**Al-Ḥajjāj’s Rhetoric of Intimidation and Humiliation**

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**Abstract**

This article discusses the strategy of intimidation and humiliation in al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafῑ's most famous speech delivered in the city of Kufa in Iraq. The linguistic devices used by al-Ḥajjāj are analyzed by applying the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This approach reveals his rhetoric of intimidation, humiliation, and emotional manipulation, reflecting al-Ḥajjāj’s intention to act with extreme cruelty against the Kufa rebels. In this speech, he strove to normalize and legitimize violence against the rebels, for example, by likening the inhabitants of Kufa to animals, thereby framing the beheading and slaughtering of them as normal, in the way that animal slaughter is perceived as normal behavior.

1. **Introduction**

Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafῑ' was born in the city of Taif near Mecca in 661 and died in 714 in the city of West Ashur in Iraq. He served as governor of Iraq during the Umayyad period under the rule of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik. Indeed, he became one of the most renowned Muslim governors in history, famous for his powerful determination and pronounced cruelty. Al-Ḥajjāj led the Umayyad army that confronted the rebels in Mecca who were united around Ibn al-Zabir, who claimed to be the legal caliph. Ibn al-Zabir's fortification in Mecca and around the Kaaba caused great embarrassment within the Umayyad government due to the religious sanctity of the city and its religious buildings. Despite the prohibition against damaging the city’s religious buildings, the need to suppress the revolt quickly caused al-Ḥajjāj to damage even the holy places where the rebels were entrenched, including the Kaaba. Although al-Ḥajjāj managed to suppress the revolt and return the region to Umayyad rule, his attack on the Kaaba led to protests by many Muslims who viewed him as a non-religious figure. However, his success in suppressing the uprising persuaded Caliph 'Abd al-Malik to appoint him as the governor of Iraq, which was known as a hotbed of uprisings spurred by the economic and political problems in the region. Al-Ḥajjāj was appointed governor of Iraq instead of the caliph’s brother, Bishar Ibn Marwan, thus beginning a trend in the Umayyad dynasty of appointing professional governors instead of family members.

This article demonstrates how the linguistic devices that al-Ḥajjāj used in his famous speech in Kufa – in fact, his most famous speech – reflect the rhetoric of intimidation and humiliation, and how he employed emotional manipulation to normalize and legitimize the violence against these rebels. The rhetorical devices used in the speech are examined according to the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to shed light on how al-Ḥajjāj engaged in emotional manipulation to deter rebel forces and preserve his power as the governor of Iraq.

The speech was delivered to the residents of Iraq in general, particularly the residents of Kufa who had rebelled against and challenged the authorities, as well as those who might subsequently rebel or revolt against them. The inhabitants of Kufa were known to be a particularly hardcore nucleus of opposition to the existing power relationship who took every opportunity to revolt against the authorities. It was unquestionably difficult to suppress their resistance. Al-Ḥajjāj understood the nature of those he was confronting, and realized that there was no chance of successfully doing so through peaceful means, since such means had consistently failed in the past.

**2. Conceptual frame**

**2.1 Classifying speech acts**

The best-known classification of speech acts is that proposed by the philosopher John Searle (see also Sevi 2012: 259).Searle classifies speech acts into five groups (Adam et al. 2012):

(1) Assertive speech acts – the speaker commits to the reality of denying, confirming.

(2) Directive speech acts – the speaker tries to cause the addressee to do something. Examples include ordering, demanding, recommending, warning, and asking.

(3) Commissive speech acts – these commit the speaker to doing something in the future. Examples include promising, threatening, proposing, and agreeing.

(4) Expressive speech acts – these express the speaker’s psychological state. Examples include apologizing, condemning, thanking, welcoming, offering condolence.

(5) Declarative speech acts – the speaker causes an immediate change in the world. Examples include declarations of war, naming, court sentences, bans, marriages.

A sentence may contain more than one speech act that may belong to different categories. For example, the sentence, “Study hard for your exam!” may be an order, a piece of advice, or a threat. The sentence, “Excuse me, I didn’t hear your name” might be an apology, a request to the addressee to repeat his name, or both acts combined.

John Austin identified three types of acts that are present in every utterance (Austin 2006: 127–128; see also Livnat 2014: 158–159; Sevi 2012: 257–258):

(1) The locutionary act – the statement itself, producing certain sounds that have meaning. The locutionary act employs language to convey content.

(2) The illocutionary act – the act that takes place when the utterance is said, namely an action with the power to perform a certain act, e.g., warning, reporting, or apologizing. The speech act is expressed in the illocutionary act.

(3) The perlocutionary act – When a locutionary act, and hence also an illocutionary act, takes place, our words often affect others’ emotions, thoughts, and actions as well as our own. An extra-linguistic result may be caused through speech. This result is called a perlocution.

We can distinguish between direct and indirect speech acts. Direct speech acts are those in which the locutionary act testifies directly to the illocutionary act. That is, the content of the utterance directly expresses the speaker’s intention. Conversely, in an indirect speech act, the content of the utterance only hints indirectly at the speaker’s intention and the action he or she wishes to perform through the utterance. For example, the statement, “I would like you to pass me the salt, please” is a direct speech act of request, whereas the question, “Can you pass me the salt?” is an indirect speech act of request. Indirect speech acts reflect what Searle means by stating that speakers often wish to express more than they say (Livnat 2014: 169–173).

### 2.2 The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach

CDA is a multidisciplinary approach that is used in discourse analysis. It focuses on how social and political power is created and maintained through language. CDA seeks to expose a discourse’s biases and manipulations that serve political interests and advance controversial ideological positions, and highlights the methods or stratagems through which the discourse produces or maintains an unequal balance of power in a society. CDA aims to expose the linguistic, cultural, and historical roots that support the practices – the modes of action – that preserve the balance of power. The approach’s basic premise is that discourse has the capacity to shape social identities and establish relations between groups of people and individuals. Discourse can help maintain the social status quo, but it can also contribute to social change. The CDA approach focuses on the way in which social structures embody the existing balance of power and control in the society through discourse: how the discourse produces them, approves them, challenges them, or legitimizes them. CDA seeks to understand, expose, and ultimately oppose social inequality (Hart 2010: 13–4; Livnat 2014: 361; Meyer 2001: 15; Reisigl and 2001a: van Dijk 2001: 352; 32; Wodak 2001a: 10; ).

The term “power” is the main concept in critical discourse analysis, the discourse mechanism being seen as a central way to actualize power in social contexts. This premise is fostered by the thinking of social philosophers such as Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Antonion Gramsci, Jürgen Habermas, Pierre Bourdieu, and others who drew attention to the central role of language in constructing social reality. (Hart 2010: 13–14; Livnat 2014: 361; Meyer 2001: 15; Reisigl and Wodak 2001a: 32).

For Foucault, discourse is a representation of knowledge about a certain subject; it is linked to knowledge production through language. Foucault argues that the term “discourse” relates not only to language but to action modes (practices), rules, and regulations. Discourse constructs and defines the objects of our knowledge. It controls how to talk about a subject or to act regarding it; it determines the accepted ways to talk about it, and thus also limits other possibilities for knowledge construction about the same subject. A discourse will never consist of one statement, one text, one act, or one source; it will appear in a variety of texts and different institutional contexts in the society (Livnat 2014: 362).

According to Foucault, ‘Words/Things’ have meaning and can be called real only in a specific historical context. For example, ‘mental illness’ is not an ‘objective’ object that means the same thing in every era and every culture. Foucault and his followers argue that the connection between signifier and signified is far more complex than implied by semiotics: “a simple combination between an idea and the sequence of sounds that expresses it”. Thus the term ‘mental illness’ does not signify something objective in the world. The object it represents is an outcome of the construction of knowledge that occurs within a certain discourse. The object is constructed by all that is said about it in a certain culture and in a certain period, by the way it is described, explained, judged, classified, etc. (Livnat 2014: 362; Meyer 2001: 15). In essence, discourse constructs objects, instilling them with significance and meaning in a particular social and cultural context. Discourse determines how people see things and creates a picture of their world and their outlooks, thus influencing their actions as well. According to Foucault, the discourse on mental illness and giving it a certain definition during the Enlightenment led to people with mental illnesses being incarcerated in institutions and mistreated (Livnat 2014: 362). According to van Dijk (1984: 13), prejudice is not merely a characteristic of individual beliefs or emotions about social groups. Such ethnic attitudes have social functions, e.g., to protect the interests of the in group. The cognitive structures of prejudice and the strategies of its use reflect these social functions (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 21–22).

CDA scholars regard themselves as ideologically motivated and committed, and their research is a kind of intervention in the life of society and social relations. Many researchers from this school are also active in movements against racism, feminist movements, peace movements, and so forth. They state their ideological intentions openly and stand with weaker social groups against more powerful ones. The quality of their research is not measured by ‘objectivity’ and academic remoteness, but by preserving the norms of systematic, rigorous, cautious analysis that are accepted in all scientific research (Livnat 2014: 371; Meyer 2001: 15)

CDA is not a school of linguistics or discourse research. While the stated goal of traditional scholars of discourse is to reveal and describe the linguistic system’s structure and laws, CDA scholars tend to argue that the academic description traditional scholars offer is sterile and has no social and ideological implications (Livnat 2014: 371).

While analyzing texts and “linguistic events” requires some analytical method, CDA on principle is neither based on nor prefers a single theory or a uniform analytical method. Instead, CDA offers a kind of tool box for the researcher, a list of linguistic and textual characteristics that can be examined when one wishes to analyze a text critically (Livnat 2014: 366; Wodak 2001b: 64).[[1]](#footnote-1)

## 3. Analysis and discussion

### 3.1 Metaphor

Metaphor is the essential core of human thought and creativity. Since the language of politics is characterized by metaphorical themes, metaphors are a powerful tool for getting to the heart of political thought. Metaphorical expressions nourish our worldview and shape our thinking and, in turn, our actual behavior (Koller 2012: 25; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 3–6; Mio 1997, 117–126). Examination of the context of metaphorical expressions facilitates our understanding of such metaphors and the goals that they are meant to attain in a given communicative event (Agbo et al. 2018: 95–96).

This article applies the cognitive theory of metaphor. One of the most influential works of the semantic cognitive school is George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s groundbreaking study on linguistics, which attracted worldwide attention and established the foundation for a cognitive theory of metaphors (2000). Lakoff and Johnson sought to examine the metaphoric nature of human cognition by focusing on our common, habitual, consensual metaphors. Their work makes it clear that metaphors are supremely efficient tools for shaping and creating thoughts. They frame the world for us. Without them, we cannot really think (Gavriely-Nuri 2011: 91; Livnat 2014:368). Metaphorical linguistic usages reflect how we perceive reality (Koller 2012: 25; Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3–6; Mio 1997, 117–126). Lakoff took this idea a step further, showing that metaphors not only reflect our view of reality but also influence it. In January 1991, on the heels of the First Gulf War, he analyzed the U.S. administration’s political discourse and showed how the Bush administration used metaphors to justify going to war. By so doing, he demonstrated how metaphor analysis can be critical in exposing discourse manipulations and normally hidden ideologies (Livnat 2014: 368–9).

Dalia Gavriely-Nuri (2009, 2011), studying metaphors in the Israeli political discourse, shows how they help to portray war as a normal part of life. Such war-normalizing metaphors aim to naturalize and legitimate the use of military power by creating a systematic analogy between war and objects that are far from the battlefield (Lakoff 1991: 25–32). For example, the metaphoric phrase “Golda’s kitchen” was the popular nickname for the most intimate circle of Prime Minister Golda Meir’s advisers. This metaphor conceals a secretive and undemocratic decision-making process even in security matters and other central issues. In other words, the “kitchen” metaphor hides what was often, in fact, a “war room” where Israel’s most urgent security matters were decided. According to the critical discourse analysis approach, the use of such metaphors is manipulative and helps to depict war as a normal, mundane, and unsurprising state of being, as expected and commonsensical a thing as medicine or business. In this way, the metaphor masks the true, terrible, and violent nature of war. Such patterns of discourse, repeated time and again in the discourse (by politicians, military leaders, academics, journalists, and internet commentators), help the public to accommodate itself to this abnormal situation. In the same way, these metaphors help leaders to convince the public of the rationality and necessity of war.

For instance, Tony Blair defended his decision to send British soldiers to the Second Gulf War in 2003 by using metaphors of progress – the successful attainment of goals (in the future)—as opposed to metaphors of regression, which reflect the failure to reach goals (in the past). These metaphors mirror the choices faced by the Labour Party and its leader, Blair, and thus establish the expected party policy: always go forward. Blair was willing to accept nothing but progress, and thus he presented himself as a strong and reliable leader who would not be moved by difficulty or criticism (Semino 2008). The metaphoric description of a particular problem or situation reflects the speaker’s perceptions of it and establishes his or her preferred solution (Chilton 2004: 202).

In this context, the rhetorical power of metaphors of movement, widely encountered in political discourse, is worth mentioning. One example is the metaphor that depicts the European common currency (the Euro) as a train that must progress at the same speed and in the same direction with all its cars in order to avoid derailment. This metaphor reflects a specific perspective that urges European governments to adopt a uniform monetary policy and act in complete economic harmony in order to ensure the success of the European Monetary Union (Charteris-Black 2005, 54–152; Musolff 2004, 30). Musolff presents examples of manipulative rhetorical baggage evoked by metaphors. The metaphors that he discusses express hostility toward the language of immigrants in Britain, such as the description of roads in British cities as streets in Bombay or Karachi (Musolff 2019: 257–266) and Coronation Street as having been relocated from Britain to Pakistan.

**3.1.1 Metaphors from the domain of the desert environment**

Al-Ḥajjāj’s use of metaphors was influenced by the desert environment in which the Iraqi people lived and worked, primarily in agriculture and animal husbandry. Al-Ḥajjāj frequently drew metaphors from these surroundings, and referred to mountains, types of wood from which arrows were made, and so on, because the Iraqi people were familiar with this environment and were able to understand the message behind such metaphors:

1. “Long live Allah; people of Iraq, I see haughty and rebellious looks, and stiff necks, and **heads that are ripe,** andit is time **for picking them** (decapitation). I am the one who will decapitate you. The residents of Kufa are like fruits that have ripened and rotted, so the time has come to pluck off their heads, as we harvest ripe fruit”.

Just as leaving overripe fruit without picking it can harm the wholesome fruits, so hesitation and delay in the oppression of these residents can complicate the situation and intensify their revolt against the authorities to the point of complete loss of control.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The word “heads” can also be expanded to serve as a metaphor from the realm of animals, since al- Ḥajjāj likens the inhabitants of Kufa to animals, thereby framing the beheading and slaughtering of them as normal, in the same way that animal slaughter is perceived as normal behavior. By using this metaphor, al-Ḥajjāj engages in emotional manipulation to make his opponents realize that the use of cruelty and violence against them is a normal matter, just as animal slaughter is perceived as normal.

1. “The Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, who is generous and Allah should prolong his days, threw the **waste of his arrows** (from his arrow holster) before him, and bit the arrows one by one to check their quality, and found me to be the **most bitter and powerful arrow,** and he sent me to you and threw me at you”.

The act of scattering the arrows for the purpose of choosing the most durable is a metaphor for the caliph’s deep thought and extraordinary meticulousness in choosing al-Ḥajjāj to rule over Kufa. Al-Ḥajjāj, with his charismatic personality, leadership, and extraordinary cruelty is perceived to be the most bitter and determined.

The most bitter and powerful arrow is a metaphor for al-Ḥajjāj 's extraordinary toughness, determination and aggression. The caliph’s choice of this arrow from among the rejected waste unequivocally indicates a voluntary and conscious choice to suppress the revolt of the inhabitants of Kufa against the authorities, after all previous attempts to subdue them have come to naught.

1. “I am a well-known and famous person, experienced, bold, adventurous, and brave, who **reveals[[3]](#footnote-3) things**. [The intention is to expose his opponents’ plots]. I am not afraid to walk on narrow, dangerous and winding roads up the mountain. [These paths serve as a springboard for him to face his opponents]”.

Just as the dawn reveals the light and removes the darkness of the night, so too al-Ḥajjāj dispersed the fog surrounding the Kufa rebels and became well acquainted with their treacherous nature and their tendency to rebel against the authorities. Al-Ḥajjāj is well aware that all his predecessors’ attempts to suppress the rebels were in vain, so he will use extraordinary violence and brutality, unparalleled in the past.

1. “I am a well-known and famous person, experienced, daring, adventurous, brave and exposing opponents’ plots. I am not afraid to walk on **narrow, dangerous and winding roads up the mountain”.**

These paths serve as a starting point for him in facing his opponents. Marching along narrow, dangerous and winding mountain roads is a metaphor for al-Ḥajjāj's ability to successfully tackle particularly arduous and difficult tasks. Only special, virtuous individuals are capable of doing such deeds.

1. “The strings of the bow used in war are as strong as the leg of the young male camel, and even more so”.

The phrase “leg of the young male camel” is used as a metaphor for the need to act harshly in the face of coercive rebels and to use particularly severe weapons against them.

1. “Long live Allah; the people of Iraq. I am not among those who tests their patience and animates them, as is they who will whip a camel to test its temper and patience. Nor am I one of those who examines their power and determination to wage battles as they feel figs to test their ripeness”.

Whipping the camel and feeling the figs are metaphors for the rebels’ attempts to test al-Ḥajjāj’s patience and provoke him. This would be utterly foolish, because he intends to treat the rebels with a policy of zero tolerance and forbearance, and with cruelty far beyond the bounds of logic.

1. “ I swear as I live by Allah, that I will **peel you as one peels the bark off a branch, and bind you as one binds the branches of the thorny trees and beat them with a** stick so that **the leaves fall off for the animals to eat**”.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The action of peeling the bark off the branch is a metaphor for the action of stripping the skin from the body. In essence, al-Ḥajjāj intends to strip the skin off the rebels of Kufa as a butcher strips the skin off of animals.

The branches of thorny trees are a metaphor for the inhabitants of Kufa, as they are a group of people who are difficult to deal with. The leaves falling from the thorny branches is a metaphor for bringing the inhabitants of Kufa into line. Binding the branches of the thorny trees and beating them with a stick until the leaves that serve as food for animals fall off them is a metaphor for the ruthless violence that al-Ḥajjāj intends to use against the rebels. These rebels are thorny branches, meaning a particularly difficult core group, therefore dealing with them requires merciless and monstrous force.

Al-Ḥajjāj treats the Kufa rebels as foreigners, and they are radically different from the rest of Iraq because of their repeated attempts and their determination to rebel against the authorities and not accept their rule. As such, they resemble camels that do not belong to the caravan. Just as the foreign camels are beaten cruelly to make them flee from the caravan, so must the rebels of Kufa be treated.

1. “Iraqi people! You are the inhabitants of a village that was safe and peaceful and you made an abundant livelihood from all sides. But you did not properly appreciate the grace of God, so God torments you because of your deeds, and clothes you in the **garments of hunger and fear**”.

The inhabitants of Kufa did not appreciate the grace of God; therefore, fear and hunger clung to them like garments. Clothing prevents a person from being naked, prevents humiliation, and preserves dignity, but the actions of the residents of Kufa changes their attire to that of hunger, fear, and humiliation. The residents of Kufa will suffer from fear of terror and humiliation, and will be punished with an iron fist, due to their repeated attempts to rebel against the authorities.

**3.1.2 How do create concepts?**

Conceptualization of the target domain through the source domain is referred to in cognitive semantics as mapping. The source domain is mapped onto the target domain, but not the other way around. Thus, in the metaphor “life is a vessel”, we perceive the concept of life through the concept of a vessel but we do not perceive the concept of a vessel by way of the concept of life. The metaphor “love is a journey” is based on the image of the road, and is reflected in many English-language expressions, for example: the lovers are at a crossroads; the lovers are at a dead end; their relationship has gone so awry as to have no way back; the lovers have come down a long, hard path, and the like. Each domain, source and target, has its own characteristics: the journey has passengers, means of transportation, a route, obstacles, and more. In love relationships there are lovers, events, development, and so on. The metaphor links the characteristics of the source domain to the characteristics of the target domain: lovers are travelers, the course of the relationship is the route, the difficulties in the relationship are obstacles in the path, and so on (Livnat 2014: 124).

The connection between the source domain, the desert environment,to the target domain, **politics,** is shown in detail below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Table 1: **Source domain: Desert Environment** | **Target domain: Politics** |
| Ripened fruit, ready to be picked | Rebels of Kufa who need to be dealt with without delay lest they are strengthened and more rebels follow them |
| Heads as metaphor for animals |  |
| Scattering arrows and biting them | The deep and serious thinking invested in choosing al-Ḥajjāj |
| The bitterest and strongest arrow | The rebels of Kufa are like animals, and therefore beheading and slaughtering them is a legitimate act |
| The meaning of *galā* | Al-Ḥajjāj’s incredible ability to uncover plots |
| Narrow, dangerous and winding roads up in the mountains | Al-Ḥajjāj’s amazing ability to handle complex tasks successfully |
| Leg of the young male camel | For acting harshly in the face of the rebels of Kufa, particularly cruel weapons must be used against them |
| Whipping camels and feeling figs | The foolish attempt of the residents of Kufa to force provoke al-Ḥajjāj’s and test his patience |
| Peeling bark from branches | Removing the skin of rebels and resorting to violence that characterizes the violence perpetrated on animals |
| Tying branches of thorny trees and beating them with a stick | Exercising monstrous force against the rebels of Kufa, i.e., against the difficult core group, who resemble thorny plants |
| Beating foreign camels that do not belong to the caravan | Exercising brutal force against the various rebel forces in the Kufa, who are different from the other residents of Iraq and require special treatment |
| Branches of thorny trees | Residents of Kufa, who are constantly trying to rebel against the authorities |
| Leaves falling from thorny branches | Straightening out the residents of Kufa to deter them from rebelling against the authorities again |
| Garments of fear and hunger | Al-Ḥajjāj’s cruel treatment of the residents of Kufa |

**3.2 Describing future actions as if they are occurring or already occurred, to emphasize that they are certain to happen**

Al-Ḥajjāj’s describes future actions as if they were currently happening or as if they had already taken place. This is done to force the rebels to take his words seriously, as if his intentions and statements of steps to be taken in the future are already completed facts. Al-Ḥajjāj’s describes these future actions in the present and past tense as if he were a witness to their existence:

1. “Long live Allah; people of Iraq, I see haughty and rebellious looks, and stiff necks, and **heads that are ripe,** and the time is ripe **for picking them** (decapitation). I am the one who will decapitate you. Long live Allah as I watch the blood spouting from between the turbans and the beards”.

Al-Ḥajjāj’s imagines blood flowing between the people’s turbans and beards. He describes the situation as if seeing it in front of his eyes. This manipulative description is intended to intimidate the residents of Kufa in an attempt to force them to comply with the authorities and cease their attempts at rebellion against them.

1. “Iraqi people! You are like the inhabitants of a village that was safe and peaceful and you made an abundant livelihood from all sides. But you did not properly appreciate the grace of God, so God **torments** you because of your deeds, and **clothes** you in the garments of hunger and fear”.

Al-Ḥajjāj’s imagines a situation in which God has already tormented the inhabitants of Kufa and imposed hunger and fear on them because they have not properly appreciated God’s grace. The implication is that these residents did not appreciate the kindness of the Iraqi authorities who did good to them, and the residents did not miss a single opportunity to rebel against the authorities. Therefore, al-Ḥajjāj’s knows how to repay them as they deserve.

**3.3 Lexical choice**

Every discourse involves a choice of words. For example, a person who has committed an act of terror can be called a terrorist or a freedom fighter. Each lexical choice indicates the speaker’s overt or covert position. It also affects how the recipients understand and perceive the world (Livnat 2014: 366). The choice of words is related to the connotations that the word evokes and its emotional value; for example, the words “left lying” in the following sentence are charged with an emotional connotation, which affects the way readers perceive the events: “No one was standing next to the small body. It was **left lying** there alone, until the doctors arrived”, (*Maariv*, February 5, 1999). Critical analysis can also reveal such lexical choices as manipulative choices, aimed at making the reader perceive the events in a certain way (Livnat 2014: 366).

Al-Ḥajjāj’s rhetoric of intimidation and humiliation rests on a choice of words that reflect excessive physical violence and humiliation. Al- Ḥajjāj is not interested in conveying hidden messages in his speech; rather, every word in his speech expresses an overt, sharp, and unambiguous position. A significant portion of al-Ḥajjāj’s lexical choices reflect violence perpetrated against animals, with the aim of framing the rebels of Kufa as animals. Such framing gives legitimacy to resorting to violence against them. The following are examples of al-Ḥajjāj’s lexical choices:

1. Heads

The word “heads” as an animal metonymy reflects al-Ḥajjāj’s overt position on the measures he intends to take against the Kufa rebels. This position is clear from the first sentence in al-Ḥajjāj’s speech: “I see heads that have ripened and it is time to pick them”. Al-Ḥajjāj conveys an overt message through a loaded word with particularly humiliating and threatening emotional connotations, thereby influencing how these rebels will relate to the consequences of their actions.

1. Pick them

The phrase “pick them” in the sentence “I see heads that have ripened and it is time to pick them” reflects the urgency in dealing with the rebels of Kufa, as any delay may intensify the power of these rebels. The rebels are likened to ripe fruit, and any delay in picking them will lead to decay and waste. Therefore, excessive violence against the rebels is legitimate. Al-Ḥajjāj relied on this word to sharpen the message: there will zero tolerance and zero patience for the rebels, as explained earlier.

1. Spouting blood

The phrase “spouting blood” reflects extraordinary aggressiveness and makes the listener think of animal slaughter, in order to infuse a dose of deterrence into the hearts of the inhabitants: Long live Allah, as if I were looking at the blood spouting between the turbans and the beards.

1. Peeling the bark from a branch

The act of peeling off the bark of the branch refers to stripping the skin from the rebels of Kufa and resorting to violence that characterizes the violence perpetrated on animals: I swear as I live by Allah, that I will peel your skin as they peel off the bark of the branch.

1. Binding thorny branches and hitting them with a stick

The residents of Kufa are a difficult group, like the branches of thorny sage plants. The shedding of the leaves from the thorny sage branches reflects the straightening out of the inhabitants of Kufa, meaning al-Ḥajjāj will not let go of them and will continue to use brutal violence against them until he straightens them out: “I swear as I live by Allah that I will bind you as you tie the thorny sage branches and beat them with a stick so that the leaves will fall off and the animals can eat from them”.

1. Beating foreign camels

Residents of Kufa with their rebellious behavior against the authorities are like foreign camels that do not belong to the caravan. Just as people use violence against foreign camels, al-Ḥajjāj vows to use such violence against the Kufa rebels. Comparing these rebels to foreign camels gives legitimacy to treating them as animals and normalizes such behavior: “I swear, as I live by Allah, that **I will beat you like the plagues of foreign camels that do not belong to the camel caravan**”.

**3.4** **Oaths and threatening language**

Throughout al-Ḥajjāj’s speech, one can notice the language of oaths and threats accompanied by verbs in the first person. This language is directed towards the residents of Kufa. The language of oaths and threats is completely at odds with the language of reconciliation and dialogue. Al-Ḥajjāj is familiar with the style of the Kufa rebels and their history, which is filled with attempts to revolt against the authorities. He is convinced that any strategy of inclusion and dialogue will shatter or break down in the face of the rebels of Kufa, so the language of oaths and threats is prevalent throughout this speech and indicates the actions that al-Ḥajjāj intends to carry out against these rebels.

As has been noted, al-Ḥajjāj's speech is full of oaths. This language of oath and threats sheds light on his state of mind at the time of the speech, the degree of excitement that dominated him during the speech, and his determination to dispel the fog and doubts of the residents of Kufa about the policies that al-Ḥajjāj will adopt against them. The examples given here primarily emphasize the language of oaths and threats taken by al-Ḥajjāj and do not need to be repeated.

**3.5 Syntactic-rhetorical repetition**

Gvura and Levi (2016) deal with syntactic-rhetorical repetition in the speeches of then-Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid. They recall the words of many scholars who have dealt with this subject of political speech. Landau (1988: 53) notes that political speech is replete with various kinds of syntactic-rhetorical repetitions. She describes syntactic repetition in repetitive sentences or repetitive elements in various forms. According to Hughes and Duhamel (1962: 487), by using parallel syntactic structures, it is possible to bring ideas together effectively and create a special rhetorical style. Syntactic-rhetorical repetition is manifest in the parallel between whole sentences and in the parallel between phrases, combinations of words, and single words. Abadi (1980: 142) calls syntactic repetition ‘the cycle’, noting that it is one of the means of formulating one unit of discourse from beginning to end.

**3.5.1 Repetition of synonymous words, phrases and sentences**

Repetition of words and use of synonyms establishes and reinforces the message, since a message that is repeated over and over becomes fixed in the mind of the recipient:

1. “Indeed, long live Allah, I will bear the evil with its heavy weight, I will act like it and I will repay it with its reward”.
2. “Long live Allah, the people of Iraq, I see haughty and rebellious looks, and stiff necks, and heads that are ripe and it is time for picking them. I am the one who will decapitate you”.
3. “The war girds its loins, then strengthens your spirit. The war has strengthened you, so gird your loins as well”.
4. “The Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, who is generous and Allah should prolong his days, threw the waste of his arrows (from his arrow holster) before him, and bit the arrows one by one to check their quality, and found me to be the most bitter and powerful arrow, and he sent me to you and threw me at you”.
5. “Long live Allah; I do not say anything that I do not intend to do, and I do not intend to do anything unless I commit to do it, and I evaluate my actions in advance so that I will keep my word”.
6. Long live Allah; the people of Iraq. I am not one of those people who tests their patience and are energized as it is customary to whip a camel to test its temper and patience. Nor am I one of those who examines their power and determination to wage battles as they feel figs to test their ripeness”.

**3.6 Sowing external sources in a text**

A speaker whose goal is to persuade may rely on elements from literature, religion, and folklore, such as poems, proverbs, fables, holy texts, and myths that are accepted in the society and culture. These elements are passed down from generation to generation. According to Aristotle, they may be divided into two categories (Spiegel 1994: 73):

1. Things that are taken for granted, self-evident, and do not need to be proven true, such as laws, contracts, and holy texts. These are called “arguments outside the art of rhetoric”.
2. “Cognitive or emotional arguments aimed at proving things that are not obvious, such as proverbs, fables, and myths”.

In Arab rhetoric, these means of persuasion are divided into these two categories (Darshan 2000: 109):

1. Quoted verses from the Koran or Hadith
2. Quotes from poems, prose, proverbs

According to Al-Hamui, the integrated quote maintains the structure, the order of its words, and its original meaning as interpreted in the Qur'an, but it need not retain the exact Qur'anic pattern. Thus, it can add or omit a word or letter; change the order of the words in the sentence, etc. However, even a Qur'anic quote may have its original meaning altered, and the author may add another lesson that he seeks to convey to the listener or reader. An author who quotes verses relies on the reader’s familiarity with the cultural tradition from which he is quoting. If the reader is not familiar with the cultural tradition, he cannot fully understand it, and will feel a certain degree of alienation. As is well known, in Arab culture, the Qur'an is a model for the Arabic language. Its language and style are attributed to God and offer the opportunity to emulate him. The verses are considered to be divine truth, sanctified with the seal of Allah, and endowed with power of truths that do not need proof. Therefore, one can understand the speaker's attempt to harness the verses to his needs and exploit their influence on his target audience (Darshan 2000: 110).

When quoting from these historic sources, the quoted text transports the reader into the ancient historical situation. The reader must make a comparison with the original text that is referred to, which enriches and deepens the contemporary text. Therefore, the author quoting verses in his work relies on the reader's familiarity with the cultural tradition from which he quotes. A reader who does not know the cultural tradition relevant to the text cannot fully understand it.

According to Landau, there are various reasons for quoting from external sources, such as scriptures, within a speech (Landau 1993: 50–51; Landau 1988: 182–185):

1. Reinforcement of the speaker's statements: proof from the sources to justify his opinion or action; or refuting an opponent's words or condemning the opponent for an act related to the quote.
2. Stylish adornment alone: beautification with flowery phrases. These are often common quotations in the speaker's language, which he embellishes his words with consciously or unconsciously. They are devoid of the rhetorical value of persuasion.
3. Manipulation: the speaker removes the verse from its original context through a symbolic interpretation to adapt it to the expression of new ideas on topical issues. For example, Darshan (2000: 110) cites Bengio’s remarks illustrating the manipulative use of quotes from outside sources. Bengio (1956: 246) claims that Saddam Hussein quoted verses from the ‘al-Anfal’ tradition to justify the killing of Kurds with chemical weapons in a campaign known as the ‘al-Anfal’.
4. Architectural use: a verse builds an idea. Each new idea in a speech is advanced through a new verse or, another structure is built in which several verses are brought together into one idea.

**3.6.1 Qur’anic quotes**

23. “Iraqi people! You are the inhabitants of a village that was safe and peaceful and you made an abundant livelihood from all sides. But you did not properly appreciate the grace of God, so God torments you because of your deeds, and clothes you in the garments of hunger and fear” (*Surah An-Nahl*, verse 112).

Al-Ḥajjāj quotes from the Qur'an to describe the residents who did not appreciate the grace of God, and upon whom God therefore imposed fear and hunger. By comparing residents of Kufa to villagers who did not appreciate God’s grace, al-Ḥajjāj normalizes the use of excessive force against them and makes it a most legitimate behavior, as there is a Qur’anic reference that clarifies how to treat people who do not appreciate the grace of their superiors.

**3.6.2 Quotes from poetry**

“I am a well-known and famous person, an experienced, daring, and brave adventurer who walks on paths winding up the mountains”.

“When I wear the turban, you will know who I am”.[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. “The time has come to drive them hard; then, stubborn Ziam[[6]](#footnote-6) surrounded her tonight with a strong driver, as fast as a fire that consumes the trees.

I am not a herder of camels or sheep, nor a butcher preoccupied with his work”.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**4. Conclusions**

This article discussed the rhetoric of intimidation and humiliation in al- Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafῑ's most famous speech in Iraq. Using the theory of CDA, it examined the linguistic techniques used by al-Ḥajjāj. It can be seen that all the rhetorical devices in al- Ḥajjāj’s speech to the Kufa rebels in Iraq reflect the rhetoric of deterrence and humiliation, with the clear purpose of engaging in emotional manipulations that reflect his intention to act with extraordinary cruelty against the coercive rebels who are considered a particularly resistant group. Al-Ḥajjāj endeavors to normalize the violence against these rebels and give it legitimacy; for example, he likens the inhabitants of Kufa to animals, i.e., he frames them as animals, and therefore beheading and slaughtering them is normal, as slaughtering animals is perceived as normal behavior. Al-Ḥajjāj quotes from the Qur'an describing villagers upon whom God imposed fear and hunger, as they did not appreciate the grace of God. By comparing the residents of Kufa to the villagers who did not appreciate God’s grace, al- Ḥajjāj normalizes the use of excessive force against them and makes it a legitimate act, as there is a Qur’anic reference that clarifies how to treat people who do not appreciate the grace of their superiors.

Al-Ḥajjāj’s choice of metaphors is influenced by the desert environment inhabited by Iraqi people, where they lived mainly from agriculture and animal husbandry. Most of the metaphors in the speech drawn on from this geographical environment. In these metaphors he refers, among other things, to the mountains and the types of trees used to make arrows, because the people of Iraq are familiar with these. These metaphors are manipulative in that they rely on the rhetoric of intimidation, with the aim of influencing the behavior of the rebels of Kufa, with emotionally-laden connotations aimed at changing their behavior and their urge to constantly rebel against the authorities.

Al- Ḥajjāj’s rhetoric of intimidation and humiliation rests on a choice of words reflecting excessive physical violence and shame. Al-Ḥajjāj is not interested in conveying hidden messages in his speech. Every word reflects an overt, sharp and unambiguous position. A significant portion of his lexical choices reflect violence perpetrated against animals, with the aim of framing the rebels of Kufa as animals, giving legitimacy to resort to the violence against them. The linguistic devices that reflect the rhetoric of deterrence and humiliation in al- Ḥajjāj's speech reflect words of direct action, in which the content of the expression directly reflects his intention. The metaphors used in this speech also reflect direct actions; there is a low degree of subtlety in them, and one can easily discern their purpose and the intention behind them.

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1. See, for example, the article by Veronica Koller (2012: 19–38) where she presents a working model for analyzing collective identity in discourse which integrates a socio-cognitive approach as a major strand in Critical Discourse Analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rebellion against the authorities is reflected in the spread of lies and gossip, corruption, rejection of the authority of the government, a strong desire to quarrel among the residents themselves, and between the residents and the authorities, and more. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The meaning of the Arabic verb جلا (*galā*) is ‘to reveal’. This verb is used mainly in the context of the dawn that reveals the light of day and removes the darkness. Al-Ḥajjāj calls himself the son of the *galā*, in order to threaten the residents of Kufa and deter them from al-Ḥajjāj's special and extraordinary ability to reveal plots, discover evil intentions in people and treat them assertively and without delay.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This refers to camels from another place approaching a camel caravan to which they do not belong for the purpose of mating with female camels. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This stanza of poetry is from the famous poet Suhaim al-Riyahi. Al-Ḥajjāj emphasizes that he is an adventurous man who does not shy away from walking up winding roads high in the mountains. The intention is that he did not shy away from dealing with complex problems and tasks, so the caliph sent him to deal with the residents of Kufa who are considered a hard group. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The name of al-Ḥajjāj’s mare or female camel. Al- Ḥajjāj coaxes his horse / camel and urges her to prepare for war because this is the time of war. Al-Ḥajjāj describes himself as a strong and fast rider, similar in strength and speed to a fire that consumes the trees. Al-Ḥajjāj emphasizes that he is not a simple shepherd or a butcher preoccupied with his work, but a shrewd, tough and experienced leader who will take care of the rebels of Kufa and straighten them out. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This is a stanza of poetry from the poet Rowayshid al ‘Anbary. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)