



Original article

Textual Representation of Sustainable Development in Iraqi Prime Minister's Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Wafaa Mudhaffar Ali 

Dept. of English, College of Arts, Univ. of Mosul / Mosul / Iraq

ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development is a contemporary global issue. It is frequently emphasized in the discourse of leaders. This study investigates the textual strategies employed by the Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani in four selected speeches on sustainable development. The study adopts Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) with a particular focus on the textual level through analyzing lexical choices, rhetorical and grammatical structures and intertextuality. The study adopts a qualitative-descriptive approach to find out how such discourse reflects ideological positioning and policy framing. The analysis reveals a diversity of discursive patterns that reflect shifting political priorities and rhetorical strategies tied to development narratives in post-2003 Iraq. This research contributes to a broader understanding of how sustainability is discursively constructed in transitional political contexts.

***Correspondence author:**
wafa.mudhaffar@uomosul.edu.iq

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Keywords: discursive strategies, Al-Sudani speeches, critical discourse analysis, sustainable development, textual dimensions

الخطاب التمثيل النصي للتنمية المستدامة في الخطاب الحكومية العراقية: تحليل نقدي

ا.م.د. وفاء مظفر علي

قسم اللغة الإنكليزية – كلية الآداب – جامعة الموصل

المُستخلص

تعتبر التنمية المستدامة قضية عالمية معاصرة، وتكرر أهميتها بشكل ملحوظ في خطابات القادة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء الاستراتيجيات النصية التي يوظفها رئيس الوزراء العراقي محمد شياع السوداني في أربع خطب مختارة حول التنمية المستدامة. وتعتمد الدراسة نموذج فيركلاف (1995) ثلاثي الأبعاد في تحليل الخطاب نقدياً، مع تركيز خاص على المستوى النصي من خلال تحليل الاختيارات المعجمية، والبنى البلاغية والنحوية، والتناص. كما تتبنى الدراسة منهجاً وصفيّاً نوعياً للكشف عن كيفية تضمين الخطاب لمواقف أيديولوجية معينة ولطرائق تأطير السياسات. وقد أظهر التحليل تنوعاً في الأنماط الخطابية يعكس تحولات في الأولويات السياسية والاستراتيجيات البلاغية المرتبطة بسرديات التنمية في العراق بعد عام 2003. وتسهم هذه الدراسة في توسيع فهم الكيفية التي تُبنى بها مفاهيم التنمية المستدامة خطابياً في السياقات السياسية الانتقالية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستراتيجيات النصية، خطابات السوداني، تحليل الخطاب النقدي، التنمية المستدامة، الأبعاد النصية

1. Introduction

Sustainable development, henceforth SD, is an approach to growth through which human beings can face the planet's problems and human needs without harming future generations' needs. It has been adopted as an international agenda and therefore it has become an integral part of international political discourse especially after the United Nations published the Brundtland Report in 1987 under the title "our common future" (United Nations' digital library)

In the past two decades, Iraq has exhibited a burgeoning interest in Sustainable Development (SD) owing to the imperative to diversify its economic base and reduce dependency on oil revenues, driven in part by global economic shift (Ali 2023). Water-related challenges and the fluctuation in water quantities are also among the primary concerns of the Iraqi government (Al-Obeidi & Al-Khateeb, 2013). All these challenges have been reflected on the rhetoric and the government narratives. Political speeches are a very strong tool for the construction and manipulation of any topic. They can shape public understanding, exemplify or justify policies and build consensus within global agenda (Chilton & Schaffner, 2011, see also Al Manaseer 2025:988). This paper analyses four Iraqi governmental speeches delivered by Prime Minister M. Sh. Al-Sudani to investigate the discursive construction of SD since a gap in the literature has been identified on SD discourse analysis in Iraq. Through utilizing CDA viz. Fairclough's 1995 methodology, the study tries to shed light on the basic discursive strategies implemented by the Prime Minister to construct SD speeches and as well as the ideological strategies underlying them.

2. Literature Review

CDA has always been a powerful tool used to investigate how language is constructed, and more significantly how ideologies and power relations are expressed and interwoven into discourse. In institutional contexts, the pioneering figures of CDA such as Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (1997)

and Wodak and Meyer (2010) have all emphasized that social realities, ideologies and political agenda can be legitimized through discourse. In relation to SD, the discourse used has an aim of communicating goals and meanings of development. It also embeds ideologies whether national or worldviews. That's why SD speeches, goals and agendas attracted the attention of many CDA scholars. The current study highlights chronologically some recent studies trying to point out how CDA methodology and techniques contributed to reveal linguistic tools and ideologies in SD texts. Carol Kambites (2012) used CDA to evaluate SD as used frequently in political discourse. The study argues that SD is used as rhetorical manipulations. Kambites criticized the discursive construction of SD in political discourse showing how it might obscure power dynamics and promote a false image of development. Unlike Kambites, Chimbarange et al (2013) examined President Mugabe's 2002 speech to the World Summit on SD using CDA. They have noticed that Global South leaders strategically construct SD discourse to criticize global inequality, resist Western dominance and assert Zimbabwe's sovereignty. Similar to Kambites, Carant (2016) applied CDA to investigate the shift from MDGs, Millennium Development Goals, to SDGs and how this shift marginalized global voices especially from the Global South. She argued that governments adopted global rhetoric and recontextualized it to fit domestic priorities. She believed that development discourse often claims inclusivity but prioritizes Western interests.

CDA, viz. Fairclough's 2012, provided useful frameworks for Cummings et al (2017) to investigate SDGs focusing on the notion of "knowledge society" and how this notion is constructed as a means of development and as a goal. The study revealed underlying assumptions about power, development and inclusivity i.e. SDGs often embed hierarchy of expertise which is often implicit as well as the superiority of Western knowledge system as universally applicable. In the same vein, Cummings, Seferiadis and de Haan (2019) explored critically how the private sector is represented and discursively positioned within SD agendas. Their work showed how SD discourse can naturalize the role of the private sector to promote certain ideologies and marginalize others. Interestingly, Ala-Uddin (2019) also critically examined the 2030 Agenda of SD. Using CDA, he claimed that SD discourse is shaped by the neo-liberal discourse that promotes growth, efficiency and market-led solutions. He emphasized also that the language of inclusion and empowerment often implies an ideology of dominance of the Western development models.

A common point that combines all the studies together is their focus on institutional or global texts of SD but they differ in showing how these texts have implications for local or national levels i.e. where governments might adopt or adapt these texts to fit their priorities. This point exactly motivated the current study to find out how the Iraqi political discourse implemented sustainability in the post-conflict context or how it is exactly constructed as a discourse in relation to national identity and economic reconstruction etc. Reviewing the literature of Iraqi political discourse analysis, the researcher detected a significant gap or lack of attention of how SD is linguistically constructed and negotiated within Iraqi politics and how it is adjusted to suit the socio-economic landscape of Iraq or internationally. For this reason, the study addressed this gap through applying CDA to a corpus of SD speeches aiming to uncover the above-mentioned points.

3. Methods

3.1 Data and Model

The four texts have been retrieved specifically from written transcript below YouTube of the targeted video. The selected texts were representative recent examples according to their thematic relevance to research topic:

Text 1: كلمة محمد شياخ السوداني امام الجمعية العامة للام المتحدة في نيويورك

Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani's speech before the United Nations General Assembly in New York (22nd September /2024) (569 words)

Text 2: مؤتمر العراق للطاقة

Iraq Energy Conference (28th January / 2025)(741 words)

Text 3: كلمة رئيس مجلس الوزراء في القمة العربية التنموية الاقتصادية بدورها الخامسة في بغداد

The Prime Minister's speech at the Fifth Session of the Arab Economic and Development Summit in Baghdad (17th May / 2025) (764 words)

Text 4: رئيس مجلس الوزراء السيد محمد شياخ السوداني يعلن عن المبادرة الاقليمية لحماية نهري دجلة والفرات

Prime Minister Mr. Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani announces the Regional Initiative for the Protection of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. (24th May 2025) (554 words)

All the texts are primarily related to SD, i.e. they are in conformity with the study's objectives, that is to say, related to SD themes of development, economic reform and environmental challenges or policies. Besides, the speeches are selected from a recent time frame across varied contexts (national vs. international platforms) to be able to capture any potential variation in the discursive construction of SD. However, one can notice from the titles the existence of one speech on energy and another one on the protection of Tigris and Euphrates. Actually they are not only relevant to national development but they can reflect the socio-political framing of SDGs in Iraqi political discourse in addition to being key challenges for Iraqi government. The data is publicly available and it is used for academic purposes only. Links are going to be provided in the appendix. All the texts are in Modern Standard Arabic and were delivered in public settings addressing an international audience. Extracts of the texts are translated into English trying to preserve meaning and rhetorical features. For clarity and consistency in analysis, texts are given numbers (1-4).

The speeches were analyzed according to Fairclough's (1995) model. This model is distinguished by its three dimensions in which three stages of analysis are often applied namely 1. Text analysis (text description on various linguistic levels including grammar, vocabulary, structure and meaning), 2. Discursive practices (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and 3. Discursive events, as instances of sociocultural practices. The analysis is basically organized around how the speech is organized; therefore, a detailed text analysis is provided. According to Fairclough (1995), 'linguistic analysis is descriptive in nature, whereas intertextual analysis is more interpretive. Linguistic features of texts provide evidence which can be used in intertextual analysis, and intertextual analysis is a particular sort of interpretation of that evidence....' (p. 16).

The four speeches were carefully read to identify recurrent patterns and dominant semantic fields related to SD (see 4.1.1 for further details). The original Arabic words were counted rather

than their translations. So initial codes were initiated on salient topics. Later on, codes were refined and grouped together into a broader thematic category. Attention was also paid to discursive features such as metaphor, modality, and intertextual references, allowing themes to emerge not only from content but also from linguistic strategies. This process ensured that the identified themes reflect both the explicit and implicit construction of sustainable development within the speeches.

Qualitative research standards, such as careful coding decisions and thematization retraining, allowed to enhance the reliability of the findings. The application of a solid model of CDA is hoped to provide a methodological rigor and reduce subjectivity in the current study. Where possible, interpretations were cross-checked against literature on SD, i.e. other scholarly findings, on discourse to strengthen validity.

4. Analysis

4.1 Textual Analysis: At this level, or as Fairclough used to call it “dimension” linguistic features of the speeches will be highlighted. They include

1. Vocabulary (lexical choices)
2. Grammatical structures (voice, modality, tenses)
3. Rhetoric (metaphors)
4. Intertextuality and interdiscursivity (citations, quotations, and references)

4.1.1 Vocabulary:

Lexical choices implemented in four speeches have shown collectively a thematically centered selection of the following:

1. The lexicon of development and reform
2. The language of partnership, collective actions and shared responsibility
3. The institutional, technical and innovative lexicon

Since the speeches vary in length, percentages were calculated based on the total number of words in each individual speech, ensuring comparability through normalized frequencies. The frequency of occurrence of each group is shown in the following tables:

Table 1: Reform and development keywords frequency in 4 texts

Text no.	Kw 1	Kw 2	Kw 3	Kw 4	Kw 5	Kw 6
	reform	development	sustainable	transformation	Economic diversification	planning
T 1	2	11	3	2	1	1
T 2	2	8	1	5	4	3
T 3	2	21	2	3	0	1
T 4	0	2	1	1	0	0
Total	6	42	7	11	5	5

Table 2: institutional, technical and innovative keywords frequency in 4 texts

Text No.	Kw 1	Kw 2	Kw 3	Kw 4	Kw 5	Kw 6
	Investment	Civil society	Private \ public sector	AI	Digital economy	Energy
T 1	4	1	2 pr.+ 1 p	1	2	1
T 2	4	1	2 pr.	1	0	12
T 3	7	1	2 pr.	1	0	2
T 4	0	0	0	1	1	0
Total	15	3	7	4	3	15

Kw = keyword , pr = private sector , p= public

Table 3: partnership and collective action keywords frequency in 4 texts

Text No.	Kw 1	Kw 2	Kw 3	Kw 4	Kw 5	Kw 6
	cooperation	Shared / partnership	integration	Shared interests	Contribution	international
T 1	8	4 / 1	0	1	0	1
T 2	1	0 / 3	1	0	0	0
T 3	2	2 / 7	7	2	1	2
T 4	2	2 / 4	0	2	0	4
Total	13	8 / 15	8	5	1	7

Through close examination of the four speeches and repeated reading, several keywords are identified signifying ideological implications and functions that will be discussed below. Dominant lexical fields are reached through multiple readings and the use of Microsoft Office/ Word with the aid of Find/Search option which highlights the selected item and gives the exact number of occurrences. The research focused on repetition as it shapes public perception and reinforces power legitimization (Fairclough,1995). These numbers are meant to provide empirical support to the analysis.

The vocabulary of reform and development shows the highest frequency for the term “تنمية” (development) and “تحول” (transformation). Then “مستدامة” (sustainable) and “اصلاح” (reform) come after, and finally “التخطيط” (planning) and “التنوع الاقتصادي” (economic diversification) are found to have similar frequencies. This can actually emphasize modernization as a main point in Iraq’s agenda constructing its identity as reformist and an open-minded progressive country which deals with challenges pragmatically.

Institutional, technical and innovative vocabulary table has shown “استثمار” (investment) and “طاقه” (energy) as having the same number of occurrence which is 15 while it shows “قطاع عام / خاص” (public (p)/ private (pr.) sector) comes after with a frequency of 7 usages, 6 of which for private sector. A notable observance is the reference to AI (artificial intelligence) in the four texts. “المجتمع المدني” (civil society) and “الاقتصاد الرقمي” (digital economy) are both mentioned 3 times in the texts.

The use of such vocabulary suggests that technological advancement is presented as an Iraqi goal and as a sign of awareness therefore framed as essential for national recovery.

The language of partnership and collective action is also effective in the texts. “مشارك / شراكة” (shared / partnership) have occurred 15 times in the texts followed by 13 occurrences for “تعاون” (cooperation). “تكامل” (integration) is used 8 times in T2 and T3 while “دولي” (international) is used 7 times and “مساهمة” (contribution) also appeared once in T3. This type of vocabulary asserts a multilateral worldview that tries to represent Iraq, the post-conflict state, as seeking engagement regionally (T3) and globally (T1).

A special attention is paid for “التنمية المستدامة” (SD) which occurred 4 times in T1, once in T2 and two times in T3. The recurrent use of this phrase might seem neutral but it embeds UN development ideology and aligns Iraq with UN’s 2030 agenda representing the state as a development partner. Iraq is identified in the speeches as a capable future actor. It positively frames Iraq as responsible and distanced from its conflict-ridden stereotype.

4.1.2 Grammar:

1. Actors / Actions and Agency Construction

The active and passive voice are central in encoding actors and actions and hence in encoding agency. They all determine how responsibility is shaped and attributed in discourse (van Leeuwen 2008). While active voice sentences usually foreground the actors and highlight their agency, passive voice sentences can background, omit and obscure agency to marginalize responsibility. Thus the distribution of agency is a core notion in understanding ideology.

Active voice is heavily used for the description of the government actions and achievements in all texts; examine some examples:

T1 / 1. يسعى العراق (Iraq seeks) 2. نعمل في العراق (we work in Iraq) 3. نسعى لتعزيز وبناء القدرات (we strive to enhance and build capacities) 4. نؤكد على ضرورة منح العراق الأولوية (we stress to give Iraq priority) 5. ندرك ان التنمية المستدامة (we realize that SD ...) 6. نحرص على توفير الحوافز (we are committed to offering incentives).

T2 / 1. ينظر الى مصلحة الشعب (it considers the interest of people)

T3 / 1. نعلن عن اطلاق المبادرة (we announce the launch of the initiative) 2. نؤكد انفتاح البيئة الاستثمارية (we affirm the openness of investment environment) 3. نأمل ان تكون القمة (we hope the summit will be)

T4 / 1. نضيف هنا ركنا بارزا (we add a key element here) 2. لننتهز فرصة هذا المؤتمر (let’s seize the opportunity of this conference ...) 3. نستذكر مقولة الأمين العام (we recall the Secretary-General’s statement).

In all the above examples, active voice reflects a confident governmental agency that is ready to take initiatives and leadership. A notable activation of “Iraq” in T1 has also been used to emphasize self-presentation as an active leader: يسعى العراق (Iraq seeks), يدرك العراق (Iraq realizes), العراق ملتزم (Iraq is committed) or in T2 يواجه العراق (Iraq faces).

Formally speaking, a passive sentence is used in T2 “ينظر الى العراق” (attention is directed to Iraq ...). Here, Iraq is thematized and foregrounded through passive construction making it the explicit topic of attention. Omitting the agent produces a collective stance that universalizes the perception

and symbolically presents Iraq's importance as unquestionable. Some sentences are *functionally passivated* i.e. agency is obscured but not through passive transformation. Actors are either omitted or generalized, for example in T1 “نؤكد على ضرورة منح العراق الأولوية في التمويل المناخي” (We emphasize the need to give Iraq priority in climate financing) but by whom? Iraq here is a recipient and agency is shifted to international actors.

More broadly, Iraq has been highlighted as a prominent actor as in the following:

Table (4): The Position of Iraq as an Actor in the Four Texts

T1	T2	T3	T4
يسعى العراق (Iraq strives)	يواجه العراق (Iraq faces)	قَدَّم العراق (Iraq proposed)	لِدعم التجربة العراقية (to support Iraqi experience)
نعمل في العراق (we in Iraq work)	مكانة العراق (the position of Iraq)		
يدرك العراق (Iraq believes)	اسهام العراق (the participation of Iraq)		
العراق ملتزم (Iraq is committed)	ينظر الى العراق (Iraq is seen)		
منح العراق (Iraq gave)			

Iraq is positioned as an agent which discursively distinguishes it as a leader that can take the initiatives and no longer victim of terrorism or wars. This contributes to the construction of sovereignty.

Similarly important is the role of the Iraqi government which is represented explicitly through the use of the pronoun “نحن” (we) as a free morpheme or through the bound morpheme *نا المتكلمين* (we/ first person plural) which is attached to verbs as in *اطلقنا* (we launched) or to nouns as in *مبادرتنا* (our initiative). As a free morpheme, the pronoun نحن (we) appeared in T1 four times: نحن ملتزمون (we are committed), نحن نؤمن (we believe) , نحن على ثقة (we are certain) , and نحن تحت تهديد (we are under threat) . According to Fowler et al (1979), this implicates the addressee in the content of the discourse and is ostensibly more intimate and solidary. This is intended to persuade the audience to accept collective responsibility and to participate in reviving the world's ecology inextricably linked to humanity. The Prime Minister organizes the tone of his speech by initially using the pronoun (we) to include delegates from the developing nations as well as those from developed nations. This tone has the effect of creating the impression that the sustainable development concerns are shared collectively with the audience. The bound morpheme *نا المتكلمين* (we / our) as a suffix attached to words is also an attached pronoun that has the effect of creating togetherness and a feeling of sharing responsibility with the audience. Consider the following table:

Table 5: The Bound Morpheme *نا* (we/our) as Attached to Nouns and Verbs

T1 verbs	T1 nouns	T2 verbs	T2 nouns	T3 verbs	T3 nouns	T4 verbs	T4 nouns
x	تركيزنا	سعيينا	شعبنا	تنبينا	مؤتمرنا	دأبنا	تجربتنا

X	سياستنا	نجحنا	برنامجنا		سرورنا	خطونا	مستقبلنا
X	تعاوننا	التزمنا	بلادنا		ارتقائنا		مياهما
X		استهدفنا			ارصدتنا		شعبنا
X		طرحنا			مكانتنا		بلادنا
X		وضعنا			اعتزازنا		
X		مضينا			التزامنا		
					اجيالنا		
					امتنا		

As the corpus shows, there is a systematic reliance on the first person plural نا (we /our) in both verbal and nominal constructions. They actually signify and foreground collective agency specially when they are associated with actions as in سعيانا (we strove) , نجحنا (we succeeded) etc. Agency with nouns is not enacted but actually embedded. In nouns like سياستنا (our policy), برنامجنا (our program), مستقبلنا (our future) etc. , the pronouns are attached to entities rather than actions which signifies a collective possession or ownership of the outcome by everyone. The repetitive usage of نا (we/our) emphasizes collective decision making as well. Thus, this usage persuasively presents the Prime Minister as representing the wishes of the majority in Iraq. Added to this, it constructs Iraq's image as unified nation willing to cooperate nationally and globally.

Emphasizing Arab solidarity, the Prime Minister strategically mentions the role of Arab League and Arab countries intensively in T3:

1. لشكر الجزيل موصول الى الأمانة العامة لجامعة الدول العربية على ما بذلته من جهود في هذا المجال

(the sincere thanks are also extended to the General Secretariat of the Arab League for the efforts it has exerted in this field). Reference is made here to the Arab League as an institutional actor.

2. ... وهنا نقترح إنشاء آلية عربية مشتركة لتقييم الأداء التنموي ...

(And here we propose the establishment of a joint Arab mechanism to evaluate developmental performance). Reference is made to the Arab countries' collective role.

3. ...نطلق مبادرة صندوق التضامن العربي لإعمار غزة ولبنان بإشراف الجامعة العربية... .

(We launch the Arab Solidarity Fund initiative for the reconstruction of Gaza and Lebanon under the supervision of the Arab League) . The Arab countries solidarity is stressed by the Prime Minister and sought to be institutionally organized by The Arab League. This actually highlights multilateral ties with Arab countries and stresses formal regional institution in development discourse.

2. Tense and Modality

Basically, in discourse analysis, the choice of the verb tense or the shift in tense can be closely tied to ideology. These choices and shifts can shape the events or how people are positioned (Abdi,

Farahzad and Saeednia, 2021: 211). Abdul-Jabar and Yunus (2017: 362) elaborated the same point saying “Tenses are the important elements that are used to construct understanding about events. For example, the use of the simple present tense constructs events as reality and facts, while the use of the simple past tense can present events that happened in the past. It is important to use a correct tense as it can be demonstrated to note the different semantic effects. It is important to understand that choices made in terms of tense and aspect are not merely concerned with the time frame of an action or process but also impact clearly on the representation of that action or process as true, relevant or significant”.

While English CDA often examines three tense distinctions (past, present, future), the Arabic verbal system works rather differently, relying on aspect (perfective vs. imperfective). These categories definitely have different ideological implications that are crucial in analyzing Arabic texts, especially political speeches (Holes, 2004). The perfective aspect is called in Arabic ماضي (past). It encodes completed actions as for example in T2: استهدفنا (we strove), استهدفنا (we aimed) etc. It conveys a settled fact. The imperfective aspect is, on the other hand, called مضارع (present) which encodes ongoing, habitual actions and a reference to future. It usually conveys the meaning of immediacy and continuity (Badawi, Carter, & Gully 2004: 207–213) as in T1 يتعدى (is held), يتعدى (unite) (concerns) etc. The last tense is the future that is called in Arabic مستقبل and marked by سوف or س which precedes the imperfective verb as in T4: ستكون (will be), or in T1 سيسهم (will contribute). It functions to project credibility, authority and future vision (Ryding 2005: 450-455).

Counting the verbs used in the selected speeches, the following table is highlighting percentages of verb types and their occurrences:

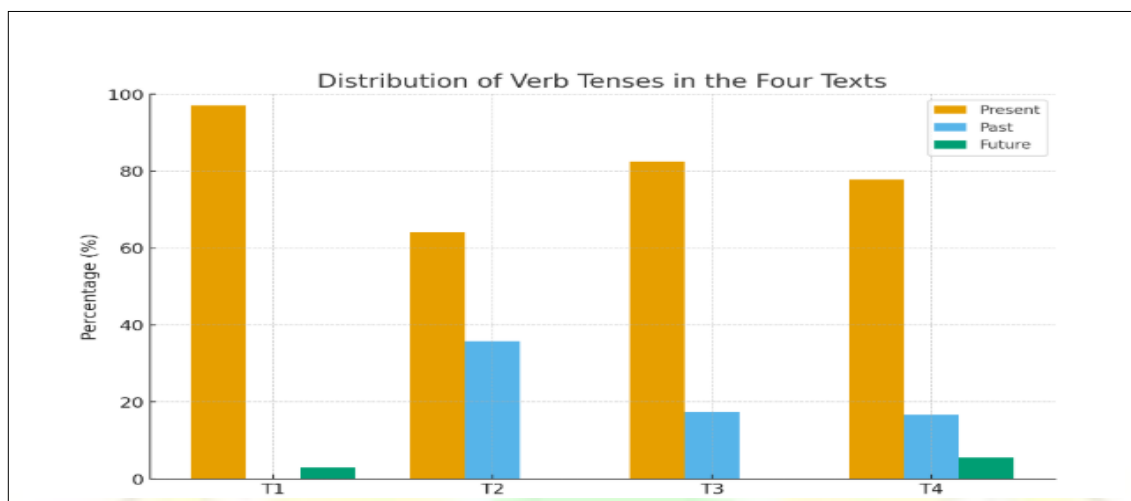
Table 6: Percentages of Verb Tenses in the Four Texts

Text No.	Present	Past	Future	Total
T1	$\frac{34}{35} * 100 = 79.1\%$	0%	$\frac{1}{35} * 100 = 2.9\%$	100%
T2	$\frac{25}{39} * 100 = 64.1\%$	$\frac{14}{39} * 100 = 35.9\%$	0%	100%
T3	$\frac{33}{40} * 100 = 82.5\%$	$\frac{7}{40} * 100 = 17.5\%$	0%	100%
T4	$\frac{28}{36} * 100 = 77.8\%$	$\frac{6}{36} * 100 = 16.7\%$	$\frac{2}{36} * 100 = 5.6\%$	100%

0%= no verbs in that tense are found

The table shows that the present tense dominates strongly in all the texts (ranging from 64% to 79%). Next comes the past tense which appears significantly in T2, T3, and T4 (especially T2: 36%). Finally, one can notice the scarcity of the use of future tense which appears only in T1 and T4 (2.9% and 5.6%).

A bar chart can show them as follows:



Obviously, the Prime Minister used present tense highly to emphasize the current moment and ongoing effectiveness to simply persuade the audience that the government is actively working now. It also signals authority and creates a sense of engagement. The past tense is used in T2 to highlight past achievements, build credibility and to connect the past with the plans of the current moment. Future is rarely used which indicates political caution i.e. he avoided making any promises for which he could be held accountable. A focus on managing present crises and challenges is better than assuming a distant vision.

The final grammatical feature that can be considered ideologically laden is modality. Al-Khazraji (2023 : 400) investigated modality in English and Modern Standard Arabic. She built her argument upon (Shepherd, 1982: 326) maintaining that modality alters the neutral semantic quality of the original proposition by subjecting it to the language user's personal attitude. She divided modality markers in Arabic according to their word class so they included modal particles, modal verbs, modal nominal and modal prepositional phrases. These markers participate in drawing up epistemic and deontic types of modality (Al-Khazraji 2023: 406-412).

The four selected speeches were examined in terms of the above-mentioned word class to explore the way in which modality is operating in the speeches. Therefore, a table is designed to show the identified instances of modality according to the modal markers, their type (epistemic or deontic), and the function they convey (obligation, ability, possibility, certainty, etc.):

Table 7: types of modality and modality markers used

No.	Arabic Sentence	Modality Marker	Class	Type of Modality	English Equivalent
2	نجد هذا السعي قد طرح ثمر	قد	particle	Epistemic (certainty)	"This effort has indeed borne fruit."
2	فقد استهدفنا أولا وقف حرق الغاز	قد	particle	Epistemic (certainty)	"We have indeed targeted stopping gas burning first."

3	إننا مصممون على تجاوز العقبات	مصممون على	nominal	Deontic (commitment)	“We are determined to overcome the obstacles.”
4	إن الحلول التكنولوجية يمكن لها أن تعوض تراجع موارد المياه	يمكن	verb	Epistemic (possibility)	“Technological solutions may compensate for the decline in water resources.”
5	موارد الحياة الأهم يمكن لها أن تفتح الطريق نحو الحلول المستدامة	يمكن	verb	Epistemic (possibility)	“The most important life resources may open the way toward sustainable solutions.”
6	يمكن أن تكون بوصلة نستدل بها	يمكن	verb	Epistemic (possibility)	“It may be a compass by which we are guided.”
7	من الواجب العمل على إيقاف العدوان والحرب	من الواجب	Prepositional phrase	Deontic (necessity/obligation)	“It is necessary/obligatory to work on stopping the aggression and the war.”
8	نؤكد على ضرورة منح العراق الأولوية	ضرورة	nominal	Deontic (necessity/obligation)	“We emphasize the necessity of giving Iraq priority.”
9	نؤكد على ضرورة تعزيز التعاون	ضرورة	nominal	Deontic (necessity/obligation)	“We emphasize the necessity of strengthening cooperation.”
4	من الضروري أن تتحدد المسؤوليات	من الضروري	Prepositional phrase	Deontic (necessity/obligation)	“It is necessary/essential that responsibilities be defined.”
3	يجب الانتقال إلى استثمار اقتصاد المعرفة	يجب	verb	Deontic (necessity/obligation)	“We must move to invest in the knowledge economy.”
1	نحن على ثقة بأن تعاوننا سيسهم في بناء مستقبل أفضل	على ثقة بأن	Prepositional phrase	Epistemic (certainty)	“We are confident that our cooperation will contribute to building a better future.”
2	الإدارة الصحيحة للإنتاج والنقل والتوزيع يمكن أن تقلل الضائعات	يمكن أن	verb	Epistemic (possibility)	“Proper management of production, transport, and distribution may reduce losses.”

2	هذا العصب التنموي والاقتصادي يمكن تحويله الى بوابة أساسية من بوابات التنمية	يمكن	verb	Epistemic (possibility)	This developmental and economic nerve may be transformed into a main gateway of development.
2	الأهم هو ما التزمنا به في البرنامج الحكومي	التزمنا	verb	Deontic	What matters most is what we have committed to in the government program.
4	تنبثق من الايمان بضرورة حماية الاصل	بضرورة	Prepositional phrase	Deontic (necessity)	It stems from the belief in the necessity of protecting the origin.
3	يجب الانتقال إلى استثمار اقتصاد المعرفة	يجب	verb	Deontic (necessity)	We must shift toward investing in the knowledge economy.

Both epistemic and deontic modality markers are strategically employed to construct both certainty and obligation. Epistemic markers like قد and يمكن (may) are used to show careful balance between asserting achievements as factual and undeniable and projecting future actions as possible , thus enhancing credibility and managing expectations. In the same way , deontic markers such as من الواجب , مصصمون على , ضرورة are all functioning to construct a sense of commitment , duty and moral obligation positioning the speaker as responsible and action-oriented.

4.1.3 Rhetoric: Metaphor

Metaphor can be considered as a central mechanism for mapping social realities (Lakoff & Johnson 2003). It can be viewed as a strong stylistic device in political discourse. The four selected speeches displayed a dense use of metaphors of different types. A close examination of T1 might show the following examples:

1. ان تحقيق التوازن بين ابعاد التنمية يعد أولوية لنا (Achieving balance between the dimensions of SD is our priority) conceptually, development is visualized as a balancing act to suggest that the Iraqi government is rationally capable of managing (economic , social , environmental) as competing factors
2. التنمية المستدامة تتطلب استثمارات طموحة لذا نحرص على توفير الحوافز (SD requires ambitious investments that's why we are keen to provide incentives) “ambitious” which is normally a human attribute is assigned to investments which are abstract entity to create a more humanized , energetic and forward looking image of Iraq.
3. نحن ملتزمون بمكافحة الجفاف والتصحر (we are committed to combat drought and desertification) . The Iraqi government is meant to be represented as struggling against dramatic natural phenomena which are actually fought just like enemies. So, the government is represented as defender of the environment against a hostile enemy which is draught.

4. الشباب هم القوة المحركة للمستقبل (youth are the driving force of the future). Driving force which is a mechanical or physical energy is applied to youth in relation to future time. This is done to frame youth as energy or force capable of moving Iraq towards the future. Future in turn is conceptualized as a vehicle. That's why , Iraq is framed as future-oriented country empowered by its young generation.

In T2, a considerable number of sentences that carry metaphor as a strategy of drawing ideologies are found among which the following are chosen :

1. انطلاق عجلة الإصلاح السياسي والتحول التنموي (the wheel of reform and developmental transformation was launched) a wheel which is a mechanical object is assigned to an abstract notion of reform and given the image of vehicle in motion to emphasize the dynamic nature of reform as well as the implicit existence of the government behind this progress or motion. Thus , Iraq is to be seen as actively moving forward.

2. هذا السعي الدؤوب قد طرح ثمر على شكل منجز ملموس (the persistent effort has borne fruit in the form of tangible numerical achievements) طرح ثمر (has borne fruit) which is usually used for plants or trees is used here to describe the government activity which is human of course . The government achievements and policies are framed with this metaphor to look like organic , natural and rewarding as if it is a living process that yields results.

3. الشراكة مع القطاع الخاص هي النافذة الأولى للتنمية (partnership with the private sector is the first window to development) “ window” here means “ way “ yet it is kept to explain that the word is usually used in architecture planning . Windows are used to give light , vision and access . It is employed here figuratively to indicate that partnership with the private sector is an essential point into development. It also suggests the openness of government strategies to support the private sector in alignment with international policies.

From T3 , the following examples are observed to illustrate metaphor:

1. الاستثمار في الانسان بوصفه حجر الزاوية في أي مشروع نهضوي (investing in humans as the cornerstone of any revivalist project) . The term cornerstone which is used in stabilized buildings has been adopted and coined with human investments to position the human (the citizen) as the central core of national progress. It is probably used to give an aura of solidity and stability as the cornerstone cannot collapse. Such usage usually legitimizes the government's health and education policies that center around humans considering him the cornerstone of the entire structure.

2. تشكل القمة منصة استراتيجية لترسيخ الشراكات (the summit forms a strategic platform for consolidating partnerships) . Platform literally refers to structure part in building. It is used to describe the summit which is an abstract event to assert that is not just a meeting but it is part of infrastructure of an action. As the word platform implies durability and utility the Arab summit is symbolically related to these meanings giving it a sense of gathering in place where partnership and cooperation can be strengthened and produced.

3. نأمل ان تكون هذه القمة نقطة تحول (we hope this summit can be a turning point). The noun phrase “turning point”, which refers usually to physical direction change on a way or journey,

has been used to refer to an abstract event which is the Arab summit. The summit is conceptualized as decisive moment of change. It is a milestone where both Iraq and the Arab countries can shift to the new future.

Finally T4 also has exhibited a number of sentences which show metaphorical use . They are as follows:

1. ان الشراكة الحقيقية المسؤولة ... يمكن ان تكون بوصلة نستدل بها (true and responsible partnership.... Can be a compass by which we are guided). Compass which is a navigation tool is borrowed here and coined with partnership to be given a sense of guiding the listeners to the right direction. In this way the Prime Minister ideologically highlights collective work and insinuating that without our partnership we may get lost or misguided.
2. نعلن مبادرة طموحة ... وهي خطوة استراتيجية شاملة (we announce an ambitious initiative ... it is a comprehensive strategic step). The reader can easily depict two metaphors “ambitious initiative” where “ambition” is a human trait assigned to ‘initiative “which is a political plan, basically abstract, yet it is personified to let it look as energetic, alive and looking forward initiative. The second one is “strategic step” where a step which is a physical movement is used metaphorically to represent political action. By doing so, the Prime Minister situates Iraq on a path of progress through combining visionary ambition with strategic steps.
3. صيانة النهرين الخالدين من التدهور (preserving the eternal rivers from deterioration) , the rivers are personified and called “eternal” which is a human like quality . They are also maintained or “preserved” as machines. This is done to assert their heritage value and fragile resources that are threatened to decline. This will position Iraq as the guard of important civilization symbol as well as a technocratic manager which will in turn legitimize any environmental action presenting it as a moral duty.

4.2. Discursive Practice level:

At this level, Fairclough’s model takes into consideration how the text is produced, distributed and consumed in a specific context. He employs both intertextuality and interdiscursivity to show how meaning is shaped or constructed. What has been noticed in the four speeches is that the Prime Minister has targeted both domestic and international audiences. T1 is directed to The General Assembly where intertextuality is strongly used to through the adoption of global development discourse and human rights themes. Phrases like “العدالة الاجتماعية” (social justice) , “اتفاقية باريس” (Paris Agreement) and phrases like “نؤمن بأن مواجهة التحديات تتطلب تعاوناً دولياً فعالاً” (we believe that facing these challenges requires effective international cooperation) are intertextual references that index Iraq in alignment with UN agendas . They also frame Iraq as a compliant international partner as well as reproduce dominant diplomatic ideologies. The text blends international diplomacy genre, development advocacy genre and climate-policies genre together to produce an interdiscursivity.

T2, the Energy Conference speech , positions Iraq within a kind of interdiscursive space of national development , global energy security and green transition through the adoption of the following technocratic and economic genres : “الموديل الاقتصادي الجديد للمحطات الحرارية” (the new economic

model for thermal stations) , "تحويل 40% من الناتج النفطي الى صناعات تحويلية" , (converting 40% of oil output into downstream industries) and "الربط الكهربائي مع دول الخليج وتركيا وصولا الى شبكة الكهرباء في " (electric grid integration with the Gulf , Turkey , and EU) (الاتحاد الأوروبي)".

T3, the speech at The Arab Development Summit in Baghdad operates through a pan-Arab discourse through assessing developmental and solidarity discourse: "التكامل العربي" (Arab integration) , "المركز العربي للذكاء الصناعي" (The Arab center for artificial intelligence) and "الإصلاح الاقتصادي العربي" (economic reform) , (Arab integration) all embed the text within a broader image of Arab identity. (Baghdad initiative) and the above mentioned extracts show an interdiscursive blending of Iraq as a unifying country through his political leadership and a forward-looking innovator through modernity of thinking.

T4, The Regional Initiative to Protect Tigris and Euphrates speech draws heavily on scientific, environmental and developmental issues through the use of intertextuality. In this speech, the Prime Minister quotes the UN Secretary General's statement "ان نهري دجلة والفرات شأن عالمي وليس " (the Tigris and the Euphrates are a global concern) which strengthens Iraq's stance through aligning with global actors. Similarly "استخدام تقنيات الري الحديث والامتة في إدارة السدود " (using modern irrigation techniques and automation) reflects blending sustainability and technology to represent Iraq as a modern state. References to "الحلول التكنولوجية " (technological solutions) , "الحلول المستدامة" (sustainable solutions) and "التغير المناخي " (climate change) show an emphasis on scientific and environmental discourse that signals Iraq's desire to be part of the international environmental debates which serves to legitimize Iraq's policies and position the government as aligned with international expectations.

4.3 Social Practice Level:

At the level of social practice, the speeches must be situated in a broader socio-political context. The Prime Minister's speeches all emerge from the socio-political and economic transformation in Iraq post-2003 period. Iraq's post-conflict national agenda explains its effort towards sustainable development although this effort, as Al-Saleem (2015) puts it, is sometimes constrained by weak legal frameworks, environmental problems and an overdependence on natural resources. This explains the government's emphasis on reforms and their effort to align with the international sustainable development. This context is echoed in all the texts. For example, in T1 "أولوية التمويل المناخي" (the priority of climate funding) presenting Iraq as a victim of global environmental injustice. In T2 "الموديل الاقتصادي الجديد للمحطات الحرارية" (the new economic model for thermal stations) and "تحويل 40% من الناتج النفطي الى صناعات تحويلية" (converting 40% of oil output into downstream industries) can show an economic ideology which tries to integrate technological progress with the social progress "سوق العمل" (labor market) or "الشراكة مع القطاع الخاص" (partnership with the private sector). Simultaneously, T3 reflected an ideology that tries to prioritize the regional solidarity as well as technocratic governance specially when the Prime Minister talks about "الامن العربي المشترك" (shared Arab security) or in "استئناف زخم القمم التنموية" (reviving the momentum of the developmental summits). The representation of the Iraqi government as proactive , modernizing and fully aware of human rights appears frequently throughout T4 as in "الامن المائي" (water security) , "استخدام التقنيات الحديثة في إدارة الموارد المائية" (using modern technologies

يقدم ركيزتي الشراكة والتنمية لتكون منطلقا جادا لمواجهة المشكلات والتحديات “ (in water resource management) ” والعقبات في مجال المياه (it presents partnership and development as two serious pillars for addressing problems, challenges and obstacles in the water sector). Thus, all these selections are to construct national priority and to emphasize a state-led vision of progress while obscuring potential environmental or social challenges. This in turn could limit any space for alternative or critical views on development particularly within post-conflict Iraq.

5. Discussion

The study is broadly in line with previous research emphasizing the prominence of CDA methodology in revealing ideology and power dimensions in SD data, viz: Carant (2016), Cummings et. al. (2017) and Ala-Uddin (2019). The examined discursive patterns revealed that SD is represented as an aspirational national project within the global sustainability agenda. This project is closely tied to the themes of reconstruction, stability, aspirations for economic growth and partnership establishment.

The findings at the textual level of analysis displayed the employment of linguistic choices at the lexical level, grammatical level and the rhetorical level to construct the identity of Iraq as a reformist, climate-vulnerable country that seeks technocratic solutions through partnerships with Arab, regional and global governance. Notably the discourse shows an absence of lexicon related to political conflicts apart from a single reference to Gaza suggesting a depoliticized SD. Also, a tone of linguistic inclusivity is evident in the frequent nominalizations associated with development, reform, and progress which present these processes as collective goals rather than actions carried out by specific actors; however, these are often realized through abstract constructions that background agency. This point could suggest that sustainability is articulated more as a symbolic slogan rather than as a concrete policy framework.

From the perspective of discursive practices, the four speeches draw heavily on interdiscursive resources associated with post-conflict reconstruction, openness and state –building discourse. References to sustainability are often associated with embedded narratives of recovery, alignment with the global agenda and sovereignty. This indicates that SD discourse is contextualized to align with domestic political priorities. International sustainability concepts are domesticated in a way that may downplay environmental challenges and social inequality.

At the level of social practice, the discursive patterns endorsed in SD speeches functioned basically to legitimize political authority and to project images of progress. Patterns emphasized economic growth and national unity. Iraq has been presented as a modernizing country diverting attention from the governance failures in different sectors and the uneven resources distribution. Thus, SD discourse operates ideologically through reinforcing existing hierarchies.

The analysis underscores the significance of examining how SD is discursively constructed in political speeches in a context that can be described as unstable to a certain extent and reconstructing. The study argues that SD is reshaped actually to suit local political goals and avoids addressing structural problems. Thus, a gap between rhetoric and practice is identified which is important for shaping development priorities.

6. Conclusion

The study employs a CDA model to investigate the basic discursive strategies implemented by the Prime Minister to construct SD speeches and of course the ideological strategies underlying them. At the textual level, the analysis showed a frequent use of development oriented and reform vocabulary, a heavy use of active voice and inclusive pronouns to emphasize cooperation and progress. The analysis also reveals the frequent use of epistemic and deontic modality markers, which express degrees of certainty, obligation, and commitment, as well as metaphorical expressions that frame development and environmental protection as collective responsibilities. These linguistic features help to construct a discourse of authority, responsibility, and forward-looking governance. At the discursive practice level, the four speeches draw on global sustainability discourse and Arab developmental narratives through the use of intertextual references and interdiscursive policy initiatives. At the social practice level, the speeches reflect Iraq's broader efforts toward reconstruction, regional integration, and international legitimacy. Overall, the speeches function as strategic political discourse that seeks to legitimize development-oriented governance and positions Iraq as a cooperative regional actor.

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Appendix

Links to Videos

T1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNjsfgIFqMI>

T2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fahHJdWBWGg&t=210s>

T3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdBV8kw0PA4>

T4: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeGv3dF39Ms&t=193s>

