**Lexical Signaling in US Presidential Statements on Islam**
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**Abstract**

The current study aims at investigating the implementation of lexical signaling in US presidential statements on Islam. The study established the notion of lexical signaling through examining different approaches to the phenomenon. The relational conceptual approach to lexical signaling (Marco 1999) was adopted in the analysis of the selected texts. This approach showed its effectiveness in analyzing the selected presidential statements and uncovering the attitudes of the text makers towards Islam.

## 1. Introduction

Any discourse contains signals that indicate the relation between its different parts and help the reader interpret the text. The signals that indicate how the different parts of a text contribute to developing a topic facilitate the interpretation of the text by the reader. According to Marco, these signals are used by the writer for several purposes, such as labeling parts of the text, fragmenting a text into segments or evaluating information (Marco 1997: 203).

Lexical signaling also participates in showing the attitudes of the text makers and how they approach the information presented in the text. This is referred to as the writer – text relation. The notion of lexical signaling is based on a common hypothesis that there are certain type of vocabulary that has the characteristics of open- class lexical items and the function of closed – class functional items. They connect he part of the text without the need to establish grammatical relations.

Throughout this study, the notion of lexical signaling is investigated from different points of view regarding their types and functions. The study starts by establishing the notion of lexical signaling by examining different definitions and opinions. Then, one of these taxonomies is used to analyze the selected texts to reach the main conclusions about the types and functions of lexical signaling used by the US administration regarding Islam.

## 2. Lexical Signaling

The concept of signaling is related both to the question of how the reader interprets the message, and to the writer's devices to encode this message in the best way. As Hoey (1983: 178) suggests, signaling involves a talk between writer and reader: "When a relation is signaled a message is being

communicated about the way in which the discourse should be interpreted. The writer/speaker is telling his or her reader to interpret the juxtaposition of the parts of his or her discourse in a particular way".

Some interesting research has been done on the way the patterns of discourse are signaled, paying special attention to lexical signals. The underlying idea of most studies is that lexical signals point to some type of formal schema (or superstructure).

Widdowson (1983: 92-94) investigates in detail the nature of procedural vocabulary and establishes a distinction between procedural and schematic vocabulary (henceforth PV and SV). PV consists of words with a high indexical potential, which means that they can be interpreted in a wide range of ways. For instance, the word '*material*' can be used in different types of discourse to refer to different objects. SV items, by contrast, are schematically bound and have a high degree of symbolic specificity.

Hoey believes that there is a large number of lexical items whose prime function is to make explicit the semantic relations that may exist between two clauses, sentences or groups of sentences. Examples of this vocabulary are words such as *reason, lead to, different* and *generally*. These items have the grammatical properties of open-class lexis; they can be modified and may fill any of the functional slots of the clause. But their meanings overlap heavily with the meanings of items that are recognizably drawn from closed sets (Hoey 1993:67).

Winter (1977) notes that this vocabulary, which he terms "vocabulary 3", broadly parallels in function the subordinators (vocabulary 1) and conjuncts (vocabulary 2). These items appear to be on a continuum between open- and closed system meaning. The open system is to be observed in their lexical behavior in the clause; the closed-system in their connective behaviour in discourse (Winter 1977:2).

Clause relations is a study of the various relations which connect one sentence with another as members of a sequenced discourse. These relations are finite and few in number and can be named by this special vocabulary, e.g., *achievement, affirm, cause, compare, deny, different, effect, example, follow, mean, method, purpose, reason, result, reverse, same, similar, time, true, unique*, etc.

Many scholars provided various taxonomies for the types of relations that can be signaled lexically in a text. Sager et al. (1980: 77) proposes that the following relations are associated with concepts in scientific discourse:

1. Classification or categorization, by means of which the concept is ascribed to a class.
2. Assignment of properties.
3. Differentiation. Concepts are discriminated and various relationships are established between them.

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4. Operations. Concepts interact, and have different effects, with other concepts.

## 3. Lexical Signaling Relations

Marco's (1999) corpus study provide a detailed account for signaling relations and the vocabulary that realize those relations. She recognizes nine relations that can be signaled lexically:

### 3.1 Identity relations

Identity relations include the similarity, correspondence, and equivalence relations. Similarity is a relation of resemblance that holds between two schematic items. Correspondence relation is very close to the similarity relation, but it differs from it in that it implies a one-to-one relation between the different elements of two sets. The equivalence relation can be expressed in the following way: X is equal to Y with regard to some purpose. The two concepts are not exactly the same, but under certain circumstances they have the same use, function, value. It includes even subjective equivalence that the author of the text think of by using vocabulary such as *be considered, be interpreted as, be regarded as, be thought of as* (Marco1999: 8-10).

### 3.2 Difference relation

The defining items that signal this relation state explicitly that the two concepts they link are different in some way. Thus, there is a correspondence between this relation and that of identity: the difference relation could be considered as the negative counterpart of the identity relation (ibid: 10).

The close relationship between the terms signaling this relation and those signaling similarity is a result of the sharing of the same function: to compare. In the case of similarity relations the comparison may be with members of the same class or with other objects. Difference is a relation holding mostly between members of the same class or between objects that would be expected to share some characteristics, therefore creating the effect of counter-expectation. The items that indicate this relation are: *as opposed to, be different from, be dissimilar, be distinct from, be distinguished from, be opposite, be unlike, differ from* (Marco1999: 10).

### 3.3 Inclusion relations

These are unidirectional relations, which imply that the defining items used will depend on which element is assigned the focus. These relations convey the idea either of possession or of containment. According to Van Dijk (1977), the natural ordering would be: possessor—possessed, container—contained, general-particular, whole-part (p.43). But the order is reversed when the given information is the part or the specific case, which is being defined or described by using the whole and the general concept. According to Marco (1999) these

relations include class membership relation which holds between a concept (subordinate term) and the class to which it belongs (superordinate term) (p.11).

According to Marco (1999) there are some particular cases of the class-membership relation. The example occurs when an element is presented as the example of a particular class of elements, or of a particular concept. It is signalled by the following items: *as illustrated by, be exemplified by, be represented by, be an example of, be prototype of, be representative of*. There are items that signal scale relations within a class. The defining items signal that an object (designated by a plural or collective noun) varies between two points within a scale. The following items simultaneously signal a class-membership relation, by indicating the different forms that something can take, and inform about some physical characteristics of the concepts: *occur as X to Y, range from... to, vary from... to* (p.11).

Composition/part-whole relation is another inclusion relation which identifies something as being a part or portion of something else. According to Marco (1999: 12), there are some relations similar to the part-whole relation where the emphasis is put not so much on the constituents or parts of the whole but on other aspects. In a whole-piece relation, the distinction between this relation lies in the difference between the concepts 'part' and 'piece'. Cruse (1986: 158) differentiates them by attributing three characteristics to parts absent in pieces: 'autonomy, non-arbitrary boundaries and determinate function with respect to the whole.' The items signalling this relation are: *be a fragment of, be a piece of, be a portion of*.

### 3.4 Exclusion relation
This is the negative counterpart of inclusion relations. According to Marco (1999: 14), an element that is expected to appear is revealed to be lacking or is excluded from a group. There is also an implicit comparison with members of the same class that possess that element.

### 3.5 Process relation
In this case defining items are used to indicate the process that links the two items. According to Marco, there are three different types of process relations: origin or product relation, cause-result relation, and change relation.

In origin or product relation, the items that signal origin are: *arise from, be a derivative of, be a product of, come from, derive from, develop from, originate from*. The items that indicate product are used to provide more details in the identification of a concept by stating its products, or to introduce the definition of something by stating first the origin: *give rise to, give way to, yield* (Marco 1999: 14).

In a cause-result relation, the cause relation between two elements can be expressed by the following defining items: *be due to, be produced by/from, be the result of, result from*. In this case the lexical item links the defined concept

not to the concept of which it is a product, but to the event that has caused it (Marco 1999: 14).

In a change relation, the item is used to state that there has been a change, whereby the original element has developed giving way to something different. The explanation of the concept is concerned with a process instead of a state, and therefore the verbs are not stative, but dynamic: *be converted to, become, branch into, evolve into, transform into*.

### 3.6 Function relation
This relation expresses the goal, function or use of something. This relation may be further subdivided into inherent function and use. The items that signal the inherent function attributed to a concept are: *act as, act to, behave like, function as, have a role in, play the role of, play a part in, provide, serve as*. The items that signal use indicate that something is used deliberately in order to achieve a purpose: *be useful for, be used for, be chosen as, employ as* (ibid:16).

### 3.7 Spatial relation
The item expressing this relation signals the location of an element or the disposition of the element with regard to others. Some items express what could be called existence: *be found in, exist in* (ibid).

### 3.8 Relations between the concept and its physical characteristics
In this case the item does not establish relations between concepts but is used to explain some measurable or observable features of a concept. Defining items act as links between a concept and its features. The main way to express physical characteristics and attributes is by means of be + adjective, but there are other defining items related to the expression of particular features. The most common way to express the size and dimensions is by means of two verbs (Have and be) which are devoid of lexical meaning. Appearance: shape, colour, etc., is consists of general terms denoting the properties that objects have: (adjective)-coloured, (noun)-shaped, be + (adjective) + in shape, have a (noun)- like appearance, in the form of, look, shape (in a possessive construction), with a + (adjective) + component, in shades of(Marco 1999: 17).

### 3.9 Quantity modification relation
The items that signal this relation are peculiar in that they never appear on their own, but they always modify other defining items, mostly those that indicate composition, in order to make the proportion between the different elements explicit to a certain degree: *a high/small percentage of, a variety of, amounts of, number of, (cardinal number) + part(s) of* (ibid).


### 4.  Methodology
This study attempts to analyze the lexical signaling relations in US presidential statements in relation to Islam.

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The selected texts include two presidential statements. The first text is "Relations With Islamic Nations" by Jimmy Carter, February 07, 1980 (Text1). This text represents sympathy with Islamic faith in the era of the cold war when the United States provided support for the Islamic fighters on their war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The second text is "Islam is Peace" by George W. Bush, September 17, 2001(Text2). This statement was a week after the 9/11 attacks and the acts of violence against the Islamic community in the US.

The text will be analyzed using Marco (1999) framework of Lexical Signaling Relations. The aim of the analysis is to account for the frequency of lexical signaling and the types of relations represented by it in this genre of texts.

## 5. The Analysis

### 5.1 Text 1: "Relations With Islamic Nations" by Jimmy Carter

The text contains 28 sentences and 504 words of which 40 lexical signals are used. This means that the total signal per sentence is 1.42 and the percentage of lexical signals on the total number of words in the text is 7.9 %. The frequency of each relation is shown in the following table:

**Table 1: frequency and percentage of signaling relations of text 1**

| Signaling relation | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Identity | 9 | 22.5 |
| Difference | 0 | 0 |
| Inclusion | 9 | 22.5 |
| Exclusion | 4 | 10 |
| Process | 10 | 25 |
| Function | 2 | 5 |
| Spatial | 0 | 0 |
| Physical | 0 | 0 |
| Quality modification | 6 | 15 |
| Total | 40 | |

### 5.2 Text 2: "Islam is Peace" by George W. Bush

The text contains 35 sentences and 470 words of which 27 lexical signals are used. This means that the total signal per sentence is 0.77 and the percentage of lexical signals on the total number of words in the text is 5.1 %. The frequency of each relation is shown in the following table:

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**Table 2: frequency and percentage of signaling relations of text 2**

| Signaling relation | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Identity | 4 | 14.8 |
| Difference | 0 | 0 |
| Inclusion | 6 | 22.2 |
| Exclusion | 6 | 22.2 |
| Process | 3 | 11.1 |
| Function | 1 | 3.7 |
| Spatial | 1 | 3.7 |
| Physical | 0 | 0 |
| Quality modification | 6 | 22.2 |
| Total | 27 | |

## 5.3 Results and Discussion

Throughout the analysis of the selected texts, it was obvious that lexical signaling vocabulary represents a significant amount of the total vocabulary used in the whole selected texts. The statistical calculation even revealed that lexical signaling is implemented almost once every sentence.

The distribution and frequency of lexical signals revealed similarities and differences in the style and attitudes of the two presidents in question toward Islamic belief. The main point of similarity is that both presidents rely less on factual lexical signals like spatial and temporal relations. They would rather utilize more abstract approximational types of lexical signals. This is represented in the high frequency in using identity, inclusion and exclusion signaling relations. In both texts, the inclusion relation was highly utilized and both presidents use the word "share" frequently. Both Carter and Bush reflected the relations of identity and inclusion of Islam with the American traditions and community and excluded any extremist doctrine from the mainstream Islamic traditions.

However, depending on the historical circumstances of each statement, the use of lexical signaling and its distribution seems to be different. In the case of Carter's statement, it is obvious that the process relation has higher frequency than other relation. This is due to the support of US administration to Islamic fighters against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. In the case of Bush's statement, however, the function relation seems to be in its lowest frequency. It seems that the US administration is not willing to provide any real support to Islamic community in the US after the 9/11 attacks. Bush's statement was merely an act of sympathy without further actual support.

## 6. Conclusions

The current study proved that lexical signaling has an essential rule in providing textual and attitudinal resources of connectivity to the text.Unlike scientists,

politicians do not rely heavily on physical, temporal, or spatial relations when encoding their text. They would rather signal the textual relations by means of similarities and differences between the concepts represented in their discourse. Lexical signaling is significantly used in US administration discourse towards Islam. The US administration discourse towards Islam does not seem to have changed across the 20 years between the two texts. The signaling relations showed general endorsement of the Islamic traditions and the exclusion of any extremist behavior from the mainstream belief. The difference between the events surrounding the two statements showed a significant strategy shift in using the signaling relations with different frequencies.

الإشارات المعجمية في البيانات الرئاسية الأمريكية حول الإسلام

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإشارات المعجمية ، البيانات الرئاسية الأمريكية

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الملخص

يهدف البحث الحالي إلى دراسة تطبيق التأشير المعجمي في البيانات الرئاسية الأمريكية على الإسلام. أسست الدراسة مفهوم التأشير المعجمي من خلال دراسة مناهج مختلفة للظاهرة. تم اعتماد المنهج المفاهيمي العلائقي للتأشير المعجمي (Marco ١٩٩٩) في تحليل النصوص المختارة. وقد أظهرت هذه المنهجية فعاليتها في تحليل البيانات الرئاسية المختارة وكشف اتجاهات و ميول صناع النصوص تجاه الإسلام.

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## Appendix 1: Analysis of text 1

| Sign. No. | Sentence no. | Lexical signal | Relation type |
|-----------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 | 1 | long compared | Quantity modification |
| 2 | 4 | Close | Quantity modification |
| 3 | 4 | Valued | Quantity modification |
| 4 | 4 | Ties | Inclusion |
| 5 | 5 | Recognize | Function |
| 6 | 6 | Includes | Inclusion |
| 7 | 6 | Vigorous | Quantity modification |
| 8 | 8 | Represent | Inclusion |
| 9 | 9 | Share | Identity |
| 10 | 10 | Share | Identity |
| 11 | 12 | Common | Identity |
| 12 | 13 | Continue | Function |
| 13 | 14 | Share | Identity |
| 14 | 14 | Behave | Process |
| 15 | 15 | Relationship | Identity |
| 16 | 15 | Friendship | Identity |
| 17 | 16 | Friendship | Identity |
| 18 | 16 | Reject | Exclusion |
| 19 | 16 | To make | Process |
| 20 | 16 | Barrier | Exclusion |
| 21 | 16 | Bridge | Inclusion |

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| 22 | 17 | Strengthen | Process |
|---|---|---|---|
| 23 | 17 | Bonds | Inclusion |
| 24 | 17 | Friendship | Inclusion |
| 25 | 18 | Support | Process |
| 26 | 18 | Resist | Process |
| 27 | 19 | Resolve | Process |
| 28 | 19 | Including | Inclusion |
| 29 | 19 | Affect | Process |
| 30 | 20 | Rejection | Exclusion |
| 31 | 21 | Making | Process |
| 32 | 21 | Against | Exclusion |
| 33 | 21 | as fierce as | Quantity modification |
| 34 | 22 | Share | Identity |
| 35 | 24 | Share | Identity |
| 36 | 25 | Twisted | Process |
| 37 | 26 | Ingrained | Inclusion |
| 38 | 27 | Closest | Quantity modification |
| 39 | 27 | Ties | Inclusion |
| 40 | 28 | Not changed | Process |

## Appendix 2: Analysis of text 2

| Sign. No. | Sentence no. | Lexical signal | Relation type |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | wide-ranging | Quality modification |
| 2 | 3 | Like | identity |
| 3 | 4 | all across | Spatial |
| 4 | 5 | Friends | Inclusion |
| 5 | 5 | Citizens | Inclusion |
| 6 | 6 | Violate | Exclusion |
| 7 | 8 | not as eloquent as | Quality modification |
| 8 | 8 | Evil | Exclusion |
| 9 | 9 | rejected | Exclusion |

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| 11 | 13 | don't represent | Exclusion |
|----|----|-----------------|-----------|
| 12 | 14 | Represent | Inclusion |
| 13 | 15 | around | Spatial |
| 14 | 17 | Brothers and sisters | identity |
| 15 | 17 | Race | identity |
| 16 | 18 | Counts | Quality modification |
| 17 | 18 | make | process |
| 18 | 18 | Incredibly | Quality modification |
| 19 | 18 | contribution | functin |
| 20 | 20 | Treated | process |
| 21 | 21 | treat | process |
| 22 | 26 | Some | Quality modification |
| 23 | 27 | not  stand | Exclusion |
| 24 | 28 | don't represent | Exclusion |
| 25 | 28 | Represent | Inclusion |
| 26 | 30 | Share | identity |
| 27 | 33 | as much as | Quality modification |