Ziyad Ahmed Dahaam

Department of Translation
College of Arts
University of Tikrit
Tikrit, Iraq

* Corresponding author: E-mail :
ziyaddahaam@gmail.com

A Pragmatic Analysis of Stancetaking Towards Facebook Posts in Popular Iraqi Pages

A B S T R A C T

Social media programs play a major role nowadays in the communication process among social interactors; one fatal program is the Facebook. No doubt that popular Facebook pages seek to attract people's perception in one way or another. It seems that those pages enforce people to show their alignment/disalignment with the propositions of their posts. It is hypothesized that those posts tell you something but hide something else which, in turn, affect the way people evaluate them to give their final stances in a form of a comment. For this reason, this study connects stancetaking with pragmatics. The main aim of this study is to find out how do Iraqi people react to such posts, and to prove that those Iraqi popular Facebook pages really cause Iraqi people to be divergent with each other.

The data of this study includes the analysis of two famous popular pages (Khan Jgan خان جغان and Baghdad بغداد), one post and three stancetakings for each. The participants are chosen randomly to arrive at successful results, taking into account that only those comments which have sub-comments are chosen to be analyzed. The data is qualitatively analyzed using Du Bois's (2007) "The Stance Triangle" model. The results in the findings and discussions show an agreement with the hypotheses of this study, they are highlighted within the conclusions of this study.

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تحليل تداولي لاتخاذ الموقف تجاه منشورات الفيسبوك في الصفحات العراقية العامة

زياد احمد دحام/جامعة تكريت/كلية الآداب

الخلاصة

تلعب وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي مؤخرا دورا اساسيا في عملية التواصل بين افراد المجتمع. احدى هذه الوسائل الحتمية هو برنامج الفيسبوك. مما لا شك فيه ان بعض الصفحات العامة على هذا

البرنامج تحاول جذب انتباه المتابعين بطريقة او بأخرى. ومما يبدو فان هذه الصفحات تجبر المتابعين على اظهار انحيازهم تجاه مواضيع المنشورات التي يقومون بنشرها، لذلك تفترض الدراسة ان هذه المنشورات لها اغراض معينة حيث تؤثر على تقييم المتابعين لمواضيعها ليتم التعليق باتخاذ موقف. لهذا السبب تربط الدراسة اتخاذ الموقف بالتداولية. ان الهدف الاساس من هذه الدراسة هو الكشف عن مدى تفاعل واستجابة المتابعين لهذه المنشورات ولإثبات الفرضية بان هذه الصفحات العراقية العامة تؤثر سلبا على علاقتهم مع بعضهم.

مادة تحليل هذه الدراسة تضم صفحتين عراقية عامة على برنامج الفيسبوك (خان جغان وبغداد)، اختير من كل منها منشور واحد وثلاثة تداخلات بالموقف حيث تم اختيار التعليقات المتداخلة بالرأي عشوائيا لغرض التحليل. تم اعتماد التحليل النوعي باتباع انموذج دو بويز (2007) "التداخل الثلاثي للموقف". واثبتت الدراسة من خلال باب الرؤى والمناقشة بان معطيات التحليل تتفق مع فرضيات الدراسة وعلية لخصت في نهاية البحث.

1. <u>Stancetaking</u>

Stancetaking is an incorporation of the base word "stance" and the active verb "take", incorporated to refer to an activity which is found in natural interactions. Emphasis is put here to "stancetaking" as a unified word, both "stance" and "stancetaking" indicate that this term is studied in linguistics to refer to such an active phenomenon where people take stances to a certain proposition in a specific communicative context. What is found in the literature is that there is no agreed definition among academic writers. Every writer defines stancetaking from his/her point of view. For this reason, the topic is described as being heterogeneous (Englebreston 2007: 3-6). However, the following sections are dedicated to investigate the topic in the literature and to present a unified definition for the term based on different resources.

1.1 <u>Definition</u>

In his introduction, Du Bois (2007: 139) asserts that stancetaking is an important phenomenon which is held by "actors" in a communicative context. It refers to the interlocutors' ability of playing upon words. Stancetaking,

according to Du Bois is a matter of "evaluation" where interlocutors give their evaluation to a certain topic in the communication process. The matter of evaluation is not that easy aspect of stancetaking, but rather, it is to show the power of stancetaking. The interlocutors within Du Bois's system are called "social actors", those social actors are not only assigning values to objects that interest them when they take stances, but also "position" themselves according to those objects and evaluate alignment between them. Stancetaking is a phenomenon which has a role to play in social interaction and has its principles. Understanding how it works requires that we understand the whole theory. Du Bois provides the following definition which is based on the three component concepts in his system of stancetaking:

> "Stance is a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field".

(ibid.: 163)

Kiesling (2009: 5-6) mentions that stancetaking refers to the relationship among interlocutors who are using language to communicate in specific contexts. The relationship created by stancetaking is often emotional and corresponds to the interlocutors' beliefs. This is what Kiesling calls "the interactional creation of relationships". Stancetaking is being used by speakers to build a social relationship within the communicative context, and at the same time it is to show whether those interlocutors agree or disagree with a certain subject or any topic or opinion.

As in any communicative event, stancetaking involves the existence of an addresser and an addressee. The stancetaking can be shown on both sides, i.e., both the addresser and the addressee can 'take a stance' with the communicative event.

Alonso-Almeida (2017: 1) emphasizes that stancetaking can be viewed as an attitude where interlocutors present themselves by giving judgments, opinions, and commitments to a certain topic. When speakers are involved in a communicative situation, they try to show their involvement by taking stances. Stancetaking in Alonso-Almeida's view is a pragmatic phenomenon because it refers to the speakers "inter-subjective meanings", and that the interlocutors may show their involvement versus "detachment" concerning a certain topic in discourse.

1.2 Characteristics of Stancetaking

The literature reveals that there are two dominant characteristics that are widely associated with stancetaking: subjectivity and evaluation. Both are negotiated below.

1.2.1 Subjectivity

Englebreston (2007:15-17) admits that subjectivity refers to the "self-expression" where the stancetaker shows himself or herself in the act of communication; to take a stance is to show the actors' point of view. The interlocutors decode their points of view in their speech, and hence, stancetaking refers to the attitudes of the interlocutors which are revealed in a form of a set of linguistic "markers" in language use.

Kiesling (2018: 6-7) asserts that this characteristic is a pragmatic one. Subjectivity is a "shared intentionality" where an interlocutor understands an intention, then expresses his or her own point of view, which is also intentional. The whole process depends on how interlocutors understand meaning in the communicative context because "this process occurs mostly without overt comment". This is what is called a "joint intention" where subjectivity represents the core of human social interaction. Added to that, stancetaking is an intentional meaning to be negotiated by interlocutors.

Haddington (2004:105) also concludes that subjectivity is one defining characteristic of stancetaking. His claim is that the act of expressing a stance is actually nothing than showing the subjective point of view of an individual towards a proposition. Whatever linguistic forms (clauses, sentences, utterances) are used in the communicative context, what concerns most is that they "are mapped onto a stance a speaker conveys". Haddington further argues that "stancetaking is better understood as an inter-subjective activity", because each individual in the activity of stancetaking represents his/her own attitude in the same communicative context; i.e., inter-subjectivity here means that the subjectivity of an interlocutor is engaged with the subjectivity of the other interlocutor in the same communicative context.

For Du Bois (2007: 41) subjectivity can be seen as having a direct link with stances. Stances can be either: objective, subjective, and inter-subjective. These three dimensions of subjectivity are determined based on the focus targeted by a stancetaker towards another. The more the relevant values are there between the stancetakers, the more subjective is the stance taken. Takanashi (2018: 189) also stress the fact that the act of stance must in all cases have one of the properties to be either objective, subjective, or inter-subjective.

1.2.2 **Evaluation**

Du Bois (2007: 141) gives rise to evaluation as a characteristic of stancetaking, asserting that the act of taking a stance "necessarily invokes an evaluation at one level or another, whether by assertion or inference". Stancetaking is an evaluative act and can only be recognized by evaluation as the most prominent characteristic of it. Du Bois asserts that the interlocutors are actually evaluating things when they take stances, his claim depends on some deep historical investigations where he found that interlocutors are really making 'assessments' in their speeches. Du Bois provides the following examples:

1. Pete: That's horrible.

2. Lance: That's ideal.

3. Kevin: That's nasty.

<div align="right">(ibid.: 142)</div>

The degree of difference among the three words "horrible, ideal and nasty", is actually a matter of evaluation where the speakers position themselves to decide whether something in that communicative context is one of the three words above.

This is also evident in Englebreston's (2007: 16) statement when he writes that evaluation can make an "explicit reference" to stancetaking in the literature. Evaluation is the most important characteristic of stancetaking:

> Evaluation is the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writers' attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about. That attitude may relate to certainty or obligation or desirability or any number of other sets of values.
>
> (Thompson and Hunston, 2000: 5; cited in Englebreston, 2007: 16)

Kiesling et al. (2018: 685) assert that stancetaking is the evaluation of entities in discourse. The whole system of stancetaking depends on evaluation and it is the first aspect which is being dealt with in that system where an interlocutor evaluates, position him/herself and shows his/her alignment towards a proposition. The other synonym of evaluation is "assessment", the later helps us understand that stancetaking is a process of accumulating the required inferences about a given proposition and then to make the final judgments because it is impossible to take a stance without making an assessment. However, the system of how stancetaking works will be clarified in the next sections.

2. <u>The Model Adopted</u>

This study adopts Du Bois's (2007) "Stance Tringle Model". This model is found to be the best to account for the main aims of this study. This model makes it easy to analyze the data selected as it presents a full account on how do people take stances towards each other depending on some basic procedures that will be explained below. These procedures are accompanied by some pragmatic factors that should be taken into account in order to fully understand how do those comments to Facebook posts are actually stances taken by some social communicators.

2.1 <u>Du Bois's (2007) "The Stance Triangle"</u>

As have been mentioned above, stancetaking is a complete theory that should fully be understood to realize how people take a stance in their communicative contexts. The most prominent figure in this regard is Du Bois. In (2007), Du Bois suggests that the "stance is an act" and that "we should expect to locate it in utterances" (ibid.: 145). This act requires the existence of the stancetaker and the object of stance within the same communicative context. The stancetaker is the "stance subject" (can be both, the producer and the receiver), and the object of stance is the "stance object"; it is what they are talking about (ibid.: 153). Within the stancetaking triangle, the stance subject (the speaker) must in all cases pass three key components which include the concepts of "evaluation, positioning, and alignment" (ibid.: 163). These three components constitute the essence of the stancetaking triangle as shown in the following figure:
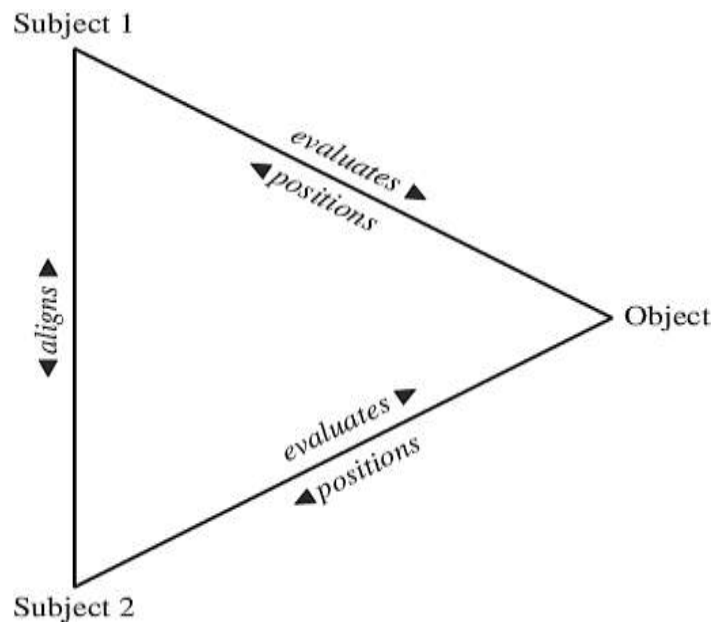
The Stance Triangle (following Du Bois, 2007:163)

In this triangle, stance is to be understood as a unified act with three processes: evaluation, positioning, and alignment. Each process is an act of its own, i.e., three acts (tri-act) in one; "the stance act thus creates three kinds of stance consequences at once" ibid. :164). However, Du Bois adopts the first person to refer to the speaking subject in the triangle: "I evaluate something, and thereby position myself, and thereby align with you":

(a) Evaluates an object: The process of making an assessment of the stance object presented by the subjects alternatively. Evaluation makes it clear for the subjects involved to decide from the early beginning whether to be convergent or divergent with the utterances of each other.

(b) Positioning: Establishing a relationship between oneself and the stance object. It is like a decision which is taken between the stance subject and him/herself in regard to the stance object, the stance subject decides the degree of convergent or divergent with the stance object. Du Bois writes that "Positioning can be defined as the act of situating a social actor with respect to responsibility for stance and for invoking sociocultural value" (ibid.: 143).

(c) Alignment: After positioning themselves, the subjects define alignment with one another. It is to show overtly (using the linguistic forms) whether their alignment is "convergent or divergent" (ibid.: 164) with each other. Du Bois provides the following example:

4. **Sam**: I don't like those.

   Angela: I don't either.

<div align="right">(ibid.: 165)</div>

In this example, Sam's (I) is subject (1) and Angela's (I) is subject (2). Subject (2) evaluates subject's (1) utterance (don't like) and positions herself to show her alignment which is indicated by (either). The stancetaking can be seen in the following:

5.

Speaker	Stance Subject	Positions/ Evaluates	Stance Object	Aligns
Sam	I	don't like	those	
Angela	I	don't (like)	(those)	either

<div align="right">(ibid.: 166)</div>

Angela positioned herself as to take the same stance of Sam, and she used 'either' to show her alignment in a linguistic form. This word is an indication that the whole utterance of Angela is convergent with Sam's utterance.

2.1.1 <u>Types of Stances</u>

It is important here to mention that Du Bois (2007) concentrated on two types of stances in his model: "Affective" and "Epistemic".

2.1.1.1 <u>Affective</u>

Affective stances are those which refer to aspects of the subjects' feelings and emotions towards the stance object. For example, someone who listens to a song that he/she likes may produce an affective stance: "I like this song". Affective stance positions the subject towards an "affective value" (glad, so

glad, sad, so sad, etc.) where subjectivity is being of different grades by the stance subject. (Du Bois, 2007: 143, 152-3). The following examples illustrates this point:

6. **Lance**: I'm glad.

7. **Jeff**: I'm so glad.

8. **Miles**: I'm just amazed.

(Du Bois, 2007: 143)

Affective stances in the above examples represent the different subject's self-positioning and subjectivity, as Du Bois asserts that affective stances are seen in the subjects' subjectivity and self-positioning. This is what Raudaskoski et. al. (2020:128) call "emotional stances" which are shown by certain participants either negatively or positively.

2.1.1.2 <u>Epistemic</u>

Du Bois writes that speakers also position themselves "along an epistemic scale". Sometimes speakers present themselves as having enough knowledge of the propositions in the communicative context, and sometimes they just ignore everything concerning the proposition simply because they don't have enough knowledge about it, i.e., position themselves as being "ignorant" (2007: 143). Consider the following examples:

9. **Kendra**: I know.

10. **Dan**... I don't know.

(ibid.)

Kendra in the above example takes her stance with the assertion that she has enough knowledge of the (absent) proposition whatever it is. Dan, on the other hand, confirms in his stance that he doesn't have enough knowledge about the (absent) proposition whatever it is in that communicative context.

This is actually evident in Kiesling's (2020: 3) when he stresses that epistemic stance refers to the speaker's 'certainty' towards a specific

proposition. It is the most familiar type of stances in language use. Epistemic stance is the most common type which seem to be negotiated by many scholars. Brady and Fricker (2016: 12-13) refer to this fact and claim that epistemic stances refer to the beliefs of the speakers, assertion is the main reason why most of the stances seem to be of this type because people assert what they believe.

2.1.2 <u>Pragmatics and The Stance Triangle</u>

In this research the whole process of stancetaking is a pragmatic one. The literature on the subject provides evidences that the process of taking a stance depends on inference and intentionality. Taking into account that all the pioneer figures who wrote about stancetaking admit the fact that taking a stance is an act which requires that the participants understand each other in order to take suitable stances in the communicative context.

Du Bois (2007:141-42) talks much about this aspect. He writes that stances are realized by linguistic acts but those acts are not mere linguistic forms. The act of any stance is a result of a "sociocultural value" which affect the whole interaction process of the participants involved in the communicative context. The evaluative act of stancetaking implicates the sociocultural values, and at the same time, that evaluative act is the reference of those sociocultural values. The sociocultural values, on the other hand, should appear in the stances themselves in order for the stancetaker to be "relevant". Du Bois writes that "via specific acts of stancetaking, value can be focused and directed at a precise target, as locally relevant values are activated to frame the significance of participant actions". This is because the participants are responsible to take stances that have consequences on each one of them, i.e., participant (2) infers that participant (1) has taken a stance, and then (depending on those sociocultural values and according to the consequences of this stance), participant (2) gives

the next stance. The matter is intentional and depends on many aspects of meaning that stancetakers should realize before they take stances.

However, Du Bois Mentions that the value of any stance should be decided according to the "prior discourse". The stancetakers assign values of stances because they are "collaborative". Stances are "the collaborative acts of co-participants in dialogic interaction". Du Bois further concentrated on the realization, interpretation, and consequences of stances in his stance triangle. His stance triangle is a process to realize, interpret, and to show the consequences of stances in discourse.

2.1.2.1 <u>Contextualizing Stances</u>

Du Bois (2007:145-50) asserts that stances are acts which should be found and realized in specific contexts. The meaning of a given sentence is situated in order to be successfully interpreted. Stances may be in a form of isolated sentences which can be regarded as being (decontextualized) abstract linguistic structures. The meaning of such structures seems to be vague, and stances appear to be "incomplete"; some parts of the meaning of those sentences are missing. Contextualization, then, becomes the only means to account for those missing information. Du Bois writes that: "the missing ingredients can only be found by contextualizing the utterance, defined as the situated realization of language in use. Any utterance carries cues for its own indexical contextualization". In this case we should resort to pragmatics, it helps us to realize the missing components of meaning in order to successfully interpret a specific stance in a specific context. Due Bois asserts that any utterance contains "contextualization cues (or indexical signs) work by pointing beyond the utterance to its presupposed conditions of use".

Contextualization cues require that we search somewhere in the context for more information other than those which are overtly presented in those utterances. For example, who is the stancetaker? What is the object of stance?

And what stance is the stancetaker responding to? Those are the main contextualization cues in Du Bois's opinion that help fully interpret the stance and determine the stance type. Consider the following example:

11. The Caribbean is incredible.

12. It was really great.

13. I would love to go.

<div align="right">(ibid.: 145)</div>

Although the above examples contain words that show an evaluative value (incredible, great, and love), still many information are missing; such as information about the speaker, information about the object of stance, and information about a prior stance that the stancetakers in these examples are responding to. Therefore, it is important to know the identity of the speakers and all other possible information about them, for example,

> "what accent, voice quality, and intonation they are speaking with; what their displayed regional, ethnic, gender, or other identities may be; whether they appear entitled to their claimed identities; details of their life story, if known; and so on"

<div align="right">(ibid.: 147)</div>

However, information about the speakers are not enough to make a sense of a given stance. We also need to know the object of stance, what is being talked about to result the stance. In the above examples we need to know what was that being "incredible"? what was that being "great"? And where was that place the speaker "loves" to go to.

The third point in the contextualization cues in Du Bois's claim is what he calls "counterstances". Each stance responds to another stance in the same communicative context, therefore we should realize what is the prior stance that the next is responding to. Du Bois writes that sentences may seem to be "grammatically complete" but "as stances they are pragmatically incomplete", which can only be completed "by referencing the relevant prior stance, locatable

anaphorically in the dialogic context, can the meaning of the present agreeing stance be understood" (ibid.: 151). Those are the relevant cues which are essential for the interpretation of a given stance.

2.1.2.2 **Relevance**

Du Bois (2007: 151) asserts that there are many explicit words, sentences, gestures, prosody, and other elements which may exist in any stance, but these are not the only features that help us to understand the meaning of a given stance. Rather, it is a matter of expectation where speakers expect what can be inherited within a certain stance to take the next. Relevance requires that speakers go beyond the explicit structures of stances and to use their knowledge to control what meaning can they expect within a certain stance. Du Bois further argues that:

> "The constant relevance of the general components of stance influences what we expect to know about any act of stancetaking, and thereby shapes its specific interpretation. This holds true whether the information is directly expressed in the stance utterance, or is only to be found distributed across multiple utterances by different speakers within extended sequences of dialogic exchange. The claim is that in each case, certain well-defined items of information are actively sought out by participants in response to the projectable structure of stance"

(ibid.)

This a pragmatic perspective which provides a successful interpretation of any stance.

3. **Procedures and Data Collection**

This study adopts the main steps pointed by Du Bois (2007) in his "Stance Triangle" model which is mentioned earlier. The triangle model requires that all

the three processes which are involved in taking a stance (Evaluation, Positioning, and Alignment) to be calculated depending on the Contextualization cues and relevance. Therefore, this study follows a qualitative analysis in order to be able to determine the type of stance (whether affected or epistemic), the subject of stance, the object of stance, and what stance is the stancetaker responding to. It is also important to determine the subjectivity of those stances, therefore, those stances will also be classified as being objective, subjective, or inter-subjective.

The data selected in this study is represented by two popular Iraqi Facebook pages, namely: 'Khan Jgan' خان جغان and 'Baghdad' بغداد, one post and three stancetakings are selected for each. Those posts are translated into English together with the comments. The researcher considers the posts of those popular Iraqi pages as the main objects of stance, then the comments on those posts are to be analyzed. The stancetaking cannot occur without the involvement of more than one participant, therefore comments and sub-comments to those posts are the main data of analysis in this study. It is important to know how do Iraqi people respond to those popular Facebook posts in order to show their alignment (convergent or divergent) with the topics of those posts and with the stances of each other. This is crucial in this study in order to find out the main purpose of those popular Iraqi Facebook posts.

4. **Data Analysis**

Khan Jgan Popular Post
2022 July 17 at 9:02 pm

Travel, only then you will see other nations and realize the real meaning of life and humanity

You'll realize that we are not the best
You'll discover the lie of 6000 years of civilization
You'll be convinced that you live in a desert
You'll realize that the west has no time to conspire and ruin your nation… this is we who ruined our nation
You'll realize the kindness of the taxi driver, the police officer, the airport worker and even the coffee waiter. They all work hard only to gain money without bribery.
You'll sit to drink something with a stranger or share smiles with a beautiful woman in public who only looks at you as a human being…
Yes, you'll learn to respect the others and they will respect you in turn.
You'll be ashamed of those simple things you were doing in your homeland.
You'll miss your family, friends, and lots of things, but you'll never go back home.
And if it happens and you returned home, it's only because you're a visitor or a dead person.
So, don't blame those immigrants, they have just found their home.
Ali Aied

Contextualization Cues and Relevance

The first point to be highlighted here is that the author of this popular post sets the stance object which is admitted by the Iraqi immigrant **Ali Aied**. This is an indication that the post has an evidence of the proposition presented in **Ali's** facts which he saw and realized himself outside Iraq. This proposition seems to exhibit a degree of divergence. For this reason, the admin of this page agreed to post it for public because this degree of divergence draws the attention of the public, and hence, the page would get more likes and comments. However, by calculating the contextualization cues and relevance we can infer that it is real that Iraqi people suffer lots of things nowadays, to live in Iraq is to realize the many facts presented in the post. But, it is not a solution to immigrate and leave everything behind. This point seems to divide Iraqi people into two sides, those who are convergent with the post and those who are divergent with it. The author of the post **Ali Aied** objectively presents those facts as evidences that he has acknowledged himself, therefore it is an epistemic stance. These stancetaking information can be seen in the following table:

Table (1)
The Stance of Khan Jgan Popular Post

Stance Subject	Stance Object (the proposition)	Type of Stance	Subjectivity
Ali Aied	living in Iraq is miserable	epistemic	objective

Stancetaking (1)

Dhary Almalih

what is this oppression…if you (the author) decide to belittle yourself… think about your followers?
It is a fact that we have our own ancient civilization which is admitted by those nations. We are not claiming this fact ourselves we have what other nations have…we have many good deeds…but it is clear that the whole world conspired to ruin us…the whole world knows this fact

Walid Khalid

Dhary Almalih have you got any benefit from your civilization and what have you presented to a civilization where you have no role in its inventory and development??

Dhary Almalih

It is impossible to deny that we are both Iraqis
I have my own civilization as any one else and I'm proud of that because it is my origins where I belong…at least those who have history to be proud of are better than thos who have no history…
Those nations who have no civilizations have created their own ones and have created their own illusions to be proud of, we didn't teach people how to write
A second point is that our ancestors won't be waiting us to be proud of them the loser is you…and always remember that who doesn't have history doesn't have future

ضاري المالح

شنو هذا التحامل.....صاحب المنشور اذا انت مقرر تمارس جلد الذات ع نفسك ....فكر بمتابعيك ؟
بلي احنه اعرق حضارة وغضب عن الكل واحب اكلك هذا الاكتشاف هم نفسهم هاي الدول الي اكتشفوا. . يعني احنه ما الئنه شي من جيوبنه احنه حالنه حال كل العالم .....وبينه هواي شغلات زينه ....والعالم تأمر علينه وهذا واضح للكل ....كل العالم تدري بهالشي

Like   Reply   2d   15

Walid Khalid

ضاري المالح انت شستفاديت من حضارتك و شنو القدمته لتفتخر بحضارة ما الك أي دور في انشاءها او ديمومتها ؟؟

Like   Reply   1d

ضاري المالح

Walid Khalid

اني عراقي وانت عراقي ومستحيل هالشي ينكر اني حالي حال اي بشر عندي حضارة وافتخر بيها لان هذا اصلي وجذوري الي انتمي الها ..... باسوء الاحوال الي عنده تاريخ يفتخر بي افضل من الي ما عنده تاريخ ...
الشعوب الي ما عدها تاريخ وحضارة سوو حضارة مزيفه وصنعوا خرافات وهم يفتخرون بيها مو احنه الي علمنه العالم يقرا ....
ثانيا يا صديقي ترا اجدادنه واسلافنه ما يضرهم شي اذا ما افتخرت بيهم بالعكس انت يلي خسران .....وتذكر الي ما عنده ماضي ما عنده مستقبل

Like   Reply   1d   3

Discussion

As it appears from the screenshot, we have two stancetakers (out of hundreds) who take stances in regard to 'Khan Jgan Popular Post' above, other stancetakers will be shown next. However, the stancetaker **Dhary Almalih** evaluates the post as being not convinced since it contains unbelievable facts such as the "lie of 6000 years of civilization" which constitutes the main stance object in his stancetaking. Therefore, this stancetaker positions himself as being completely unconvinced with the proposition of the author's stance. It is clear that his alignment is divergent with the proposition of the post since he claims that it is a fact that "we have our ancient civilization" which contrasts the claim in the stance of the author. What is being recognized here is that the stance is subjective because the stancetaker gives his own point of view concerning the proposition of the post. Furthermore, the type of his stance is epistemic since

the stancetaker positions himself as having enough knowledge about the proposition of the post to completely contradict it.

On the other hand, the other stancetaker **Walid Khalid** shows his divergence with **Dhary Almalih** in a sub-comment. This is an indication that the stance taken by **Walid Khalid** changes to be inter-subjective in that he is giving his point of view in regard to the comment of **Dhary Almalih**. Meanwhile, the stance subject also changed from the fact that Iraq has an ancient civilization to the accusation of presenting nothing to that civilization. The stancetaker evaluates the previous stance negatively and positions himself against his counter stancetaker's opinion. The type of stance, however, is still epistemic since the stancetaker didn't argue about the existence of such a civilization which is something he knows very well, meanwhile, he presents himself as being acknowledged enough to accuse his stancetaker.

In turn, the stance taken by **Dhary Almalih** in his reply to **Walid Khalid's** comment is also inter-subjective. This stancetaker realized that **Walid Khalid** is accusing him of presenting nothing to that civilization, so that he mentions and admits that he is "Iraqi". He evaluates and positions himself against this stance. Therefore, his alignment is divergent. The type of stance is also epistemic since he is acknowledging his counter stancetaker of some information, as appears in his comment above. The following table shows their stances:

Table (2)
Stancetaking (1) to Khan Jgan Popular Post

Stance Subject	Stance Object (the proposition)	Type of Stance	Alignment	Subjectivity
Dhary Almalih	living in Iraq is miserable	epistemic	divergent	subjective
Walid Khalid	it is a fact that we have our own ancient civilization	epistemic	divergent	inter-subjective
Dhary Almalih	you have presented nothing to your civilization	epistemic	divergent	inter-subjective

Stancetaking (2)

Abdullah M Alkhafaje
The civilization is not a lie and all countries have different types of crimes racisms don't make it paradise
I agree that living in Iraq is worse but it is same case in any other country
Mohammed Al Eqaby
When your country is in this bad situation the civilization becomes really a lie, can see civilization in your society
It is a fact that we failed, what is important is the future and not our history

Abdullah M Alkhafaje

الحضارة مو كذبة 🙂 والدول بيها انواع الجرائم والعنصرية لتسووها الجنة

اوكي المعيشة بالعراق سيئة بس لتحسسوني باقي العالم وردي.

Like   Reply   2d   👍😆❤ 45

Mohammed AL Eqaby
Abdullah M Alkhfaje نعم لما يكون بلدك بهذه الحالة السيئة
الحضارة كذبة اين الحضارة وانعكاسها على مجتمعك الحضارة
عزاء انفسنا بفشلنا لاغير الحاضر هو اهم شي وليس التاريخ

Like   Reply   2d   Edited

Discussion

The first stancetaker is responding to the proposition of the post of the popular page above that "living in Iraq is miserable", therefore, he concentrates on the fact that civilization has nothing to do with the worse life in Iraq, claiming that this fact can be found in many countries. His stance, then, seems to be subjective because he is trying to show his opinion in regard to the post. This stancetaker evaluates the proposition as being untrue as his comment indicates, therefore, he positions himself to contradict the claim that Iraqi civilization is a lie. The whole comment indicates that his alignment is divergent. His stance is also epistemic as he tries to inform the author of some absent information in his stance.

The sub-comment of **Mohammed Al Eqaby** indicates that his stance is inter-subjective because he is directly contradicting the stance of **Abdullah M Alkhafaje.** His claim is that the bad situation is the outcome of the same people who once said to have a civilization. The type of stance here is epistemic, for, he knows they have a civilization but it is not tangible in their society. His alignment is divergent since he contradicts **Abdullah M Alkhafaje's** stance in defending their civilization. Their stances can be seen as follows:

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Table (3)
Stancetaking (2) to Khan Jgan Popular Post

Stance Subject	Stance Object (the proposition)	Type of Stance	Alignment	Subjectivity
Abdullah M Alkhafaje	living in Iraq is miserable	epistemic	divergent	subjective
Mohammed Al Eqaby	Iraq has a civilization and can be lived in	epistemic	divergent	inter-subjective

Stancetaking (3)

Wadhah Al Jalal
no need to mock at the post. Just travel outside and you'll realize the difference

Ammar Mohamed
Wadhah Al Jalal did you travel, live, eat, drink, with such nations or you were just a tourist for months to claim so?

Azhar Adhiem Al-Hillo
Wadhah Al Jalal try to request a visa for any of countries and you'll realize their civilization

Discussion

The third stancetaking to 'Khan Jgan Popular Post' shows that the whole stances are inter-subjective. **Wadhah Al Jalal** addresses those who commented on the post rather than he comments on the post itself, therefore he gives his point of view in regard to those comments. His evaluation is that those who disagreed with the post are mistaken, and so, he positions himself negatively against them. The type of his stance is epistemic since he presents himself as having enough knowledge of the countries outside Iraq, his alignment is divergent with the proposition of stance object as shown in table (4) below.

The sub-comments to his post are also inter-subjective, both **Ammar Mohamed** and **Azhar Adhiem Al-Hillo** present their points of view to contradict **Wadhah Al Jalal's** opinion. They both evaluate his stance and position themselves negatively against it. Knowing that each one of them has an evidence to contradict the stance; **Ammar Mohamed** seems to have travelled before, and **Azhar Adhiem Al-Hillo** seems to have faced some troubles in doing so. For these reasons, the type of stance of both of these subjects is

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epistemic where they both have a divergent alignment with the proposition. The following table illustrates the three stances:

Table (4)
Stancetaking (3) to Khan Jgan Popular Post

Stance Subject	Stance Object (the proposition)	Type of Stance	Alignment	Subjectivity
Wadhah Al Jalal	many comments mocked at the post	epistemic	divergent	inter-subjective
Ammar Mohamed	don't mock at the post	epistemic	divergent	inter-subjective
Azhar Adhiem Al-Hillo	don't mock at the post	epistemic	divergent	inter-subjective

Baghdad Popular Post
2022 May 21 at 5:37 PM

Al-Sahir expresses his sympathy with Iraqi people and solaces the families of the victims

Contextualization Cues and Relevance

The stance subject of this post seems to be the admin of the page himself because no name appears at the very end of the post to indicate its author. Al-Sahir (Khadum) is a very famous Iraqi singer all over the world. He gives his words of sympathy some days after the attack happened in Berikh summer residence southern Sakho governorate where some tourists died. It seems that the admin of this page intended to post these little words in this late time to draw the peoples' attention to this point and to let people decide whether Al-Sahir cares much about Iraq, though it is found that he showed his sympathy with the accident in the same day of the attack on his private page. This post, therefore, has this proposition which is to stress the late time of showing sympathy and the rare occasions where Al-Sahir appears to express his attitude towards Iraq.

However, the stance is objective because it is forwarded to Iraqi people as a whole. The admin seems to negotiate the proposition of this post with Iraqi people to let them evaluate and position themselves with or against it. This stance is affective; the author seems to negotiate the feelings of those people:

Table (5)
The Stance of Baghdad Popular Post

Stance Subject	Stance Object (the proposition)	Type of Stance	Subjectivity
The admin	Al-Sahir appears after a long time to show his sympathy with Iraq	affective	objective

Stancetaking (1)

Enas Hussen
What is this it's too late you don't even know where is Iraq, only Allah can help Iraq
Sizar Bakri
Iraq is in the heart of every Iraqi who is faithful to his country and people
Haider Al-Auqaily
Enas Hussen he mentioned Iraq only two times, in a paid Asia Cell company advertisement
The second one was in Saudia when the Iraqi MBC channel started to broadcast.

Enas Hussen
هاي شنو بعد وكت هو اصلا انت ماتعرف العراق وين صاير الك الله ياعراق
Like   Reply   3d   2

Sizar Bakri
العراق بقلب كل عراقي مخلص لوطنه واهله Enas Hussen
Like   Reply   3d

حيدر العقيلي
Enas Hussen
ذكر العراق مرتين.
وحده اعلان اسيا سيل بثمن.
والثانيه عند السعوديه من فتحت قناة ام بي سي العراق.
Like   Reply   3d

Discussion

The stancetaker **Enas Hussen** responds negatively to the post, therefore she shows her divergence with it. Whether this stancetaker knows the intention behind this post or not, she seems subjective and gives her own feelings towards the relationship between this singer and Iraq. She is not that happy to hear those little words in the post. The type of stance, then, is also affective.

The sub-comment of **Sizar Bakri** indicates that he is inter-subjective in that he addresses **Enas Hussen's** proposition about Al-Sahir. This singer, in the stancetaker's opinion, is not faithful enough to his country and he rarely appears to stress the point that he is always sympathy with Iraq. This stance is epistemic since it presents a kind of information rather than to express feelings; and the alignment is convergent with the proposition of the previous stance and is divergent with the proposition of the post.

The third stancetaker **Haider Al-Auqaily** also shows that he is convergent with **Enas Hussen,** and hence he is also divergent with the proposition of the post. He seems to be inter-subjective because he stresses the point raised by **Enas Hussen** in a form of information, as can be seen in his comment. It is clear that his stance is epistemic:

Table (6)
Stancetaking (1) to Baghdad Popular Post

Stance Subject	Stance Object (the proposition)	Type of Stance	Alignment	Subjectivity
Enas Hussen	Al-Sahir appears after a long time to show his sympathy with Iraq	affective	divergent	subjective
Sizar Bakri	Iraq needs you but you don't care	epistemic	convergent	inter-subjective
Haider Al-Auqaily	Iraq needs you but you don't care	epistemic	convergent	inter-subjective

Stancetaking (2)

Sara Omer Aljafari

Sarah Omar Aljafari
تقبل التعازي بس دزلهم كم فلس تجبر بخاطرهم ورة هل طركاعه هاي
Like   Reply   4d

علاء الحيدري
شنو كم فلس تقصدين كم دفتر كم شده Sarah Omar Aljafari
Like   Reply   4d

Zeina Lkc
دباعيه ديحك ايده اليسرى جايته فلوس Sarah Omar Aljafari
Like   Reply   3d

Your solace is accepted but send them some money to help them get out of this trouble
Alaa Al-Haidery
Why some money? let it be much money
Zeina Lkc
Sara Omer Aljafari look at him he is scratching his left hand; he must have got enough money recently

Discussion

The first stancetaker **Sara Omer Aljafari** is trying to show that he has no time to show his sympathy with Iraq because he is busy making money abroad. Her stance is subjective because she gives her own opinion; and the type of her stance is epistemic since she adds some information. Her alignment with the propositions of the post is divergent.

Both the second stancetaker **Alaa Al-Haidery** and **Zeina Lkc** inter-subjectively notice that **Sara Omer Aljafari** is stressing the point of making money where she draws attention, in one way or another, that this is the main reason why he rarely shows sympathy with Iraq. Therefore, these stancetakers are convergent with **Sara Omer Aljafari's** stance in this point, but at the same time they are divergent with the proposition of the post. This is an indication that the stance object changed a little to match another proposition by the first stancetaker. The type of both stances is epistemic, the stancetakers show themselves acknowledged of the sum of money that this singer has. It prevents him to always show sympathy with Iraq. The following table illustrates:

Table (7)
Stancetaking (2) to Baghdad Popular Post

Stance Subject	Stance Object (the proposition)	Type of Stance	Alignment	Subjectivity
Sara Omer Aljafari	Al-Sahir appears after a long time to show his sympathy with Iraq	epistemic	divergent	subjective
Alaa Al-Haidery	Al-Sahir is busy making money	epistemic	convergent	inter-subjective
Zeina Lkc	Al-Sahir is busy making money	epistemic	convergent	inter-subjective

Stancetaking (3)

Baker Aljoboury
Too much of you
Safaa Al-Asmer
Do you want him to use airplanes and
bomb?

Bakir Aljoboury
خاف صارت زحمة
Like Reply 6d

to

صفاء الاسمر
شتريدة يطير طيارات ويقصف؟ Bakir Aljoboury
Like Reply 6d

Discussion

In this stancetaking **Baker Aljoboury** follows an affective stance to show his feelings towards the post subjectively. He thinks that there is much of Al-Sahir to present than these few words. He evaluates and positions himself against Al-Sahir, and shows a divergent alignment with the proposition of the post. This is an indication that the admin of the page succeeded to draw the attention of these people.

On the other hand, **Safaa Al-Asmer** is divergent with the proposition of this stance that he is commenting on, claiming that this is the usual attitude of any artist. This stance is epistemic since it adds some points to be understood by the previous stancetaker rather than to blame Al-Sahir. This comment is inter-subjective because this stancetaker directly addressing **Baker Aljoboury** and contradicting his opinion:

Table (8)
Stancetaking (3) to Baghdad Popular Post

Stance Subject	Stance Object (the proposition)	Type of Stance	Alignment	Subjectivity
Baker Aljoboury	Al-Sahir appears after a long time to show his sympathy with Iraq	affective	divergent	subjective
Safaa Al-Asmer	There is much of Al-Sahir to present	epistemic	divergent	inter-subjective

5. <u>Findings and Discussions</u>

Through the pragmatic analysis of the data, it is found that those Iraqi Facebook popular pages seek to draw the people's attention towards some hidden aims in the minds of the admins. The two posts in this study reveal that it's easy to involve the Iraqi people in commenting on topics that draw their attention. It seems that those pages are doing so by posting topics which they already know that people will be divergent with. People usually have different stances concerning any topic and this is a good device to be used by those admins. However, it is important here to admit the fact that the Iraqi people are divergent with each other. This degree of divergence can simply be seen just when they give their stances. The study proves that whether a stancetaker agrees or disagrees with the main post, there must appear another stancetaker to agree or to disagree with the first in a sub-comment. The sub- comment is a very dangerous stance because the stancetaker is directly showing his agreement or disagreement with the comment. The following table represents the full account of the stances analyzed in this study:

Table (9)
The Stance Information of the Two Posts

No. of stancetakers of the two posts		No. of stances	No. of convergent stances	No. of divergent stances	No. of affective stances	No. of epistemic stances	No. of objective stances	No. of subjective stances	No. of Inter-subjective stances
Khan Jgan	7	8	0	8	0	8	0	2	6
Baghdad	8	8	4	4	2	6	0	3	5
Total No.	15	16	4	12	2	14	0	5	11

The most important concern of this study is the alignment which is held by the stancetakers towards the stances of each other in regard to the propositions of the posts. As it appears from the table above, the analysis recorded (12) divergent alignment out of (16) stances; taking into account that the stances of the admins themselves are not included in this table. However, this is an indication that those pages deliberately post controversial topics in a try to recall

the involvement of many people to participate whatever happens. This is a big problem because people who do not understand this point are victims, they are likely to fight with each other just to prove that their points of view are right.

On the other hand, subjectivity is another proof that those popular pages have other intentional purposes rather than to inform people of some important news. The study recorded (11) inter-subjective stances out of (16). This is another problem that may invite people to evaluate the stances of each other negatively rather than to evaluate the post itself. It is found that inter-subjectivity is the main reason why people change the stance object. The following table calculates the changes of the stance object between the stancetakers:

Table (10)
Number of Stance Object Change

No. of stance objects of the two posts		No. of stancetakings	No. of stance object change
Khan Jgan	1	3	5
Baghdad	1	3	3
Total No.	2	6	8

This table shows that the stance object changed (5) times out of the one proposition of 'Khan Jgan' post, and (3) times out of that one proposition of 'Baghdad' post. This is, again, a prof that those posts are problematic since they invite people to stress their own points of view, which may provoke divergence as have been seen. Divergence is the reason why people change the stance object of the main post; and it is the same reason why people become inter-subjective with each other.

The epistemic stance is found to be the most prominent type in the analysis of this study. The study recorded (14) times of its occurrence out of (16) stances; this number indicates that the controversial topics of the two selected popular pages cause people to forget their feelings and to stress their own points of view with informative evidences. Iraqi people, as is proved in the analysis,

present themselves acknowledged enough of the propositions they defend; they are doing the same thing with the propositions they are divergent with.

6. <u>General Conclusions</u>

The study concludes the followings:

1. Facebook program makes it free for Iraqi people to take stances and to reveal their real alignments towards the stance object of the post itself and towards the stances of other participants who comment on the same post.

2. Iraqi popular Facebook pages seek to attract people to participate in the topics they post. Those pages choose certain controversial topics to do so.

3. The controversial topics of those Iraqi pages cause people to be divergent with each other in order to enlarge the number of the participants in their pages.

4. The degree of divergence is very high among the Iraqi participants in their stances due to the different points of view that they try to epistemically convey in a form of a comment.

5. Most of the stances towards the two posts proved to be epistemic. This is, again, another indication that those Iraqi stancetakers are involved in a controversial debate where feelings have no role to play.

6. Those controversial posts invite Iraqi people to evaluate the stance of each other negatively, and due to that they position themselves against the stances of each other.

7. Iraqi Facebook users seem to change the stance object of the main propositions of the posts analyzed. This is something dangerous because it draws people to some harm conflicts.

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