

The First Elections in the New Iraq in 2005: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This paper analyses a news story published on the BBC news website, reporting the first elections for a full-term government to replace the interim one which took over after Saddam's fall in 2003. The focus of this study is on the macro- and micro-semantics of the news story and ideological representations. To carry out this study, the researcher employs van Dijk's (1980) theory of Semantic Macrostructure to examine the news discourse at the macro-level and micro-level, and van Dijk's (1998) theory of ideology to investigate group ideology at both levels. Utilising Wodak's (2001) discourse-historical approach, the linguistic and ideological analyses are supported by background information where a historical and political critique is provided to ensure objectivity in the process of interpretation. The findings of the macro- and micro-semantics are identical and they reflect the dichotomy between the in-group and out-group stance towards New Iraq whereby positive self-representation and negative other-representation are explicitly and implicitly manifested respectively in the text of the news story.

Keywords: New Iraq, Iraq elections 2005, semantic macrostructure, group ideology, discourse-historical approach, critical discourse analysis

1. Introduction

Williams (2004) and Yang (2004) emphasised the importance of the online news media, especially with regard to political and security issues. Yang (2004) stated that the Iraq war which started in March 2003 has attracted more online news readers to follow up the consequences of this war which ultimately led to establish democracy in Iraq.

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Ward (2002) and Tumber and Palmer (2004) mentioned that the BBC is one of the leading news providers. A case in point to mention, Ward (2002), Lacey (1998), and Daim (2004) pointed out that the BBC considers ethical matters, integrity, and impartiality. The BBC news website has given much attention to Iraq's politics since the 2003 Iraq war by creating the category **Struggle For Iraq** in the Middle East news.

Ramesh (2004) has stressed that many define the 2003 Iraq war as a historic turning point as it may have had profound effects on the Arab countries. As such, this has urged the researcher to investigate one of the positive consequences of this war so far, at least at this point of time. The researcher also thinks that there is a need to conduct research that examines how linguistic and ideological structures are presented in this news discourse. This requires employing a critical discourse analysis approach to examine the BBC's news story.

2. Background to the Study

Hashem (1991) stated that Iraq has never been stable since 1958 and that hundreds of thousands were tortured, jailed, exiled or killed during the wars waged against Iran in 1980 and against Kuwait in 1990. Pestalardo (2006) stated that George W. Bush in his televised address gave Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein, forty-eight hours to leave Iraq or he would be removed from power by force; Saddam refused to leave. On 20 March 2003, the US-led coalition troops waged the war against Iraq. Rahim (1991) mentioned that in 1968, a military coup brought the Baath Party of Iraq into power. In 1979, the President of Iraq at that time, al-Bakr was removed when the Revolutionary Command Council of Baath Party was chaired by Saddam. After that, Saddam became the leader of this party and thus the President of Iraq by then until April 2003.

According to Pipes (1983), Iraq's majority are Shia Muslims (55 to 60%), and the Sunni Muslims make up around (35 to 40%) including the Arabs and Kurds; whereas, the non-Muslims are about 5%. Pipes (1983) said that when the Baathists came to power, the Sunni domination over power re-asserted more than ever before. Pipes (1983), Keddie and (1983) Rubin (1983) argued that even though the Shias in Iraq are the majority, they have been continuously oppressed and marginalised thus causing them discontent; the minority Iraqi Kurds (mostly Sunnis) are no exception.

Owing to all these negative political situations practised by Saddam's regime and his Baath Party, Saddam and his gigantic military force have to come to an end.

The oppressed Iraqis have long waited for a savior, and it was through the US-led coalition forces.

On April 9, 2003, the Iraqis headed towards Firdouz Square in Baghdad where Saddam's huge bronze statue was erected aloft. They pulled the statue down and the scene was broadcast live and it has received wide media coverage. As such, the following headlines were reported by the UK and US media as cited by Tumber and Palmer(2004, pp.108-110): "Grateful civilians welcomed [the UK forces] who liberated Basra", "This joyous moment recalls the deposition of scores of statues of Lenin...", "A giant concrete and metal statue of Saddam Hussein with his arm outstretched [...] pulled down in a dramatic scene [...]", and "Saddam statue toppled in central Baghdad. Crowds cheer as a statue of Saddam Hussein falls". This scene marks Saddam's regime collapse which marks the beginning of a New Iraq which will be briefly discussed in the subsequent section.

3.New Iraq (2003 –Present)

Soon after Saddam's fall in April 2003, the phrase, New Iraq, began to be used by Iraqi politicians and citizens through speeches, slogans and social practices as well as in the media, emphasising signs of democracy and regime change outcomes. For example, Ramesh (2004) mentioned that not only political freedom appeared in Iraq after Saddam's fall, but also freedom of religious practices when some Shia pilgrims chanted anti-American slogans while commemorating the death of Imam Hussein [once banned under Saddam] in Karbala. Ramesh added that the Iraqi Communist Party raised red flags and a banner saying "A free country for joyful people" (p.267). While, others set up the toppled regime's premises for their parties such as The Liberal Democratic Movement, The National Arab Democratic Movement, and National Congress. Ramesh stressed that the "seeds of democracy were undeniably being planted in Iraq" (p.267). Among the dramatic transformations is the appearance of many media agencies. One of the first leading satellite TV channels is the state TV *al-Iraqiya*.

The channel also streams online round the clock through the official website, *Iraqi Media Net* through which one can also access other media outlets such as *Republic of Iraq Radio* and *al-Sabaah* newspaper which belong to this institution which is financially supported by the government and monitored by the Parliament of the day.

Furthermore, New Iraq has also established the Ministry of Human Rights to monitor the abuses of human rights and to tackle and monitor human rights issues; human rights is being taught in schools now. Signs of freedom of speech can be seen through a number of programs broadcast live and repeated on the Iraqi TV channels and radios to evaluate the performance of the ministers and parliament members. For instance, the program, *Let's chit-chat* which was once broadcast over a period of time on both *al-Iraqiya* TV and *Radio of Iraq Republic* and the program, *Human Rights in Iraq* broadcast on *Radio Free Iraq* aim to educate the Iraqis about democracy and human rights. Scenes of religious rituals that were forbidden under Saddam can be seen reported and broadcast live on some Iraqi TV channels.

4.Past studies on the Iraq war 2003

The Iraq war has attracted many researchers from various disciplines. Some researchers such as White (2004), Eid (2004), Williams (2004), Sjoberg (2004), Geary (2004), Crotty (2005), Jaramillo (2006) and Zheng (2006) focused on how the media framed the war, international communication and political crisis management. These researchers have mostly conducted a quantitative content analysis approach in their studies.

Tumber and Palmer (2004) examined the themes of reporting such as attention to Iraqi civilian casualties or balance between Iraqis welcoming/not welcoming the coalition forces which reflect positive and negative presentations respectively. They analysed the media coverage of the combat phase (20 March 2003 - 17 April 2003). They sampled the channels of *BBC1*, *ITN*, *Sky News* and *BBC News 24* besides the national newspapers: *The Sun*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian*. The purpose of their study was to monitor the Iraq war news themes after the fall of Saddam's regime.

Lee's (2004) sampling included articles, editorials and opinion pages gathered between the start of the war on 20 March 2003 and the US official declaration of the end of the war on 1 May 2003.

Lee employed a quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis to analyse 502 stories in total. Lee examined a number of dimensions: emphasis on war efforts, the effects of war on society, the anti-war voice, and the war victims.

Lee's (2004) study showed national interests of the sampled newspapers which reflected two opposing tendencies. *The New York Times* emphasised U.S. war efforts in terms of military operations and war victims of coalition forces citing primarily U.S. officials; whereas the two Arabic newspapers (*The Arab News* of Saudi Arabia and *The Middle East Times* of Egypt) allocated more space to anti-war voices citing mainly Arab sources and reporting war effects on society and Iraqi victims.

Thompson's (2006) study has revealed how the Bush administration persuaded the American people to launch the war against Saddam. Kim's (2006) study of the Iraq war was to see *The Time's* portrayal of the war through the magazine's published photographs over nearly one year, from 13 January 2003 to 29 December 2003. His purpose was to see the dominant ideologies of the war from an American viewpoint via the U.S soldiers. 12 photographic packages were examined in terms of content or absence of content, layout and visual style.

Based on the literature reviewed in this respect, the researcher believes that there is a need to explore the language reporting this war. As such, he attempts to examine the Iraq war linguistically and ideologically by analysing macro and micro structures in the BBC's news report on the first general elections which took place in 2005, after the removal of Saddam from power.

5.Objectives

- 1) To identify the semantic macrostructure of the news report
- 2) To identify the semantic microstructures in terms of syntactic, lexical and rhetorical choices used in the news report
- 3) To reveal the participants' ideology in this news report

6.Theoretical framework

To analyse the news discourse in question, the researcher utilised Dijk's (1980; 1988a; 1988b) Semantic Macrostructures, van Dijk's (1998) Ideological Square (in-group vs. out-group's ideology), and Wodak's (2001) discourse-historical approach which are further highlighted and shown below in Figure 1.

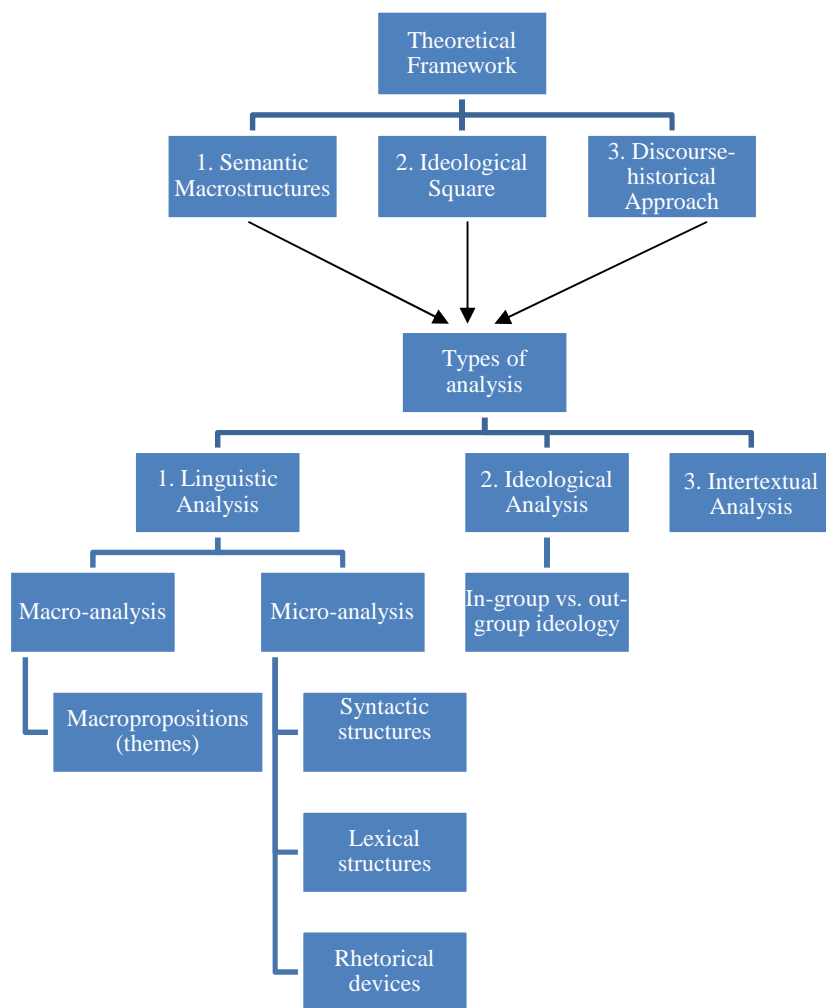


Figure 1: The Theoretical Framework of the Study [Adopted from Al-Shaibani (2011)]

As seen from the figure above, this study involves three types of analysis. Firstly, the linguistic analysis includes the derivation of semantic macrostructure of the whole news story as well as examining the micro-structures (syntactic, lexical and rhetorical). Secondly, the ideological analysis is carried out at both levels (macro and micro) to reveal the ideology of the news participants (actors, patients, their references, and the BBC's journalist). Whilst, the intertextual analysis, which depends on the historical and socio-political contexts provided in the background to the study and New Iraq (2003–present) sections, is to be integrated into the interpretation process where necessary at any level. This theoretical framework is further explained through the analysis process.

7. Analysis and Discussion

7.1 Thematic Structures(Derivation of the Semantic Macrostructure)

Topics in a news story are represented in the form of macropropositions. These macropropositions are further reduced to more general topics as seen in the sub-headings. The derivation of the semantic macrostructure is achieved through a systematic process called macro-rules which include generalisation, deletion, and construction. That is, a number of macropropositions which revolves around the same topic can be summarised to a more general macroproposition by deleting the details. This process can be repeated a number of times to reach at the overall macroproposition which is called the Semantic Macrostructure of the whole news story. Macropropositions can be reached through certain inferences based on the analyst and reader's knowledge about the topic in question (van Dijk, 1980; 1988a; 1988b). Therefore, sufficient information was provided in the Background to the study and New Iraq (2003–present) sections so that one can digest the process of constructing the Semantic Macrostructure (SM).

At this first stage of analysis, the topics/themes covered in the news story – (see Appendix 1) – are summarised as shown below to five main macropropositions (M1-M5) from which the Semantic Macrostructure (SM) is derived and thus summarising the whole news story.

M1: The elections for the first full-term government to rule Iraq for four years were marked with bombing attacks in a number of provinces and towns.

M2: Arab Sunnis, who boycotted the previous elections for the transitional government, are participating in great numbers this time.

M3: The US and UK are optimistic about the elections and the future of a democratic Iraq.

M4: The bomb attacks are meant to frighten and kill the voters indiscriminately and to disrupt the elections. That is why security measures are stringent across Iraq.

M5: The Iraqis are keen about practicing democracy.

The above five main macropropositions (M1-M5) can be summarised to a more general macroproposition which represents the Semantic Macrostructure (SM) of the news story. Consider Table 1 below.

Table 1: Derivation of the Semantic Macrostructure (SM)

Macroproposition no.	Semantic Macrostructure (SM)	Macrorules application
M1-M5	Iraq election is a milestone as it is for a New Democratic Iraq.	Formed from the main five macropropositions

The semantic macrostructure, *'Iraq election is a milestone as it is for a New Democratic Iraq'*, is briefly structured from the main five macropropositions (M1-M5) as shown above in the table. Moreover, this semantic macrostructure is congruent with the headline macroproposition. This reveals that the headline, *'Iraqis vote in landmark election'*, relatively conforms to the semantic macrostructure, *'Iraq election is a milestone as it is for a New Democratic Iraq'*; however, the headline did not provide more details as in the macrostructure due to space restrictions that are normally imposed on headlines. The macrostructure which is inferred from the whole article through the main five macropropositions (M1-M5) explains why the election event is a milestone which is, in turn, explained in the subordinate clause 'as it is for a New Democratic Iraq'. The clause is missing in the headline because headlines do not give details about events and this makes them subjective.

7.1.1 The Semantic Macrostructure and Group Ideology

In terms of van Dijk's (1998) Ideological Square, this semantic macrostructure, therefore, bears something positive and good for the previously oppressed people as well as those who are interested in the good news on post-Saddam Iraq, i.e. the in-group members. It could also be bad news for the out-group members represented by the insurgents or al-Qaeda and those who oppose the current political process that is taking place in the New Iraq. The Sunni al-Qaeda in Iraq constantly targets Iraqi civilians and troops (al-Shaibani, 2011), and in this story against polling stations across the country. In a broader context, this semantic macrostructure may also be neutral to other readers. In addition, the reliance on the background information provided facilitates the interpretation of the macrostructure and the ideological representations thoroughly.

Table 2 below demonstrates van Dijk's (1998) Ideological Square pertaining to the semantic macrostructure of the news story.

Table 2: The Semantic Macrostructure and Group Ideology

Semantic macrostructure	Van Dijk's (1998) Ideological Square
Iraq election is a milestone as it is for a New Democratic Iraq.	In-group: good news vs. out-group: bad news others: neutral

7.1.2 The Semantic Macrostructure and Wodak's (2001) Approach

To further elaborate the constructed macrostructure, *'Iraq election is a milestone as it is for a New Democratic Iraq'*, examine Table 3 below. Iraq election is a milestone because of at least three reasons. First, it is taking place under extraordinary conditions in the country whereby the insurgents are carrying out different attacks, such as suicide bomb attacks, bombings in many areas, and mortar attacks, targeting mainly the Iraqi civilians. Second, the Arab Sunnis, who boycotted the transitional government elections earlier that year (2005), are participating in great numbers this time which is an indication of political improvement. Finally and most importantly, the election is to establish a democratic Iraq and also because it is for the first full-term government since the invasion in 2003. In this case, the reliance on the background information provided in the story itself as well as in the background part presented earlier helped to explicate the constructed semantic macrostructure.

Table 3: Semantic Macrostructure and the Application of Wodak's (2001) Approach

Semantic macrostructure	Wodak's (2001) approach: Background information
Iraq election is a milestone as it is for a New Democratic Iraq.	helped to explicate the constructed macrostructure

At this juncture, the researcher has semantically analysed the themes covered in the story and has explained how the semantic macrostructure was constructed at the global level of macro-semantics. The subsequent stages of analysis will consider the local meanings, i.e. micro-semantics such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. In this way, the whole text is semantically dissected (van Dijk 1988b).

7.2 Syntactic Structures

This stage of analysis focuses on syntax and how words are organised through sentential structures. That is, it deals with word order and syntactic function. To uncover this, a number of sentences will be examined in order to determine whether they are active or passive. The sentences will also be analysed in terms of (major/minor) actor, patient and the sequential order in the sentence and/or in the overall news story. Such issues have been addressed by a number of scholars in the field. For example, van Dijk (1988b) has shown in his analysis of the news discourse that news is fairly structured in a complex way and it is not usual to find a simple clause structure. Moreover, complex sentences are embedded within clauses and nominalised structures. In this news story, various tenses and syntactic structures have been used for different purposes as it will be demonstrated in the examples below.

Example (1): Live reporting in the present

- A) Iraqis *vote* in landmark election
- B) Iraqis *are electing* their first full-term government since the US-led invasion in 2003 amid tight security.
- C) A steady stream of people *are turning out* to vote, say BBC journalists at polling stations across the country.
- D) "Iraqis *are living* a historical moment today - that is the elections..." Baghdad voter Shaab Ahmad told the BBC.
- E) "This *is* a good day and the Iraqi people bear the responsibility to vote for a better future..." Mr Talabani said.

As seen in the above extracts (A-E), the sentences vary in the use of active simple present and present continuous while reporting the event. The first three sentences (A-C), which have been placed in the first three positions in the article that is the headline, the lead, and the paragraph following the Summary category, summarise the event. The first sentence (A) is written in the simple present so as to describe a fact that the *Iraqis vote in landmark election* as in the factual sentence 'bees give honey'; whereas the second and third sentences, (B) and (C), are written in the present continuous to portray the event as something happening now and is still in progress as if the BBC website were broadcasting the election the whole day live and exclusively. This progressive image is supported by the two pictures pasted at the top of the news report page besides the hyperlink, **In pictures: Iraq election**, under the second picture which gives the reader the feeling of live TV reporting.

To accomplish such live reporting, the BBC journalists are distributed “at polling stations across the country” as mentioned in (C). This set of extracts highlights a positive action and a good image of the in-group members – the inclusive *Iraqis*.

As for the two independent clauses *Iraqis are living a historical moment today* in (D) and *This is a good day* in (E), they express two reactions of a voter from the capital Baghdad and of the Iraqi President Talabani respectively; they give the sense of continuity of living the historical moment on the election day. As usual, political news reports are often backed with statements that are quoted from the interviewee (s) in the form of reactions or opinions about the event. Therefore, the BBC writer has selected the excerpts in (D) and (E) to match the event that is in progress and to show that the Iraqis are pleased with the election or democracy. As seen in the example above, the main player in the election is the key actor, the Iraqis, as what Talabani told the BBC in this report, they “bear the responsibility to vote for a better future”.

Example (2): Simple present for description and information

- A) A high turnout from Sunni Arabs, who boycotted the last election, *is* hoped for.
- B) Turnout *is* expected to be much larger than the vote in January, which was largely boycotted by the Sunni Muslim minority.
- C) Sunnis *are* expected to actively participate this time, in a vote for a national assembly that will serve a full four-year term. The current government *is* Shia-dominated.
- D) Some 15 million Iraqis *are* eligible to vote.
- E) Iraqis *have to* walk to polling stations as vehicles have been banned to prevent attacks on voters.
- F) The BBC's Jon Leyne, at a polling station in a Baghdad school, says voting *is* very brisk there.
- G) The vote *closes* at 1700 (1400 GMT) but official results are not expected until later in the month.
- H) It *is* the second time this year Iraqis have voted for a new government.
- I) A US Bradley armoured fighting vehicle *patrols* the street outside, and there *is* a heavy presence of mainly Iraqi police and soldiers in the polling station itself, he says.
- J) About 150,000 Iraqi soldiers and police officers *are* on patrol across the country, backed up by US soldiers.

The simple present is used in this example to describe the election and the security measures taken to protect the voters from expected attacks by the insurgents as well as to provide historical and informative backgrounds to the reader. For example, the extracts (A-C) inform the reader that the Arab Sunnis in Iraq are participating in this election in great numbers because they boycotted the previous election. The boycott was a mistake made by the Arab Sunnis and they do not want to repeat it as declared by some Sunni figures on the state TV *al-Iraqiya*. For this reason, the Sunni participation is stressed in three similar sentences. The three extracts also reveal that there is political progress.

Regarding the extracts (D-H), they give descriptive details about the number of eligible voters as in (D), the type of challenge in polling and why it is obligatory to walk as in (E), voting that is happening in a quick and smooth manner as in (F), when voting is over (5pm) as in (G), and finally the number of voting to have a government after the war as in (H), alluding to the transitional government election which occurred earlier in 2005. In addition, extracts (I) and (J) describe the security procedures on the ground taken by the authority to defend the voters against any possible attack that might be launched by the rebels during the election. These two excerpts indicate a war scenario through the use of armoured vehicles and a show of heavy presence of Iraqi and US troops. It also shows that the in-group members (the troops) are in charge of defending their own group members (the Iraqi voters). This demonstrates that the election is happening under abnormal and exceptional conditions; and this, in turn, indicates that the Iraqi people are determined to have a democratic government. Overall, the extracts cited reveal enthusiasm and patriotism on the Iraqi people's part.

Example (3): Reporting a past event

- A) President Jalal Talabani *called on* Iraqis to make it a day of celebration.
- B) Election officials *said* some polling stations in Ramadi and the restive Anbar province, west of Baghdad, *did not* immediately *open* for security reasons. Most *opened* in the northern city of Mosul.
- C) Among the first people to cast their ballot *was* Mr Talabani, who *voted* in the northern city of Sulaimaniya.
- D) The most senior British general in Iraq, Lt Gen Nick Houghton, *told* the BBC the elections give "growing confidence" that coalition forces can begin to withdraw in the "relatively near future, certainly during the first half of next year" if the conditions are right.

- E) ... turnout *has been* very high with few irregularities, US ambassador ZalmayKhalilzad told the Associated Press.
- F) Land borders and airports *have been closed*.
- G) Some 6,655 candidates, 307 parties and 19 coalitions *have registered* for Thursday's ballot, electoral officials say.
- H) Even some insurgent groups *have called on* people to vote, though al-Qaeda describes the elections as the work of Satan.
- I) Despite the stringent security measures, low-level violence *was reported* within minutes of polls opening;
- J) A huge blast *was heard* near the heavily-fortified Green Zone, home to the Iraqi government and a number of Western embassies. There *were* no reports of casualties
- K) Mortar fire *was heard* in a number of areas around Baghdad, with reports of at least two civilians *wounded*
- L) In Mosul, a hospital guard *was killed* when a bomb went off near a polling station, witnesses said
- M) A mortar round *targeted* a polling station in Saddam Hussein's home town of Tikrit
- N) On the eve of voting, bombs *were uncovered and diffused* near a number of polling stations in Baghdad, Falluja and other cities, the US military said

From the extracts (A-N) above, it can be noticed that simple past and present perfect are used to report the event through the use of active and passive forms. The extracts have also given more background information about the election, such as the action phrasal verb *called on* in (A) is euphemistically used as a transitive verb to ask the Iraqis to celebrate the election which symbolizes freedom. The reporting verb *said* in (B) is used to brief the journalists about polling in Anbar and Mosul which are bastions of al-Qaeda in Iraq; whereas *told* in (D) is used to brief the BBC exclusively about when the coalition forces can withdraw from Iraq. The active present perfect as in *has been*, *have registered*, and *have called on* in (E), (G), and (H) respectively is mostly used to provide some background information about the event and to highlight a good action of the in-group members. Simple past sentences in the passive voice form are mostly used to report the consequences of violent acts or bomb attacks, such as *was reported*, *was heard*, *wounded*, *was killed*, and *were uncovered and diffused* in (I), (J), (K), (L) and (N) respectively and thus emphasising a bad action of the out-group members (al-Qaeda).

Example (4): Statistical figures and numerical actor

In this example, some facts are presented in numbers in the report to provide some background information about the elections. For a clearer presentation, consider the table below.

Table 4: Numerical Actor in the News Story

No.	Actor	Verb form	Complement	Tense	Voice type
A	275-seat National Assembly	will have	four-year term	Simple future	Active
B	18 provinces	are taken	as separate constituencies	Simple present	Passive
C	230 seats	[are] allocated	according to size of population	Simple present	Passive
D	45 seats	[are] distributed	to parties whose ethnic, religious or political support is spread over more than one province	Simple present	Passive
E	Over 14 million	[are]	eligible to vote	Simple present	Active
F	One third of candidates in each party	must be	women	Simple present	Active

As it can be seen from the table above, it is interesting to find various numerical actors in the six tabulated sentences (A-F) as they provide very detailed information about the elections in terms of numbers. For example, (A) informs the reader about the number of seats in the forthcoming Iraqi parliament, the National Assembly. (B) informs the reader about the number of provinces in Iraq which are considered separately to see the election results of each province. (C) and (D) give more specific numbers about the (275) parliamentary seats which shows how rigorous the seat allocation is. (E) estimates the number of eligible voters. Finally, (F) shows that women are not marginalised in the New Iraq as it is a must to have female candidates at least one third in each party. Such statistical information has not only been topicalised, but also it gives prominence as it occupies the actor position in all the six sentences, and that the equal use of active and passive voice is to make such prominence noticeable.

This example shows that the function of these numbers is to enhance the idea of democracy in Iraq to the reader. Pertaining to the missing 'are' in (C), (D), and (E), it is meant for brevity because this information is provided as a side text in a box in the second column.

7.3 Lexical Structures

This stage of analysis deals with words (lexical items) and phrases (nominals) to reveal how certain choices of words are made which ultimately influence the reader in a negative or positive way. Indeed, these choices are not free from ideological and cultural implications. As mentioned earlier, the news story is mainly about the elections to form the first full-term government after the 2003 invasion to govern the country for four years. It is expected that the news report focuses on the elections topic; however, the news story has also reported security measures and insurgent attacks against civilian targets which concurred with the main event of the story. Consequently, the news report contains elections, security, and war/violence registers. These are respectively discussed in the examples below.

Example (5): Elections Register

- A) *Iraqis vote* in landmark election
- B) *Iraqis are electing* their first full-term government
- C) *A steady stream of people are turning out to vote*
- D) *A high turnout* from Sunni Arabs, who boycotted the last election, is hoped for.
- E) *President Jalal Talabani called on Iraqis* to make it a day of celebration.
- F) Some 15 million Iraqis are *eligible to vote*.
- G) ... *turnout* has been very high with few *irregularities*
- H) *Iraqis have to walk to polling stations* as vehicles have been banned *to prevent attacks on voters*.
- I) ...*the Iraqi people bear the responsibility to vote for* a better future.
- J) We hope that *the people will vote* to keep the constitution
- K) It is the second time this year *Iraqis have voted for a new government*.
- L) *Turnout* is expected to be much larger than *the vote* in January
- M) Sunnis are expected *to actively participate* this time
- N) Even some insurgent groups *have called on people to vote*

Table 5: Frequent Words (Elections Register) in the News Story

Word	Frequency	Total
Iraqis/people/turnout/voter(s)	7/7/3/2	19
Vote (v/n)/electing (v)	9/3/1	13
Election(s)/voting/polls	7/3/2	12
Polling	8	
Boycott	2	
Eligible	2	
Ballot	2	
Candidates	2	
electoral	1	

As it can be seen from the table above, the most frequent word is the action verb *vote* which is used as a verb nine times in the report, and this is expected as the event is about the elections. However, the most frequent actor is the *Iraqis* which has other synonyms or referents as *a steady stream of people*, *turnout*, *Iraqi people*, and *voter(s)*. Using the word *Iraqis* and its referents as an active agent in most of the extracts indicates that the main player in this event is the Iraqi people and it is they themselves who decide the destiny of the candidates as well as the future of the country even when the actor, *voters*, is placed in the patient position as in (H) in the example above. Therefore, the role of the major actor *Iraqis* is positive. The second most repeated word is *polling* which is always associated with its collocation *station(s)* as shown in the example below.

Example (6): Elections Register (polling station(s))

- A) ... say BBC journalists at *polling stations* across the country.
- B) Iraqis have to walk to polling stations
- C) The BBC's Jon Leyne, at a *polling station* in a Baghdad school
- D) ... there is a heavy presence of mainly Iraqi police and soldiers in the *polling station* itself
- E) ... some *polling stations* in Ramadi and the restive Anbar province, west of Baghdad, did not immediately open for security reasons.
- F) In Mosul, a hospital guard was killed when a bomb went off near a *polling station*
- G) A mortar round targeted a *polling station* in Saddam Hussein's home town of Tikrit
- H) On the eve of voting, bombs were uncovered and diffused near a number of *polling stations* in Baghdad, Falluja and other cities

Such a recurrent use is attributed to the main topic of the event that is the elections; and because polling stations are centers for casting the ballots in a democratic manner by dipping the voter's finger in the purple ink-pot "to guard against multiple voting" as highlighted in the first picture's caption, they receive such media attention and security measures to protect the voters from the expected insurgents' attacks. By doing so, the Iraqi troops are protecting the voters, journalists, and democracy (see Example 7 below).

Example (7): Security Register

- A) Iraqis are electing their first full-term government since the US-led invasion in 2003 amid *tight security*.
- B) ...*vehicles have been banned to prevent attacks on voters*.
- C) A US Bradley *armoured fighting vehicle patrols* the street outside, and there *is a heavy presence of mainly Iraqi police and soldiers in the polling station itself*...
- D) *About 150,000 Iraqi soldiers and police officers are on patrol across the country, backed up by US soldiers*.
- E) *Land borders and airports have been closed*.
- F) ... "*we hope to live in stability and security in Iraq, in the north and in the south, east to west*," Baghdad voter Shaab Ahmad told the BBC.
- G) ... *some polling stations in Ramadi and the restive Anbar province, west of Baghdad, did not immediately open for security reasons*.
- H) Despite the *stringent security measures*, low-level violence was reported within minutes of polls opening

The word *security* is used five times in the report which indicates how important security is to the event and it also reveals that the election is held under exceptional conditions. This is asserted through a number of lexical items and nominals, such as *tight security*; *banned*, *prevent*, and *attacks*; *armoured fighting vehicle*, *patrol* and *a heavy presence of mainly Iraqi police and soldiers*; *about 150,000 Iraqi soldiers and police officers*; and *closed* in (A), (B), (C), (D), and (E) respectively. Such security measures are not taken against the occupiers as some readers may think, but against the rebels and al-Qaeda in Iraq who oppose democracy in the New Iraq as highlighted in this report as in "al-Qaeda describes the elections as the work of Satan". This leads the discussion to the following example.

Example (8): War/Violence Register

- A) *Several incidents of violence* were reported soon after polls opened
- B) ... *low-level violence* was reported within minutes of polls opening
- C) *A huge blast* was heard near the heavily-fortified Green Zone, home to the Iraqi government and a number of Western embassies. There were *no reports of casualties*
- D) *Mortar fire* was heard in a number of areas around Baghdad, with reports of at least *two civilians wounded*
- E) In Mosul, *a hospital guard was killed* when *a bomb went off* near a polling station...
- F) *A mortar round* targeted a polling station in Saddam Hussein's home town of Tikrit
- G) On the eve of voting, *bombs were uncovered and diffused* near a number of polling stations in Baghdad, Falluja and other cities...
- H) The most senior British general in Iraq ... told the BBC "... *coalition forces can begin to withdraw* in the 'relatively near future, certainly during the first half of next year' if the conditions are right.

Only two times, the word '*violence*' has been used due to "low-level violence" during the election which was under control by the Iraqi forces on the ground. One may think that nominals such as *a huge blast*, *mortar fire*, *a mortar round* and verbs as *wounded*, *killed*, and *went off* in their respective clauses "two civilians wounded", "a hospital guard was killed", and "a bomb went off" contradict the nominal "low-level violence" during the elections. On the contrary, it is true as these incidents did not inflict many casualties nor too much devastation to the targeted polling stations as it is normally reported in the media in this regard. Moreover, low-level violence is ascribed to the security measures as in (G) above when "bombs were uncovered and diffused" in a number of regions in Iraq. This low-level violence has encouraged the most senior British general in Iraq to deliver his optimistic vision with the conditional *if* to the BBC journalist that the "... coalition forces can begin to withdraw in the 'relatively near future, certainly during the first half of next year' if the conditions are right". It is most likely that the attacks against the polling stations targeting the civilians were launched by al-Qaeda in Iraq as it has already considered and described the elections as a satanic act (see Paragraph 21, Sentence 34). Therefore, the perpetrators are inferred by the reader either through prior knowledge or through the news report itself. This example emphasises the positive in-group acts and the negative out-group acts.

This example implicitly shows that there is war between the Iraqi people (the in-group) and al-Qaeda militants in Iraq (the out-group), not between the Iraqi people and the occupiers or the coalition forces; it also reveals that this war is meant to abort the immature democracy in Iraq by targeting and terrifying the civilians for political goals. As a result, this gives a negative image of the insurgents whose actions are seen as meaningless, if not terrorist. This negativity is further strengthened when the reader realises that al-Qaeda in Iraq is not targeting the occupiers, but the Iraqi people.

Example (9): Optimistic Register

- A) A high turnout from Sunni Arabs, who boycotted the last election, *is hoped for*.
- B) “*we hope* to live in stability and security in Iraq, in the north and in the south, east to west,” Baghdad voter Shaab Ahmad told the BBC.
- C) “*I hope* that the Iraqi people will stay united. *We hope* that the people will vote to keep the constitution that was approved by the Iraqi people,” Mr Talabani said.

In this example, the BBC highlights the Iraqis’ views about the election and its outcome through three prominent statements in which the verb *hope* has been repeated four times. The verb *hope* which is used once as passive as in (A) and as active as in the rest is used by the BBC writer as in (A), and a voter as in (B) who may represent the majority of the Iraqis through the use of the inclusive pronoun *we*. It is also used by the Iraqi President to reflect a pragmatic function in the form of personal and inclusive polite request as in the use of the two pronouns *I* and *we* respectively for the future of Iraq. Overall, the use of the verb *hope* reflects a successful image of voting and its outcome.

7.4 Rhetorical Devices

According to van Dijk, (1988a; 1988b; 1993), rhetoric deals with special devices, such as rhyme, hyperbole, understatement, parallelism, alliteration, metaphor, comparison, contrast, irony, and repetition which are purposely used to help draw the reader’s attention to important issues. He stated that there are also other rhetorical devices that may include direct observation, interviews with eyewitnesses, quotations extracted from the participants, scene descriptions, sources, and numbers. Thus, the recourse to rhetoric is to make the message more effective in a sense to achieve aesthetics as well as persuasion. This is the last stage of micro-level analysis.

In this news report, a number of rhetorical devices have been used, such as, quotations (2), scare quotes (2), several sources of information, numbers, and metaphors. For further discussion, consider the examples below.

Example (10): Quotations

- A) "Iraqis are living a historical moment today - that is the elections... we hope to live in stability and security in Iraq, in the north and in the south, east to west,"
Baghdad voter Shaab Ahmad told the BBC.
- B) "This is a good day and the Iraqi people bear the responsibility to vote for a better future. I hope that the Iraqi people will stay united. We hope that the people will vote to keep the constitution that was approved by the Iraqi people," Mr Talabani said.

The two quotations represent two voices expressing their opinions about the election and its consequences. The first one comes from a voter (unofficial) who described the elections as a historical moment and added on by saying that what the Iraqi people wish in the future is stability, security, and unity. In a similar manner, the Iraqi President (official) has also expressed his view in this regard. In fact, the two voices have a quite similar tone and both of them showed a positive and optimistic view. Owing to space constraints, the writer has selected two quotations to maintain objectivity and avoid bias by quoting a citizen and a candidate to represent the Iraqi people. Moreover, because the BBC has deployed a number of reporters to cover the significant event, the writer/editor has to select from and summarise the reports sent in to their respective agency, the BBC. It is clear that the first quotation was made through a personal interview with the voter as it can be inferred from the transitive verb *told*; and the second one was probably made in a similar way or through a press conference, for instance, due to the use of the intransitive verb *said*. Finally, the two quotations explain the Iraqis' wishes regarding the political and social future of Iraq, and thus showing patriotism in the process.

Example (11): Scare quotes

The most senior British general in Iraq, Lt Gen Nick Houghton, told the BBC the elections give "*growing confidence*" that coalition forces can begin to withdraw in the "*relatively near future, certainly during the first half of next year*" if the conditions are right.

This extract has two scare quotes, “*growing confidence*” and “*relatively near future, certainly during the first half of next year*”. They are absolutely meaningless when they are cut off from the text in this way, but they are of significant meaning when they are carefully read as part of their respective clauses. The two scare quotes which are part of the indirect discourse used in the above example have two different functions. The first scare quote, “*growing confidence*”, is a noun phrase in the position of direct object of the transitive verb ‘give’; the indirect object is the omitted noun phrase *coalition forces* which is inferred from and mentioned in the subsequent clause. Therefore, the scare quote suggests successful elections, and this means there is some advancement in Iraq’s politics which, in turn, may lead to stability. Such a conclusion promoted the British senior general to make his hyperbolic declaration about withdrawing the coalition forces from the war-torn Iraq in only six months as indicated in the second scare quote, “*relatively near future, certainly during the first half of next year*”. Collectively, the use of the two scare quotes may be meant to ridicule the general’s hyperbolic statement or to confirm it; however, the former interpretation makes more sense because of the general’s later hesitation through the use of the conditional *if*. In this case, the BBC tacitly reveals an unbiased stance towards the statement of an in-group member, the British general, suggesting that his assessment about the situation in Iraq cannot be taken for granted because withdrawing thousands of troops requires rigorous military plans and a lot of time.

Example (12): Information sources

The BBC has produced this report by relying on a number of sources used to write up the report to support the facts in the report and to ensure credibility. The BBC has gathered some information from the news agency Associated Press, its deployed journalists (a number of them distributed at polling stations), two election officials, anonymous and named witnesses, US officials (the ambassador and military in Iraq), Iraqi official (President Talabani), and a British senior general to cover the event and thus making it factual and convincing in this way by extracting pieces of information and opinions from a variety of sources. This strategy is certainly intended to achieve rhetorical goals such as persuasion and it also provides an impression of the BBC as a professional and credible news agency.

Example (13): Numbers

- A) *first* full-term government since the US-led invasion in *2003*
- B) About *150,000* Iraqi soldiers and police officers are on patrol
- C) at least *two* civilians wounded
- D) *a* hospital guard was killed
- E) Some *6,655* candidates, *307* parties and *19* coalitions have registered for Thursday's ballot
- F) The vote closes at *1700 (1400 GMT)*
- G) It is the *second* time this year Iraqis have voted
- H) a national assembly that will serve a full *four-year* term.
- I) 'relatively near future, certainly during the *first half* of next year'
- J) *275-seat* National Assembly will have four-year term
- K) *18* provinces are taken as separate constituencies
- L) *230* seats allocated according to size of population
- M) *45* seats distributed to parties whose ethnic, religious or political support is spread over more than one province
- N) Over *14 million* eligible to vote
- O) *One third* of candidates in each party must be women

As a rhetorical device, no doubt such numerical accounts lend credibility and accuracy to the news report and thus the BBC as a news agency. By providing such specific details, the BBC demonstrates that it is paying too much attention to the event in particular and to the political situation in Iraq in general. It also shows that the process of obtaining all these figures and statistics is complex and it requires a considerable time and effort to garner them from different sources of information such as governmental and electoral commission officials, eyewitnesses, and access to records. Moreover, the function of this numerical account is not only to provide relevant information, but also to reveal that Iraq is becoming or is willing to become a democracy as shown in the number of candidates, parties, and coalitions which indicates the level of seriousness in participating in the elections. As for women's participation, their compulsory representation in terms of numbers is stressed through the use of the obligatory modal auxiliary *must* in "One third of candidates in each party must be women" so that their voices can be heard louder in a patriarchal society. This underscores the important role that they can play in establishing democracy in Iraq.

Example (14): Metaphors

- A) *A steady stream of people* are turning out to vote
- B) ...though al-Qaeda describes the elections as *the work of Satan*.

Literally, the word *stream* means a small narrow river or a continuous flow of something which is not very much different from the metaphorical use in this example as in (A). However, this use triggers in the reader's mind an image that the voters are gushing into the streets in big numbers so that this literary use or description can replace live TV broadcasting which shows the voters' willingness to vote for the new government, a positive image in itself. On the other hand, such an act is sinful as it is described by al-Qaeda in (B) because to them the elections are a satanic act. Such a declaration and 'decree' legitimates their bomb attacks against the voters reported earlier in the text. This example also highlights the ideological differences between the in-group members (the majority of the Iraqi people) and the out-group ones (al-Qaeda and insurgents).

8. Conclusions

The formation and interpretation of the semantic macrostructure show the importance and applicability of employing Wodak's (2001) approach in this study. That is, readers require certain information about Iraq's politics so that they can establish objective evaluation. Hence, the semantic macrostructure '*Iraq election is a milestone as it is for a New Democratic Iraq*' can be formulated and is better understood when pieces of information such as 'there has been no democracy in Iraq before the US-led invasion in 2003'; 'the previous ruling government was run by a solo party, The Ba'ath; and 'the seeds of democracy and freedom only started after the invasion' are provided or known to the reader.

At the micro-level, it was noticed that various syntactic structures and tenses are used for different purposes. For example, many complex sentences are used in the story in order to provide a lot of information about the sentence topic. The information is organised in the form of embedded propositions mostly in relative clauses and prepositional phrases for the sake of brevity as in sentence (S31) in paragraph (P19), *Turnout is expected to be much larger than the vote in January, which was largely boycotted by the Sunni Muslim minority*.

Two prominent types of actor were found. First, the Iraqis are the key actors or the major players; and this is conveyed via a variety of forms, for example *Iraqis, a steady stream of people, and a high turnout*. This is so because this key actor can play a significant role in the election; it is portrayed positively. Second, it is the numerical actor which has been used in a number of sentences to provide the reader with statistical figures as a background. This numerical actor has been topicalised to be noticeable and prominent and to further enhance the idea of democracy in Iraq to the reader. Collectively, the two types of actor are positively represented as they both highlight the democratic process that is taking place in the New Iraq. The main actor *Iraqis* is responsible for the successful elections as this actor has played a significant and positive role in the event; and the voters are portrayed as heroes by defying the aggressive attacks of al-Qaeda. The same actor is also a patient, as a victim of the political conflict between the Iraqi politicians/candidates and the militants.

Moreover, the Iraqi and US troops are also portrayed as positive actors in that they are protecting the voters and democracy against al-Qaeda's attacks. On the other hand, al-Qaeda's acts of violence are seen as negative as they are based on their illogical and unjustified 'fatwa' (decree) where participation in the election is considered as an act of Satan. Pertaining to the rhetorical features used in the report, while the quotations are employed to convey a positive view about the event, the scare quotes are used to cast doubts on the British general's declaration with regard to withdrawing the coalition forces from Iraq in six months after the elections. In addition, information sources are used to back the 'facts' made in the report to elevate them to the status of absolute facts by depending on many sources and multiple numerical and statistical figures. The recourse to such a strategy is also to avoid bias in reporting news. Generally, group ideology at the level of micro-semantic analysis is manifested through the notion of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation for the in-group members and out-group ones respectively. The BBC has reflected a neutral position when reporting the first elections in post-Saddam Iraq.

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Appendix 1: The News Story: Iraqis Vote in Landmark Election

Iraqis vote in landmark election

Iraqis are electing their first full-term government since the US-led invasion in 2003 amid tight security.

A steady stream of people are turning out to vote, say BBC journalists at polling stations across the country. Several incidents of violence were reported soon after polls opened, but voting has not been disrupted so far. A high turnout from Sunni Arabs, who boycotted the last election, is hoped for. President Jalal Talabani called on Iraqis to make it a day of celebration.

Security checks

Some 15 million Iraqis are eligible to vote.

Initial indications suggest turnout has been very high with few irregularities, US ambassador ZalmayKhalilzad told the Associated Press.

Iraqis have to walk to polling stations as vehicles have been banned to prevent attacks on voters.

The BBC's Jon Leyne, at a polling station in a Baghdad school, says voting is very brisk there.

A US Bradley armoured fighting vehicle patrols the street outside, and there is a heavy presence of mainly Iraqi police and soldiers in the polling station itself, he says.

About 150,000 Iraqi soldiers and police officers are on patrol across the country, backed up by US soldiers. Land borders and airports have been closed.

"Iraqis are living a historical moment today - that is the elections... we hope to live in stability and security in Iraq, in the north and in the south, east to west,"

Baghdad voter Shaab Ahmad told the BBC.

Explosions

Election officials said some polling stations in Ramadi and the restive Anbar province, west of Baghdad, did not immediately open for security reasons. Most opened in the northern city of Mosul.

Despite the stringent security measures, low-level violence was reported within minutes of polls opening:

- A huge blast was heard near the heavily-fortified Green Zone, home to the Iraqi government and a number of Western embassies. There were no reports of casualties
- Mortar fire was heard in a number of areas around Baghdad, with reports of at least two civilians wounded



Voters have to dip their finger in ink to guard against multiple voting



In pictures: Iraq election

“ It is a moral victory for the exploited Iraqis and a big victory for human liberty ”

Debu, New Delhi, India

Iraq elections: Your views

- In Mosul, a hospital guard was killed when a bomb went off near a polling station, witnesses said
- A mortar round targeted a polling station in Saddam Hussein's home town of Tikrit
- On the eve of voting, bombs were uncovered and diffused near a number of polling stations in Baghdad, Falluja and other cities, the US military said

'Historic opportunity'

Among the first people to cast their ballot was Mr Talabani, who voted in the northern city of Sulaimaniya.

"This is a good day and the Iraqi people bear the responsibility to vote for a better future. I hope that the Iraqi people will stay united. We hope that the people will vote to keep the constitution that was approved by the Iraqi people," Mr Talabani said.

Some 6,655 candidates, 307 parties and 19 coalitions have registered for Thursday's ballot, electoral officials say.

The vote closes at 1700 (1400 GMT) but official results are not expected until later in the month.

It is the second time this year Iraqis have voted for a new government.

Turnout is expected to be much larger than the vote in January, which was largely boycotted by the Sunni Muslim minority.

Sunnis are expected to actively participate this time, in a vote for a national assembly that will serve a full four-year term. The current government is Shia-dominated. Even some insurgent groups have called on people to vote, though al-Qaeda describes the elections as the work of Satan.

The most senior British general in Iraq, Lt Gen Nick Houghton, told the BBC the elections give "growing confidence" that coalition forces can begin to withdraw in the "relatively near future, certainly during the first half of next year" if the conditions are right.

IRAQ ELECTION FACTS

275-seat National Assembly will have four-year term

18 provinces are taken as separate constituencies

230 seats allocated according to size of population

45 seats distributed to parties whose ethnic, religious or political support is spread over more than one province

Over 14 million eligible to vote

One third of candidates in each party must be women

Election guide

Who's who