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Epistemic Stance Strategies and (Inter)Subjectivity in Political Discourse: A Case Study on the Issue of the American Declaration of Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel

By: Professor Miranda Mohamed Khamis El-Zouka
Professor of Linguistics
English Department
Faculty of Arts
Damanhour University

#### **Abstract**

In various kinds of daily communication, interlocutors express their emotions and beliefs regarding various issues. They also indicate their alignment or disalignment with many issues. The present study deals with epistemic stance strategies as well as (inter)subjectivity in the issue of the American declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The study utilizes the methodology proposed by Marin-Arrese (2013). The study reveals that the epistemic stance strategies and the categories of (inter)subjectivity used demonstrate the full American bias to Israel. This led to Trump's decision to officially declare Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

**Keywords:** Epistemic stance - (Inter)subjectivity - Jerusalem

## الملخص العربي

# استراتيجيات اتخاذ المواقف المعرفية والذاتية والذاتية المشتركة في الخطاب السياسي: دراسة حالة عن قضية الإعلان الأمريكي للقدس كعاصمة لاسرائيل

في الأنواع المختلفة من الاتصال اليومي يعبر المتحدثون عن مشاعرهم ومعتقداتهم فيما يتعلق بمختلف القضايا. كما يعبرون أيضا عن انحيازهم أو عدم انحيازهم لهذه القضايا. ويعالج البحث استراتيجيات اتخاذ المواقف والذاتية والذاتية المشتركة في قضية الإعلان الأمريكي للقدس كعاصمة لاسرائيل. ويستخدم البحث المنهجية الخاصة بمارين أريس(٢٠١٣). ويظهر البحث أن استراتيجيات اتخاذ المواقف وفئات الذاتية والذاتية المشتركة المستخدمة توضح الانحياذ الأمريكي التام لإسرائيل مما أدى إلى قرار ترامب بإعلان القدس رسميا عاصمة لإسرائيل.

#### Introduction

In the daily process of human verbal interaction, speakers tend to express their own personal opinions, feelings and judgments towards various daily issues in different fields of life, such as politics, economy, and social issues. In daily interactions, speakers/writers may also claim authority and/or agree or disagree with each other. In this way, stancetaking is manifested, and this motivates the use of various epistemic stance strategies. Stancetaking is a social action that involves the expression of the speaker/writer's personal attitudes or assessments regarding different issues. Thus, stance is indicative "of the speaker/writer's subjective or intersubjective construal of the stance object, and their positioning and alignment with other voices in the discourse" (Marin-Arrese, 2013:411). Different fields of knowledge have addressed the issue of "stancetaking" such as sociology, anthropology, and linguistics.

# Aims, Methodology, and Data of the Study

Any politician tries to justify his/her claims and/or actions. Politicians aim at making hearers accept whatever they say or do. Thus, politicians try to legitimize their actions or claims to the public. They use language in a manipulative way to make the people believe them.

The present study aims at indicating epistemic stance strategies and categories of (inter) subjectivity in the issue of the American declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in two of the American President Donald Trump's speeches. The study also presents frequency counts for the use of the epistemic stance strategies and categories of (inter) subjectivity used in the data. The analysis is carried out using the methodology proposed by Marin-Arrese (2013). This methodology has been chosen because it integrates cognitive and discourse strategies to manifest the ways linguistic devices expressing epistemic stance and (inter)subjectivity are used in the analyzed two speeches.

The issue addressed in the study is the American declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The analysis of this issue is carried out in two speeches of the American President Donald Trump. The first is the speech Trump addressed to the AIPAC (American Israel public Affairs Committee) on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2016, obtained from the website of the *Time* magazine, and the other is the one in which he recognizes Jerusalem as

the capital of Israel on December V<sup>th</sup> 2017, obtained from the website of the *New York Times* magazine. In the study, the analyzed extracts are indicated and verbs and expressions that clarify the point under investigation are underlined for clarification.

#### **Theoretical Background**

Stance is defined as "the speaker-based evaluation of the propositional content expressed by an utterance" (Biber & Finegan, 1989: 92). It is also defined by Haddington (2004: 101) as "the speaker's subjective attitude towards something". Other definitions of stance are "a speaker's indication of how he or she knows about, is commenting on, or is taking an affective or other position towards the person or matter being addressed" (Wu, 2004:3). Du Bois (2007: 163) provides a comprehensive definition of stance as "a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning (self and others) and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the socio-cultural field". Finally, Englebretson (2007: 195) defines it as "a dialogically constructed form of social action, which is public and interpretable, and...involves responsibility and consequences for the stancetaker in social terms." In fact, stance has a subjective nature as it expresses the attitudes, feelings, judgements or commitment concerning the propositional content of a message (Biber & Finegan, 1989: 92; Biber et al., 1999: 966).

There are two kinds of stance, namely epistemic stance and affective stance. The former deals with the degree of certainty or doubt a speaker/writer has regarding what he/she expresses (Tracy, 2011: 66).

Epistemic stance, according to Marin-Arrese (2015: 211):

Pertains to the positioning of the speaker/writer with respect to knowledge about described events and their commitment to the validity of the communicated information. They are characteristically aimed at the legitimization of the assertions, through the expression of the speaker/writer's degree of certainty regarding the realization of the event and/or the reference to the sources and modes of access to that knowledge.

The latter refers to the speaker/writer's evaluation or assessment regarding a given issue or person (Tracy, 2011: 67). Affective stance

aims at "determining or influencing the course of reality itself and plays a direct role in the legitimization of actions. (Marin-Aresse, 2009,2011).

The focus of the study is on epistemic stance through which the speaker/writer aims at the legitimization of the assertions through the expression of his/her degree of certainty regarding the realization of the event and/or the reference to the sources or modes of access to that knowledge (Marin-Arrese, 2015: 211).

Epistemic stance markers refer to the speaker/writer's position concerning evidence or knowledge that justify his/her claim when making a given claim or assertion (Marin-Arrese, 2015: 1). The speaker/writer claims to have better knowledge than the addressee(s), and thus makes them accept his/her proposition (Chilton, 2004: 117). In this way, the speaker/writer legitimizes his/her actions, claims, or assertions (Marin-Arrese, 2011: 34). Epistemic stance expressions indicate the way the speaker/writer aligns him/herself (subjectivity) regarding the truth or validity of his/her assertions and the way he/she aligns/disaligns him/herself with other external voices (intersubjectivity) (Marin-Arrese, 2013: 412). The markers include linguistic structures that either express the source of information or degree of certainty or both (Boye, 2010: 10). The speaker/writer's aim is to make the hearer(s) accept knowledge of events and the validity of the information, and accept a given assertion as true (Marin-Arrese, 2013: 414). Thus, epistemic stance markers indicate the speaker/writer's subjective and/or intersubjective alignment.

Epistemic stance includes the domains of "epistemic modality" and "evidentiality". The former is concerned with the speaker/writer's assessment and certainty of the claim or action indicated in a given proposition. The latter is concerned with the sources of knowledge that make the speaker/writer make any given assertion or claim (Marin-Arrese, 2013: 415).

Marin-Arrese (2013: 418-419) proposes a classification of epistemic stance strategies taking into account the following three parameters:

- 1-The domain of evidence (experiential, cognitive, communicative).
- 2-Modes of knowledge (direct versus indirect).
- 3-Source (internal versus external to the speaker/writer).

The combination of these parameters would result in the following categories of evidential strategies of stance (Marin-Arrese, 2013: 419-421):

- 1-"Experiential, Direct, External" (EDE). This includes direct access to visual and other sensory evidence that are external to the speaker/writer, e.g. "He has seen....".
- 2-"Experiential, Indirect, External" (EIE). This indicates knowledge depending upon "external sensory evidence", such as "seem".
- 3-"Cognitive, Direct, Internal" (CDI). This includes personal cognitive factives, such as "I know", and involves reference to both personal and encyclopedic knowledge.
- 4-"Cognitive, Indirect, Internal" (CII). This strategy includes the speaker/writer's inference together with knowledge of the world and encyclopedic knowledge, e.g. "I guess".
- 5-"Communicative, Direct, Internal" (CMI). The speaker shifts from the basic unbiased position to an overt phatic mode using perfomatives, as in "All I'm saying..." and "He is just telling you...." (Brandt: 2004:5).
- 6- "Communicative, Indirect, External" (CME). This involves the speaker/writer's inferences based on knowledge from text external voices, e.g. "It is clear from the study that...."
- 7-"Mediated, Communicative, Direct, External" (MCDE). This involves information directly attributed to a specific external source, such as "Mandella said that all people...".
- 8-"Personal/Mediated, Communicative, Direct, Internal" (MCMI). The speaker refers to some of his/her previous utterances, e.g. "As I was saying...."

Epistemic stance expressions indicate various degrees of (inter)subjectivity. Subjectivity is the presentation of the speaker/writer's point of view regarding a given issue (Finegan, 1995: 1-2). It is indicated

by expressions such as "I think/believe/suppose". Intersubjectivity refers to the relation between the speaker/writer and the addressee(s). Sometimes information is shared by the speaker/ writer and other participants. There are expressions that indicate shared responsibility such as "We witnessed" and "We know". There are also impersonal expressions, such as "It seems" and "It is clear". (Sanders & Spooren, 1996: 246).

(Inter)subjectivity relate to the two parameters of "salience of the role of the conceptualizer" and "the degree to which the speaker assumes responsibility (subjectivity) for the information indicated or whether the information is shared between the speaker/writer and the addressee(s) (intersubjectivity) (Nuyts, 2001:52). The former refers to the degree of explicitness or implicitness of the presence of the conceptualizer, and personal vs. shared responsibility for the information indicated. By using epistemic modals such as "may, perhaps", the conceptualizer acts as an implicit point of reference, and is construed subjectively (Marin-Arrese, 2013: 427; Sanders, 1999: 473). By using impersonal expressions such as "It is clear", the conceptualizer is opaque, and the speaker/writer is backgrounded, so the speaker/writer is maximally objective (Langacker, 2000: 350). Regarding the latter, there are expressions that refer to the speaker/writer explicitly such as "I think/believe" to manifest personal commitment. Epistemic modals also indicate personal responsibility for a given judgement. There are also expressions that indicate shared responsibility as "We all know". Concerning impersonal expressions, they indicate that a given assertion or information is shared between the speaker/writer and the addressee(s) (Marin-Arrese, 2011: 794).

(Inter)subjectivity is conceived according to the degree to which the speaker/writer assumes his/her responsibility for the judgment of the evidence he/she gives regarding a given issue (subjectivity) or whether the evaluation is shared by others (intersubjectivity) (Nuyts, 2001: 86).

Marin-Arrese (2013: 435-436) proposes a model for the distinction of subjectivity and intersubjectivity based upon the parameters of "salience of the conceptualizer" and "responsibility" as follows:

1-Subjective, Explicit (SE): In this category, the speaker/writer is an explicit point of reference. He/she is also the only subject of epistemic

judgement, e.g. "In my opinion/judgment". In this way, the speaker/writer declares his/her own responsibility for a given proposition.

2-Intersubjective, Explicit (IE): The speaker/writer presents a given evaluation as shared with the addressees such as "We all witnessed/know". This includes inclusive "we" which includes the speaker and others (Kitagawa & Lehrer, 1990: 745). It also includes impersonal "you", as in "You would claim".

3-Subjective, Implicit (SI): In this category, the speaker/writer is the only conceptualizer, and is the subject of epistemic judgment. It includes modal verbs such as" may, could" and modal adverbs, such as " certainly, perhaps". This category signals the personal responsibility of the speaker/writer.

4- Intersubjective, Virtual/Generalized, Explicit (IVE): In this category, the speaker/writer uses expressions that invoke a general conceptualizer. This can be the speaker/writer or none specific individuals. These expressions refer to a nonspecific whole. This is manifested by the use of expressions such as "You can find" and "Everyone would think".

5-Intersubjective, Virtual/Generalized, Implicit (IVI): In this category, the expression indicates an implicit conceptualizer who may be unknown or indeterminate. This category indicates shared information between the speaker/writer and others. A number of expressions can be used in this category, such as" It was judged, It seems, It is clear" (Marin-Arrese, 2013: 435-436).

A number of previous studies have dealt with epistemic stance and (inter)subjectivity, such as Biber & Finegan (1989), Clift (2006), Downing & Perucha (2013), Marin-Arrese (2011, 2015), and Tracy (2011). Other studies have dealt with stance in political discourse, such as Lempert (2008) and Marin –Arrese (2013). However, to the researcher's knowledge, no study has dealt with epistemic stance strategies and categories of (inter)subjectivity in the issue of the American declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

#### **Analysis**

#### **A-Epistemic Stance Strategies**

The analyzed data manifests that only five of the epistemic stance strategies proposed by Marin-Arrese (2013) are used. Some strategies are not used. These are: "Experiential, Indirect, External", "Communicative, Indirect, External", and "Mediated, Communicative, Direct, External". The following extracts clarify the strategies used:

### 1-Experiential, Direct, External (EDE)

In this strategy, there are expressions that refer to the senses and other sensory evidence. This is done to prove the reality of what Trump says concerning the new situation in Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, as manifested in the coming extracts:

a-...We <u>feel</u> that we must send a clear signal that there is no daylight between America and our most reliable ally, the state of Israel.

(Trump, 2016)

b-...We <u>see</u> the need for moderation, and for the voices of tolerance to prevail over the purveyors of hate.

(Trump, 2017)

# 2- Cognitive, Direct, Internal (CDI)

By using this strategy, President Trump tries to indicate that his decision regarding Jerusalem is correct regardless of any possible criticisms because peace will prevail as Israel is willing to negotiate with Palestinians. Trump uses cognitive verbs as manifested in the underlined verbs.

c-...We know Israel is willing to deal. Israel has been trying....

(Trump, 2016)

d-...I know I'll be criticized. I think this is number one priority....

(Trump, 2017)

# 3- Cognitive, Indirect, Internal (CII)

By using this strategy, Trump tries to manifest that his inferences regarding the situation in Jerusalem are correct because they are based upon knowledge of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Trump uses verbs that express his knowledge of the world, as shown in the following extracts:

e-...With President Obama in his final year...I <u>believe</u> he may be the worst thing to ever happen to Israel ....

(Trump, 2016)

f-...I've <u>judged</u> this course of action to be in the best interests of the United States of America and pursuit of peace between Israel and Palestinians....

(Trump, 2017)

#### 4-Communicative, Direct, Internal (CMI)

In this strategy, Trump uses expressions that indicate an emphatic mode to assert that the United States is committed to support the state of Israel in the peace talks, and in the declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This is shown in the following extracts:

g-... The United States <u>remains deeply committed</u> to helping facilitate a peace agreement that is acceptable to both sides. I intend to do everything in my power to help forge such an agreement

(Trump, 2017)

h-...But today we finally <u>acknowledge the obvious</u>, that Jerusalem is Israel's capital....

(Trump, 2017)

# 5- Personal/Mediated, Communicative, Direct, Internal (MCMI)

In this strategy, Trump refers back to some of his previous statements to indicate that he is a president who keeps his promises, one of which is that he is committed to spread peace in the Middle East which he thinks will be done by officially declaring Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This is illustrated in the next extracts:

i-...<u>I repeat the message</u> I delivered at the historic and extraordinary summit in Saudi Arabia earlier this year: The Middle East is a region rich with culture, spirit, and history. Its people are brilliant, proud, and diverse... But the incredible future awaiting this region is held at bay by bloodshed, ignorance and terror....

(Trump, 2017)

j-...I <u>ask the leaders of region political and religious, Israeli and Palestinian again as I asked before</u>, Jewish and Christian and Muslim to join us in the noble quest for lasting peace....

(Trump, 2017)

#### **B-Categories of (Inter)Subjectivity**

The data reveals that only four of the categories of (inter)subjectivity proposed by Marin-Arrese (2013) are used. The category of "Intersubjective, Virtual/generalized, Implicit" is not used.

#### 1-Subjective Explicit (SE)

In this category, Trump uses verbs and expressions that manifest him as the only conceptualizer and thus highlight his personal responsibility for the declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This is illustrated in the following extracts:

a- It was a very dangerous time for Israel and frankly for anyone supporting Israel...I <u>took the risk</u> and I'm glad I did.

(Trump, 2016)

b-... <u>I've judged</u> this course of action to be in the best interests of the United States of America and the pursuit of peace between Israel and the Palestinians....

(Trump, 2017)

# 2-Intersubjective Explicit (IE)

In this category, Trump uses inclusive "we" in expressions that indicate that his claim is shared with others. Trump does this to manifest that all Americans, both in the public and political arenas, support his decision regarding Jerusalem. This as illustrated in the next extracts:

c-... But today <u>we finally acknowledge the obvious</u> that Jerusalem is Israel's capital...It is also the right thing to do. It's something that has to be done...

(Trump, 2017)

d-...To make a great deal, you need two willing participants. We know Israel is willing to deal. Israel has been trying....

(Trump, 2016)

#### **3-Subjective Implicit (SI)**

In this category, modal verbs are used. Trump is the only conceptualizer. By using this category, Trump tries to indicate his personal responsibility for taking decisive actions to support Israel in the international arena and in the peace talks with the Palestinians. In fact, Trump's decision regarding Jerusalem is the greatest support for Israel. This is manifested in the coming extracts:

e-...I <u>will</u> veto any attempt by the U.N. to impose its will on the Jewish State. It will be vetoed 100 percent....

(Trump, 2016)

f-...I <u>will</u> meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu immediately... and we'll be able to work closely together to help bring stability and peace to Israel and to the entire region....

(Trump, 2016)

# 4-Intersubjective, Virtual/Generalized, Explicit (IVE)

In this category, Trump uses expressions that indicate a generalized conceptualizer. He uses expressions that refer to nonspecific individuals to show that many people share his opinion. This is shown in the following extracts:

g- ...It is time for the many who desire peace to expel the extremists from their midst. It is time for all civilized nations and people to respond to disagreements with reasoned debate, not violence. And it is time for young and moderate voices all across the Middle east to claim for themselves a bright and beautiful future

(Trump, 2016)

h-...<u>You</u> cannot achieve peace if terrorists are treated as martyrs. Glorifying terrorists is a tremendous barrier to peace...In

Palestinian textbooks and mosques, <u>you've</u> got a culture of hatred that has been fomenting there for years....

(Trump,2016)

# **Results and Discussion**

# **Epistemic Stance Strategies**

Table (1) clarifies the frequency of occurrence of the various epistemic stance strategies used in the data.

Table (1) Frequency of Occurrence of Epistemic Stance Strategies

<b>Epistemic Stance Strategy</b>	Frequency of Usage
Experiential, Direct, External	18
(EDE)	
Experiential, Indirect, External	
(EIE)	
Cognitive, direct, Internal (CDI).	23
Cognitive, Indirect, Internal(CII)	28
Communicative, Direct, Internal	32
(CMI).	
Communicative, Indirect, External	
(CME).	
Mediated, Communicative, Direct,	
External (MCDE)	
Personal/Mediated,	26
Communicative, Direct, Internal	
(MCMI).	

Table (1) shows that the most commonly used strategy is "Communicative, Direct, Internal" (32 times) may be because President Trump wants to achieve an emphatic mode so that the Americans can easily be convinced of his opinions. Trump wants to gain their support because he knows that there will be extreme anger in the Arab world regarding his decisions. The second most commonly used strategy is "Cognitive, Indirect, Internal" (28 times). This may be because he wants to give the Americans the impression that his views and decisions are not only based on his general inferences but also on his understanding of affairs in the world. The third most commonly used strategy is "Personal/Mediated, Communicative, Direct, Internal" (26 times). This indicates that President Trump refers back to some of his prior statements to show his deep personal commitment to the issue of declaring

Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The fourth commonly used strategy is "Cognitive, Direct, Internal" (23 times). This may be due to the fact that Trump favours expressing publicly his personal knowledge of the world to convince Americans of his decision regarding Jerusalem. The least commonly used strategy is "Experiential, Direct, External" (18 times). This shows that trump likes to make use of visual and other sensory evidence to convince Americans that his decision regarding Jerusalem is correct by appealing to their senses to manifest the reality and correctness of his decision.

Table (2) clarifies the frequency of occurrence of the categories of (inter)subjectivity as indicated by Marin-Arrese (2013).

Table (2) Frequency of Occurrence the categories indicating (Inter)subjectivity

Subjectivity/Intersubjectivity	Frequency of usage
Parameter	
Subjective, Explicit (SE)	32
Intersubjective, Explicit (IE)	26
Subjective, Implicit (SI)	21
Intersubjective,	22
Virtual/Generalized, Explicit	
(IVE)	
Intersubjective,	
Virtual/Generalized, Implicit	
(IVI)	

Table (2) clarifies that concerning the categories of subjectivity, the index of "Subjective, Explicit" is used more than that of "Subjective, Implicit" (32 times vs 21 times). This shows that Trump is very biased to the issue of declaring Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. It can be deduced that he considers this issue as his own personal responsibility. As for the categories of intersubjectivity, "Intersubjective, Explicit" is used 26 times. Thus, it is the most commonly used category. This indicates that Trump wants to present his decision regarding Jerusalem as a universally shared aim. The second most commonly used category is that of "Intersubjective, Virtual/Generalized, Explicit" (22 times). This may stem from the fact that Trump wants to give the impression that his decision regarding Jerusalem represents a general opinion shared by many people. Therefore, this decision is correct at the public and political levels.

#### Conclusion

The study investigates the use of epistemic stance strategies, and categories indicating (inter)subjectivity in the issue of the American declaration of recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The study shows that "Communicative, Direct, Internal" is the most commonly used epistemic stance strategy, followed by "Cognitive, Indirect, Internal", and "Personal/Mediated, Communicative, Direct, Internal", and "Cognitive, Direct, Internal". The least used strategy is "Experiential, Direct, External". The study also manifests that regarding the categories of subjectivity, "Subjective, Explicit" is used more than that of "Subjective, Implicit". As for the categories of intersubjectivity, "Intersubjective, Explicit" is most commonly used followed by "Intersubjective, Virtual/Generalized, Explicit", and Intersubjective, Virtual/generalized, Implicit", which is the least used category.

The study clarifies that stancetaking involves evaluation on the part of the speaker/writer. It also demonstrates that indicating (inter)subjectivity manifests the extent to which the speaker/writer is responsible for his actions and claims (Marin-Arrese, 2013:441).

It has been clear that by using the analyzed epistemic stance strategies and categories of (inter)subjectivity, President Trump has managed to achieve his main goal of convincing Americans that Jerusalem must be officially declared by the United States as the capital of Israel. Also, he has managed to establish himself as a hero because he is the only American president who was courageous enough to officially make this decision and take full responsibility for it. Moreover, Trump succeeds in giving the impression that his decision is shared by all Americans at the public and political levels. The data manifests the full American bias and support to Israel by officially declaring Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In fact, President Trump's decision completely ignores the feelings of billions of Muslims around the world, who really want the Palestinian issue to be resolved, end the Israeli occupation, and declare Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

Further studies can deal with affective stance in various types of discourse. They can also investigate epistemic stance and (inter)subjectivity in other issues of general interest in other discourse types. Furthermore, other studies can analyze various epistemic stance strategies across various languages.

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