylistic options may overlap in some cases, the fact still remains that rhetorical choices are under the conscious control of the discourse producer, while stylistic options relate to an unconscious process constrained by the subject matter of the discourse and other situational variables that we have identified above. In other words, discourse producers, in their own freedom, deploy rhetoric to drum support of the audience in certain viewpoints. For instance, we contend in this work that bloggers rely essentially on rhetoric to win sympathies of the blog readers, whose support they also solicit in demonising opponents or members of the out-group, in conflict situation, even while hiding these ideological tendencies in manipulation techniques, especially where rhetorical strategies fail.

A cursory look at some of the bloggers’ deployment will reveal how they seize the opportunity offered by rhetorical choices to hide (their) ideological postures in their

various postings. Let us make another blog post; “Beirut Live”, as our guide in this direction. The post features a number of articles that focus on the July 2006 war in Lebanon between Israeli forces and Hezbollah fighters. These articles, altogether, amount to one hundred and eighty pages and have been posted by four different contributors. Because of the large volume, however, only the relevant portions of the articles are extracted for analysis in the next section.

As noted above, the blog post selected for the analysis of rhetorical choices of bloggers in the following section contains several articles on the war in Beirut, the capital city of Lebanon. Perhaps, this is why the post is named; “Beirut Live”, in what seems a direct reference to the war. Four bloggers are identified in the post as “contributing authors”, hence, the decision to extract from the contributions by each author, thereby giving us extracts (from four different articles in the same post) that are analysed. The extracts are presented as Plate 2 in the next section.

BEIRUT LIVE

THE BLOG FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT TO KNOW MORE Thursday, August 31, 2006

America's claim to be Lebanon's 'friend' lacks credibility

I don't over quote The Daily Star but this editorial rings very true indeed.

America's claim to be Lebanon's 'friend' lacks credibility

Editorial

The current "talking points" of US officials include an assertion that Washington's "support" for Beirut is dependent on the latter's taking bold steps to disarm Hizbullah. This is accompanied by a tacit threat that if Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah's organization continues to exist in its current form, Israel will resume its offensive against Lebanon - this time with even more of a green light from an increasingly impatient America. During the 34-day onslaught that ended on August 14, the US government appears to have experienced internal divisions over the extent to which it should encourage and re-supply the Jewish state, but the end-result was a policy of unconditional backing for a campaign that primarily destroyed civilian lives and civilian property. Any suggestion that the current administration is a "friend" to Lebanon is therefore viewed with understandable skepticism.

From the perspective of many Lebanese, being America's friend carries precious few benefits. Prime Minister Fouad Siniora has done his utmost to respect US wishes on a variety of fronts, only to be sent away empty-handed whenever he has asked for anything in return. American policy vis-a-vis the devastating war with Israel was no more than a highly purified version of this formula, with Washington repeatedly claiming that it was concerned about the stability of Siniora's government but simultaneously helping the Jewish state to mete out more and deadlier punishment.

Especially in this part of the world and particularly for a tiny country like Lebanon, the absence of effective support means no support at all. The presence, meanwhile, of active and enthusiastic support - diplomatic, economic, military - for a powerful invader is difficult to see as anything other than unabashed betrayal.

Lebanon and the wider Middle East need a powerful force to help local fires from spreading across the region. The United States has the might and the influence to supply such a stabilizing influence, but it has thus far lacked two other necessary qualities: even-handedness and consistency. This is indeed a tragedy of the highest order, for what other nation on the planet has so storied a history upon which to base its credentials as an honest broker and a supporter of democratic freedoms? Washington's selective enforcement of both US and international law - always to the benefit of Israel - robs it of the credibility it needs to be trusted by Arabs and Muslims, let alone to call itself their "friend." The current situation in Lebanon is just the latest episode of a long-running horror show of American inconsistency, and the Lebanese need look no further than Palestine for another recent one: the collective punishment and economic strangling of a people who dared to elect a government that defied Washington's diktats.

Plate 2 is culled from the articles that appear in the one hundred and eighty page blog post. It is particularly adopted for analysis in this section because of its relevance to the present discussion of rhetoric in blog post as it encapsulates the opinion of the author, which focuses on America's role in the 2006 Lebanon War between Israeli and Hezbollah. Not only this, it also appears on the first page in the blog post, making it the most recent among the postings that featured at that time and lastly, the article is referred to in the post as 'editorial', which affords us the opportunity to observe the opinion of blog editors regarding the articles in the post. This means that the reader may (or may not) attach much importance to the article, perhaps, considering it as mere personal opinion that may not actually be reporting facts.

The main thrust of the 'article' is that it decries the role of the United States in the 2006 Lebanon War, describing it as lacking 'even-handedness' and 'consistency'. It urges the United States officials who are deliberating on the aftermath of the war to put Lebanon into consideration in their debate as, in the view of the author, the country (Lebanon) has met the stipulated conditions for getting America's support. Finally, the author is of the opinion that the United States should extend the support currently being provided to Israel to Lebanon, being a country that bears the brunt of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, rhetorical elements are those linguistic choices deployed by the discourse producer to captivate the reader to the point in which the reader is swayed to a particular line of thought by affective use of language. Such affective use of language also has the effect of achieving in the reader some flow of sympathy, especially for the course of the discourse producer. Affective language is largely enhanced by affective elements like evocative headline, catchy introduction, direct address, repetition, parallelism and rhetorical elements such as ethos, pathos and logos.

We identify ten linguistic items in Plate 2, which we consider quite significant for the analysis of rhetoric or affective use of language by blog authors. These ten items are presented as excerpts in Table 9 (below) for easy identification and reference.

Table 9 Rhetoric in Plate 2

1	I don't over quote the Daily Star but this editorial rings very true indeed
2	America's claim to be Lebanon's 'friend' lacks credibility
3	The current "talking points" of US officials
4	... an assertion that Washington's support for Beirut is dependent on...
5	Prime Minister Fouad Siniora has done his utmost to respect US wishes...
6	... only to be sent away empty-handed...
7	... accompanied by a tacit threat...
8	... claiming that it was concerned about the stability of Siniora's government
9	Lebanon... need a powerful force to help local fires from spreading across the region.
10	The United States has the might and influence... but lacked... even-handedness and consistency

Item 1 on the table is a linguistic expression indicating a remark probably made in connection with the published article (Plate 2), especially with regard to its headline, which seems to capture the essence of the article. The linguistic element is an assertion, just below the 'first' headline (recall that the headline is positioned twice on top of the page, with the remark in question (i.e. item 1) sandwiched between the two. This assertion takes the form of a prolepsis, which is a rhetorical figure of speech that speaks about an action/ event yet to be carried out as if it is done and past. For instance, while it may be assumed that the author must have read the article over and over before it is published (hence, finding it 'to ring very true indeed'), it may also be assumed that the reader has not read it at all, as the article is just being introduced through the headline.

To assert or declare it as editorial that rings very true by the author is nothing but a calculated attempt at rhetoric. The rhetoric element must have targeted the cognitive domain of the reader. In other words, from a cognitive perspective, the lexical choice (item 1) seems to suggest to the reader that there is no need to read (or embark on reading) the piece, as the producer has 'read' it (perhaps, repeatedly) and has found it to ring very true. In which case, the truth being referred to is the message coded in the headline, the code, which, perhaps, encapsulates the goal of the author.

Prolepsis, such as the above, is largely deployed by discourse producers to achieve rhetorical ends. The purpose for deployment in this circumstance could be, for instance, that the author intends to ensure that the reader's mind, as far as the article is concerned, is narrowed to a particular line of thought, which is, perhaps, consistent with the authorial stance on the article (that America's claim of friendship with Lebanon should be discountenanced, as it lacks credibility). This is perhaps the position which the

author wants the reader to assume, even before going through the article, if at all it will be necessary to do so (especially, if the position has been assumed from the on-set).

Prolepsis is such a powerful rhetorical figure that shows high determination on the part of the discourse producer to influence the reader and heighten suspense and anxiety, with the goal of appealing to the reader's psyche (cognition) so as to influence his/her opinion (but ironically, it also has the tendencies to unmask the hidden intention of the author). This tact seems to have separated the rhetorical element from the two (ethos and pathos) initially identified in this discussion and makes it stand out as a separate entity and a unique element of rhetoric, akin to what Babatunde and Odepidan (2009) describe as 'logos' in their attempt at separating it from ethos and pathos, which are similar rhetorical elements. Its deployment in this context, therefore, indicates that the reader is expected to reason in conformity with the author's viewpoint and accept the article as that which 'rings very true indeed'.

Another affective element in text 2 that is also significant for the discussion of the reader's manipulation through rhetoric is repetition, through which other rhetorical figures like metaphors and suggestiveness (implication) have their place. For instance, the repetition of the title of the article on top of the page is suggestive. The first impression appears in large, bold print (14" font), while the repetition, even though still in bold print, appears in a reduced font (12"). The representation of the same item in two different forms suggests that the author intends the two different forms to be conceived differently. This is occasioned by the greater emphasis placed on the first impression, which is an indication that it should be perceived as more important than the repeated form. In other words, the graphological device (font) introduced by the author to add

colour to the existing discourse feature (headline) may have directed the attention of the reader on the need to adopt this attitude, posture, position, ideological stance, etc., before the coded message can be decipherable.

While it may be argued, for instance, that the discourse producer wants the reader to consider the first appearance (in higher font) as the locus of information, the repetition (in smaller font) can be considered as a piece (of information) the producer intends that the reader keep at the back of his/her mind in the course of reading, so as to reiterate the significance of the message (coded in the headline). The effect of this is quite understandable. First, the appearance of the headline in large font is to make it appeal to both the reader's eyes and brain, consequently, making it indelible or permanent in both mental faculties, just as the repetition in smaller font can have it stuck at the back of his/her mind, so that in the long run, there might be no 'storage' space left in the reader to keep any form of disbelief, doubt or mistrust that may likely unfold in the course of reading to nullify the author's claim (that the article rings true).

Repetition is such a useful instrument of manipulation, as it helps rhetoric in its deceptive strategy through its ability to place emphasis on a motivated prominence. However, repetition is not solely for emphasis, it is also a significant rhetorical tool to state commitment, especially, to a particular ideological standpoint. For instance, in text 2, the item 'friend' appears four times in the text, each time in its original form, which has it expressed in quotes, to indicate the ideological stance the author has taken with regard to the intended meaning of the word, and the position the reader must assume in order to decode its meaning in the current deployment in the text. In other words, it is expected that, throughout the course of reading, the lexical item, 'friend', should be

perceived in this ideologically held belief as denoting sham and insincerity, hence, its repeated deployment (in connection with the United States and Lebanon) is deceptive, insincere and unbelievable (that is, lacking credibility). This means that the original (denotative) meaning of the word ‘friend’ has been lost within the context of the article (Plate 2).

Also, the lexical item, ‘civilian’, deployed as modifiers in the expression; ‘civilian lives’ and ‘civilian properties’ is a repetition for the purpose of emphasis. The emphasis is directed to the reader on the need to see the type of ‘campaign’ being supported by the United States as one which, in the words of the author, “primarily destroyed civilian lives and civilian property”. Thus, the emphasis on the item ‘civilian’ is to present both the warring party (Israel) and its backer (the United States) to the reader on the need to have them judged (or held responsible) for the victims of their ‘campaign’, who in the real sense should be protected, even in war situation. The deployment may also be intended to evoke pathos in the reader (a rhetorical figure for drawing sympathy out of the discourse recipient), so that he /she may see the carnage in such campaign and feel pity or sadness for the victims (civilian) of the campaign. This is another instance of negative other-presentation of opponent in conflict situation.

Item 3; ‘the current “talking points” of US officials...’ points to another instance of effective management of the graphological device (quotation mark) for rhetorical effect, as items put in quotes, as earlier discussed, are intended to indicate the author’s position, perception or feeling about the linguistic items that receive the graphological sign. It also gives the reader the ‘opportunity’ to perceive the affected items in line with the perception of the author, which is usually within the framework of a new

interpretation. In other words, the deployment of the graphological sign indicates a kind of scepticism placed on the lexical item that receives the sign.

We earlier observed that the rhetorical symbol (i.e. the graphological sign) is placed on the lexical item 'friend' to indicate that the item, as deployed in the text, is sham in relation to its real (denotative) meaning. This observation can also be extended to item 3 on the table as far as its deployment on some lexical items in the excerpt is concerned. In this excerpt, the rhetorical figure, as appeared on "talking points", is suggestive that the linguistic item should not be perceived as actual talking points, within the context of this usage, but a deceptive form of talking points.

Going by the detailed analysis of the word 'talking point', it denotatively suggests (especially, in British English) a subject that a lot of people want to talk about (see: LDOCE, New edition, 2003: 1694). The rejection imposed by the presence of the graphological symbol on the item by the author may probably be for two reasons. It is either the subject which the author wants (included) in the discussion is absent or it may be that what is included as part of the (subject of) talking points is undesirable to the author, as the author remarks: "The current "talking points" of US officials include an assertion that Washington's support for Beirut is dependent on the latter's taking bold steps to disarm Hizbullah". This remark obviously reveals that what is included in the talking points is unpalatable to the author, hence the rejection. However, viewing it from a different angle, it could be that the author believes that there is no sincerity (or trust) in discussing what is even included in the talking points, let alone implement the outcome of the discussion, as the following remark indicates: "Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora has

done his utmost to respect US' wishes on a variety of fronts, only to be sent away empty handed whenever he has asked for anything in return".

The above remark suggests that what now features as a talking point by the US officials has earlier featured as a condition for granting Lebanon the US' support, a condition which the author claims has been fulfilled (by the conditioned), only to realise that the conditioned has been cajoled or fooled by the United States, the setter of the condition. For the US officials to now include what according to the author has been discussed and implemented is nothing but a deception. This, perhaps, explains the rejection by the author, through the deployment of the graphological sign (rhetorical symbol) of rejection on 'talking points', the item that lexicalises the act.

The same attitude of rejection is projected by item 4 on the table, where the lexical item 'support' in "Washington's support" is expected to be viewed with the same semantic lens of disbelief. In other words, the issue of support, whether it is featured as an item in the "talking points", or conceived in its literal sense, is expected to be perceived, by the reader, in the same manner as the author's (position on it), within the context of the text as representing insincerity, deception and camouflage. According to the author, the perceived deceptive implications suggested by the deployment of the graphological sign on the word, each time it appears in the text, is necessitated by America's attitude or disposition towards the real meaning of the word (support), which indicates non-commitment to what the true meaning of the word suggests, even while publicly laying claim to it.

We may feel justified if the reasons adduced as the author's explanation for the deployment of the graphological sign on the lexical items, such as; 'friend', 'support' and

‘talking points’ are anything to go by. In other words, our view on such deployment is that it is a call on the reader (by the discourse producer) to disregard the ordinary (original) interpretation suggested by the denotative use of the words, and the urge to now consider the words differently within the context of their deployment in the text, as ‘the semblance of what they used to stand for’. It is against this background that the reader can arrive at their correct interpretations.

Still on item 4 on the table, the metonymic expressions in ‘Washington’ and ‘Beirut’ can be perceived as more than what would, ordinarily, be regarded as mere ornamental devices typical of rhetorical style, to embrace more cognitive explanations for the deployment. This is because we believe, in line with Ungerer and Schmid’s (1996: 115) view that metonymy, like metaphor, may have moved away from this traditional position as a figure of speech to matters of intense cognitive concern, especially, due to the important role that metonymies play in everyday language. For instance, within the context of the expression, especially in the text where it features as item 4 on the table, it is deployed to indicate a contiguity relation in which ‘a part’ is made to represent ‘the whole’, such as ‘Washington’, a capital city, standing in for the whole country (USA), and ‘Beirut’, the capital of Lebanon, representing the country, Lebanon. This is a normal deployment of the figure of speech to indicate such contiguity relation.

However, in the ideological (and cognitive) sense of it, we may want to see the relationship expressed by the deployment of ‘Washington’ in relation to ‘Beirut’ as incongruous and the incongruity derives from the imbalance relationship suggested in the real world by such deployment. According to Plate 2, the relationship existing between ‘Washington’ and ‘Beirut’ is that of dominance, in which Washington is presented as

Master (the powerful) that gives ‘support’ to the needy (the powerless), based on certain stipulated conditions, support of which Beirut (the less powerful) is seeking, even after fulfilling the stipulated conditions.

Metonymy, rather than expressing a contiguity relation in this context, merely exposes the powerlessness of the second party in the other side of the relation. Even though the deployment of the figure of speech attempts a comparison for which it is capable of expressing, the comparison portrayed in this situation, however, is not only contrastive, it also exposes the weakness and helplessness of a country (represented as Beirut) and the powerfulness of another country (represented as Washington). In other words, the rhetorical figure may have been deployed to invite the attention of the reader to imbalance in the social distribution of power and to expose the callousness (typical) of the dominant group against the dominated or less powerful group, as manifested in the description of the manipulative action of the United States in relation to the request and plea of the Prime Minister of Lebanon, lexicalised as items 5 and 6 on the table.

Items 5 and 6 portray effective development of anti-thesis. This is a rhetorical figure in which certain idea is set against the other in a sharp contrast. For instance, in text 2, we notice that there is a strong contrast in the idea thrown up by the deployment of item 5; *Prime Minister Fouad Siniora has done his utmost to respect US wishes on a variety of fronts* and the response of the United States made known by item 6; *only to be sent away empty-handed whenever he has asked for anything in return*. The placing together of the two parallel structures (that manifest as items 5 and 6 respectfully) can be described as a rhetorical ploy to evoke ‘pathos’ from the reader.

As indicated earlier, pathos is an attempt by the discourse producer to rouse audience to sympathy or emotion. In this case, the reader simply identifies with the plight of the Lebanese Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora, through the effect produced by the deployment of the rhetorical figure in which injustice, insincerity and inconsistency of the United States is exposed as the reader is shown how the country reneges on the promise of providing support for Lebanon if it can meet its condition for getting support. The ‘thesis’ (item 5) indicates the Prime Minister fulfils his own part of the agreement, while the ‘anti-thesis’ (item 6) indicates that the Prime Minister receives the opposite of his expectation from the United States.

The rhetorical figure indicates that both of them (i.e. Lebanon and the US) perform actions, but what they do are in sharp contrast (like their nature, as exposed by the metonymic relation earlier discussed). In other words, it is like a powerful master gives a condition for granting support but still refuses to give the support even after the stipulated condition has been met, instead, sends the hopeful ‘needy’ away empty handed. This means that the rhetorical figure (anti- thesis) has been quite helpful in revealing the nature of the two players through the imbalance exposed by the weight of their actions. No doubt the reader is likely to sympathise with the disappointed and condemn the action of the hard-hearted master. If this is the case, then the discourse producer would have achieved his/her goal in using the device.

There is a deployment of another rhetorical figure, innuendo, in item 7 on the table. Innuendo, as a rhetorical figure, has the capacity to achieve, in the reader, the ability to draw inference (insinuation) or conclusion from a particular action or line of action. In the deployment of item 7, “...accompanied by a tacit threat”, the author

describes the threat made (without agent) within the context of the meeting by US officials as ‘tacit’, which means that such threat is neither spoken nor written. This leaves the reader with no option than to imagine the source of the meeting and to insinuate the rationale behind (or purpose of) the threat. In other words, if the threat derives from neither a spoken or written angle, it suggests that only inference could be relied on to get to the root of such threat, more so that the agent is also concealed or lost by the passive construction of the structure which harbours the threat: *This is accompanied by a tacit threat.*

The only escape from this semantic quagmire is to regard the structure where it appears as a continuation of the first sentence of the passage. In this case, it would mean that the ‘tacit threat’ is part of the condition associated with receiving US’ support, which is introduced in sentence one, so that in sentence two, the demonstrative pronoun; ‘this’, which begins the sentence without recourse to any form of anaphoric reference would now be assumed to have ‘dependent’ as its anaphor. This will now enable the sentence to assume a new status that will make it read as follows; *this dependent (on the latter’s taking bold steps to disarm Hizbullah) is accompanied by a tacit threat that...*

We may also argue that the deployment of the lexical item ‘tacit’ in relation to ‘threat’ also leads to what we have earlier discussed as collocation clash. This is because, ordinarily, a threat may be spoken or verbally issued, just like ‘warning’, ‘query’ and any form of illocutionary act or deployed in writing, thus making it a ‘written threat’. Granted that the lexical item ‘tacit’ collocates with words like ‘agreement’; ‘approval’ and so on, it may not in the same manner collocate with ‘threat’, because of its implication, especially, as supplied by the denotative interpretation of the lexical item. In other words,

the lexical items such as ‘verbal’ and ‘written’ would appropriately serve as the identifiable collocates as demonstrated by the following expressions; ‘verbal threat’ and ‘written threat’, which are semantically well formed expressions.

The collocation clash witnessed in the deployment of ‘tacit’ and ‘threat’ may therefore compel the reader to ‘suspect’ that its usage within the context of where it is found is not ordinary. The search for the purpose of deployment may make him/her rely on inference to get to the root of the matter. This is where innuendo comes in. Innuendo is a powerful rhetorical figure that allows the reader to draw inference from what is not directly stated in the text. In other words, the reader has to rely on his/ her own intuition (judgement) in order to decode a message that is implied or suggestive in the text.

Innuendoes also have the tendency to reveal ‘hidden’ intentions in unpleasant situations, even without appearing to be doing so, especially, as intentions are often inaccessible except by relying on inferences, deductions and implicatures about what is communicated. Within text 2, innuendo plays a major role in appealing to the reader’s logic for the interpretation of some indirectly stated expressions. For instance, the reader is put in a challenged frame of mind to decode the intention or purpose behind the deployment of some expressions such as; ‘friend’; “support... dependent on...bold steps to disarm Hizbullah”; ‘tacit threat’; “if...organisation exists, Israel will resume offensive against Lebanon”; ‘impatient America’ and so on. The reader may need to go beyond the ordinary (usage) in order to read the message of war coded in the deployment of the above expressions. This is where the rhetorical figure, innuendo, becomes relevant as it combines with logos to awake the consciousness of the reader.

The tactical deployment of logos as a rhetorical strategy is noticeable in item 8 on the table; “Washington...claiming that it was concerned about the stability of Siniora’s government...but simultaneously helping the Jewish State”. In this expression, America is presented by the author as a country with ‘double think’, ‘double speak’ and ‘double standard’, especially, with regard to its relationship with Lebanon. Within the context of the text, the author makes the reader believe that America’s attitude towards Lebanon (especially, over the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War) is insincere, deceptive and tricky, as it also portrays double standard. This labelling is enhanced further by the lexicalisation of America’s action towards the Lebanese Prime Minister, who is sent away empty handed even after meeting America’s condition for support.

Not only this, America is said to be helping Israel (Jewish State), which is probably Lebanon’s adversary, even while claiming friendship with Lebanon. All these actions of America must have informed the country’s description as ‘double speak’ by the author. The image of America formed (or being projected) in this manner may be linked to the effective deployment of the rhetorical strategy that we have discussed under items 5 and 6, which combines pathos, the intention to whip up emotion of the reader and rouse him/her to pity and sadness, with ethos, the desire to sway the reader to own side of argument. If the reader is convinced of the plausibility in this description, by identifying with the alleged victims of America’s supposed deception, then the deployment of the rhetorical strategy becomes quite effective.

A cursory look at item 9 on the table; ‘Lebanon...need a powerful force to help local fires spreading across the region’, reveals an effective deployment of imagery, which is another powerful figure in rhetoric. For instance, the picture (or image) of fire is

vividly presented to the reader in the expression. Fire, literally, is a very dangerous element that can consume even its maker. To speak of ‘fires’ which, ordinarily may be interpreted as different rages of fire, as spreading across a region, brings the image of a disaster or a looming calamity, even in the literal sense.

In the connotative sense, the image of ‘fires’ presented by the author is clearly seen in the numerous problems that plague the entire Middle East region. It is a region characterised by violence, instability and large scale conflicts caused by groups such as militants, militias, religion extremists, fractionalisation and factional leaders, sectarianism and so on. These have been some of the problems confronting the region and, as the author puts it, they are ‘local fires’ spreading across the region and, perhaps, the support of the international community, represented by the United States, being sought by the Lebanese Prime Minister, is an international assistance to combat the spread of the problems (local fires) across the region.

Imagery concretises an idea, makes it more vivid and much more visible than mere words could do. Its deployment in this text presents the reader with a clearer picture of happenings in the Mideast region, a situation which also provides a necessary clue to the theme, the content and the message the Mideast blogger is trying to project through the posting, and most probably, the reader is likely to be swayed to the blogger’s side of argument by the deployment of the rhetorical figure (imagery), especially now that the reader has the ‘clear picture’ of why the Lebanese Prime Minister needs the support of the United States.

The deployment of imagery in the text is quickly accompanied by another rhetorical figure (dilemma) in item 10 on the table. The dilemma comes from the blog

author as he/ she is confused by America's refusal to give Lebanon this much needed support, at least in the wake of all the supplied evidences in the text. The author puts this dilemma succinctly:

The United States has the might and the influence to supply such a stabilizing influence, but it has thus far lacked two other necessary qualities; even-handedness and consistency.

From the excerpt above, the reader is made to see or believe that that the negative image created of America by the author can be justifiable, more so that the author claims similar support has been given to a party (Israel) in the other side of the conflict, perhaps, without conditions. This discriminatory practice is lexicalised in the following expression:

Washington's selective enforcement of both US and international law –always to the benefit of Israel –robs it of the credibility it needs to be trusted by Arabs and Muslims, let alone to call itself their “friend”.

So far, we have been discussing how the blogger in the post; ‘Beirut Live’, has perceived the United States. The perception was brought within the reach of the reader (of the article) through effective deployment of rhetorical figures that have been examined in this discussion, even though we believe these figures of speech may not have been quite exhaustive. The rhetorical strategies discussed so far are capable of indicating the ideologies, the positions, the interests and the attitudes of people on a side of conflict, as they indicate their belief, impression, perception and attitude to those on the other side of the conflict.

It is against this background that this study considers it necessary to also investigate those at the other side of the conflict (America, in this regard) and observe

their own impression of opponents. It is hoped that this will give us a balanced view of the conflict. This expectation will provide the basis of our investigation in the next section, as we examine another blog post; *Anderson Cooper Blog 360⁰*, owned by an American (Anderson Cooper), who is also a CNN Senior Correspondent in the real world. The news story; “Our very strange day with Hezbollah”, which has been designated as Plate 3 in this chapter, will be our guide in the investigation.

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Plate 3: Our very strange day with Hezbollah

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"Be honest about what you see, get out of the way and let the story reveal itself." Anderson Cooper
Sunday, July 23, 2006
Our very strange day with Hezbollah
Hezbollah invited us to come see them again; it's the second time in as many days. Yesterday, Anderson, photographer Neil Hallsworth and I drove to the southern suburbs of Beirut and waited at a predetermined meeting spot.

A few minutes passed, then an old, American-made sedan pulled up behind us. Two men jumped out of the car. Our fixer approached them and after an animated conversation, one of the Hezbollah men stuck his head in our car window and said in passable English, "We're very sorry to inconvenience you but there will be no tour today. There are Israeli drones overhead and it's not safe to be here. Please leave now." Those were easy orders to follow.

Today, we were told Hezbollah was again willing to take our team into their neighborhood. Meet them at the same spot, they said, at 11 a.m. and don't be late. We weren't. We waited. Then waited some more, and what follows is a log of a very strange day with Hezbollah.

10:40 a.m.: Our team of Anderson, Neil, producer Tommy Evans and I arrive at the site of a bridge that's been blown to pieces by Israeli bombs. It's the same spot we met our Hezbollah men yesterday. Next to the bridge there are two high-rise apartment buildings under construction. This is a poor neighborhood and new construction clearly doesn't come here often. The buildings are heavily damaged, though, and it seems unlikely they'll ever be completed.

10:50 a.m.: Our translator, Mira, is making a call to Hezbollah's office, making sure they know we've arrived. You don't have to spend much time in these neighborhoods to realize that you're an outsider ... and you're being watched. They tell us they know we're

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11:05 a.m.: Hezbollah is late for our meeting. We're sitting still for 25 minutes in an area recently hit hard by Israeli jets, so it's no surprise the mood is tense. We're not talking much. A young couple passes by -- the boy is wearing jeans and short sleeves, the girl a head-scarf and a dress covering her body ankle to wrist. They nod politely and continue past us. They're holding hands. We're still waiting.

11:22 a.m.: A crowd of journalists is passing 200 yards behind us and we quickly realize we've been given bad information and that Hezbollah's tour has started without us. We turn our car around and try to catch up.

11:26 a.m.: It's not hard to spot 40 western journalists walking through a bombed-out area, and we've just now found the group. We also find out we missed some ground rules. We're pulling into a side street and two men dressed in black step out of a doorway with AK-47s. Neil has the camera on his shoulder and they immediately assume he's rolling. He's not, but they want to check the tape anyway. We show it to them and they let us pass. Hezbollah tour ground rule #1: Don't show the faces of anyone we don't want you to see or pictures of places you're not supposed to be. Now we know. We catch up to the group.

11:35 a.m.: We're standing on what used to be a residential street. It's now a mess of wires and rubble. Smoke is still rising off the debris. Bombs have smashed nearly a quarter mile of this area and there's virtually nothing left. There's a twisted tire from a children's bike here, some compact disks from someone's collection there. Anderson is doing a few stand-ups, but the Hezbollah representative leading the tour is telling us it's time to move on. We tell him we want to talk to some people who lived here, who witnessed what happened. "Not here," he says. "Maybe at our next stop."

12:05 p.m.: Our car is being led through back streets to a broken-down building with five ambulances parked in front. "These are the emergency workers who respond to casualty calls when Israel drops their bombs," the Hezbollah man says. "Take your pictures and talk to some of them if you'd like." We're growing tired of what is now obviously a dog-and-pony show, but we decide to play along, and approach one driver with a few questions. Anderson asks him what kind of casualties he's seeing, but before he can answer, the ambulance beside us turns on his siren and screeches out, followed by the next ambulance, then the next. It's a well coordinated and not-so-subtle piece of propaganda that might as well come with a soundtrack titled "Hezbollah Cares."

12:16 p.m.: We again ask the Hezbollah guy (he won't give us his name) when we can talk to some residents, but he brushes us off and tells us maybe at our next stop. He's now on his cell phone and it's not hard to imagine he's making sure all the props are in place before we move on. I wish I spoke Arabic. He opens our car door, slides in, and says he's riding with us. We're fine with it and offer him a bottle of water. "No thank you," he says in English. While we have his attention, Anderson asks him if we can talk to someone in Hezbollah's leadership. His answer is short: "Not while we're at war." He gets out of our

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the back of someone's motor scooter.

12:30 p.m.: We're now driving through a neighborhood that hasn't seen any bombing, but it's here we're told we can talk to some residents. Hezbollah guy takes us down to what amounts to a crude bomb shelter and tells us the people here live on this street but are afraid to sleep in their apartment. The concrete room is dimly lit and dank. Two people on plastic chairs are watching an Arabic news channel. One sits in the corner yelling angry epithets about Israel for the reporters. We wait for the media gaggle to leave, then introduce ourselves. They tell us they're a mother, her son and his wife. There's no way to know if it's true. The conversation follows a familiar pattern:

"Are you scared?"

"No!"

"Will you fight?"

"To the death!"

"Do you hate Israel?"

"Of course, and its mother America!"

We thank them for their insights and move back up to the street.

12:44 p.m.: We're back on the street and on cue, a Hezbollah resistance song is now blaring from an apartment. A young man on the porch dressed in black is giving us the victory sign. I look behind me and there's our Hezbollah guide encouraging the young man to lift his hands higher so our camera can see.

12:50 p.m.: Anderson is doing a few more stand-ups about our story that's quickly become less about Hezbollah and more about their crude propaganda machine when the "family" emerges from the bunker behind us and joins their friends in the street. They're laughing, talking loudly, and gesturing with their hands, mocking anger. I really should learn Arabic. Anderson does another stand-up about the group now standing behind us.

12:55 p.m.: We pile into our van and are now driving out of the Hezbollah-controlled neighborhood. It feels like we've just left a haunted house: Slightly frightening at first, but ridiculous by the end.

Posted By Charlie Moore, CNN Senior Producer: 11:11 AM ET

61 Comments

Editor's Note: We receive hundreds, sometimes thousands, of comments on this blog each day. Unfortunately, due to the high volume, we cannot post all of them. But we appreciate your thoughts and hope you enjoy the comments included in the dialogue below. Thank you for your participation.

This was an excellent story Charlie. Thank you for posting it.

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Plate 3 is a posting by Charlie Moore, a CNN Senior Producer, which is sent to the blog post; *Anderson Cooper Blog 360⁰*, owned by another CNN correspondent, Anderson Cooper. In the news story, Charlie Moore describes minute by minute details of his personal encounter with Hezbollah militants through a pre-arranged meeting between a CNN team, comprising the narrator himself, Evans, Anderson, Mira (a translator) and Neil Hallsworth (the team's photographer) and members of Hezbollah, a militant group in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the capital city of Lebanon.

The posting of the article was done on Sunday, July 23, 2006. This was at the heat of the war between Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and the militant group, Hezbollah, in Beirut. The story mainly centres on how the CNN team, upon an invitation by Hezbollah,

through the assistance of a member of the Hezbollah group (referred to as ‘Hezbollah guy’ throughout the story, because, according to the author, he would not give his name) decides to honour the invitation. The author describes their movement right from the waiting spot (the site of a blown up bridge), their driving through the suburbs and to the ‘territory’ of the militant group (a bombed out area in the poor neighbourhood). The story also hints at a brief conversation they had with some members of the militant group. It all turns out that the purpose of inviting the CNN team might probably be to show the team the destruction caused by the bombings of Israel, their opponent in the war. This, the narrator describes as sheer propaganda as the team was making their return.

In line with the trend of discussion in the previous sections, we also consider it necessary to continue the investigation of rhetorical elements whose deployments might have been ideologically influenced in the story. As usual, we extract some linguistic items from the text and present them as excerpts in an adjoining table for the purpose of analysis. Table 10 (below) contains the items considered suitable for the analysis of rhetoric in the story.

Table 10 **Rhetorical choices in Plate 3**

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Our very strange day with Hezbollah (title)2. Hezbollah invited us to come see them again; it's the second time in many days3. ...old, American-made sedan pulled up behind us4. two men jumped out of the car5. one of the Hezbollah men stuck his head in our car6. ...said in passable English7. ...Hezbollah was again willing to take our team into their neighbourhood8. We waited. Then waited some more, and what follows is a log of a very strange day with Hezbollah9. ...arrive at the site of a bridge that's been blown to pieces by Israeli bomb10. This is a poor neighbourhood and new construction clearly doesn't come here often11. Hezbollah is late for our meeting12. The mood is tense13. we 've been given bad information14. two men dressed in black step out of a doorway with AK-47s

From the items in Table 10, it can be observed that, in general, the pattern of description in the text reveals overall evaluative concepts that exhibit ideologically controlled propositions. Apart from the positive self-presentation of the story teller in expressions like; 'our car', 'invited us', '...we were told', 'take us down to...', 'our team' and so on, it can also be observed from the lexical choices in the story that the out-group (Hezbollah) being presented to the reader is portrayed negatively, as reflected in

expressions such as; ‘...jumped out of the car’, ‘stuck his head in our car’, ‘speak passable English’, ‘having office in a “crude bomb shelter”...’, ‘...yelling angry epithets’, ‘their crude propaganda machine’, ‘a haunted house’, ‘giving...bad information’, ‘late for our ...meeting’ and so on. This negative other-presentation of the out-group suggests from the onset that the story is ideologically motivated, a situation that makes the text ideal and suitable for the investigation of rhetoric and ideological posture in blog stories.

We begin the analysis with the remark of the author, which is the first linguistic item on the page (even before the headline). The remark is imperative: “Be honest about what you see, get out of the way and let the story reveal itself.” This a remark credited to the blog author, Anderson Cooper, perhaps as his guiding principle (or a form of motto), displayed for the reader, suggesting that the story, which the reader is about to read (and, perhaps other stories in the blog), is devoid of doctoring, censoring, editing and, perhaps, sensationalism.

However, a cursory look at the excerpts contained in Table 10 reveals that this is actually not the case. The story is not only doctored, it is indeed tinged with a lot of sensationalism. For instance, item 1, “Our very strange day with Hezbollah”, which, incidentally, is the title of the news story, indicates nothing but a bias conclusion on the story. The conclusion is biased in the sense that the modifier, ‘strange’, which itself is pre- modified by an adverb of intensity, ‘very’, in the nominal group ; ‘...very strange day’, demonstrates that something very unusual (strange), odd and incredible has happened as it also leaves the expression with a lot of ambiguity, thereby creating problem for the reader. In the first instance, the reader tends to imagine whether the

oddity created through the use of the word, 'strange', refers to the people being met (i.e. Hezbollah militant group), the meeting itself, the manner in which the team was received, the place of meeting, the risk associated with war coverage, etc., all of which can appropriately fit into the category of strangeness that the deployment of the word suggests. Ambiguity is a rhetorical strategy created by the discourse producer when the intention to manipulate (the reader) is high.

Apart from the ambiguity generated by the use of the word 'strange', the choice of the title is also biased and prejudiced against the out-group being described in the news story. This observation is informed by the expression we have marked as item 2 on the table; "Hezbollah invited us to come see them again; it is the second time in many days." A cursory look at the content of the expression shows that the narrator's meeting with Hezbollah is not the first; rather, it is the second time of meeting with the militant group. This is why the ambiguity in the word 'strange' is still not clear, but it has succeeded in removing Hezbollah (and probably the meeting also) from the list of identifiable probabilities, that is, with regard to the oddity and insinuation generated by the deployment of the word in the title of the story.

In other words, if the reader is searching for what is unusual in the meeting, definitely, the reader will look beyond Hezbollah, because, if the meeting with Hezbollah being the described in the news story is not the first, then the author cannot describe Hezbollah as strange or unusual, as this will lead to contradiction. However, if the meeting with Hezbollah and/or Hezbollah itself constitutes the variable being described as strange, then, this will attest to the subjectivity in the assessment of both items.

Item 3 on the table; "...old, American-made sedan pulled up behind us", is also an extension of the biased assessment by the author, but the item goes a step further to reveal the typical ideological posture of racism and supremacist idea. For instance, in the description of the author's (or, perhaps, the team's) car, there is silence on the manufacturing date of the car, as well as the manufacturer, but now, these details are considered necessary when the out-group comes to them with its own car (which the author even refuses to acknowledge as car, but an old sedan).

The racist tendencies inform the author's refusal to acknowledge that what Hezbollah has brought to meet him is a car, as doing so would boost the out-group's ego and this will jeopardise the inferiority complex being painted of the group. Reference to the manufacturer is also very important as this increases the author's own ego (recall that the CNN team is American) because the information is capable of showcasing America as a car manufacturer, which is a plus to the author's image.

Item 4; "Two men jumped out of the car" is deployed to exemplify the rashness, the crudity, the uncivilized nature and the primitiveness of the out-group (Hezbollah) that the story teller aims at exposing. This attempt to expose the weakness in the out-group (Hezbollah) is carried further by items 5 and 6; "...one of the Hezbollah men stuck his head in our car window" and "...said in passable English..." These three items (4, 5, and 6) allow the reader to form the image of Hezbollah as barbaric, crude, weak, fearful and, perhaps, uneducated (...speak passable English), as this is usually the conclusion against anyone who could not speak the standard form of English.

This attitude, which is ingrained in racist ideology, is usually common in America and some other countries that speak English as a mother tongue (L1). The knowledge (or

ability to speak the standard form) of English is synonymous with education and this has become a sine qua non for recognition and gaining acceptance in these countries. Anybody who is unable to speak English very well is treated as inferior, no matter how fluent he/she may be in other language(s). This is exactly what has transpired in the discourse under consideration between the participants. It is assumed that the out-group, Hezbollah, should be able to speak English very well (whereas, it is not assumed that the narrator should be able to speak or understand Arabic very well, which is the language presumably understood by Hezbollah).

The relationship of dominance is expressed by item 7 on the table: "...Hezbollah was again willing to take our team into their neighbourhood..." The presence of the adverb, 'again', which is an indication of a recurring action, suggests that Hezbollah has once taken the team (or the narrator) willingly into its own territory or neighbourhood, as the case may be, and by the expression, it is also willing to take them there again. This is a deployment that is intended to reveal how important Hezbollah considers the team, perhaps, because they are from America.

While one may be tempted to consider Hezbollah as humane and kind in their approach to the team, this is however, not the image the author is portraying. In the first instance, the author wants the reader to see the significance Hezbollah attaches to the team which culminates in their 'ever ready' willingness to ensure the team's satisfaction. This is to confirm the master-servant picture that the author tries to paint (that is, giving the impression that dominant-dominated relationship exists). In other words, the author seems to be saying that Hezbollah considers it a great honour to receive members of the

team and, as such, is doing everything possible to ensure that they are recognised, regardless of the war situation in which they are, and even, the threat to its own life.

Item 8 suggests lack of promptness or the inability to keep to time on the part of Hezbollah. This is the continuation of the negative other-presentation witnessed earlier in the text. It could also be part of the strategy to confirm the assumption that the delay is deliberately done to give Hezbollah time to arrange, what the narrator refers to as, its propaganda machine for the pre-arranged meeting. However, if what the author is trying to project is that Hezbollah is not conscious of time, as in the following expression; “Hezbollah is late for our meeting” (11), then it is part of the negative other-presentation earlier mentioned. It may also include part of the strategy to depict Hezbollah as disorganised and a group that lacks proper arrangement.

As witnessed in the discussion so far, it is evident that no matter how hard the out-group may try to please an ideologically imbued in-group, it will still be presented negatively. It is usually the case, especially, once attitude, ideology or opinion has been formed of the out-group. This is, perhaps, what Keen (1986) regards as a normal human phenomenon. This pre-conceived attitude (ideology), perhaps, informs the negative description of Hezbollah’s dwelling in the news story, as expressed in the following (items 9 and 10):

“...our team...arrive at site of a bridge that’s blown to pieces by Israeli bombs... it’s the same spot we met our Hezbollah men yesterday. Next to the bridge...two high-rise apartment buildings under construction... This is a poor neighbourhood... the buildings are heavily damaged...”

Other negative depictions of Hezbollah can also be found in the following expressions; “the mood is tense” (12), suggesting that the group (Hezbollah) lives in fear; “we’ve been given bad information”, implying that Hezbollah is tricky or deceptive; “two men dressed

in black...with Ak-47s”, suggesting that Hezbollah men are always armed, perhaps, due to the perpetual fearfulness in which they live.

This latest description of the weapon possessed by Hezbollah is perhaps done to demystify the hitherto dreaded militant organisation. The image of ‘Hezbollah’s powerlessness’ is further created by the deployment of subsequent lexical choices, such as; living in ‘a crude bomb shelter’; ‘yelling angry epithets’; ‘their crude propaganda machine’; ‘a haunted house’ and so on. This is an attempt by the narrator to further demystify the group, so that the reader can see them as unsophisticated and powerless.

This strategy is typical of the US ideology, noticeable in the country’s military, and it always aims at the demystification of the enemy, so that they look less powerful than the people imagine them to be. It is probably through this strategy that the US is able to capture some powerful personalities such as Saddam Hussein, Charles Taylor, Mahammad Gaddafi and so on. Those who could not be captured through this ideological strategy are sentenced to silence (and, perhaps, oblivion), as witnessed in the case of Osama Bin Laden and some prominent Taliban in Afghanistan. Hence, it is not surprising that the blogger in this text, who is also an American, possess this ideology and may be deploying the lexical selections in a similar tactic to bring Hezbollah into a state of disrepute and demeaning, especially before the people that hold the militant group in high esteem. Other items, apart from 12, may also have similar intention.

However, a look at item 14 seems to suggest to the contrary. By describing the two men (dressed in black) as stepping out with AK-47s, the narrator still believes Hezbollah has elements of militancy in it. AK-47 is the name of a powerful military rifle, but which has become obsolete or old fashioned, especially, in the wake of the modern

day technological advancement in war fare. The modern day fighters now talk about ballistic missile, rocket and rocket launcher, fighter jets, sub marine and war ship and so on. By portraying Hezbollah militants as carrying (or going about with) AK-47s, suggests nothing but the usual attempt to tell the reader that they are still far behind in modern day technology and weaponry. It might also be the attempt to confirm the image of crudity, non-civilisation and non-sophistication, which the narrator has earlier painted of Hezbollah in the text.

4.3 Summary

In this chapter, we have presented various tactics that bloggers use to attack opponents, especially through the opportunity offered by language and rhetoric, even while claiming that they are posting news stories from a neutral angle. The chapter has attempted to unmask these hidden ideologies through an in-depth analysis of the messages that are heavily coded in the use of language in the blog posts examined.

In the next chapter, we shall further examine how bloggers encode messages, ideas, perceptions and thoughts that also have ideological implications, in semiotic ‘containers’, through devices, such as pictures, photographs, cartoons, and so on.

CHAPTER FIVE

Non-linguistic coding in Mideast blog posts

5.1 Introduction

As pointed out in section 2.7, bloggers connect to public issues through text, video and other visual devices such as pictures, photographs, emoticons, cartoons and so on. These are semiotic devices that provide them with ‘safe’ haven to code ideas, information, interests, perspectives, ideologies and positions. The devices have been classified in this study as linguistic and non-linguistic, based on whether or not language is the chief means of expression.

Having examined the linguistic coding in the last chapter, which focuses mainly on selected texts of the Mideast blog posts, this chapter is devoted to the analysis and discussion of coding in other semiotic devices, such as pictures, photographs and cartoons, that rhetorically address the issue of ideology in the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war. Although the devices are described as non-linguistic, we do not rule out the fact that some of them, especially pictures and cartoons, engage linguistic illustrations to further encode their messages. The (semiotic) devices are obtained from the Mideast blog posts and they have been numbered in plates for easy reference in our analysis. We begin with the coding of pictures in Mideast blog posts.

5.2 Picture coding in Mideast blog posts

Signs, according to Chandler, (2009), take the form of words, images or sounds and they have no intrinsic meaning until they are invested with meanings. This observation is in line with the Saussurean ‘dyadic’ (two-part) model of the sign

(discussed in the theoretical background, section 2.2) which is composed of a signifier (i.e., the form that the sign takes) and the signified (the concept it represents). In this study, we regard picture (especially as relating to the Mideast blog posts) as a sign, with the usual dyadic model. The picture is the signifier, while the coded message (which such picture represents) is the signified. This dyadic approach is assumed in the analysis in this chapter. The picture below illustrates this better.

Plate 4: War Jokes



(source:<http://photos.blogger.com/blogger/8162/1924/1600/keep%walking.jpg>)

Plate 4 is a picture placed at the top page of the posting by a blogger named MRTEZ, in an article titled; ‘War Jokes’, which is one of the articles that featured in the blog post ‘Beirut Live’. The article is described as having been posted on Wednesday August 30, 2006 at 9.54 am, and attributed just below the picture, to “another of the infamous Johnnie Walker ads in Lebanon” from the local office of Leo Burnett in Beirut.

In the plate, there is what seems like a broken bridge and a bearded man (probably described by the linguistic inscription in capital letters, as Johnnie Walker) dressed in an armour, with a sheathed sword tied to his waist, is walking eastwards of the broken bridge. Just behind the man, there is another inscription; 'keep walking' placed much close to the man's back. In-between the disjointed bridge is a fuel gauge (which resembles that of an automobile) and it seems to connect the broken pieces of the bridge together, as it has the **E** (which, ordinarily, indicates an Empty point in an automobile fuel gauge) in the first part (of the broken bridge) and the **F** (a pointer to Fullness) in the other part of the broken bridge. The arrow on the fuel gauge points to E and all the elements of the picture are on a black background.

As pointed out in Section 2.2, there is no sign except the sign is invested with meaning. In this plate, the picture of a broken bridge on which the bearded man is walking probably signifies part of the ruins of the aftermath of a war. It will be recalled that in reality, on July 12, 2006, there was Israel's bombing of bridges in its military offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon. The picture of the broken bridge might therefore be an indication to the aftermath of bridges (and roads) in Lebanon after the bombardment. The man walking on the bridge probably represents a typical Lebanese, armed with courage and resilience (which an armour probably depicts) and is undaunted by the broken pieces (of a bombed bridge). In fact, there is an indication that he has crossed the hurdle created by the gap that divides the bridge and he is about getting to the Eastern end of the bridge, to show that the task (of walking) is almost completed. He is perhaps able to achieve this (success) by the support and encouragement that is being

provided by the accompanied linguistic inscription; *keep walking*, which probably serves as a driving force behind him in the journey.

What can be deduced from this picture in reality is that the blogger probably intends to show the reader that in spite of the Israel's 'devastating' military onslaught against Hezbollah, which has left Lebanon in ruins, the average Lebanese still keeps life going, even amidst destroyed bridges, homes, schools and other public infrastructure. This average Lebanese seems to have found solace in the inspiring words "keep walking", which can be literally interpreted as 'keep going', 'keep fighting' or "keep struggling. This is the ideology behind resilience, which could also be the reason why the picture (or its adaptation) is hung on buildings in Beirut with the same inscription, as observed in a similar picture below.

Plate 5: Post war ads



(Source: <http://photos.1.blogger.com/blogger/8162/1994/1600walker.jpg>)

The picture in Plate 5 resembles that of Plate 4, but with some notably minor differences. For instance, there is the absence of the automobile fuel gauge, which has its (indicating) arrow pointed to E, in the earlier picture, a sign which probably implies ‘emptiness’ in Plate 4. Also, the picture in Plate 5 now stands erect and is hung on top of the building as against being lying fallow in Plate 4. Two flags (probably the national flag of the Lebanese) are now hoisted on top of the picture in Plate 5, whereas the inscription that eggs on the walker is still in its normal place, behind the walker. This inscription probably confirms the name of the walker; Johnnie Walker, but it is now wide apart, that

is, separated from the referent, with the collapsed bridge in-between the two, even as the walker faces the same direction in both plates.

These are just the literal (denotative) interpretation that can be read into the pictures in both plates. Rhetoric, however, in contrast to literal meaning, is not simply a matter of how thoughts are presented, but is itself an influence on ways of thinking, of which we must make an imaginative leap to be able to recognise the signified (symbolic code) of metaphors or other rhetorical tropes deployed as signifiers in the discourse. This will constrain us to consider the representations not only in literal (denotative) terms but also in figurative (connotative) terms. In other words, while literal usage intends to be (or taken as) purely denotative, which limits or narrows scope of analysis, figurative representations constitute a rhetorical code that broadens the scope of analysis and, according to Chandler (2009), understanding this rhetorical code is part of what it means to be a member of the culture in which it is employed.

Figurative language, Chandler stresses, is a code which relates ostensibly to how things are presented rather than to what is presented. It is this meaningful use of sign that is central to the concerns of semiotics. Let us now attempt a semiotic analysis of the 'pictures' in both plates, with a view to finding out the extent to which visual metaphors or metaphorical images have projected the (bloggers') ideas or messages that could otherwise be expressed in words.

It should be stressed that we decide to merge the pictures in both plates together and analyze them as one, due to the similarities observed in them that seem to outweigh the minor differences earlier identified in page 203. However, we would not hesitate to indicate where the minor differences may have played significant role in each deployment. As observed earlier in this discussion, signs are never innocent. They are there to project the message of the author. The study of semiotics shows that when signs are deployed or represented, they acquire additional meanings.

The picture (of the man presented in both plates) shows him literally as someone returning from a victorious battle (or war), as the sheathed sword suggests. This conclusion derives from the cultural knowledge of war which indicates that a warrior only sheaths the sword when a battle has been fought and won. A warrior does not usually sheath the sword when he/she is going to the battle because of enemy that may ambush. He/she also needs it when the battle is on to avoid being killed or captured, hence; the only period the sword is sheathed, presumably, is after the battle, and only the victor usually sheaths the sword, as the sword of the vanquished might have either been lost, captured or surrendered.

The linguistic inscription; Johnnie Walker, situated right below the feet of the man in the picture probably attests to the man's name, which is a good example of the perpetual sliding of the signified under a signifier. This therefore raises a logical connection between the picture and reality. In reality, for instance, a 'walker' is someone who walks for pleasure or exercise, while 'Johnny' refers to 'a man' in an old fashioned English (see: LDOCE New Edition, 2003.:871). It therefore suggests that Johnnie Walker can mean "a man who walks for pleasure'. In that case, it will be apposite to establish a

metonymic connection between war and pleasure, which ideologically could mean 'war is fought to achieve pleasure or peace' or 'a man derives pleasure after winning a war'. The contiguity between war and pleasure derives from the victory over enemy and the thunderous ovation that accompanies such victory, which is considered a heroic feat.

This thunderous ovation might have been personified in the inscription, 'keep walking', that accompanies the victorious warrior (Johnnie Walker) as he walks triumphantly across the bridge. The solitariness of the walker may symbolise confidence, independence and self reliance (of a victorious warrior) in a bid to continue the normal (post-war) life. It should be recalled that part of the ideology of a war monger, in real life situation, is that 'war is actually fought if peace is desired'. The pictures in plates 4 and 5 can be part of the strategy to sell this ideology. For instance, through the deployment of ontological metaphors in the picture, the reader is made to see peace, pleasure, stability and commendation at the end of a victorious war.

Ontological metaphors are those that associate activities, emotions and ideas with entities and substances through the use of personification. It should be noted that resilience, courage, bravery and confidence are all personified in Johnnie walker, the man who walks 'pleasurably' in both pictures. There is no doubt that the pictures are intended to invoke passion, admiration and approval on the part of the reader, especially for the action of Johnnie Walker. The hanging of the picture atop tall buildings (Plate 5) is to further market this ideology, as making it to lie fallow (as in plate 4), may not actualise this intention, and the hoisting of two 'national' flags atop the picture is to signify public approval (that is, as being of national interest) for what is being depicted; resilience, courage and determination in an undaunted effort to get to the 'promised land'.

We should also recall that the man in the picture has crossed the bridge at a very crucial and difficult point (the point of collapse) and he is about getting to the 'end' of the journey. This depiction probably indicates that the difficult point symbolises the war (i.e. the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war) in Lebanon, (which Hezbollah believes it won) while the remaining few walk to the end of the journey symbolises the little courage, resilience and aspiration needed by Hezbollah to start the celebration of freedom.

Recall that there is what seems like an automobile fuel gauge in Plate 4, which is conspicuously missing in Plate 5, and that the arrow (indicator) therein points to E, which signifies 'Empty fuel tank' in reality, (that is, for an automobile, it shows that there is no fuel in its tank). In this picture, the essence of the fuel gauge, which has its arrow on 'E', might be to draw the attention of Hezbollah to their emergence from the unknown, the scratch, the zero level or emptiness. It is a matter of course that Hezbollah is relatively unknown or unheard of as a party in the long-standing conflict between Arabs and Israel, especially, at the periods in which all forms of international, inter-ethnic, religious, sectarian and other types of large-scale violence had taken place in the country.

The arrow on 'E' may also be to remind the Lebanese that the problems, difficulties, challenge, turmoil, violence etc, brought about by these wars, have been put behind them (as suggested by the man in the picture who has successfully crossed over a collapsed bridge) and that Hezbollah is about getting Lebanon to the state of fullness, fame and fulfilment, which is what the 'F' in the automobile gauge of the picture in Plate 4 probably signifies. However, the disappearance of the gauge when the picture is hung on buildings (Plate 5) might be an attempt to forget the unfortunate incidents of war that had befallen Lebanon in the past, a sorry reminder of which may jeopardise the

resilience, the courage and the confidence that the (present) ideology targets. It is no surprising therefore that this element of the picture, which is conspicuously present in Plate 4, is tactfully deleted in plate 5, for this ‘ideological’ reason, especially as the ‘E’ on it, which symbolises ‘emptiness’, in reality, may indicate the starting point of a negative experience in the virtual world.

To the blogger, what is considered more important now is a new ideology, that of courage and resilience, which is believed to be more necessary (than languishing in the sorrowful memory of the past) in order to forge ahead, an ideology that is very similar to the ideology of “moving the country forward”, which is being constructed in the world of reality. This same ideology might have also influenced the representation in Plate 6, below, which is presented next in our discussion.

Plate 6: The Checklist



(Source: [http://photos.1.blogger.com/blogger/6306/3365/600/mail, jpg.](http://photos.1.blogger.com/blogger/6306/3365/600/mail.jpg))

In Plate 6, the geographical area (map) of Lebanon is presented, and attached to this map, is what the blogger refers to as Israeli checklist. On this list, some items are featured. These are; bridges, economy, power plants, airports, children, more children, schools and Hizbullah (Hezbollah). While all the items are marked by a tick (✓); only the item 'Hizbullah' remains unmarked. This is part of the metaphorical image intended to draw curiosity from the reader. Recall that in our discussion of ontological metaphors, page 206 above, we argued that visual metaphors are so powerful in that they have the ability to rouse readers to pathos because of the association of emotions, feelings and ideas to entities and substances of the visual presentation, in a rhetorical manner (form) designed to reflect the reality. In Plate 6, the reader is made to see (clearly) all the items

that were purportedly destroyed (by supposed Israeli bombs) in Lebanon. The image presented by this figure purports to represent an Israeli official, perhaps Israel's military officer, who has been designated to give report of the Israeli military onslaught in Lebanon, and the picture in Plate 6 purportedly represents his/her analysis of the report.

The marking (tick) of the items suggests 'a mission that has been accomplished' (that is, what has been destroyed) while the unmarked represents what is spared or has not been touched. Ironically, the unmarked (Hizbullah) is the target of attack. It is the perceived target (enemy) in the military onslaught. It is the cause of going to war and it is the 'bone' of contention. Yet, it is the only item spared in the list. This probably indicates, in reality, that Hezbollah may not have been touched, captured or destroyed. Perhaps, this is why it is unmarked by the reporting officer (as against others in the list).

The picture (as presented by the blogger) suggests that the Israeli mission (i.e., the military onslaught) in Lebanon is yet to fully realise its objective, as the picture in the plate shows that the target has not been hit. This is not only highlighting the failure of the 2006 Israeli mission in Lebanon, it is also drawing the attention of the whole world to the victims, the civilian casualties and the wanton destruction caused by the Israeli military, as a result of its incursion into Lebanon. This is perhaps why, in the real world, the UN's emergency relief coordinator, Jan Egeland, described Israeli's strategies (especially, the use of excessive force and the dropping of cluster bombs) in the Lebanon war as "completely immoral", (see: Held, Colbert "Lebanon Country", *Encarta (R)* 2009, DVD). Not only Jan Egeland, other international observers also condemned Israel for what they

term “disproportionate use of force by the Israeli Military (IDF)” whose attacks purportedly killed many civilians, mostly children.

According to Colbert, the international law permits the use of cluster bombs on military targets, but human rights organisations have argued against their use, saying it is difficult for military forces to prevent cluster bombs from falling on civilian areas. Cluster bombs, according to them, are tiny bomblets (about the size of a flashlight battery) which can detonate on contact. Because of their size (and because they resemble toys), children are often attracted to them. In 2006, Colbert further observes, the UN human rights investigators discovered one million unexploded cluster bombs allegedly dropped by the Israeli forces at about seven hundred and forty five different locations in Southern Lebanon, a discovery which must have been capitalised on by the blogger to add “more children” to the list of marked casualties (i.e., plus the already affected children that had been marked), alongside infrastructure like bridges, power plants, airports and schools.

While it may be implied that the picture intends to portray Israel negatively, which is the normal tactics of negative-other presentation in war or conflict situation, the picture may also aim at celebrating Hezbollah, more so that it is the only item that is unmarked in the check list, which may also mean the only ‘untouched’ in the war, despite being the object of attack. In reality, Hezbollah operates both as a political party and as an armed guerrilla group in Lebanon. The name ‘Hezbollah’ literally means “party of God”, according to the *Encarta online Dictionary*, 2009. The group is confined to Southern Lebanon where, as guerrilla fighters, it constantly poses threat to Northern Israel through its rocket attacks on Israeli cities such as Haifa, Akko and Nazareth. These

attacks, together with the capture of an Israel soldier (Gilad Shalif) in a border between Israel and Lebanon might have led to the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, which is the object of our investigation.

The ideology being constructed by the blogger is that Hezbollah is such an ‘invincible’ organisation, versed in military and political tactics. Colbert (2009) maintains that the group enjoys Iranian support and Syrian approval, while Israeli regards them as either religious extremists or terrorists. Part of the ideology in Lebanon, Colbert remarks, is that no matter how Israel tries, it will not be able to capture or wipe out Hezbollah (the presumed party of God) from Lebanon. This ideology is perhaps being represented in the figure displayed by the blogger on Plate 6.

It is also believed that because Hezbollah is trained in Iran and enjoys Iranian support, such group is likely to be as powerful as Iran, whose military might is now a source of concern to the Western World due to the information that the country possesses nuclear enrichment facilities that give them ability to produce nuclear bomb. This ideology (about Iran’s military capacity) might have informed the representation of Hezbollah (flag) in a similar fashion to the Iranian Flag, as witnessed in the figures presented as plates 7 and 8 below.

Plate 7: Brothers in Arms? (The Hezbollah flag)



Plate 8: Brothers in Arms? (The Iranian flag)



(Source:<http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/8162/1974/16001flag-of-Hezbollah.sv9.png>)

Plate 7 is the picture of Hezbollah flag, while the picture in Plate 8 is that of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Apart from the background colours (which is yellow in

the case of Hezbollah, and black in that of Iran), and the Arabic inscriptions which probably convey different messages, other elements in both pictures are quite similar. For instance in each plate, a hand is firmly holding a gun high. There is a picture of the globe (the world) in both figures, but while the hand holding the picture in Plate 7 lifts the gun high above the globe, the hand in Plate 8 lifts its own gun in the middle of the globe and allows the gun to run across the globe, even while the hand is still holding firmly to it. Another remarkable similarity between the pictures is that the hand in each case stems (or originates) from the base that has a laser-guided, surface-to-air missile launcher, which probably has, at its disposal, the (picture of) globe, perhaps to which the firmly held gun is being shown. Both pictures have on top of them, a headline in English, "Brothers in Arms?" Let us attempt a semiotic analysis of these pictures to determine what they all signify in reality.

Plates 7 and 8 are combined for analysis because of their similarities, even while holding their differences constant, which suggest that the two pictures are perhaps coded for the same purpose. The emphasis on gun and other weaponry such as the laser-guided missile launcher is to signify the military might of Iran as well as Hezbollah, its trained armed guerrilla, and to produce the message that their common interest lies (mainly) in fighting war, especially as weapons are used to symbolise or represent war. The gun is held across the world (the globe) in plate 8 to show that its tentacles spread across the world. By tentacles here we mean the Iranian power, which may also include its feared capability to produce nuclear weapon, a weapon of mass destruction. This, perhaps, suggests that either Iran or Hezbollah is capable of destroying the entire world (represented by the globe).

In real world, this may probably be the reason why Iran's Nuclear Enrichment programme is a source of concern to the entire international community, especially, the United Nations. In Plate 7, the gun is held over the globe, pointing to the sky. This suggests that the group (Hezbollah) being referred to literally as "the party of God" is portrayed as one that has the ability or supernatural power to dominate the whole world, as demonstrated by the wielding of weapon over the world. It may also suggest that Hezbollah derives its power from heaven (meaning God) who is believed to hold dominion over the world (part of religious ideology), as both gun and arm are raised above the globe in a decisively boisterous manner.

The ideology that Iran and its Hezbollah ally possess such military might is perhaps what the blogger attempts to depict in the two pictures (plates 7 and 8), and probably the intention behind this representation is to intimidate the opponent, who probably is aware of the ideology as projected through various propagandist strategies. The blogger, having been so ingrained in Iran-Hezbollah ideological belief in nuclear power, is thus selling the ideology through the pictures, as indicated by the placement of the similar flags together in such an intimidating fashion.

The manner of intimidation, together with the ideology that the duo possess the ability to produce the dreaded weapon of mass destruction (of which the entire world becomes jittery) informs the manner through which the United Nations is perceived in the next representation. That is, it probably shows the helplessness of the United Nations in checking the Iranian power (including that of its Hezbollah ally). This helplessness is depicted in the picture (below) of a tortoise struggling in its own shell to stand on its feet, as if to indicate that the UN is unable to stamp its authority on member-nations. Its

relevance to the current semiotic analysis of the Mideast crisis is undoubted, especially, as far as the UN role in the conflict is concerned.

Plate 9: UNable



(Source: <http://photos.1.blogger.com/blogger/8162/1974/1600/eUNable.jpg>)

The picture designated as Plate 9 is titled 'UNable'. The plate has the picture of a live tortoise which looks like a Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus Polyphemus*) because of its unwebbed, stumpy feet. But rather than being 'protected' by heavy shells (as typical of an ideal gopher tortoise), it is being protected by the officially designated sky-blue helmet of the United Nations (UN), which has replaced the heavy shells. The replacement probably makes the animal uncomfortable as it lies on its back and struggles for survival in its attempt to regain its normal or original posture.

Tortoise is a type of slow-moving land animal that has the body covered by a hard shell into which the legs, tail and head can be pulled for protection. In other words, tortoises are protected by heavy shells composed of an inner, bony layer and an outer layer made of horny plates. A tortoise walks slowly or may move at a speed of just 0.2km/h, that is when it moves at all, as it may remain motionless for hours (*Encarta online Dictionary*, 2009). Like all turtles, a tortoise has toothless jaws which are covered by horny ridges. These jaws are used to bite off sections of plants, its major food.

Presenting the United Nations in the image of a tortoise that is lying on its back and struggling laboriously (but fruitlessly) to correct this posture is an issue that calls for semiotic concern. As the title suggests; 'unable' could mean inability to get it right, which may be an indication that the tortoise is 'unable' to fix the problem after all. Looking at the role of the international community in reality, especially the UN, with regard to the 2006 Lebanon war, between Israel and Hezbollah, the blogger, Mertz, attempts to summarise his/her impression of the international body, as far as the war is concerned, in this picture.

The choice of a tortoise to depict the UN speaks volume of the blogger's attitude towards the international organisation. It may be assumed that the blogger initially conceived the UN as a very powerful organisation that can be relied on for possible protection, going by its sky-blue helmet, which is always present, especially in violence or an uprising that escalates beyond the control of the warring groups or their mediators. This ideology is reflected in the hope and belief associated with the UN's possible intervention through the protective helmet. It should be noted that the name UN

signifies the coming together of one hundred and ninety three powerful (sovereign) nations, including the five permanent members who are super powers of the world.

The ideology that the UN is a protector of human right is what is personified in the sky blue helmet of the UN, which the blogger strongly believes in. According to Peter Howard, in a contribution published by *Microsoft Encarta (online) Premium* (2009), the UN's mission is to maintain world peace, develop good relations between countries, promote cooperation in solving world's problems and encourage respect for human rights. The ideology that the UN has pledged to settle disputes peacefully might have earned the organisation, in reality, the respect it enjoys from the citizens of member countries. The blogger who posted the picture in Plate 9 is probably one of these citizens.

However, because of the freedom of the sign to align, through representation, with some analogous figures, the blogger relies on the opportunity offered by catachresis, a visual metaphor, to express disgust about the UN's role in the 2006 Lebanon crisis. In this figure, the UN is portrayed as a tortoise that lies on its back and is struggling to 'stand' on its feet, or retain its normal balance, even before any other thing, including performing its basic 'functions'. After all, no function can be expected from a tortoise that is, by nature, very slow to act and very sluggish to respond.

Apart from this visual metaphor depicting the sluggishness of the tortoise denotatively and by connotation, representing the UN's slowness to action, we can also see the metonymic representation of the tortoise toothless jaw in the signified, UN, even though the associate image of a toothless dog is the picture that readily comes to mind. When a dog is toothless, it can only bark but not bite. This simple analogy can be seen in the tortoise in Plate 6 whose precarious condition does not even allow it to open the

(toothless) jaw, as it is still battling to save its own life, which is in topsy-turvy, with the hope that if its normal posture can be regained, that would save it, at least, from the death knell that is about sounding on its life.

In real world, the UN's influence in world affairs, Peter Howard observes, has fluctuated over the years and the organisation still faces constant challenges because of its little independent authority over member nations that are somehow reluctant to defer their own authority or wish away their sovereignty by following the dictates of the UN. These are challenges that the UN has to grapple with, which perhaps has made it toothless, like the tortoise in this figure. It is also interesting to see that, just like the overturned tortoise, the UN is still struggling inside its 'protective' helmet, and the supposedly protective helmet has ironically been turned to the snare that is now trapping its own body. For instance, Chapter 7 of the UN Charter offers authorised members power to take military action in response to international breach of peace. This is an envisioned tooth in the UN charter, and it has been used to intervene in many international crises such as the 1950 Korean War, 1990 Iraq Gulf War, the 2006 Lebanon War, the 2011 Uprising in Libya and so on.

However, because of the problem of getting all five of the veto-wielding Super Powers to agree to military action, enforcement of the UN peace operations has either been hampered or slowed down considerably. This situation is personified in the visual metaphor projected by the (toothless) image of the slow and embattled tortoise in plate 6. Hence, the blogger might have observed that, in reality, the UN is very slow to action for the reason given above, especially in what ordinarily may be regarded as emergency or humanitarian crisis caused by war or disaster. Perhaps, that is why the blogger is

embittered about the UN's slow response to the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War by negatively portraying the UN in the picture on plate 9.

Apart from accusation and counter accusation, which is a normal human phenomenon in war situation, bloggers also demonstrate interest in instigating indictment of the opponent (out-group) through representation. For instance, in the picture contained in Plate 10 (below), Israel is being accused of violating international laws concerning the use of deadly weapons on civilian areas. The picture, titled 'deadly weapons' shows the cluster bomb strikes purportedly found in Southern Lebanon (the base of Hezbollah) as of August 20, 2006, that is, immediately after the war. These cluster bombs are shown to have covered every part of Southern Lebanon, hence, we consider the picture as being of semiotic significance, as its analysis may bring to the fore the purpose of its deployment.

Plate 10: The Killing goes on



The picture in Plate 10 depicts a map that shows the areas where cluster bomb strikes are found in Southern Lebanon. The purpose of the picture, according to the blogger, is to show why “Israel is being investigated by the US State Department” for possible violation of international law, especially the Geneva Convention on the use of cluster bomb. A close look at the map shows that it is almost a complete map of Lebanon, showing most of the Lebanese cities, including Beirut, the capital city. The source of the map is attributed to *New York Times*, perhaps, to lend credence to its authenticity and through the red sign that indicates the bomb, the reader is made to see that the bomb covers the entire landscape of Southern Lebanon, and beyond. The map is pasted at the top page of the article titled: “The killing goes on” by Mrtez, while the picture itself is titled: “A map of the locations where cluster bombs have been found in Southern Lebanon”.

As observed in the picture, the presence of the cluster bombs is felt in nearly all the locations on the map, and as argued by the blogger in the article that subsequently follows the map, these bombs were said to have been responsible for heavy civilian casualties in the Israeli-Hezbollah war. The intention behind the picture is probably to evoke pathos in the reader who may likely consider the map an important evidence to support the claim of human right violation and the allegation of war crime.

As can be observed from the picture, the map is on top of a less visible Israeli map, but the name of ‘Israel’ boldly appears below the map as if to reveal it as the one behind the ‘killing that goes on’. Perhaps, this is why the name (Israel) is made to appear in bold prints and upper case, standing alone with no cluster bomb around its territory. It is therefore suggestive that the essence of fielding ‘Israel’ below the map is to show the

culprit, the perpetrator or the enemy behind the cluster bombs found throughout the locations on the map. It may also be a direct report of the act of using cluster bombs and detonating them (on civilians) in opponent's territory, even while directing the attention of the reader to the culprit's territory, which is free of such bombs.

The reader is also pathetically made to see why it is difficult to trek in any area of the Southern Lebanon, as most of the area is covered with cluster bombs, with heavy concentration of the bombs in big cities, which means that both humans and cluster bombs are dangerously clustered in the same cities (i.e., put together in numbers), especially in areas that are not close to Israel's territory. Perhaps, this is why the blogger presents this map as the reason why the reader may need to agree that the headline: "The killing goes on" subtly fits the description, as it is evident that the blogger implies that more casualties are still expected, even after the war, especially as yet-to-detonate cluster bombs would eventually detonate, may be, in the hands of children who may perceive them as toys when picked up in the course of playing around.

A further observation of the map in plate 10 indicates that the area designated as border between Israel and Lebanon is completely free of such cluster bombs, as evident in Marwaheen, a Lebanon town close to the border. We believe this is tactical, for two reasons. First, it could be a strategy to keep the reader informed about this deliberate act on the part of Israel. That is, Israel is perhaps aware of the danger inherent in cluster bombs, particularly the yet-to-be-detonated ones, and is therefore determined to get the danger far off its own territory, such that its (i.e. Israeli) children would not be in contact with the deadly bombs, not to talk of playing with them.

This is a rhetorical attempt by the blogger to present Israel as selfish, self-centred and inconsiderate, a ‘normal’ feature of negative other-presentation in conflict situation. Secondly, it could be an attempt to indirectly report Israel to the international community which is likely to consider the dropping of cluster bombs on civilian areas as a violation of the international law governing the conduct of war. The right activists are likely to see this as abuse of human rights, which is equally a war crime. It could also be another attempt at rhetoric, as the reader is likely to align with the position being presented, except he reads a counter story, perhaps a justifiable explanation for such act, may be from the side of the accused, that is, Israeli.

Plate 11 is probably an attempt at such a counter story. It is a picture presented by a blogger who is likely to be from the Israeli side of the conflict, as it seems a direct response to similar accusation by the blogger in plate 11. A close study of the picture in Plate 11 (below) suggests what looks like a trading of pictures between plates 10 and 11.

Plate 11: Hezbollah Rocket Ranges



The picture in plate 11 is titled: 'Hezbollah Rocket Ranges'. It depicts an attempt by the blogger to show, in the map of Israel, the areas hit or likely to be hit by Hezbollah rockets. The linguistic explanation offered to illustrate the picture reveals that Hezbollah (probably) possesses a number of Fajr-3 (a short range rocket that has the capacity to cover 45.06 km); Fajr-5 (a medium range rocket that can cover up to 72.42 km) and; zelzal-2 (a long range rocket that has the capacity to travel as far as 209.21 km). All these weapons, according to the blogger, were acquired from Iran (a Hezbollah ally) and concealed in the Beka'a valley in Southern Lebanon. The two cities starred on the map, Beirut and Damascus, are regarded as the launch-sites of the rockets. Beirut is in Lebanon while Damascus is in Syria, but, as argued by the blogger, all the rockets identified on the map have the capacity to cover the Israeli territory and cause havoc, as witnessed by the circles. The circles indicate the ranges of the Hezbollah rockets and these ranges span the entire Israeli geographical territory.

The picture seems like a direct response to the picture in plate 10, as it offers to the reader, the areas of Israel that are vulnerable to rocket attacks by Hezbollah. The blogger, through linguistic illustrations below the map, attributed "the rockets that impacted" Haifa (an Israeli city) on July 13 (2006), to Hezbollah's long range rocket assets. The blogger, through the map, is able to indicate that this rocket-launch in Haifa is just a tip of the ice-berg, as only a short range rocket is involved (which is Fajr-3) This rocket merely has the capacity to cover just 45.06 km, within which Haifa is affected. The circular illustrations on the map suggest that Hezbollah has other rockets that have the capacity for longer ranges, as zelzal-2, for instance, has the capacity to cover up to

209.21 km within which other Israeli prominent cities such as Tel Aviv-Yafo and Jerusalem, even Gaza strip, could be hit by this long range rocket.

The deployment of this map is quite tactical, for many reasons. One, it could be a propagandist attempt to warn Israel not to underrate the capabilities of Hezbollah, a party to the Israeli-Hezbollah war, and to remind Israel that Haifa may not be the only target by Hezbollah. Secondly, it could be a rhetorical play to invite the attention of the reader, as well as the international community to where Hezbollah rocket launch on Israel usually comes from. Perhaps, that is why the two cities are starred on the map as indicator of the launch sites.

This strategy also has the ability to inform the reader about those that are strongly behind Hezbollah (that is, Hezbollah allies) in this war. The map reveals the capital city of Lebanon (Beirut) and the capital city of Syria (Damascus). These are metonymic representations for the governments in these two countries, as metonymy can be applied to an object that is visibly present but which represents another object or subject to which it is related (see; Hayward, 1996:217). In other words, this seems an indictment of the authorities in Beirut and Damascus for providing havens for Hezbollah to launch rocket attacks on Israel.

Again, the picture on plate 11, rhetorically invites the sympathy of the reader as the reader is likely to see that all areas of Israel are vulnerable to attacks from the long-range rockets of Hezbollah. This looks like a direct response to the earlier accusation in plate 10, that the Israeli cluster bombs are dropped in almost all civilian areas in Lebanon. The picture seems to be informing the reader that all the territory of Israel, including civilian and non-civilian areas, all the cities, all the resources, all the buildings

and valuable assets of Israel are vulnerable to attacks by Hezbollah's long-range rocket, zelzal-2, as indicated by the largest circle, which signifies the longest range (i.e., the distance capacity of the rocket) on the map.

So far, we have been explaining the semiotic power of pictures. Perhaps, this is why Chandler (2009) believes pictures speak more than what words can express. Semiotics is however not restricted to pictures alone. Other devices such as photograph, cartoons, emoticons and so on, are also significant for semiotic analysis. The next section will focus on some cartoons featured in the Mideast blog post in relation to the Israeli-Hezbollah war. Plate 12 (below) is a cartoon of the failed attempt (by Israel) to suppress Hezbollah in the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War.

Plate 12: Smell good



Plate 12 depicts the official (national) symbol of Lebanon. It resembles the picture of an air freshener, which is usually hung in a car to make the interior smell pleasantly. In this plate, it is referred to as a cedar scent. It has the cartoonish head of the Hezbollah leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, sticking out from behind it, and a rope (tying up and, perhaps, linking two explosives) runs across the cedar scent (just like the rope used in hanging the scent to a car). There is an Arabic inscription at the bottom of the cedar scent which, according to the author, means: "Let it to smell good" (sic).

The identification and subsequent analysis of the visual content in the plate may compel the need to draw from iconography, the branch of art history that studies the identification, description and interpretation of the content of images. This is necessary, because of the image of Hassan Nasrallah that sticks out of the cedar scent. Hassan Nasrallah is a political icon of Hezbollah, a militant and political group in Lebanon, and he has since systematically accomplished a semantic transformation that seems absolutely magical, as he, like an idol, is deified, especially, in Southern Lebanon (the Hezbollah base), probably for his ability to repel attacks by Israel and at times, due to his militant exploits (which Israel calls terrorism), one of which led to Israeli troop withdrawing from Lebanon in 2002 (Colbert, 2009).

The name, Nasrallah, is synonymous with Hezbollah throughout the region. There is no doubt that iconographic reference occupies a pivotal point in the relationship between language and ideology. For instance, iconographic frames of reference are usually exploited as basic building blocks in constructing ideologies. In fact, Driven (2001) argues that in some human acts, such as those of cruelty and systematic programs

of (in)human oppression, iconographic frames are basic building blocks in constructing powerful ideologies that have some terrible (in)human applications.

In the plate, the cedar scent, according to the blogger, is an airdrop by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF). The image presented by the cartoonish head is that of someone entangled in a fix, like being suffocated, and he (Nasrallah) is sticking out his head to receive fresh air and the 'beautiful' fragrance of the cedar scent offered by Israel. That the cedar scent is an airdrop of IDF is suggestive that Israel has a 'good' intention after all. It signifies that despite the war, IDF still has some humanitarian instinct/gesture in it that could offer solace to a 'captured' enemy. In other words, the relegation of Nasrallah to the background in the symbolic picture is synonymous with an envisaged 'defeat' of Hezbollah by the IDF, going by the ideology in Israel with regard to the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war.

The ideology, in reality, suggests that the Hezbollah leader (Nasrallah) can be 'held' in captivity, through which Israel would be providing an olive branch that Hezbollah (Nasrallah) would be 'allowed' to see, even in the so-called captivity. The idea of captivity is shown in the image of explosives at both ends of the cedar scent (which is presented in the form of a war plane) that completely overwhelms the body of Nasrallah, but who manages to stick out his head, probably, to escape suffocation, or perhaps the head is tactically pulled out in order to read the Arabic inscription beneath the scent. A careful look at this ideology suggests a form of inhibition on the part of Hezbollah (personified in Nasrallah) and a form of victory for the IDF.

This victory is however in sharp contrast with the earlier one presented as Plate 6 in this analysis, where Israeli check list marks all the targets that have been

‘destroyed’ by the IDF, but which has Hezbollah unmarked, to indicate that it has not been able to hit it as a target. If it is the claim by Hezbollah that the Israeli offensive in Lebanon has not been able to affect the group and that the 2006 war had ‘actually’ been won by Hezbollah, then, it leaves the reader with the question of who actually won the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. This is the question the cartoonist in Plate 13 (below) attempts to answer.

Plate 13: Who won?



Plate 13 is a cartoon posted by a blogger, RS, on Wednesday August 23, 2006 (9.58pm). The blogger attributes the source of the cartoon to the Salt Lake Tribune, 2006. The plate displays the caricatured forms of all the key players in the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War, including their allies. The leaders of the countries that are ideologically connected with the war are caricatured alongside Hezbollah and Israeli leaders, who are the major actors in the dispute. The name of each country is boldly written below its caricatured leader, as part of the perpetual sliding of the signified under the signifier. All the six leaders that are caricatured raise their hands up in celebration of victory, while two people (each, perhaps, depicting the ordinary citizen of each side of the conflict) are seen in the cartoon as exchanging comments over the shout of victory, “we won”, from the caricatured leaders.

The cartoon reveals those who were actively participating in the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war in reality. Apart from the two key players, Israel and Hezbollah, other groups such as Iran, USA, Syria and probably the United Kingdom (represented as W, an abbreviation which literally depicts: ‘West’) are also portrayed as active players in the war. The cartoon had been able to list the key players in descending order of magnitude, based on their level of involvement in the war.

Hezbollah is perhaps presented first because the group may be seen to have set the stage for the conflict through the kidnapping and subsequent abduction of two Israeli soldiers during clashes across the border in Southern Lebanon on July 12, 2006 (see *The Guardian* Thursday, July 13, 2006 P. 11). This act, according to the publication, could be said to have instigated the war, as Israeli military (IDF) responded with attacks on

Lebanon targets, especially the stronghold of Hezbollah militants. Iran is presented next in the cartoon due to the country's military affiliation with Hezbollah (see the established connection between the two groups in page 213-214 of this study) In fact, the ideological standpoint of Israel and, perhaps, its allies is that, Hezbollah militants are not only trained by Iran, the group also enjoys financial, military and ideological support from Iran.

The next on the list is the United States, represented in the cartoon by its then Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, whose name is distorted and represented as coNDI, as part of the strategy of caricature to hide identities, perhaps, for security reason. The US is a notable ally of Israel as, according to Ogbeidi (2005:90), the country played a major role in the creation of the Jewish State of Israel, and as such has always shown support towards its course. The next group is Syria, another backer of Hezbollah. In fact, Israel has always accused Syria of allowing Hezbollah to use Damascus (the Syrian capital) as a base for launching rocket attacks on its cities. The last actor represented in the cartoon is the UK. As usual, the name is distorted by the ambiguity posed by the letter 'W' (presented in the cartoon as the signified). It is probably a reference to the West, as the letter, 'W' usually stands as a written abbreviation for the Western part of the world (Europe), popularly referred to as the West. The UK is a suspected ally of the Jewish State.

It can be observed that the visual elements of the cartoon in plate 10 have clearly provided the reader with information about the key actors in the Israeli-Hezbollah war. That all the key players claim victory in the war through their linguistic utterance, "we won", seems to have embarrassed the ordinary citizens in both sides of the conflict who temporarily suspend their hostility and bring heads together (in the cartoon) to

‘question’ the authenticity of each claim (of victory). When the citizen on the side of Hezbollah could not notice any change, perhaps in the life of an ordinary Lebanon citizen before and after the war, he/she was forced to request answer from another (ordinary) citizen on the other side of the conflict (Israel) who probably gives a daft response; “everybody’s a winner” to show his/her own disgust and confusion about the proliferation of victory claims by all the players in a game that requires a single winner. Hence, the so-called political leaders are ridiculed by the cartoonist, probably for some reasons. The first reason is that the leaders lack foresight, as in the first instance, they should not have gone into a war in which there is no loser. A war in which everybody is a winner is as good as no war, hence, by foolishly engaging in such a war speaks volume of lack of seriousness on the part of the political elite on both sides of the conflict.

Secondly, the leaders are not diplomatic enough to conceal the shame brought about by the inability of the war to produce a single verifiable winner; instead they engage the usual manipulation of the citizenry on both sides of the conflict. The manipulation of the citizenry is exposed by this cartoon as the two represented citizens cannot find sincerity in claims and counter claims of victory by the so-called leaders, especially, as nothing changes in reality, as far as the Mideast is concerned, even after the war, and lastly, the non-commitment to the resolution of the long-standing conflict between Israel and Arab is further ridiculed, as the reader (through the exposure of the great powers behind the two warring sides) becomes ‘wiser’ about the real purpose of the war and the masked insincerity in the much vaunted peace talks on Mideast crises.

The greatest rhetorical strategy deployed by the cartoonist to execute this expository project is irony, a rhetorical figure that relies on self-deceit, lies and

camouflage to laugh at the foolishness of the so-called elite. This is made manifest in the self-imbued 'claims' of victory by the political leaders of the gladiating countries and groups when, in actual fact, they are losers. Indeed, there is no war fought in reality without a loss, one way or the other, by actors in whichever side of the conflict. The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war is no exception in this regard. Hezbollah suffered casualties in terms of loss of men and material, the same loss also applies to Israel.

The United States and other countries in the West suffer impaired images and strain relationship between them and the Arab world for their partisanship, while the credibility and reputation of Iran and Syria were either lost or dented in their being branded as 'axils of evil', perhaps, because of their support to Hezbollah, a group that may have been perceived as either terrorist or guerrilla by the international community. This therefore suggests that rather than everybody being a winner as being claimed in the cartoon, everybody who participated either directly or indirectly in the war is, in fact, a loser in the real sense of it. It is therefore ridiculous and funny, as portrayed in the cartoon, that all the losers ironically lay claim to victory, even while it is obvious that all of them are losers, as they all suffer certain loss one way or the other.

We have seen, through this cartoon, how information, truth, sincerity of ideas and purpose and facts can be encoded in a single semiotic device. This strategy has been argued in all the pictures and cartoons so far analysed in this chapter, but before we conclude the analysis, it is necessary to examine photograph, which is another semiotic device that is also significant in the coding of information, ideas and knowledge about the position, interest and values of the discourse producer, especially with regard to blog postings on the 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli war. The next section will see us examine

photographs as shot and sent to the Mideast blog posts on the 2006 Lebanon war, which is our pivot in this study.

Plate 14: War Crimes



(Source: Amnesty % Beirut. Jpg)

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The above picture, which we have labelled Plate 14 for easy reference, is the photograph posted atop the article titled: “War crimes” by Mrtez, perhaps to illustrate his claim that Israel, deliberately targeted civilians and the country’s (Lebanon) infrastructure as part of its military strategy. The photograph reveals some residential buildings that are in ruins, perhaps they have been bombed, and the personal cars that have been damaged in the process.

According to Chandler (2009), photographic image is an index of the effect of light on photographic emulsion and this has indexical signification as it normally resembles what they depict. In other words, an index is a mode in which the signifier is not arbitrary but is directly connected in some way. Plate 14 represents the photograph of a bombed residential apartment and the aftermath of the bombing presents us with the ruins left off by collapsed buildings and destroyed private cars. The buildings photographed in the plate actually resemble inhabited residential flats because of the clothes hung on lines as typical of a residential apartment. The effect of this is probably to lend credence to the claim (of war crime) to the international community, particularly the Amnesty International, which forbids the targeting of civilian areas during conflict/war situation. The blogger perhaps wants Israel to be held accountable for this.

This rhetorical strategy can be said to be very effective as, in the real world, the Amnesty International (perhaps after looking at the photograph) condemns the Israeli act, that is, Israeli attacks on civilian infrastructure, which it describes as aggression in its report, entitled: “Lebanon: Deliberate destruction or collateral damage?” (Colbert, 2009). Photographic image has been quite useful in winning propagandist war, and both parties in dispute have been employing it to justify claims and counter claims. Photographs show

‘genuine relation’ between the sign and the object, a relationship that may not absolutely depend on the interpreting mind, as the object is necessarily existent (Pierce 1931:58). This feature of photograph distinguishes it as an indexical sign, that is, a photograph, in certain respects, is like the object it denotes through the physical connection it has with the object. For this reason, it is pointless to examine catalogues of photographs in this analysis as they all have the same thing in common, which, as far as the 2006 Lebanon war is concerned, is used to support claim and counter claims by respective bloggers.

5.3 Summary

In this chapter, two relevant modes of signifiers have been examined through their (representing) semiotic signs (devices). These are; the iconic and the indexical signifiers. Using pictures and cartoons taken from the Mideast blog posts, we argued that the iconic signifier is a mode in which the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified, as exemplified by the pictures and cartoons in plates 1 to 10. For instance, we argued that a picture can be compared to a sign vehicle, since it is the form that the sign takes (i.e., the signifier), while what the sign represents (signifies) in reality is the Referent. The sense made of each sign in this analysis is achieved through the interpreting mind, which is usually referred to as intuition.

Intuition, however, plays little significance in the case of indexical signs as this is a mode in which the signifier is not arbitrary but is directly connected, either physically or causally, to the signified. The physical connection is demonstrated by the photograph in plate 14, which is a snapshot of a physical event (bombing). This photograph is representative of other indexical signs such as film, video or television shot

or an audio-recorded voice that have been delimited in this study, because of their inaccessibility.

However, we wish to stress that while indexical signs direct the attention to their objects by blind compulsion, as instanced by the photograph deployed in this analysis, we may not rule out cases of manipulation as observed by Chandler (2009), in this age of modern technology where digital imaging techniques are increasingly eroding the indexicality of photographic images, more so that the indexicality depends largely on the medium (which is responsible for interpreting them as “objective record of reality”) and the perspective and ideological position of the photographer or film editor/producer. These variables determine what to film or snap and how to film or snap it.

So far, all the three modes of signifiers have been examined in this study. Chapter four, for instance, discusses the symbolic mode in which the signifier(s) have no real resemblance to the signified but in a relationship that is simply arbitrary or purely conventional. This arbitrary relationship has provided us in this study, the leeway to arrive at certain conclusions about the rhetorical use of language in the Mideast blog posts. Chapter five discusses some semiotic tools such as pictures, cartoons and photographs that are usually deployed in iconic and indexical representations.

However, the analyses in this chapter rely very much on the ambiguity usually created by image representations and based on this ambiguity of images, the study does not rule out other possible interpretations of the plates that have been analysed in this chapter. In the next chapter, we shall attempt an analysis of discourse strategies rhetorically deployed in the Mideast blog posts over the 2006 Israeli- Hezbollah war.

CHAPTER SIX

Discourse strategies in Mideast blog posts

6.1 Introduction

In the theoretical background (section 2.3), we proposed that discourse connects with ideology at various levels of text and talk. To this end, this chapter explores the discourse strategies deployed in the structures of Mideast blog postings, taking into consideration the ideological concerns that, perhaps, motivate the choice of a particular discourse feature, out of a wide range of structural possibilities offered by discourse, language or other forms of representation. This exploration touches key areas of discourse structures such as the surface structure, the schematic structure and the dialogic structure. We begin with the surface structure.

6.2 Surface structure of Mideast blog posts

Recall that in the theoretical framework (section 2.8), we made efforts to establish the link between the surface structure of discourse and the ideological concerns of the discourse producer. The discussion, in this regard, led to the perception of surface structure, through the insight offered by Van Dijk (1995a:23), as the variable forms of expression at the level of phonological/graphological ‘realisation’ of (ideological) standpoint or other underlying meanings of a discourse. In other words, surface structure of a discourse is described as the conventional manifestation of ‘hidden’ meanings of the discourse.

In this section, our focus is on the graphological devices in the surface structures of the Mideast blog postings. We shall examine the ‘marked’ features of the graphological elements in the surface structure, especially, if such marked features are out of the ordinary or violate communicative principles. In furtherance of this, we consider it necessary to examine the ideological import of such marked features, especially in relation to the 2006 Israeli – Hezbollah war, which is the main concern in this study. The investigation covers significant graphological elements such as the blog format, titles (or headlines), capitalisation, repetition, the deployment of inverted commas and/or quotation marks as well as any other prominent elements of the surface structure that indicate ideological posture in the discourse. Let us begin with the examination of the blog format of the Mideast blog posts

6.2.1 ‘Format’ of the Mideast blog posts

By ‘format’ we mean the way postings are organised or arranged before they are published in the weblog. The investigation of the blog format in the Mideast blog posts may therefore take us to phenomena such as the blog layout, blog rolls and the story telling strategies. This investigation is predicated on the assumption that these phenomena express underlying (hidden) meanings other than those purportedly displayed on the surface structures. Let us, for instance, take a look at the blog layout in the Mideast blog posts.

6.2.1.1 Blog layout in Mideast (blog) posts

We may observe, at a glance, that nearly all the postings in Mideast Weblog follow the normal (blog) pattern of being arranged in reverse chronological order.

However, a closer look at the layout of some postings indicates that some are patterned in a way that hides ideological posture, especially going by the graphological design. For instance, the layout is such that articles are flanked left and right by hypertext transfer protocol (http). This is a set of standards that control how computer documents that are written in hypertext mark-up language (HTML) connect to each other. A page from our earlier examples of blog postings on page 122 (Text 1) may be used to illustrate the ideological significance of this ‘formal’ pattern (layout) of blog in the Mideast blog posts.

A typical page in Mideast blog post

The image shows a screenshot of the Middle East Report website. The page features a dark sidebar on the left with navigation links such as 'Press Room', 'Background', 'About Us', 'Subscribe', 'Back Issues', 'Internships', 'Giving', and 'Search'. The main content area is titled 'Middle East Report' and displays an article titled 'In Annapolis, Conflict by Other Means' by Robert Blecher and Mouin Rabbani, dated November 26, 2007. The article text discusses the situation in Nablus and the upcoming meeting in Annapolis. A sidebar on the right contains a search bar, a 'DONATE' button, and a 'Middle East Online Subject Index' with a list of topics including Afghanistan, Algeria, Arab Spring, Egypt, and Israel. A large yellow watermark 'IBADAN' is overlaid diagonally across the page.

The figure above is the first page in the blog post of Blecher and Rabbani, who are both described (on the page), as editors of the post: *Middle East Report Online*. At the top of the page is a direct pointer to the name of the blog post (Middle East Rep), written first in large, bold characters, all in initial cap, displayed in 18” font, followed by repetitions of this same name in smaller or reduced font (16”) which perhaps, still make the name prominent on the page. All these graphological tactics are displayed on the page before the pasting of the real article which, going by the chronological order, is the latest entry in the series of postings in the blog post. The title (headline) of the article appears first, but rather than the real story following the title, there is an intrusion of the editors’ names (which is to probably indicate the authors of the article) and the posting date. After the date, there is (reader’s) guidance note (which serves to provide additional information on the authors).

When the story finally begins, just at the reading of the first line, the reader is interrupted again by a block (of another guidance note), which is squared up on a black background, perhaps, to underscore the importance of such notes and far more importantly, to arrest the attention of the reader. The story itself is flanked at the left by a hyperlink, (which is meant to be another guidance note), through the title, ‘MRP’, which could be taken to be an abbreviation for ‘Mideast Report’ (part of the name of the blog post) or its logo, if not for the distorted ‘R’ in the figure that renders the inscription unreadable. This hyperlink provides information (to the reader) on routes (links) to access or navigate the Press Room, background, the post, subscription, internship, search and ads, before it is wrapped up by another link to special publications on Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict. All these (messages) are encoded on black

background, perhaps, to invite the curiosity of the reader. The hyperlink is equally at play on the right side of the page where it features a search engine designed to give the reader access or route to other online journals on Middle East conflicts and other issues relating to the Middle East region generally. Having observed the linguistic information contained in the page and the graphological devices deployed to convey the information, we may, at this juncture, examine the ideological posture (or motive) behind such arrangement (lay out). The analysis of the figure (above) can thus be the focus of the next section.

6.2.2 Graphological structure of Blecher and Rabbani's blog lay out

A careful study of linguistic information on the first page of Blecher and Rabbani's blog post shows that series of graphological devices are deployed through the techniques of publication. These devices include capitalisation, colour background, font, shape, parenthesis and so on. The deployment of these graphological devices must have enabled the discourse producers to separate the linguistic information contained in the page into; important items, more important items and less important items.

Let us take a look at the graphological distribution of linguistic information on the page. This will enable us to identify items or linguistic information considered higher than the other(s) in this rank-scale of importance. The table (below) illustrates the distribution of linguistic information in the layout/graphic structure of Blecher and Rabbani's webpage. Both bloggers are based in the Middle East region (Jerusalem and Amman) and the choice of their blog post is simply arbitrary.

Table 11 Graphological distribution of linguistic information in Blecher and Rabbani’s web-page

FONT			PARENTHESIS	SHAPE		CAPITALISATION		COLOUR BACKGROUND		
normal	extra large	large	bracket	square	rect-angle	full cap	initial cap	black	white	plain
1	2	20	3	1	7	6	24	5	3	1

From the Table 11 above, we can observe that the distribution of linguistic information in the lay-out of Blecher and Rabbani’s web page is spread across five different graphological devices; font, parenthesis, shape, capitalisation and colour background. Each of these parameters would be analysed and discussed in turns. Let us begin with ‘font’.

6.2.2.1 Font

The table above reveals that the web page contains the deployment of normal (unmotivated) and peculiar (motivated) use of font. Font is a set of letters of a particular size and style that is used in publication. The size of a standard font is usually 12’, especially when using the Times Roman style. This is adopted by the authors in publishing the body of the news story. However, other linguistic information (for the reader) is put in either a very large font (of about 20” size), while some other linguistic information is published in a large, but reduced, font (of about 16” size). These motivated sets of letters could have been purposefully deployed.

Two linguistic items are in the category of extra large. These items include the name of the blog post (*Middle East Rep*), which comes first on the page, perhaps, being the name of the post, and MRP, which perhaps represents the logo of the blog post. It is assumed that the authors must have made use of extra-large font for the two items in order to attract the attention of the reader to the names and logo of the blog post that ‘freely’ offers the posting for reader’s consumption. It could also be a way of advertising the blog post, as the name is hung over the page at the centre, while the logo’s appearance is restricted to the top-left corner, perhaps, heading the guidance notes in that angle.

Other linguistic pieces of information that are deployed in large font (16” size) include the Web page address, repetitions of the name of the blog post, the title of the new story, the names of the author, the date of publication and all the hyperlinks in both left and right of the page. This is perhaps done with a view to underscoring the relative importance of these pieces of information to the reader by drawing attention to them. Let us consider another attention-grabbing graphological device, parenthesis.

6.2.2.2 Parenthesis

Three instances of the use of parenthesis are noticed in the page, and in all these cases, the discourse producers have not deviated from the normal use of parenthesis to provide additional information to the reader, perhaps, for more explanation on the information earlier supplied. What is perhaps ideologically significant is the positioning of these parentheses. The first occurrence is just at the top of the news story, making it unavoidable for the reader. The second and the third occurrences are both enclosed in the information box (i.e., the squared guidance notes) beside the first line of the news story.

If we are to separate the code from the message, it means that before reading commences, the reader must have internalised the enclosed information (in the parenthesis) about the identity of the two authors of the news story, who also double as the discourse producer and the blog owners. Also, just as the reader sets to read the news story, he/she is also punctuated by the highlighted information in the squared box containing the reader's guidance notes that harbour the two parentheses. The first parenthesis captures the place and date of an advertised journal (of the International Crisis Group), while the second provides the period of publication (Spring, 2006) for another advertised journal, published by the discourse producers/ authors. The squared box housing the guidance notes is one of the series of graphological devices through the use of shape. This device is next in the line of discussion.

6.2.2.3 Shape

Shapes are part of textual codes that are representational. Based on the fact that nearly all codes can be seen as ideological, it may be argued that the discourse producers decide on this graphological tactic for the purpose of 'housing' important linguistic information meant for the reader's digestion. This graphological device becomes very necessary, especially to the discourse producer, in order to prevent the reader from taking the messages inside the shapes as mere decorative pieces of language. There are two types of shapes deployed in this page, the square and the rectangle.

The rectangular shape can be regarded as dominant, as it permeates the entire structure. It is placed at the left side of the page to accommodate the logo of the blog post, the web address, the hyperlink to *Press Room*, *Background*, *About Us* (i.e. the

authors) *about subscription, back issues, internships Giving and Search*. The advertisement calling on readers to subscribe online to *Middle East Report* is also on the hyperlink, with a small rectangular shape inset. The inset has the inscription ‘subscribe’ boldly written on it, with an underlined initial cap. The imperative ‘subscribe’ is subsequently paraphrased as a directive in the linguistic information below it as: “*order a subscription and back issues to the award – winning magazine Middle East Report*”. This paraphrase is followed shortly by another command: ‘click for the order page’. Lastly, on this side of the page is linguistic information, on special publications of the post, listing two of these special publications as: *Primer on Palestine; Israeli and the Arab-Israeli conflict*.

The rectangular shape also features on the right side of the page and, just like it functions on the left side, it also houses other linguistic information which includes a call on the reader to ‘donate, search (featuring as inset) and hyperlink to *Middle East Report online* subscription for some itemised publications, numbering sixteen. It should also be noted that the rectangular shape can be noticed at the top of the page, just below the first item, but it is just deployed with a short breadth (i.e., short enough to accommodate inscriptions) and a very long length that cuts across the page, linking the rectangles on both sides of the page.

The second shape, which is in a square form, is deployed to house the guidance notes to other publications of the *International Crisis Group*, that is, the employer of the discourse producers, on the suggestion that the publications are related to the issues discussed in the news story that the reader is about to read. Before discussing the ideological relevance of these deployments, let us consider the remaining graphological

devices identified in the table. The next graphological device is capitalisation and it is examined in the section below.

6.2.2.4 Capitalisation

There are two forms of capitalisation on this web page. The first involves linguistic items whose letters appear in capital forms (upper case), while in the second category are those linguistic items (words) in which only the first letters of the items are in upper case. The first category is labelled as ‘full cap’, and five items feature in this category. They include the three versions of the repeated names of the blog post, deployed just below the original name (at the top of the page) and ‘SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS’ on the left side’ and ‘DONATE’, a rectangular inset atop the right side of the page.

Twenty four linguistic items fall within the second category that has its featured items as capital (upper case), only by the first letters. The linguistic item ‘subscribe’, with its noun variant ‘subscription’ and its paraphrase ‘order...’ or ‘click for the order...’, is a regular item in this regard. It is also the item that has the highest frequency of occurrence as it appears six times on the left side of the page and one time at the right side, making a total of seven appearances on the page. This prominence makes it a suspicious item on the page. But before we go into the details of its appearances, let us briefly examine the last graphological device in the page, which is colour background. The next section takes care of this.

6.2.2.5 Colour background

The layout of the web page under investigation is such that permits the colouring of the shapes earlier identified. Apart from the news story that is published on a normal

(plain) colour, all other items that appear beside, atop, or within the news story are published with a black background. From the table (page 243) above, five items identified as co-texts in the page are in this category. Each of them is enclosed within one shape or the other, which has darkened (black) colour as its background. Only three items are separated from this arrangement and these are the inset in both left and right of the page, one of which bears the inscription ‘subscribe’, at the left side of the page, ensuring that the first letter of the inscription is not only in the upper case, but also underlined, perhaps to underscore the importance of the item. Having identified the graphological devices presented in the table, we may at this juncture, discuss their relevance to ideological standpoint in the post. The next section will focus on this and other hidden meanings that can be advanced for the deployment of graphological devices in the page.

6.3 Layout in Mideast blog posts

As pointed out earlier in this chapter (section 6.2), before considering the surface structures of discourse as ideologically relevant, such surface structures must be ‘marked’. That is, they must be out of the ordinary and violate communicative rules or principles. Just as van Dijk (1995a:23) observes, ideological surface structures primarily function as signals of ‘special’ meanings or model structures and may also contribute to special processing of interpretations. It is against this background that we examine the blog lay out in Mideast blog posts, using our earlier example (Blecher and Rabbani’s web page) as a guide. We shall examine the ‘deviant’ items of surface structure identified in Table 11 above and show how such ‘deviant’ items signal, express or convey similarly ‘deviant’ properties of models. Let us begin with the deployment of ‘font’ in this page.

We have observed how some items appear in very large printed type, which we have classified as 'extra large font' in the table. The two items in this regard refer to the name of the blog post, which appears atop the page, and the logo of the post, which flanks the name at the left side of the page. Granted that large printed type may strategically be used to emphasise or attract attention to specific meanings, the invitation of the attention of the reader to the name and logo of the blog post may however have ideological undertone. This is because several blog posts exist on the Internet, hence, effort is needed to convince the reader/surfer that a particular blog post is unique, significant and in the 'best interest' of the reader. This message is conveyed by arresting the reader's attention with such graphological technique. This explains why the name, as well as the logo of the blog post, is printed, using such a deviant font. The same reason can also be advanced for the printing of the other twenty identified linguistic information in the page.

These items are printed in large font, but reduced in size, when compared to the initial two. Featuring in this category are names of the blog post in three different forms (just below the first one earlier mentioned). Others include the title of the news story, the names of the authors of the news story, the date of posting, the address of the web page and other guidance information that flank the news story left and right. All these are deviant graphical items which must have been deployed specially for emphasis. It should be noted that the main object of the page (the news story) is the only item that appears with the normal 'font' on the page. This is particularly so because it is 'exactly' what the reader is interested in or poised to read; making it deviant will raise suspicion on the part of the reader. For such a reader to be convinced of reading further 'information' (that

may not necessarily be in his/her own interest), the discourse producer has to rely on rhetoric, which is a discourse strategy that employs either persuasive or manipulative techniques to get at the reader. These persuasive techniques have been largely utilised (by the graphical emphasis on the page), through the unusual 'font', which is expected to arrest the attention of the unwary reader.

The parentheses deployed in three significant places in the page are also ideologically relevant. The first, which encapsulates the manipulated details of information on the discourse producer, is designed to punctuate the reader, whose mind must have been set for the news story as soon as the title is read on top of the page. The reader would have expected the news story to immediately follow the title but this punctuation has been made necessary so that the reader may internalise the message (i.e., the manipulated information about the producer) enclosed in parenthesis. Perhaps, that is why the message is put directly on top of the news story, which, ordinarily, should have been the appropriate position for the title.

The other two parentheses appear in the guidance note (in the squared information box), which is strategically situated close to the first line of the news story, so that its reading becomes unavoidable, again, for the reader. In other words, the juxtaposition of the news story with the information 'box' is manipulative, as the reader is compelled to read the information in the box, even after he/she has commenced reading the news story, he/she must pause, read the information before proceeding with further reading of the news story. In other words, the discourse producer is aware that the reader must have started reading the news story from the first line, hence, he/she decides to punctuate such reading by drawing the reader's attention to the information juxtaposed by the box. This

is where the reader is confronted by the parentheses that invite his/her attention to the places and period of publication of supposedly related articles. This invitation may be considered as being in the best interest of the discourse producer.

The deployment of shapes within the surface structure of discourse is another graphological tactics largely employed (by the discourse producer) for ideological gains. It is interesting to note that these shapes are given special background colour, thereby making them deviant or out of the ordinary. These are special graphological devices that are largely deployed to manage the importance of information. In other words, it is plausible that the important information (that could be in the best interest of the discourse producer) is the one enclosed in shapes and coloured background. It is probably done for two reasons; first, to invite the attention of the reader and secondly, to make the reader believe that the pieces of information in the shapes contain benefits that are in the best interest of the reader. This probably explains why all the linguistic information on subscription is enclosed within the shapes, including the hyperlink to (order a) subscription and back issues and other 'special publications'. This tactic suggests a hidden economic motive.

Lastly, capitalisation is another graphological device that also plays a prominent role in the manipulation of the reader by the discourse producer. Six major linguistic items are fully capitalised. That is, they appear in upper case. This appearance is most likely to be in the best interest of the discourse producer as some of the linguistic items poise to advertise the name of the blog post (three items are in this category). Some advertise the special publications by the post, while the last one invites donation from the reader. Capitalisation has the same ideological effect as the enlarged font earlier

discussed. It is designed to arrest the attention of the reader, so that the capitalised linguistic items are believed to be more important linguistic messages in that structure. Those items that have their capitalisation on their first letters (initial cap) may therefore be viewed as lower in the degree of importance, especially when placed within the hierarchical organisation of models, in which important information receives greater emphasis.

However, this is not to say that the linguistic information on the graphical elements discussed so far is solely made important by these graphological devices. While it may be true that this is the case with some linguistic items, others may toe an entirely different line. For instance, meanings and beliefs may be de-emphasised or concealed by non-prominent graphical structures, especially when it is absolutely clear that they express meanings that are inconsistent with the best interest of the reader. This is particularly the case with the linguistic item 'subscription' or its verb variant 'subscribe', which appears in the normal 'font' and 'case' throughout the page. Its frequent occurrence is the only significant factor that raises suspicion about viewing it as linguistic information that is ideologically significant because of its economic undertone. In other words, the idea to subscribe or order a subscription may be seen to be in the best interest of the discourse producer, who is likely to reap economic benefits from such idea.

However, in the page, this obvious fact is concealed by other manipulative devices (that is, the graphological devices discussed above) which are emphasised, while the real motive behind the entire graphical structure (that is, economic interest) is de-emphasised, in order to douse suspicion. Perhaps, this is why the lay out of the blog post is in this

format of the surface structure. Next, we move on to schematic structure as part of our investigation of the discourse strategies of the Mideast blog posts.

6.4 Schematic Structure of Mideast blog posts

As observed in section 2.8.1.3, schematic structures sometimes define the canonical order of discourse as they may indicate importance or relevance. For instance, the headlines in the news usually possess the crucial role of expressing the topic highest in the macrostructure hierarchy, that is, the most important information of a news story. In this way, readers may be manipulated, especially, if semantically subordinate topics are assigned more prominence (by making them headlines, for instance), whereas the main topic may be reduced or downgraded to a lower level of the schema by realising it as a subordinate topic (see van Dijk 1995a:28). Perhaps, this is why van Dijk concludes that such possible variations of relevance and importance are open to ideological control.

Bloggers are probably aware of the importance of news headlines as part of the organ of politics and social communication, more so that titles or headlines of news stories usually exercise their influence and power on the readers through language. Perhaps, this is why Fairclough (1989: 30) concludes that the exercise of power in modern society is increasingly achieved through the ideological workings of language. Yu-ping (2007:2), while observing the hidden power of language in Web-news headlines, submits that Web-news headlines are perfect embodiment of the exercise of power through language with its tremendous influence on the reader.

It is against this background that we explore, in this section, the schematic structures of the Mideast blog posts, with particular emphasis on the headlines in the blog

posts, as they reflect the ideological posture of the discourse producers. Some headlines from the Mideast blog posts are randomly selected and presented below for the purpose of reference.

Table 12 Some headlines in Mideast blog posts

1.	In Annapolis, conflict by Other Means
2.	ISRAEL: A HORIZON DIMMED
3.	PALESTINE: A HOUSE DIVIDED
4.	The Neo- Internationalism: Global Security, Democracy and interventionism after 9/11
5.	Washington Ready for war with Syria to Defend Lebanon?
6.	Arab Anti-Semitism and the Arab-Israeli conflict
7.	Our very strange day with Hezbollah

In line with Fairclough's (1989:33) observation that language power in the news text can manifest itself by mystifying the nature of the event being reported (perhaps, through the power behind discourse), we shall attempt to analyse each of the headlines above with a view to determining how each headline is shaped and constituted by ideology. This analysis will be the focus of the next section.

6.4.1 Ideological posture in headlines of the Mideast blog posts

According to Tunstall (1996:13), headline, as a unique type of text, is likely to be perceived more as a conceptual and ideational business, a matter of statements, claims, beliefs, positions etc. rather than personal feelings or products of social and interpersonal relationships. On the Internet, the web-news headlines attract large-scale surfers, perhaps, being the major encoder of information, perceptions or positions, especially as most headlines are designed to inform, entertain, impress or intrigue the unwary reader/surfer browsing the webpage for certain information or the other.

The selection (above) encapsulates some headlines that have been randomly picked to illustrate how headlines may embody ideological posturing, especially of the discourse producers who could probably be aware that the largest news audience on the Web gravitates to headlines as alternative to reading voluminous articles of the weblog. Let us take a look at the first item on the table: *In Annapolis, conflict by other means*. Recall that in chapter four (section 4.1.2); this headline featured as part of Plate 1 in the analysis of lexicalisation in the Mideast blog posts. In the current section, however, we are presenting the headline as part of the discourse strategies of the blog authors to encode beliefs, positions, as well as ideological standpoint on the process of resolving the Middle East conflict. This ideological standpoint is presented in the following analysis.

Table 13: Analysis of ideological elements in headline 1

Activity	Perspective	Self identity	Rhetorical form	Goal	Resource	Key words
Conflict resolution	pessimism	International crisis group analysts	Manipulation and persuasion	To scuttle the peace initiative through scepticism	News story headline	Annapolis conflict other means

From the table above, we can observe that the words deployed in the headline indicate that the proposed peace meeting in Annapolis is perceived by the authors as another conflict, but in different form, perhaps different in the sense that dangerous weapons like, artillery, tanks and other instruments of violent conflict are not involved. The idea to reveal the self-identity of the discourse producer as International Crisis Group analysts is probably to confer on them the authority to speak on the (proposed) peace talks in Annapolis or, perhaps, to lend credence to their position on the proposed activity (conflict resolution).

The pessimistic ideology of the discourse producers perhaps informs the goal of the headline (and by extension, the entire article), which is to scuttle the peace effort organised for Annapolis, USA. This is to be achieved through the resource of the news story headline where the position, the thought and the perception over the peace initiation are enveloped in manipulation and persuasion. The manipulation of the reader is revealed by the inability of the discourse producer to provide verifiable access to the claim under self-identity and, again, there is a deceptive claim suggested by the title that the article is merely a news story on “life in West Bank”. It is evident that the discourse producer

resorts to another means of rhetoric, which is persuasion, in case these initial tactics fail. This is later unveiled in expressions such as “...doing so will not get them very far... the waiting grows tiresome, featuring later in the body of the article. Meanwhile, let us take a look at another headline in the table.

Headline 2 ISRAEL: A HORIZON DIMMED

The above headline is a demonstration of different formal features in terms of word choice, grammatical form and even graphic elements, perhaps in an attempt to shield ideological posture that it contains. Let us attempt the analysis of the headline through the table below.

Table 14 Analysis of ideological posture in headline 2

Activity	Purpose	Medium	Perspective	Keywords	Goal
peace meeting in Annapolis	to resolve Israeli-Palestinian crisis	headline	cynicism	Israel, horizon dimmed	dissuasion

Discussion

Headline 2 is evocative, as it seems to appeal directly to the state of Israel, which is a party in the conflict. The headline captions one of the articles that feature in the Middle East Report Online (the blog post of Blecher and Rabbani). The article seems to be preceding the one earlier discussed above. Three prominent words (featured as key words in the table) encapsulate the ideology of the discourse producer. Israel is particularly addressed in relation to the forth coming activity (peace meeting in

Annapolis) perhaps arranged for the resolution of the long-standing crisis between Israeli and Palestine, which manifested in the Israeli- Hezbollah war, 2006.

The ideology expressed in this regard, through the perspective in the table, is cynicism. The producers of the headline are cynical of the honest intention or sincerity behind the meeting proposed by the United States for Annapolis (US territory) and are of the opinion that any hope or expectation from such meeting is like a horizon dimmed. This cynical ideology is betrayed by the conclusion of the discourse producers, as expressed later in the body of the article through this rhetorical question: “So why negotiate now, with a leader who, due to the breakdown of his accord with Hamas, lacks a mandate to speak for his entire people?”

The above is more than a rhetorical question; it implies a cynical remark about Israeli’s intention to go to Annapolis, perhaps for the negotiation of a peace accord with Palestine. This intention is probably what is condemned through the above headline, which has the goal of dissuading Israeli from such move. The next headline in the table: **Headline 3 PALESTINE: A HOUSE DIVIDED** is directed to the party on the other side of the conflict, that is, the Palestine. Let us take a look at its analysis in the table below.

Table 15 Analysis of ideological posture in headline 3

Activity	Purpose	Medium	Perspective	Keywords	Goal
Peace meeting in Annapolis	Conflict resolution	Headline	Consensual paranoia	Palestine, Division	to create despair

The ideological posture in the above headline is situated in the authors' perspective which is hung on consensual paranoia. Paranoia, according to Keen (1986:19) involves a complex of mental, emotional, and social mechanisms by which somebody attributes hostility and evil to the other (opponent or enemy), who is regarded as the architect of his/her problem and misfortune. This ideological standpoint maintains that the other (opponent or enemy) is behind a particular set-back and thus forms the template from which all the horrible images of the enemy are created.

In the body of the article (of which the headline attempts to capture its theme), Palestinian problems are blamed on sectarianism, which is an act of creating divides or factions, even within the same polity, especially through patriotism, an ideology that encapsulates divide based on group's solidarity. The body of the article traces Palestine woes, including inability to secure truce with Israel, to the people on all sides of the sectarian divide in Palestine, such as Mahmoud Abba's Fatah movement, Hamas' militant group and so on. This division, in the headline's perspective, is responsible for the fracture suffered by the Palestinian national movement for the sovereign state of Palestine.

This opinion, expressed in the body of the article, can be extracted to further illustrate the perspective claimed in the above analysis: "Even in the absence of external constraints, it will prove extremely difficult to achieve a new agreement between the Palestinian rivals; in the grip of them, the prospects are virtually zero". This opinion vividly portrays the viewpoint of the discourse producer, against which we derive the goal of the headline, despair, as conveyed by this linguistic information in the extract: "the prospects are virtually zero". In other words, the ideological posture expressed by

the headline suggests a lack of hope in the proposed peace effort slated for Annapolis, citing sectarianism, dissent and factionalism as the basis for its conclusion.

Let us take a look at another headline; **Headline 4: The Neo-internationalism: Global security, Democracy and interventionism after 9/11** from a different blog post, to further illustrate the way ideological posture is encoded in the blog headlines. It is taken from the blog post of Nassim Yaziji, which is named Middle East Policy Blog. The analysis of the headline is provided in Table 16 below.

Table 16 Analysis of ideological posture in headline 4

Activity	Purpose	Key words	Perspective	Goal	Norm and Value (ideology)
blog posting	creating awareness about changing global policy	neo-internationalism, global security, democracy, interventionism, 9/11	sovereignty and international relations	to change attitude about sovereignty	freedom, democracy, global security

From Table 16, we are able to see the ideological posture in the headline which is betrayed by the *perspective* as well as the *goal* of the headline that centre on the emerging trend in international politics, especially after 9/11. The former ideology about sovereignty (i.e., the belief in complete freedom and power to govern without interference from another country) is now being replaced by the need for global security (an ideology being supported by *freedom* and *democracy*, the social norm and value), which has now favoured the policy of interventionism above sovereignty, especially in the face of global threat and international necessity.

The key words in the headline put 9/11 (at the forefront), perhaps, as one of the factors that necessitated the replacement. That is, replacing sovereignty with renascent internationalism as a new system of international relations. This new ideology is being supported by other linguistic elements, such as *global security*, *democracy* and *interventionism*, which are key words that justify the need for the new ideology and the reason for dropping the old (and perhaps, out-fashioned) sovereignty. This new ideology is being sold through the headline. Let us take a look at a similar headline.

Headline 5 **Washington ready for war with Syria to defend Lebanon?**Headline 5 (above) captions an article posted by Naharnet and published in Nassim Yaziji’s blog post. Let us examine the ideological elements in the headline, through the table below.

Table 17 **Ideological posture in headline 5**

Activity	Medium	Key words	Perspective	Purpose	Goal
Threat	headline	Washington, War, Syria, Defend Lebanon	belief in the US’ military might	to raise alarm	to alert Syria on the US’ intention

The ideological posture demonstrated through ‘perspective’ column of the table is derived from the main article through which the hidden ideology is unveiled. Consider the following extract from the body of the article: “...e-mail leaked a few days ago by Egypt to Syria reveals that the US is ready to launch a wide-scale military offensive against Syria if Damascus holds onto its current position towards the Lebanese crisis”.

The extract above demonstrates ideological belief in the United States’ policing style and the ability of the country (USA) to back threat with action. Perhaps, that is why

the blogger considers it necessary to further supply another alarming revelation through the linguistic information in the following extract: “A US Navy official said earlier this week that (USS) Cole destroyer had been relieved by the guided missile destroyer USS Ors and the guided missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea”.

Even though there is no substantial evidence to verify the authenticity of the claims in both extracts, it is clear that the blogger believes in US’ supremacist ideology and therefore considers it necessary to raise alarm before the threat (by the US) is carried out. The decision to put the headline in form of question is to underscore the intensity of the message encapsulated through the headline, a message which, nonetheless, reveals the ideological posture described in the *perspective* column of the table. Let us take a look at the next headline on table 12. This is Headline 6 which, from the onset, seems to display an unveiled ideological posture. The ideology is described as having been unveiled in the sense that the topic ‘anti-Semitism’ is already an ideological topic in this study (see its discussion on social ideology, section 2.9.2).

Headline 6 Arab anti-Semitism and the Arab-Israeli conflict: Headline 6 is posted by Abraham H. Foxman, whose self-identity is revealed as National Director of the Anti Defamation League. The headline, like the rest that we have examined, can also be subjected to ideological scrutiny as provided in Table 18 below.

Table 18 Analysis of Ideological Posture in headline 6

Activity	Purpose	Self-identity	Perspective	Goal	Key words
article headline	to enlighten	National Director of the Anti-Defamation League	Arab anti-Semitism ideology is self-constructed	denouncing the self-constructed Arab anti-Semitism	Arab anti-Semitism, Arab-Israeli conflict

The analysis above shows that Headline 6 does not see Anti-Semitism as peculiar to the Arab world, hence, contends that it cannot be the basis for the Arab-Israeli conflict. An incursion into the real article reveals the blogger claiming that Arab anti-Semitism, is an ideology self-constructed and that the ideology is baseless. The blogger also believes that the so-called Arab anti-Semite ideology could be regarded as nothing but a well orchestrated rhetoric, as in his opinion, the Jews in Christian Europe experience more anti-Semitism than the Jews living under Islam, hence, in his opinion, if the so-called Arab anti-Semitism is allowed to flourish, it portends danger of greater violence against the Jews generally.

The idea to reveal the self identity of the discourse producer is to serve two purposes. The first is to allow the Arab to see that, even while speaking as an Israeli, Israel (the perceived enemy of the Arab) does not believe that the Arabs hate the Jews, and that there are other causes of Arab-Israeli conflict that are beyond prejudice and perceived Arab's hatred of the Jews. The writer's attitude is encapsulated in the following extract: "Several months ago, I said that we must be as firm in denouncing Arab anti-Semitism as another kind of anti-Semitism... Today, I go a step further, Arab anti-Semitism, if allowed to flourish, could become one of the most destructive forces..."

The second purpose is, perhaps, to establish himself as one that has the authority or expertise to speak on such issue. This is a manipulative strategy in discourse through which the discourse producer takes the advantage of the social belief in (and respect accorded to) position, status and know-how. It is manipulative in the sense that, many a time, it is found out that this is an authority fallacy which the discourse producer usually

deploys with the intention to stamp authority over topical issues being discussed by participants.

Before we conclude our investigation of ideological posture in blog headlines, let us briefly examine the last headline on the table which focuses on the other party in the Arab-Israeli conflict, that is, the Hezbollah.

Headline 7 Our very strange day with Hezbollah

Headline 7 demonstrates the ideological perception about Hezbollah as a powerful militant group in the Middle East region. Much has been said about this militant group in the previous analyses which portray the ideology being held in relation to the group. Part of this ideology is that Hezbollah is perceived in the region as dreadful and terrifying. Perhaps, that is why the meeting with the group is perceived in the headline as very strange, which may be literally interpreted as ‘unexpected’ or ‘unusual’. Let us look at the ideological import of the headline, which could be observed through the following analysis in table 19.

Table 19 Analysis of Ideological Posture in headline7

Activity	Purpose	Medium	Perspective	Goal	Key words
meeting with Hezbollah militant group	to ascertain the true posture of the group	article headline (news story)	the belief that the group, Hezbollah, is invincible	to change perception about the assumed invincibility of Hezbollah	Our, strange day, with Hezbollah

The use of the personal (Possessive) pronoun in the headline is probably to personalise the encounter being described so as to let the reader consider the news story

as a real event (experienced by the writer), thereby lending credence and authenticity to the published news story. This is considered very germane to realising the goal described in Table 19 above, which targets not only the reader but the populace as well. From the perspective column of the table, it is evident that there is an ideology about the invincibility of the Hezbollah militant group, which is a key party in the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah conflict.

This ideology is probably hung on the audacity of the group to confront Israel which, most probably, is an unchallengeable power within the enclave, and perhaps, a dominant figure in the region. With the July 2006 challenge of Israel's power through confrontation by the militant group, Hezbollah's image must have received a boost by such effrontery, and the group could now be perceived in the region as no less powerful. Other key words in the headline, apart from the use of 'our' whose deployment has been explained above, are designed to change the newly growing perception (ideology) about the invincibility of Hezbollah, as a militant group. The deployment of 'strange day' in the headline is meant to be interpreted as 'strange meeting' or 'an unusual encounter' in relation to the group. This encounter has the sole purpose of ascertaining the true picture of Hezbollah, especially through a close encounter and, having done this, the blogger is poised to make this revelation appear in the body of the news story:

We're growing tired of what is now obviously a dog-and-pony show... about Hezbollah and more about their crude propaganda machine... we've just left a haunted house: slightly frightening at first, but ridiculous by the end.

The last two lines of the above extract clearly suggest that the writer's mission (goal) has been accomplished. That is, to change the initial perception about the invincibility and

capability of the militant group which, according to him, has been made possible by the personal encounter with the group through the visit to its 'armoury'.

So far, we have been examining ideological posture in the weblog headlines in Mideast blog posts. It should be stressed that a headline is more of a conclusion or position on a particular topical issue and it is constructed in a way that it wraps up the ideology of the blog author, as witnessed in the perspective columns of the tables showing the analyses. We opine that headline must have been fronted in order to prepare the mind of the reader for the basic information (theme) contained in the main article and more importantly, to orientate the reader towards the perception, the viewpoint or the ideology desired by the blog author. In that case, headlines may thus become part of the bloggers strategy to push forward own position and acquaint the reader with this position, especially from the onset, so that the linguistic or other semiotic forms of information contained in the main article may do the rest, together with rhetoric and other communicative strategies that engage persuasive and manipulative devices.

Perhaps, that is why Yu-ping (2007: 6) concludes that power in web-news headlines is exercised through language in ways which are not always obvious, just as power in the real world is usually unnoticed, hence, becomes naturalized. This observation also confirms Fairclough's (1989:33) earlier submission that the power to project one's practices as universal and common sense may powerfully boost or serve economic and political interest. The situation in which ideological interests are concealed in blog headlines therefore lends credence to the contention in this study that the hidden power in weblog headlines is basically ideological, and its deployment as first item in the hierarchical arrangement within schematic structure of the blog discourse is to attach

relevance and importance to the ideology being projected and more importantly, to ensure the reader does not brush it aside as mere linguistic decoration.

Next, we move on to take a look at the dialogic structure of the weblog, using the Mideast blog posts as a guide, in order to investigate the coding of ideological information within the dialogic structure of the blog posts. The next section takes care of this investigation.

6.5 Dialogic structure of Mideast blog posts

As observed in section 2.1.2, weblog not only transmits information through the Internet, it also takes on receiving role through reader-feedback, as many bloggers create space for their readers to respond to the different postings published in the post. Through this avenue, the reader is not only accorded recognition but is also involved in the topical issue being discussed, that is, the reader takes part in the on-going conversation. This unique attribute of blog has thus made its structure dialogic.

Our focus in this section is to study the reader-feedback mechanism, with a view to identifying the extent readers are persuaded or manipulated by the device of rhetoric and ideological posture within the dialogic structure of the Mideast blog posts. The table below summarises the comments made by blog readers in their bid to participate in the dialogic interaction. The comments were randomly sampled from the various responses made on postings in Mideast Blog posts regarding the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war.

Table 20 Readers' feedback in Mideast blog posts

	Title of posting	Author/ contributor	No of comments	POSITIVE COMMENTS	NEGATIVE COMMENTS	INDIFFE -RENCE
1.	American claim to be Lebanon's 'friend' lacks credibility	HB KING MRTEZ RS	39	39	-	-
2.	War Jokes	MRTEZ	49	48	-	1
3.	Wine of the Bekaa	RS	52	50	2	-
4.	IDF Report Card	MRTEZ	10	10	-	-
5.	A letter by Einstein and Co.	MRTEZ	57	90	5	2
6.	Post war Ads	MRTEZ	30	30	-	-
7.	UNIFIL with 'teeth'	MRTEZ	10	10	-	-
8.	Media Controls	Justia Raimondo posted by RS	55	51	2	2
9.	The killing goes on	MRTEZ	11	11	-	-
10	Death Tourisms	MRTEZ	99	99	-	-
11	The aftermath? May be not	Robert Fisk posted by MRTEZ	33	30	1	2
12	Rifts over Hizbullah form Lebanon's new Green line	Declan Walsh posted by MRTEZ	17	17	-	-
13	Who won?	RS	32	30	1	1
14	Maliban	RS	41	40	-	1
15	War crimes	MRTEZ	39	39	-	-
16	The cease-fire may be sticking but Israeli's embargo keeps Lebanese and Lebanese goods prisoners	RS	72	72	-	-
17	Brothers in Arms?	MRTEZ	40	40	-	-
18	Above the clouds	MRTEZ	50	48	-	2
19	For the Record	HB	117	116	1	-
20	Back to 'Norma'	HB	30	28	2	-
21	No time to waste, time to reconstruct	MRTEZ	88	82	2	4
22	Hizbollah's outlook in the current conflict (Part II)	MRTEZ	81	80	-	1

23	End of the beginning	HB	2	2	-	-
24	Hizbollah's outlook in the current conflict	MRTEZ	129	126	3	-
25	What is the logic behind this war?	Nadin Shahadi posted by MRTEZ	71	65	6	-
26	How about a song?	HB	26	25	-	1
27	You are terrorists, we are virtuous	Yitzhak Laor	145	143	2	-
28	What's next	MRTEZ	27	27	-	-
29	A bunch of Gangs	MRTEZ	45	39	4	2
30	The solution? We hope so...	MRTEZ	5	5	-	-
31	Lebanese beaches and Marine life, 'Hezbollah target'	HB	7	7	-	-
32	1,071Dead 3,628 Injured,973,334Displaced	RS	26	26	-	-
33	A very Good article from Jonathan cook	Nazareth posted by RS	18	16	2	-
34	Smell Good	MRTEZ	39	38	1	-
35	Siniora: Man with a three-track mind	Haaretz posted by MRTEZ	42	40	-	2
36	A chance for, if not peace, the absence of war	RS	26	20	4	2
37	Work for peace	RS	58	58	-	-
38	Pump up the volume II	MRTEZ	58	50	3	5
39	Keep on keeping on	RS	26	25	1	-
40	Propaganda wars	MRTEZ	34	34	-	-
41	Killer Tan	HB	37	33	3	1
42	Death Note	MRTEZ	13	13	-	-
43	Pump up the volume	MRTEZ	155	151	-	4
44	Will Israel bomb all of us?	Rasha Salti posted by RS	113	100	11	2
45	The PM End This Tragedy Now	Fouad Siniora posted by RS	45	40	-	5
46	Israel, Hamas, Hezbollah: The vicious circle of righteousness, force, and loss of	Moderator	133	120	10	3

	compassion					
47	Is this the New Middle East	Ralph Peters	21	15	3	3
48	Thank you Paris	MRTEZ	26	20	4	2
49	Introducing 'Horrorism'	Posted by HB	51	50	1	-
50	Thank you Berlin	MRTEZ	48	46	-	2

The above table shows the figures of comments that were obtained from the following Mideast blog posts:

1. Beirut Live: http://beirutlive.blogspot.com/2006_08_01_archive.html.
2. Anderson cooper Blog 360: CNN.COM
3. MideastWebforcoexistence:
<http://www.Mideastweb.org/log/archives/00000491.htm>

After reading through the (readers') comments, the responses were further classified into three categories:

- (i) Readers' comments that align with the viewpoints expressed by the authors in the postings are regarded as positive comments (in the table) and the numbers of readers in such category are supplied accordingly.
- (ii) Readers' comments that disagree with the author's positions or viewpoints expressed in the postings are classified as negative comments (in the table) and their numbers are also provided in the column.
- (iii) Comments that display total indifference to the topics or issues focused in the posting or the positions or view points of the authors are classified as indifferent. The number of this type of comments is provided in the appropriate column in the table. We can now subject these comments to ideological analysis.

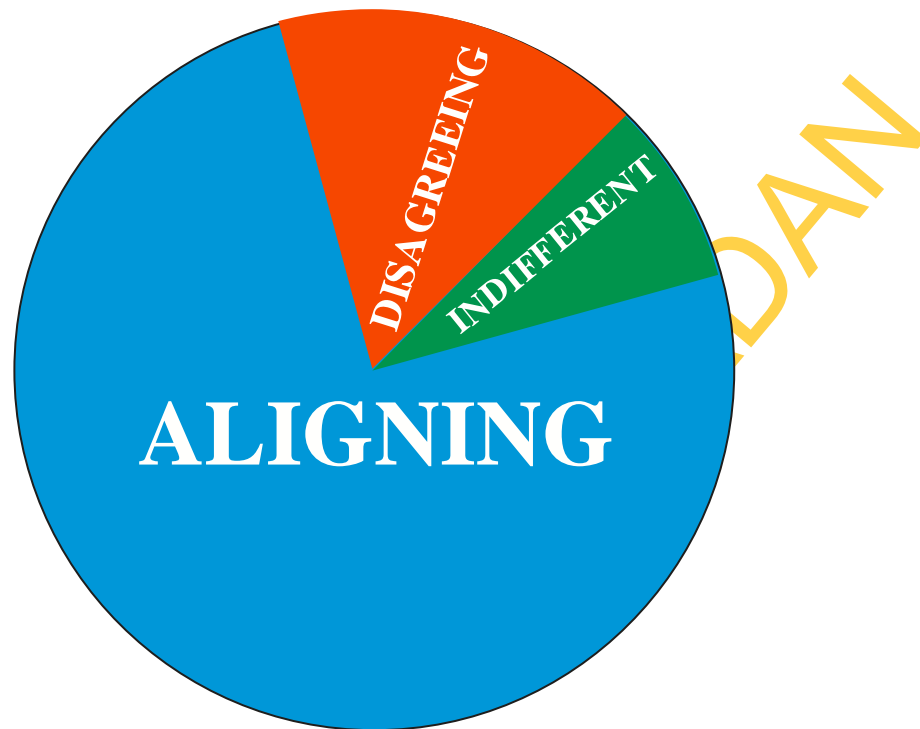
From the table, a total number of two thousand, five hundred and seventy six (2,576) comments were received by the fifty postings sampled. After a careful study of them, it was discovered that two thousand, four hundred and twenty two (2,422)

comments aligned with the views expressed by the blog authors, representing 94.02%, while seventy six (76) readers disagree with the viewpoints expressed by the blog authors in their comments. This represents 2.95% of the total number of sampled comments. The readers who showed indifference in their responses to the issues raised by the discourse producers are fifty one (51), representing 1.98% of the total comments sampled. These figures can be represented in a tabular form and pie-chart as shown respectfully in Table 21 and figure 3 below.

Table 21 Blog readers' comments in relation to blog authors' view points

Total number of comments	Number of comments aligning with authors' viewpoints	(%)	Number of comments disagreeing with authors' viewpoints	(%)	Number of comments indifferent to authors' viewpoints	(%)
2,576	2,246	94.02	76	2.95	51	1.98

Figure 3: Distribution of readers' comments in relation to viewpoints expressed by blog authors



6.6 Discussion of the role of readers' feedback

From the figures represented in Table 21 and reflected in figure 3, we may wish to contend that the blog readers have been largely manipulated especially, judging from the number of blog readers that align with the authors' view points in their responses. This manipulation can be argued to be a crucial factor that has resulted in the large number of bloggers swaying to the discourse producers' (own) line of argument. We have proposed in the theoretical background of this study that language, including other semiotic devices such as photographs, pictures, cartoons, audio and video devices, is employed by people of different ideological persuasions particularly for manipulation. According to van Dijk (2006:375), a contextual criterion through which recipients of discourse are manipulated, that is, becoming victims of manipulation, is that they lack crucial resources to resist,

detect or avoid manipulation. This criterion, van Dijk argues further, is based on four essential parameters. They are:

- (i) incomplete or lack of relevant knowledge. When there is incomplete knowledge, for instance, the discourse recipient may not have the capacity for counter-arguments that can be formulated against false, incomplete or biased assertions;
- (ii) fundamental norms, values and ideologies that cannot be ignored or denied;
- (iii) strong emotions, trauma, and so on that make people vulnerable; and
- (iv) social positions, professions, status and so on that induce people into accepting the discourses, arguments, etc of elite persons, groups or organisations hook line and sinker.

(See van Dijk 2006: 359-382 for detailed discussion on Discourse and manipulation)

This insight, offered by van Dijk, can thus provide us with the necessary background to establish the case of manipulation (of blog readers) against the Mideast blog discourse producers, in view of the alarming rate with which the blog readers swayed to the authors' line of arguments. In the first instance, it can be observed from the ideological analysis in this chapter that some of the pieces of information made available to the reader on issues being focused are often incomplete. For instance, Blecher and Rabbani, in their article, "In Annapolis, conflict by other means", failed to provide justifiable explanations on why the proposed Annapolis peace meeting should be boycotted. They merely embellished their news story with unrelated stories about life in the West Bank on the eve of the meeting in Annapolis.

Through this, the readers must have been carried away by the depiction of the crude life of the Palestinian pedestrians in favour of the motive for the article, which is eventually suggested towards the end of the article. Even the supply of details about the identities of the discourse producers is manipulative, knowing full well that

social positions, professions and status confer authority about arguments and also induce readers into accepting such discourse, arguments and so on. This manipulation is pushed further by the fundamental norms and values and ideologies, especially as they relate to conflict, which is a universal phenomenon. This perhaps motivates the making of this phenomenon an essential feature of the headline, not in terms of resolving an existing one, but predicting further conflicts that could be the lot of the proposed meeting in Annapolis.

The strategy of featuring social positions, status and profession permeates the entire dialogic structure of the Mideast blog posts and it probably accounts for the readers' supports that were largely received by the blog authors. We have instances in other postings such as "Our very strange day with Hezbollah" by Charlie Moore, a CNN correspondent and senior editor. This self-identity makes his news story more believable because of the international fame of CNN as a media organisation. Others include "The PM: End This Tragedy Now" by the Lebanese Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora, who may be considered as a political elite with similar international recognition. His opinion in the article is bound to be considered highly important, first, being the Prime Minister of a country and secondly, being an international diplomat. We also have similar instances across Table 20, which contains the comments sampled for the analysis.

Strong emotion, trauma and so on also make the readers vulnerable to manipulation. The discourse producers are perhaps aware of this strategy as they embellish their news stories with pictures, photographs, cartoons, emotions, audio and visual appeals that target the readers' pathos. Reading through pictures, photographs

and videos of some seemingly true life events, the readers are easily swayed. Perhaps this is why these semiotic devices are usually placed atop the page, even before the real article, so that the viewpoints being expressed in the main article could be seen to have been backed up or made verisimilitude.

Fundamental norms, values and ideologies about life and existence must have also played vital role as a strategy on the manipulation of the readers. For instance, posting 9 on Table 20; “The killing goes on”; 10, “Death Tourism”; 15, “War crimes” and many others reveal photographs of purported killings and dead bodies, (some beheaded, some severed beyond recognition). These are (ugly) situations that the societal norms, values and ideologies reject and condemn in all ramifications. When these photographs are displayed in the surface structures of the articles, readers cannot but support the blog authors in condemning such massacre; hence, this could also be responsible for readers’ alignment with the authors’ viewpoints. But as argued in our previous analysis, specifically in the summary on chapter five (page 237) in this study, digital imaging techniques are increasingly eroding the indexicality of photographic images, especially in this present age of modern technology. This has cast doubt on the idea of interpreting web page photographs or images as objective record of reality because of the manipulative instinct of the discourse producers and the capability of the technological device (computer) to help them realise this goal, thereby performing the role of accomplice in this regard.

6.7 Summary

In this chapter, we have examined the discourse strategies that are usually adopted by discourse producers (bloggers) to win the blog readers’ sympathy and solicit their

support in demonising opponents, especially in conflict situation. These strategies were discussed under three major titles viz; the surface structure, the schematic structure and the dialogic structure. For the surface structure, we have proved that the graphic elements displayed on the surface structure of a web page may encode hidden meanings of the discourse that conceal the ideological standpoint of the blog author. For instance, the blog format or the lay-out of the blog may be patterned in a way that conceals the ideological interests of the discourse producer as demonstrated by the hyperlinks to readers' subscription in all the corners of the page, which eventually paved the way for the discovery of economic interest of the blog discourse producer.

Other hyperlinks are also incorporated on the web page to lead the reader to other works or productions of the bloggers that may not even be in the best interest of the blog reader. We have also shown that the schematic structures of the blog discourse are also culpable in this attempt to manipulate the blog reader. For instance, having realised that the reader is aware of the importance of headline to the understanding/interpretation of an article, the discourse producer usually tinges the headline with a lot of sensation (in what is usually referred to as 'screaming headline') to attract the reader/surfer. This is done through a lot of means that include increasing the size of the headline letters through unusual font to draw curiosity; giving headlines priority in the canonical order of discourse to signal important information desirous by the blog producer; upgrading topics that organise little/ local information in the discourse to the status of headlines in order to manipulate the reader ideologically and downgrading the main topic to the lower level of the schema

in order to realise it as a subordinate topic in the background of the schematic structure.

Lastly, we also demonstrated that dialogic structure of the blog discourse is also an important source of manipulation of the reader by discourse producer. Relying on the basic knowledge that the reader is disadvantaged in certain respect such as strong emotion, trauma etc that may be exhibited by the reader in the course of reading the news story, the discourse producer is quick to capitalise on this weakness by embellishing the news story with a lot of colourful innovations such as providing pictures, photographs, video and images that may whip up emotions, feelings or pathos in the discourse recipient.

This lack of crucial resources to resist, detect or avoid manipulation has subjected the discourse recipient to manipulation, which is a form of social power abuse, and to worsen the situation, the discourse recipient believes he/she is receiving authentic information or facts from someone that is held in high esteem in the society because of the social position, profession or status held by the discourse producer, which is part of the ideologies that help 'naturalise' manipulation as a 'normal' ideological phenomenon, and compel discourse recipients to accept the discourses, arguments or opinions of elite persons, groups or organisations without question.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Summary of findings and conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In the three preceding chapters, we analysed and discussed language and some other semiotic devices, as well as the discourse strategies, deployed by blog authors in their attempt to sway readers to (their) own side of arguments or viewpoints. This chapter concludes the study, giving the summary of the findings and the observations made in the study. It also provides concluding remarks with close reference to the instrumentality of language as a foil to achieve socio-political and ideological goals. Lastly, it suggests further areas of research emanating from the limitation of the current study.

7.2 Summary of the findings

The three discourse structures –surface, schematic and dialogic- show the ways blog readers are manipulated by linguistic and non-linguistic devices, including the ‘opportunities’ provided by the control that the bloggers have over information on their blogs, which allow deeply partisan meanings and ideological constructs to seem real, well-established and self-evident in blog discourse. The study reveals that some semiotic devices deployed within the surface structures of blog discourse, for instance, purportedly to embellish the news stories or articles in the blog posts, are indeed culpable, as they may be regarded as ‘accomplice’ in the manipulation of both the audience and reality. They have been proved in this study, as serving the best interest of the blog producers (i.e. bloggers), who have perfected the art of taking

sides while disguising behind airs of neutrality. Through supporting evidences from semiotic devices, we are able to see how semiotics develops and concretises the relationship between language and ideology, as it makes conspicuous the role of sign systems in the construction of ideas and worldview witnessed in the surface structure.

Another salient characteristic of blogging discovered in this study is the reflection of power difference among interactants or discourse participants. This discovery enables us to see how role-relationships (social roles) condition power wielding by blog authors. This is demonstrated through discourse structures and strategies that encourage the display of names, self-identities, professions and status of contributors on the web page. This fundamental norm of blog format (and layout) is respected and published on the webpage, but the practice clearly accentuates the fundamental belief in social positions, status and profession, which confers automatic respect and recognition on the elite groups, persons or organisations. This practice tends to induce readers (of lower status) into accepting the discourses, arguments and texts produced by the elite individuals as unquestionable or authentic.

This study reveals this belief system as a dominant ideology which seems to have been naturalised by blogging (and even, media discourse generally). The discourse producers seize the opportunity offered by this ideology to manipulate the readers by supplying incomplete, false or biased conclusions, knowing full well that the discourse recipient (or consumer) lacks the relevant knowledge and resources to produce or formulate counter-arguments.

The study of readers' manipulation in blogging further corroborates Fowler's (1985:62) view that language is a reality-creating social practice which helps societal

institutions such as the judiciary, educational system, the media, religious institutions and so on, to function by creating social 'reality' through discourses that give legitimacy to these social structures. The so-called social reality is questioned in this study as it is considered a self-constructed ideology favourable mainly to those who hold 'power' (or the so-called social elite) and give the less powerful group the impression that those who wield power in the society are justifiable because of the resources within their disposal. Through this, discourse thus becomes a controlling force in the society which arms the discourse producers with enormous power to manipulate and control discourses at will. This situation has consequently divided members of the society into two groups; the dominant and dominated groups or institutions and their clients or by this study, the blog authors and the blog readers.

A critical study of discourse as undertaken in this study has shown that discourses that are intended to exploit consumers, recipients, readers (or whatever name the targeted victims may be called) can be challenged. This study, through in-depth analysis of rhetorical (and ideological) posturing in blogging offers such a challenge to this asymmetrical power relation by showing that blogging is manipulative, first in terms of the context models of the participants and again, in terms of the blog structures. For instance, in the analysis of the schematic structures of blog postings (see: section 6.3), it is discovered that headlines, which are ordinarily used to encapsulate major ideas in articles or news stories (since they usually express topics and signal the most important information of a text), are used to assign weights to events that are, in themselves, not so important. What is more, headlines are embellished with semiotic ornaments that signal interests and attention of the blog

readers, making them view or consider news stories with the same semantic lens as the blog producers.

Lastly, the study reveals ideologies as fundamental social cognitions that usually reflect the basic aims, interests, aspirations and values of persons, groups and organisations. In this way, the study likens ideologies to operating systems which control, organise and monitor the social attitudes of groups and members of the groups. This perhaps influences most comments of blog readers that align with the positions and viewpoints expressed in the discourse by bloggers, with regard to the 2006 Israeli- Hezbollah War. It should be recalled that nearly all the values, opinions and interests with regard to the conflict are organised, constructed and woven around the divide between the two key players of the conflict (Israeli and Hezbollah).

These values, opinion and interests, which characterise the various ideologies witnessed in the blog posts, can be said to have informed the rhetorical and ideological posturing in all the blog posts and commentaries examined in this study. Such features like negative lexicalisation of opponents, events and so on, propagation of credibility, emotive use of language, biased opinions and argumentations, persuasive soliciting of support and manipulation of reality are the hall marks of political rhetoric and war blogging that this study has revealed in the course of analyses. In other words, bloggers that address conflict issues through the Mideast blog posts engage in blogging as a social practice through which they activate the above features of rhetoric, perhaps in a bid to participate in matters relating to the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War, thereby drawing sympathies to their own side of the divide.

7.3 Concluding remarks

It is indisputable that authors can use language to shape political ideas which can incite the reader to taking ideological positions to join the vanguard for enacting political, social or cultural change. This dimension of language use underscores the fact that, recently, emphasis is gradually shifting from the analysis of formal properties of language to matters of intense concern in contemporary life. Perhaps, that is why scholars like Fowler, Fairclough and van Dijk focus on the description of language along socio-political dimensions, one of which is language of the media. This is predicated on the basic assumption that language users (especially, media practitioners) encode messages, ideas and information which can only be decoded by analysts with background in critical linguistics, critical methods and critical thinking.

Today, with the advent of modern technology, of which the Internet and other elements of the New Media represent, the coding of information is shifting gradually from the old media to the New Media. Coding now takes place in different semiotic models, which include visual, verbal, gestural, audio, video, photographic, literary and artistic forms. The emergence of this new technology, however, has not undermined the communicative potentials of language, but merely serves to complement its use, especially in a bid to achieve these social and political goals.

Blogging is one of such instances where language functions (in conjunction with other semiotic devices listed above) to mask the ideological potentials of communication in discourse. Ideology makes artificial social constructs look real (that is, like reality) and it lends credence to social actions that are inimical to

people's condition. It is for this reason that we embark on the study of rhetorical posturing in Mideast blog posts, using the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war as a reference point, with a view to determining the extent to which the blog owners use linguistic and other semiotic devices to get the blog readers into believing that they have made appropriate choices of response to the postings read when, in actual fact, their behaviour and opinions have been manipulated and controlled by forces beneath their awareness.

This study has embarked on a critical analysis of blogging to show that discourses that are 'intended' to exploit recipients can be challenged. The understanding that may be gained in this process may assist the potential victims (of manipulation), especially the blog readers, to escape from the role of victim, as hidden ideologies of the blog authors are unveiled. In other words, through the insight offered by this study, the blog readers now have the opportunity to observe power relationship in the blog discourse and the knowledge gained in this process can offer them an escape from bloggers' exploitation or manipulation.

7.4 Further research directions

This study has merely investigated rhetorical and ideological posturing in Mideast blog posts and commentaries, using the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah face-off as a guide. The investigation is restricted mainly to postings and commentaries that address the war, analysing and discussing the viewpoints expressed by bloggers and blog readers and discovering the extent to which ideological orientations influence their horizons and worldview on issues in the posts. The limitation of the study has therefore pointed attentions to areas of further research.

Since this research is a description of rhetorical posturing in postings and commentaries, which does not proffer solution to the long-standing conflicts in the Middle East, it is evident that further research is needed in the areas of immediate and remote causes of incessant conflicts in this region of the world. This may interest researchers in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies who may wish to offer permanent solution to the long-standing conflict between Arabs and the Jews.

It is also part of the limitation of this study that ideology is not studied from the cognitive perspective where ideas and thoughts are packed into linguistic communication like a container. For instance, conceptual metaphors and metonymies may be related in a way that they experience semantic shift from figures of speech to conceptual systems that may interest a cognitive linguistic researcher on the intricate bond between language and ideology.

Other veritable research areas in blogging or the New media include ‘unveiling of the hidden power of language in Weblogs; ‘the use of blogging for improvement in language learning’, especially in the areas of virtual communication, reading and writing proficiency, social or classroom interactions and so on.

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