

Discourse and Unequal Diplomacy: A Critical Textual Analysis of the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement

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Abstract:

This study examined the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to uncover power dynamics and ideological constructs embedded within its discourse. The research aimed to identify the textual strategies that shape power relations and influence diplomatic discourse. Adopting Fairclough's (2015) CDA model, the study employed qualitative-quantitative research methodology to analyze graphological, lexico-semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic resources. Findings revealed that transitivity structures, modal expressions, and speech acts reinforce the U.S. dominance, framing Iraq as a recipient rather than an equal partner. The strategic use of euphemisms, metaphors, and overwording obscures power imbalance while presenting a narrative of cooperation. Despite its formal neutrality, the SFA embeds asymmetrical power relations, shaping Iraq's political, economic, and security framework. Finally, a set of conclusions and implications are provided.

Keywords: *Critical Textual Analysis, U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), Power Dynamics, Ideological Constructs, Diplomatic Language.*

1- Introduction

Diplomatic language is identified as “Special language employed to minimize the provocation likely to be caused by delivery of a sharp or unavoidably threatening message. It is typically mild, euphemistic, and circumlocutory” (Berridge, 2003, p.74). Diplomatic discourse, according to Bhatia (2004), can be classified as a subgenre of political or media discourse, sharing characteristics like intercultural communication, media interaction, polite negotiations, manipulative strategies, and disagreement management. These elements are more precise in diplomatic contexts (Afzaal and Chishti, 2021, p.122).

Diplomatic discourse encompasses the language and communication strategies employed by diplomats and officials to convey a nation's international policies and objectives, often shaped by historical context. This type of discourse includes formal national documents on diplomatic policies or ideas, speeches, treaties, agreements, and diplomatic negotiations (Hu & Li, 2018, pp.5-12). The language diplomats use depends on their situation, and they often have precise instructions about what language to use or avoid (Kleiner, 2008, p.321)

Scot (2001:153) suggests that diplomats utilize various linguistic techniques to influence and persuade their counterparts toward reaching agreements. (Ismailov, Rayeva, Koblanova, Yelikbayev, & Yessenova, 2020, p.809) Identify two key aspects of the language used in diplomacy: it is reserved for formal texts like resolutions, treaties, and peace agreements, and follows specific conventions, vocabulary, sentence structures, and idiomatic expressions. The language of diplomacy is crafted to be both precise and flexible, allowing for multiple interpretations, which becomes particularly important in formulating treaties and agreements, where the language defines the level of commitments and responsibilities .

Diplomatic language often conveys underlying meanings beyond the direct interpretation of words, using subtle suggestions, coded expressions, or euphemisms to address sensitive topics tactfully. Terms like "agree to disagree" or "taking into consideration" are common in easing disagreements or creating space for compromise without causing offense (Dadush, 2020, pp.239-250). Diplomatic discourse is characterized by “courtesy, non-redundancy and constructive ambiguity” (Jönsson, 2016, as cited in Hussein & Ahmed, 2020, p.189). Jönsson notes that diplomats know how to interpret diplomatic ambiguity, avoiding rough language while sending softened signals. Ambiguity facilitates international agreement and political maneuvering, enabling tactful communication to ease tensions and ensure flexibility (Hashim, 2009, p.850).

The authority of diplomatic language is reflected in its legal status, demanding precision to avoid misunderstandings (McEwan, 1986, p.80). Similar to diplomatic discourse, treaties and international agreements use carefully constructed language to balance between specificity and flexibility, leaving room for interpretation (Jönsson, 2016:79).

Due to the fact that the discourse of the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement is under-researched from a critical linguistics perspective, the present study aims to expose the power dynamics and ideologies embedded in the discourse of the agreement via using Fairclough's (2015) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model. By examining textual strategies, the study seeks to reveal how the language of the SFA constructs and reinforces power relations, shaping the U.S.-Iraq partnership. Accordingly, the present study addresses the following research questions :

1. What are the textual strategies and resources used in the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA)?
2. How do the textual strategies and resources contribute to the construction of power and ideology in shaping the U.S.-Iraq relationship ?

2- Discourse of International Treaties and Agreements

In modern diplomacy, treaties are formal, legally binding agreements between states or international organizations, governed by international law. Unlike nonbinding agreements, such as declarations or memorandums of understanding, treaties create legal obligations and are enforced under the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*—"agreements must be kept"—as outlined in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969) (Constantinou, 2005, p.1.)

A treaty, as defined in the Vienna Convention, is a written agreement between nations, governed by international laws, and may consist of multiple related instruments (United Nations Treaty Series, 1980, p.332). According to Antonio (2001, p.126), treaties are used to establish standards for states and officials. They are also known as conventions, protocols, and memorandums of understanding, but all serve to regulate the interests of international parties through agreed-upon rules.

Slomanson (2011, p.351) defines treaties broadly as all written international agreements, whether they establish "hard law" or "soft law" obligations, depending on the language used (Shelton, 1997, pp.119-43). For example, terms like "must" indicate hard law, while "should" reflects soft law, allowing more flexibility in compliance (Abbott & Snidal, 2000: 54, pp.421-56).

Treaties are classified into three types based on the issues they address (United Nations, 2006, p.30):

- i Bilateral Treaties: Agreements between two parties, typically following Article 102 of the United Nations Charter. These treaties do not have a standard form, but require registration for reservations or declarations (Antonio, 2001, p.127).
- ii. Multilateral Treaties: Agreements involving three or more parties, where each party has the ability to create treatie (United Nations, 2006, p.30).
- iii. Unilateral declarations: Interpretative, optional, or mandatory declarations linked to previously or concurrently registered treaties, some of which can be independent international agreements (Antonio, 2001, p.127).

Functionally, treaties establish international rules and have become increasingly significant in addressing international challenges (Antonio, 2001, p.129). They contribute to:

- i Maintaining International Law: By establishing organizations or mechanisms for enforcement .
- ii. Human Rights: Treaties help institutionalize human rights, contributing to their global acceptance .
- iii. Ethical Impact: Treaties shape a state's ethical perspective, with enforcement reinforced by legal and moral sanctions.

As such, treaties are crucial for their "legally binding" nature, establishing obligations that significantly impact both states and individuals (Simmons, 2010, p.275).

Treaties can be drafted in multiple languages, with the United Nations considering texts in all official languages equally authentic (United Nations, 1969, Article 33). In bilateral treaties, the official language is typically used, but if a state's language is difficult to access, a third language, usually English, may be designated as the dominant version. Only the treaty's authentic text is authoritative, and drafting errors do not invalidate the treaty's validity (United Nations, 1969, Article 48). For bilateral treaties, diplomatic notes are exchanged to correct errors, while multilateral treaties follow specific guidelines (United Nations, 1969, Article 79).

Treaty language belongs to legal discourse, or language or Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) (Mattila, 2013, p.1). Though precise and standardized, it is not as restrictive as a "technolect" since treaties aim to be accessible to the public (Ministry of Justice of Finland, 2016, p.439). Aust (2013, p.187) emphasizes the importance of precision in treaty language to prevent varying interpretations and conflicts. Treaties often reference prior treaties or legal frameworks, maintaining consistency in international law (Bianchi, 2016, p.88).

This intertextuality strengthens legal precedents and aligns treaties with established norms. Scholars, such as Tiersma (2010), argue that treaty language is performative, creating or modifying the rights and obligations of states, with commissive and directive speech acts signaling commitments and specifying actions that must be taken (Kone, 2020, p.816).

A key feature of treaties includes their normative power. Terms like "shall", "must", and "will" create enforceable commitments, turning political discourse into binding legal obligations (Klabbers, 2017, p.112). These terms often reflect power dynamics and ideological influences, subtly embedding unequal power relations between parties, particularly by imposing conditions on weaker states. Finally, treaties must remain adaptable to the evolving nature of international relations. Provisions for amendments, reservations, and terminations allow treaties to stay relevant and effective in a changing global environment (Aust, 2013).

3- The American-Iraqi Strategic Framework Agreement

The Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) was signed in 2008 to support Iraq's sovereignty and democratic stability, establishing a long-term partnership in political, economic, cultural, and security cooperation (The Washington Institute, 2024). The agreement aimed to align Iraq's policies within Western frameworks, while reducing its dependency on regional powers. It also introduced institutional mechanisms such as Joint Coordinating Committees and the Higher Coordination Committee (HCC) to oversee bilateral relations (Katzman and Humud, 2015, p.9).

The signing of the SFA coincided with Iraq's post-2003 transition, following the drafting of a new constitution and the 2005 elections. The agreement was framed as a means of reinforcing U.S.-Iraq relations after the withdrawal of U.S. troops. However, its language strategically emphasized continued American influence, particularly in security and economic domains, despite claims of respecting Iraq's sovereignty (Katzman & Humud, 2015, p.3)

The SFA's preamble highlights the end of UN Security Council measures under Chapter VII, yet many of its provisions overlap with the SOFA. Both agreements emphasized that Iraq would not be used as a base for attacks on other nations, and that the US would not seek permanent military bases in Iraq (Bassiouni, 2010, p.10). However, discourse strategies in the SFA subtly frame the U.S. as a dominant actor, influencing Iraq's future security and political. During a White House briefing, Lieutenant General Douglas Lute clarified that the SFA was not a binding treaty, but rather a set of guiding principles for future negotiations (Joint Statement on the US-Iraq Strategic

Dialogue, 2021). The agreement's language, therefore, operates within a discourse of strategic ambiguity, presenting Iraq as a sovereign state while embedding long-term U.S. oversight.

4- Research Methodology

This study investigates the power dynamics and ideological constructs within the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement. The primary data for analysis consists of the full text of the SFA, which is a significant diplomatic document between the United States and Iraq. The text of the agreement has been selected as the main corpus of this study to examine how language constructs and reinforces power relations between the two countries. Given that, the SFA has been published in English, the study will focus on this version. The selection of this text is crucial because it reflects the strategic relationship between the two nations and provides insights into how power and ideology are constructed through language in formal diplomatic agreements.

This study adopts a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, based on Fairclough's (2015) model. The analysis will focus on four main textual levels: graphological, lexico-semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic resources. Using qualitative interpretation, the study will explore how these features convey and reinforce power relations within the agreement. Although the research adopts a qualitative-quantitative approach, the analysis begins with a statistical (quantitative) overview of linguistic features, which is subsequently enriched with qualitative interpretation to uncover deeper ideological and power-related meanings .

5- Results and Discussion

5-1 Textual Analysis: Qualitative & Quantitative Analyses

The textual analysis of the SFA is carried out at four linguistic levels: graphological, lexico-semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic resources .

5-1-1 The Graphological Level

Using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) framework, the graphological features of the text are examined through the principles of Information Value, Saliency, and Framing. The qualitative analysis provides illustrative examples from the data, along with a detailed interpretation, while the quantitative analysis investigates the statistical distribution of these features.

The overall statistical distribution of the graphological resources in the SFA is shown in Table (1) below, alongside an illustrative pie chart.

Table (1): The statistical distribution of the graphological resources in the SFA.

The Graphological Level	Raw Frequency No.	Percentage %
Information Value	11	22.94%
Saliency	21	43.75%
Framing	16	33.33%
TOTAL	48	100%

Figure (1): The distribution of graphological resources in the SFA .



5.1.1 Information Value

The principle of information value refers to the placement and hierarchical positioning of textual elements, reflecting power dynamics. Information value is identified 11 times throughout the agreement. Notable examples include :

1. Title of the agreement: The placement of "United States of America" before "the Republic of Iraq" in the title of the agreement can reflect an intentional prioritization of the U.S., which conveys dominance, while presenting the agreement as balanced .
2. Arrangement of sections: In the Main Provisions part, Political and security cooperation are discussed first, followed by cultural, economic, and environmental cooperation. This order emphasizes the priority given to the U.S.'s strategic and security interests in Iraq.
3. Signatures: In the Final Provisions part, the U.S. signature comes before the Iraqi signature, visually emphasizing the U.S. dominance, despite the agreement's claim of equal partnership.

5.1.1.2 Saliency

Saliency refers to how certain elements stand out in a text to draw the reader's attention. Saliency is identified 21 times throughout the agreement.

4. Title of the agreement: The title is the most visually salient feature, placed at the top of the document, in a large and bold font,

immediately capturing attention. The emphasis on the U.S.'s name in such positioning reinforces its dominant role in the agreement, while Iraq's presence is recognized, it is visually understated.

5. Section Headings: In the Main Provisions part, headings like "Principles of Cooperation" are bolded and larger than the body text, emphasizing the U.S.'s strategic goals.

6. Political and security sections: These sections are placed earlier in the document, foregrounding their importance over secondary themes, such as cultural or health cooperation.

5.1.1.3 Framing

Framing involves dividing lines, such as white spaces or section headings that connect or separate elements in the text, showing their relationships. Framing is identified 16 times throughout the agreement. Examples include :

7. Preamble: Numbered points separate key principles like sovereignty and equality, linking them to U.S. support, showing how they are interrelated.

8. Section headings: Bold headings separate themes like defense and cultural cooperation, visually emphasizing security concerns and relegating cultural and environmental issues to a secondary position.

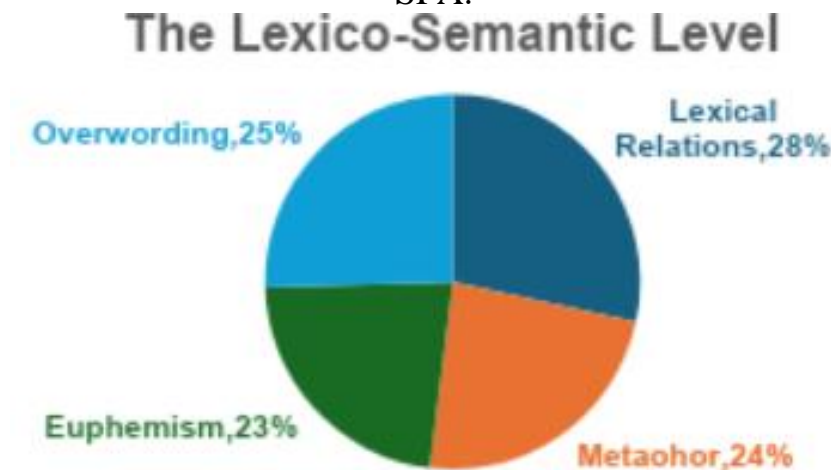
5.1.2 The Lexico-Semantic Level

The lexico-semantic level is examined through Lexical Relations, Metaphor, Euphemism, and Overwording based on Fairclough's (2015) framework. The analysis highlights examples from the data, with detailed interpretation and statistical distribution of these resources, as shown in Table (2) below, alongside an illustrative pie chart.

Table (2): The statistical distribution of the lexico-semantic level in the SFA.

The Lexico-Semantic Level	Raw Frequency No.	Percentage %
Lexical Relations	29	28.43%
Metaphor	24	23.53%
Euphemism	23	22.55%
Overwording	26	25.49%
TOTAL	102	100%

Figure (2): The distribution of the lexico-semantic resources in the SFA.



5.1.2.1 Lexical Relations

The key lexical relations identified are synonymy and antonymy. Synonymy involves words with similar meanings, while antonymy refers to words with opposite meanings (Fairclough, 2015:133-34). In the SFA, lexical relations are found 29 times.

Synonymy is used 24 times throughout the agreement, reflecting intentional linguistic choices to highlight certain ideas. For example, the terms “Cooperation” and “Friendship” appear three times in the preamble, reinforcing themes of mutual benefit and partnership, while emphasizing the U.S.’s strategic goals. Another example includes “Peace” and “Security,” conveying the agreement’s broader geopolitical objectives.

Antonymy, on the other hand, highlights contrasts in meaning, often revealing opposing ideas or values. It appears five times in the agreement. In the Preamble part, Antonymy is demonstrated through the pairing of “Peace” vs. “Threat,” underscoring the progress achieved in Iraq and setting the stage for the agreement’s goals.

In the Main Provisions part, examples such as “Temporary” vs “Permanent” emphasize the temporary nature of U.S. forces in Iraq, while “Internal” vs. “External” highlights the scope of Iraq’s security obligations. Additionally, “Export” vs. “Import” outlines the agreement’s economic focus.

5.1.2.2 Metaphor

Fairclough (2015:136) defines metaphor as expressing one aspect of experience in terms of another, making complex ideas more accessible. In the SFA, metaphor appears 24 times, helping to clarify the agreement’s themes.

In the Preamble part, the metaphor “Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation” presents the agreement as a partnership, suggesting

equality while downplaying the U.S.'s dominant role. Similarly, the term "Enshrined in the United Nations Charter" draws from sacred connotations, enhancing the agreement's legitimacy and masking any potential power imbalance.

In the Main Provisions part, the metaphor "Positive dialogue among states" extends personal communication to international relations, highlighting cooperative discussion and diplomacy as key to resolving disputes. Additionally, "Communications are the lifeblood of economic growth" emphasizing the vital role of communication technologies in modern economics, suggesting that without communication, economic growth could be hindered, just like a body without sufficient blood.

5.1.2.3 Euphemism

A euphemism is a word that is substituted with a more familiar one to avoid negative or harsh connotations (Fairclough, 2015:134-135). Euphemisms are identified 23 times in the SFA.

In the Preamble part, the phrase "The termination of the Chapter VII authorization for and mandate of the multinational forces" avoids directly addressing Iraq's years under foreign control, instead framing the withdrawal of these forces as a natural conclusion of a cooperative agreement. Similarly, "The situation in Iraq is fundamentally different than that which existed..." softens the discussion of Iraq's troubled past, focusing on progress, rather than conflict and instability.

In the Main Provisions part, euphemisms are used to mitigate the power imbalance and soften sensitive topics. For example, the phrase "The temporary presence of U.S. forces in Iraq is at the request and invitation of the sovereign Government of Iraq" suggests mutual respect, framing the U.S. presence as voluntary. Additionally, "Issues consequent to the actions of the former regime that continue to harm Iraq" avoids directly mentioning the negative impacts of Iraq's former regime, focusing instead on rebuilding and reconciliation.

5.1.2.4 Overwording

Overwording refers to the repetitive use of words or phrases to emphasize certain ideas, often reflecting ideological constructs and power dynamics (Fairclough, 2015:133). Overwording is identified 26 times in the entire discourse of the agreement.

In the Preamble part, the repetition of "long-term relationship" emphasizes the goal of establishing a lasting and stable partnership between the U.S. and Iraq, reinforcing the ideological importance of a sustainable relationship.

In the Main Provisions part, phrases like "Temporary presence" and "Nor seek or request permanent bases" emphasize Iraq's sovereignty by downplaying concerns about foreign occupation.

Additionally, terms like “Support,” “Strengthen” and “Promote,” repeatedly highlight the U.S. role in Iraq’s political and diplomatic development. While the frequent use of “Monitor implementation” emphasizes the U.S.’s supervisory role in the agreement, subtly reinforcing a power imbalance.

In the Final Provisions part, the repetition of “In accordance with the constitutional procedures in effect in both countries” reinforces respect for both parties' sovereignty and legal independence, while implicitly highlighting the U.S.’s role as a partner in ensuring the agreement implementation according to both international and domestic legal systems.

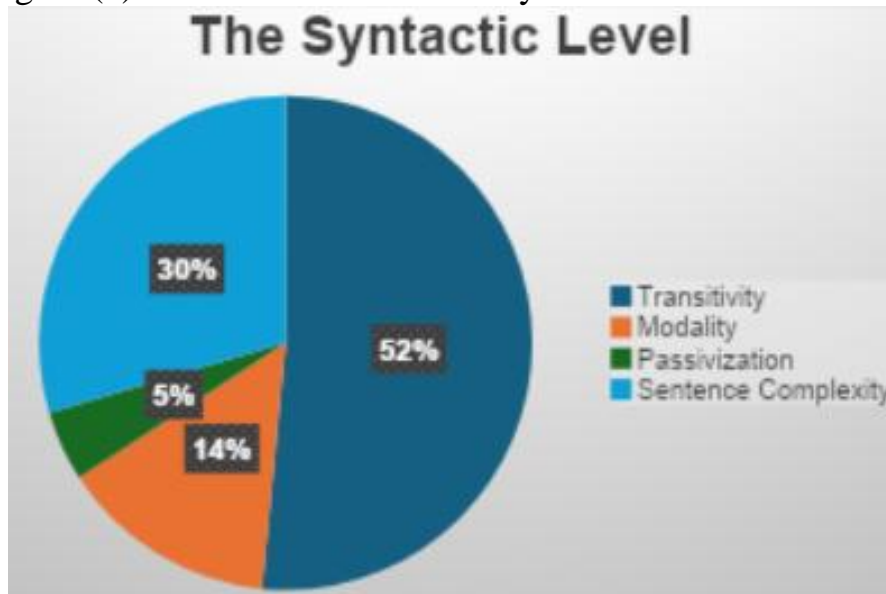
5.1.3 The Syntactic Level

Using Fairclough’s (2015) framework, this analysis examines the syntactic features of the agreement, focusing on Transitivity, Modality, Passivization, and Sentence Complexity. It includes illustrative examples from the data and a discussion of the statistical distribution of these syntactic features, as shown in Table (3) below, alongside an illustrative pie chart.

Table (3): The statistical distribution of the syntactic level in the SFA .

The Syntactic Level	Raw Frequency No.	Percentage %
Transitivity	101	51.53%
Modality	28	14.29%
Passivization	9	4.59%
Sentence Complexity	58	29.59%
TOTAL	196	100%

Figure (3): The distribution of the Syntactic level in the SFA.



5.1.3.1 Transitivity

Using Fairclough's (2015) framework, this analysis examines action, event, and attribution processes along with participants, and circumstances to uncover power relations and ideological constructs.

In the Preamble part, action processes (SVO structures) highlight both the U.S. and Iraq as active agents, but Iraq is often the sole agent when specific responsibilities are mentioned, such as in "Iraq will assume full responsibility" indicating an unequal distribution of obligations despite the illusion of partnership .

Event processes (SV structures) agentless constructions like "Major and Positive developments in Iraq that have taken place" and "The threat to international peace and security... no longer exists" present Iraq's changes as natural, hiding the U.S.'s role in these events.

Attribution processes (SVC structures) are strategically used to establish new states of being. Sentences like "The situation in Iraq is fundamentally different" and "Such a long-term relationship...will contribute to the strengthening" portray the U.S.-Iraq relationship as naturally beneficial, normalizing power dynamics.

In the Main Provisions part, action processes are dominantly used, emphasizing commitments and constraints. Examples include "The United States shall not use Iraqi land, sea, and air as a launching or transit point for attacks" and "The United States shall ensure maximum efforts to work with and through the democratically elected government of Iraq," which emphasize the U.S.'s commitments and portray the U.S. as a facilitator of Iraq's democracy .

Event processes appear less frequently in this part. Examples like "Iraqi citizens currently dwelling outside" and "Disputes that may arise under this agreement" use agentless constructions that obscure power imbalances, reflecting passivity or lack of agency.

Attribution processes are infrequent but hold significant ideological importance. Sentences like "A strong Iraq capable of self-defense is essential for achieving stability in the region" and "Communications are the lifeblood of economic growth in the twenty-first century" attribute power to Iraq and Western technology, respectively, reflecting global and regional power structures.

In the Final Provisions part, action processes are extensively used. Examples like "Either party provides written notice" suggest a balance of power in decision-making, though the broader context may indicate otherwise.

Event processes are less frequently used. Sentences like "This agreement shall enter into force" frame processes as neutral and inevitable, even though it is likely driven by political decisions.

Attribution processes make up a low percentage of the total processes in this part. For example, “Each text being equally authentic” presents an ideological stance of mutual respect and equality, though they may mask imbalances in language and culture, particularly the dominance of English in international legal contexts.

Table (4): The statistical distribution of Transitivity types in the SFA.

Transitivity Types	Raw Frequency No.	Percentage %
Action Processes	74 (Preamble: 4 instances, Main Provisions: 67 instances, Final Provisions: 3 instances)	73.27%
Event Processes	13 (Preamble: 2 instances, Main Provisions: 9 instances, Final Provisions: 2 instances)	12.87 %
Attribution Processes	14 (Preamble: 2 instances, Main Provisions: 9 instances, Final Provisions: 3 instances)	13.86 %
TOTAL	101	100%

5.1.3.2 Modality

This analysis examines relational and expressive modality, following Fairclough’s (2015) taxonomy, to explore how power is conveyed through obligations, permissions, and certainty in the agreement.

In the Preamble part, relational modality is evident in “Iraq should return by December 31, 2008, to the legal and international standing,” which imposes an obligation on Iraq, signaling the U.S.’s authority. Another example is “Iraq will assume full responsibility for its security,” where “will” asserts Iraq’s future obligations while indirectly reinforcing the U.S.’s control .

Expressive modality overlaps with relational in “Iraq will assume full responsibility for its security,” expressing certainty about Iraq’s future role. The dual use of “will” shows both expectation and belief in Iraq’s ability to manage its security.

In the Main Provisions part, relational modality is clear in “The United States shall not use Iraqi land, sea, and air as a launching or transit point for attacks” and “The Parties share a common understanding that their mutual efforts and cooperation on political and diplomatic issues shall improve and strengthen security,” both using “shall” to impose strong obligations and commitments.

Expressive modality is reflected in “The Parties share the conviction that connections between their citizens... will forge strong, long-lasting bonds of friendship and mutual respect,” conveying optimism about the success of the partnership.

In the Final Provisions part, relational modality dominates with examples like “This Agreement shall enter into force on January 1, 2009” and “All cooperation under this Agreement shall be subject to the laws and regulations of both countries,” where “shall” emphasizes binding commitments and legal authority.

Expressive modality appears in “This Agreement may be amended with the mutual written agreement of the Parties,” where “may” suggests possibility and adaptability, reflecting a more flexible power dynamic between the parties.

Table (5): The statistical distribution of Modality types in the SFA.

Modality types	Raw Frequency No.	Percentage %
Relational Modality	17 (Preamble: 2 instances, Main Provisions:10 instances, Final Provisions: 5 instances)	60.71%
Expressive Modality	11 (Preamble: 1 instance, Main Provisions: 8 instances, Final Provisions:2 instances)	39.29%
TOTAL	28	100%

5.1.3.3 Passivization

Passivization, as described by Fairclough (2015:141), shifts focus from the agent to the action or recipient, sometimes omitting the agent to obscure responsibility and causality .

In the Preamble part, the passive construction “Recognizing the major and positive developments in Iraq that have taken place subsequent to April 9, 2003” omit the agent, making the developments seem like neutral facts and avoiding the need to assign responsibility (e.g., U.S. or Iraqi government).

In the Main Provisions part, examples like “Disputes that may arise under this Agreement... are to be settled through diplomatic channels,” focuses on the action of settling disputes without specifying the agent, obscuring authority over the resolution process.

In the Final Provisions part, “This Agreement shall enter into force on January 1, 2009, following an exchange of diplomatic notes confirming that the actions by the Parties necessary to bring the Agreement into force... have been completed” uses passivization to emphasize the completion of necessary actions, without naming the agents, reinforcing an image of neutrality and institutional power.

5.1.3.4 Sentence Complexity

This section analyzes the complexity of sentences in the SFA, focusing on both simple and complex sentences as per Fairclough's (2015) framework. A simple sentence consists of one independent clause, regardless of word count, whereas a complex sentence combines an independent and a dependent clause linked by either

coordination (with equal importance) or subordination (prominence of the main clause) or two independent clauses .

In the Preamble part, the total number of sentences in the preamble is nine (9), of which eight (8) are complex and only one (1) is simple. An example of a complex sentence is sentence (1) in statement (2). It addresses Iraq's progress and the transition in its international status, using multiple clauses connected by subordination (e.g., "that have taken place subsequent to April 9, 2003") and coordination (e.g., "and affirming in that regard"). It is a complex sentence integrating both dependent and independent clauses, reflecting the detailed nature of the agreement. An example of a simple sentence is "The United States and the Republic of Iraq have agreed to the following," since it contains one independent clause. It has a subject (The United States and the Republic of Iraq) and a predicate (have agreed to the following).

The Main Provisions part is divided into ten numbered sections, each representing a different theme. The total number of sentences in the main provisions is (92), the total number of complex sentences is (47), and the total number of simple sentences is (45). An example of a complex sentence is found in section (II), specifically in sentence (3). This sentence addresses Iraq's diplomatic relations, detailing actions such as establishing positive relations with the regional states and resolving disputes peacefully. It is a complex sentence, using coordination (e.g., "and") and subordination (e.g., "including") to link clauses and expand on diplomatic efforts. An example of a simple sentence is "A strong Iraq capable of self-defense is essential for achieving stability in the region," it contains a single independent clause, expressing a complete thought, addressing the importance of Iraq's ability to defend itself as a key factor of maintaining peace and stability in the region.

The Final Provisions part is divided into four numbered statements, each addressing a specific procedural aspect of the agreement. The total number of sentences in the final provisions is (6), the total number of complex sentences is (3), and the total number of simple sentences is (3). An example of a complex sentence is sentence (1). This sentence discusses the enforcement of the agreement, detailing actions such as the exchange of diplomatic notes and adherence to constitutional procedures. It is a complex sentence, using subordination (e.g., "following" and "confirming that") to connect clauses and elaborate on the procedural requirements. An example of a simple sentence is "The termination shall be effective one year after the date of such notification," which is a single

independent clause, addressing the process of terminating the agreement.

Table (6): The statistical distribution of Sentence Complexity in the SFA

Sentence Complexity	Raw Frequency No.	Percentage%
Total number of sentences	107 (Preamble: 9 instances, Main Provisions: 92 instances, Final Provisions: 6 instances)	100%
Complex Sentences	58 (Preamble:8 instances, Main Provisions: 47 instances, Final Provisions:3 instances)	54.21%
Simple Sentences	49 (Preamble:1 instance, Main Provisions:45 instances, Final Provisions:3 instances)	45.79%

5.1.4The Pragmatic Level

Using Fairclough's (2015) framework, the study analyzes the pragmatic resources of the SFA through Speech Acts, providing examples from the data and a detailed explanation for each example. The statistical distribution of speech acts in the agreement is presented in Table (7) below, alongside an illustrative pie chart.

Table (7): The statistical distribution of Speech Acts in the SFA.

Speech Acts Types	Raw Frequency No.	Percentage %
Assertives	20 (Preamble: 8 instances, Main Provisions: 10 instances, Final Provisions: 2 instances)	27.78%
Directives	1 (Preamble: 0 instances, Main Provisions:1 instances, Final Provisions: 0 instances)	1.39%
Commissives	48 (Preamble: 0 instance, Main Provisions: 47 instances, Final Provisions: 1 instance)	66.67%
Expressives	1 (Preamble: 1 instance, Main Provisions: 0 instances, Final Provisions: 0 instances)	1.39%
Declarations	2 (Preamble: 0 instances, Main Provisions: 0 instances, Final Provisions: 2 instances)	2.78%
TOTAL	72	100%

Figure (4): The distribution of the different categories of speech acts in the SFA.



5.1.4.1 Speech Acts

Speech acts, as defined by Searle (1979), are utterances that perform actions through language, such as making statements, giving orders, making promises, or asking questions. Fairclough (2015) highlights that speech acts reflect power relations and ideologies. Using Searle's (1979) model, speech acts are analyzed in the agreement .

The Preamble part of the agreement is rich in speech acts that reflect the power dynamics and ideological constructs in the relationship between the United States and Iraq. For example, "Affirming the genuine desire of the two countries to establish a long-term relationship of cooperation and friendship," "Affirming" is an assertive speech act that does more than describe; it frames the relationship between the two countries as cooperative and equal. By asserting a "genuine desire," the producer or initiator creates an image of mutual intent, hiding potential power imbalances.

Another example is "Welcoming no later than December 31, 2008, the termination of the Chapter VII authorization," "Welcoming" is an expressive speech act since it expresses a positive psychological state. The use of "welcoming" conveys a sense of approval about the event "The termination of Chapter VII authorization," signaling approval of Iraq's return to full sovereignty. It reflects power by positioning the U.S. as a supporter of Iraq's progress, reinforcing a hierarchical relationship. While its ideology conveys partnership on the surface, it implicitly underscores hegemony and liberal internationalism, where powerful states like the U.S. play a leading role in the development of the least powerful states.

The Main Provisions part of the agreement is also rich with speech acts. For example, “The United States shall not use Iraqi land, sea, and air as a launching or transit point for attacks,” is a clear example of a commissive speech act. The speaker (The United States will) commit to not doing something in the future, using Iraqi territory for attacks or seeking permanent bases. The use of “shall not” is a strong commitment, typically used in diplomatic discourse. This reflects a promise to respect Iraq’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The fact that the U.S. is the one making this commitment highlights its authority in this relationship, reinforcing its dominant position .

The Final Provisions part of the agreement extensively employs different categories of speech acts. For example, “This Agreement shall enter into force on January 1, 2009, following an exchange of diplomatic notes,” is a declarative speech act because it changes the reality to match the content of the speech act. It states that the agreement shall enter into force on a specific date, which changes the agreement’s status from non-binding to binding. It reflects an ideology of mutual consent and legal formalism, where the U.S. and Iraq commit to bringing the agreement into force through constitutional procedures.

The concluding statement of the Final Provisions “Signed in duplicate in Baghdad on this 17th day of November, 2008, in the English and Arabic language, each text being equally authentic” is an example of an assertive speech act. It states a factual condition (the agreement was signed on a specific date in specific languages). It reflects an ideology of mutual consent and legal formalism, where the two parties commit to respect each other’s languages and legal traditions.

.6Conclusions

In conclusion, the graphological and visual elements of the SFA had been strategically employed to reinforce the U.S.’s dominance. The consistent precedence of the U.S. before Iraq in headings and signatures, along with the prioritization of security and political cooperation over cultural issues, created a visual hierarchy that implied authority and control. The deliberate structuring and layout projected an image of partnership while implicitly encoded power asymmetry through salience, framing, and information value. The lexico-semantic choices were employed to obscure asymmetrical power relations. Euphemisms (22.55%) softened the perception of U.S. military presence, while overwording (25.49%) around concepts like “long-term relationship” emphasized stability and mutual cooperation. Metaphors (23.53%) such as “friendship and cooperation” depicted the agreement as balanced, and the use of

synonymous expressions contributed to a tone of diplomatic goodwill. These strategies ideologically framed the U.S. as a benevolent actor while downplaying its control over Iraq's sovereignty. The syntactic structures within the SFA revealed an unequal distribution of agency. The U.S. was frequently positioned as the actor providing assistance and support, while Iraq was positioned as the recipient of obligations, often through the use of modal verbs such as "shall" and passive constructions to obscure responsibility in sensitive clauses. Complex sentences (29.59%) further legitimized authority and legal formality, all contributing to an asymmetrical portrayal under the guise of mutual commitment. Finally, the speech acts embedded in the text sustained the image of cooperation while implicitly reinforcing the U.S. influence. Commissive acts constituted (66.67%) like promises not to seek permanent bases, projected generosity, assertives (27.78%) emphasized shared objectives, and even the rare directives (1.39%) implicitly aligned actions with U.S. interests. This pragmatic structure presented a cooperative image while obscured the U.S.'s dominance in shaping the operational framework.

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الخطاب والدبلوماسية غير المتكافئة: تحليل نصي نقدي لإتفاقية الإطار الاستراتيجي بين
الولايات المتحدة والعراق

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المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة إتفاقية الإطار الاستراتيجي بين الولايات المتحدة والعراق من خلال منظور التحليل النقدي للخطاب، بهدف الكشف عن ديناميكيات السلطة والبُنى الإيديولوجية الكامنة في الخطاب المصاغ ضمن بنود الإتفاقية. وتهدف إلى تحديد الوسائل النصية التي تُسهم في تشكيل علاقات الهيمنة وتوجيه الخطاب الدبلوماسي. وقد تبنت الدراسة نموذج فيركلاف (٢٠١٥) في التحليل النقدي للخطاب، مستندة الى منهج بحثي نوعي-كمي لتحليل الموارد الغرافولوجية، والمعجمية الدلالية، والتركييبية، والبراغماتية. كشفت النتائج أن بنى العبور والتراكيب الحدّية وأفعال الكلام تُسهم في تعزيز هيمنة الولايات المتحدة، إذ يتم تأطير العراق بصفته رفاً متلقياً لا شريكاً ندياً. كما أن الاستخدام الاستراتيجي للتلطيفات، والاستعارات، والتكرار المعجمي يُخفي اختلال توازن السلطة، بينما يروج لخطاب يُوهم بالتعاون. وعلى الرغم من الحياد الظاهري للإتفاقية، إلا أن الخطاب يتضمّن علاقات سلطوية غير متكافئة تُعيد تشكيل البنى لسياسية والإقتصادية والأمنية للعراق. وتختتم الدراسة بمجموعة من النتائج والدلالات البحثية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحليل النصي النقدي، إتفاقية الإطار الاستراتيجي بين الولايات المتحدة والعراق، ديناميكيات السلطة، البُنى الإيديولوجية، اللغة الدبلوماسية