HEDGING IN JOURNALISTIC ARABIC
AN ANALYSIS OF
POLITICAL DISCOURSE DURING THE
THIRD GULF WAR (THA9LAB AL-SAhra’)

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts (linguistics)

at

Yarmouk UNIVERSITY

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Spring, 1999
Abstract

This study aims at investigating *hedging phenomenon* in journalistic Arabic political discourse during the third Gulf war (thaqāb al-sahāra'). The study is based on a detailed contextual analysis of 200 haphazardly selected articles published in six Arabic leading daily newspapers in the period from December 17 to December 26, 1998. For purposive contrastive goals, emphatics and intensifiers are also included in the study. To facilitate the discussion, five major different points have been distinguished for thorough investigation, viz.:

1. the principal devices, categories, and pragmatic functions of hedging.
2. the density of metadiscourse features (hedges, emphatics, and intensifiers)
3. the major taxonomy of Arabic hedges
4. the relationship between politeness and hedging.
5. the main voices employed to convey Arabic political discourse.

In addition to the three kinds of hedging employed in Arabic discourse (lexical, structural, and strategic), findings have shown that there is a strong consistent connection/relation between the political situation/attitude and the number as well as the type of metadiscourse features that a sender uses in the his/her discourse. Moreover, the study has revealed that hedges are mainly used to mitigate direct criticism and incitement, avoid sender's commitment to the truth of the proposition, express politeness, show respectfulness, save against possible criticism, and modify discourses. Along with the political based hedges, three other valid observations need to be made in reference to the findings, namely:

1. Politeness is as much the conveyor of hedging as the hedging is the conveyor of politeness.
2. Writer-reader (we) and voice neutrality (unknown voice) are the main voices employed to convey Arabic political discourse.

3. Sender-receiver inter/shared knowledge is an indispensable condition for full understanding of political based hedges.