

Sara and Other Kid's Agony: Back to Innocence to Save Iraq

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Abstract:

The research paper focuses on discourse analysis of some Iraqi children's writing and speech. This, in fact, sheds light on the impact of war and its hard consequences on children. Many studies and reports have shown that the Iraqi children and youth are the victims of serial wars highly affect general and psychology health. Yet, the children have through their insightful vision and true hearts that they are the hope for Iraq. We, as adults, are in real need to understand such a moral if we really have a sincere intention to rebuild our country.

1. Introduction

Many critics of the war in Iraq do argue that the daily bloodshed is turning young Iraqi adults into anti-Americans terrorists (McCloskey, 2005:1). Regarding to the effect of war on Iraqi children some reports and studies have clearly demonstrated that war definitely has an effect on them. Chelala (2004:1) stated that Iraqi children were the victims of three wars. The two conflicts previous to the present one were the eight-year war with Iran in 1980s and the Gulf War in 1991, which caused a considerable damage to Iraq's infrastructure. In addition, the country has suffered from over 12 years of comprehensive United Nation's sanctions from Saddam Hussein's perverse policies to manipulate funds for personal gain rather than to improve the basic-services infrastructure in the country. Iraqi children were highly vulnerable to disease and malnutrition for the third time. An article in the medical magazine, The Lancet confirmed that there has been an excess of 100,000 civilian deaths since the invasion of Iraq, in 2003. A report entitled "Threat War is Affecting Health of Iraqi Children", released by a Canadian team concluded that if a war between Iraq and the West broke out, then the

vast majority of Iraq's 13 million children will be affected. The result of the interview of 100 families in Baghdad, Kerbla and Basrah during January 2003, showed that Iraqi children would be at a great risk of starvation, disease, death and psychological trauma. The two psychologists, who accompanied the team interviewed more than 300 children to assess their mental health, the outcome was that the children showed a great fear of a perceived war. They described with clear ideas the horrors of war. They were fearful, anxious and depressed as the report declared. Some of them thought that "Life is not worth living"! From the above mentioned report the researchers noticed that war images, events of children watching their homes burn, seeing their parents being killed afflict them. What makes this worse is the fact that children are targeted by bombing, kidnapping and slaughtering. Article 54 of the Geneva Convention stipulates: "It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove, or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuff cops, livestock, drinking water installations supplies and irrigation works for the specific purpose of denying them for their

sustenance value to the civilian population or the adverse party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move a way, or for any other motive". Hassan (2005:1) states that " a humanitarian crises has been looming in Iraq since the 1991 U.S war due to the shortage of drinking water and increase in waterborne diseases that kill children". In 2001, Professor Thomas Nagy of the school of Business and Public Management at George Washington University cites macabre foreknowledge of the effects of bombing water purification and sewage treatment facilities, which provide clean water to the Iraqi people. Current "public health problems are attributed to the reduction of normal preventive medicine, waste disposal, water purification and distribution, electricity, and the decreased ability to control disease outbreaks". Hassan (Ibid.) wondered: "why the U.S and its allies targeted the Iraqi children in particular".

Psychological and emotional responses vary in nature and severity from child to child. Nonetheless, there are some similarities in how children feel when their lives are impacted by war. The following will spot the light on the word "how".

Fear: may be the predominant reaction among children. They are panic-stricken and shell-shocked by a bomb being dropped on their homes or terrorists attacking them. This leads to loss control. Lack of self-control can be overwhelming and confusing. Nearly all- Iraqi children experienced the aftermath of war. As a result, children refuse to go to school or cooperate.

Anger: Anger is another aftermath of war. Those who are in deep loss of control are filled with anger at what they have experienced.

Social Impact on War Affected Children:

War destroys homes, splinters communities and breaks down trust among people undermining the very foundation of children's lives.

Schools and health posts in Iraq are targeted specially by terrorist attacks. Not only those, but other life establishments like power generation, phone services, water and municipal are all targets for terrorism.

The major part of our Iraqi children are immensely affected by shortages in services (no electricity, no healthy water, no healthy environment, pollution...etc). Life becomes very chaotic where no rules could be accepted and implemented by any

responsible men. This witnessed some active resolutions or judgments regarding changes of conditions especially those related to social decision, but no severe and direct actions on ground were taken to implement them even by using force. Average Iraqis specially children witness similar daily regular and harsh kind of living threatened with fear, agony, distress and reluctance because of terrorism and terror actions which are endless, but on the contrary have risen to such an extent, especially in some districts, that no active power could put an end to these actions.

Innocence, as a word, is almost always related to childhood when man is still harmless, has no evil, knows no evil, says no evil and does no wrong. War and violence take a way the innocence and happiness out of the children's eyes. Life is full of grim visages of violence and misery that surround not only Iraq but the whole world wide. The plague of war afflicts the children in particular. McCloskey (2005:1) stated that "it's when the violence affects a child's social structures that we start to see real problems". Turning to innocence, to the writings of children, who experienced war, fear, anxiety and murdering of hopes and wishes, kid's

growth to experience occurs so swiftly through their awareness of their futile fate mingled with a slight ray of light that is kindled from their simple faith in God, in good deeds of Iraqis and their willingness to change the country into a better place and a better life.

The kid's writings are their voices that echoed their resistance and insistence on struggling. It seems that the solution is in the innocent voices of Iraq's children. Sama, one of them, says: "love, fraternity and no-room for black hearts- are the answer".

2. The Aim of the Study

The aim of this research is two-fold:

This research is a true call to all peace makers and supporters in the world to help the Iraqi children gain a normal life. Children, in Iraq, want their voices to be heard. They show their writings that war and misery go hand in hand in Iraq. The contents of the kid's writings are analyzed according to the themes found in them.

3. Procedure of the Study

Writings or speeches of six children from different areas are analyzed. The variety of areas is taken into account to identify the impact of a community on those children. If children, in spite of that diversity (Sunni, Shiite...etc) have mutual

views, then there is a real hope for Iraq.

The data have been first translated into English by three reliable translators at the Department of English*. Text analysis are followed to reveal the similarities among children's utterances.

4. Sample of the Study

Six children have participated in this study. Two of them usually express themselves by writing prose. Three others are talented both in speech and painting. The other one is good at speech as well. Four of them live in Baghdad, in either stable or unstable region. The fifth is from the district near Baghdad known in media as "The Triangle of Death". The sixth one is from Basrah in the south, a governorate, which is regarded as relatively stable, compared with Baghdad. They asked the researchers to shoulder the responsibility for delivering a letter from the heart to the people who always change the world, i.e., the men of thought.

The circumstances Iraqi children have to bear are concrete problems in an occupied country such as:

Absence of security, which causes heavy casualties, random arrests, kidnapping, assaulting, breaking into as demolishing houses, stealing, raping (especially women detainees), losing or even not finding any shelter, one's daily bread and being on short commons, having no creature comforts especially for children and having no freedom to oppose the effective powers or death might be the cost, so where is the promised democracy?

From a different perspective seen by children, the researchers present the solution, that is, to have a child's heart to forgive first hope for a better future.

5. Scheme of Analysis

The scheme of analysis comprises the Subjects:

Texts of children's writings like Sara's and Summer's are translated into English. The age of those children ranges between 11-12. The researchers do not interfere in imposing subjects on them. They wrote what they like to write. Both of them are in the first intermediate classes. Sara who lived in Al-Yousifia, The Triangle of Death, wrote nine passages, whereas Summer who lived in the center of Baghdad, Al-Khrada wrote two passages.

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Other kid's speeches are written and translated into English.

6. Data Analysis

The present study involved the analysis of six texts of six children. The texts were analyzed independently by the two researchers.

The analysis of the text is divided into three kinds: form analysis, content analysis and figures of speech.

6.1 Form Analysis

The form of these texts are analyzed through the following Hoey's model (1983: 107-112) in analyzing the texts of the children. This model concentrates on repetition which is defined as "one of the key signaling devices" that sets up reactions and thereby patterns of discourse (Ibid., 107).

Repetition has several manifestations. They are substitution, ellipsis and paraphrases adding repetition in this model.

Repetition is divided into:

1. Simple Repetition which is defined as a straightforward repeating of a lexical item.
2. Complex Repetition the two words contain a paraphrase of the other word. Complex repetition involves a change of grammatical class e.g. a noun vs. a verb

3. Substitution: is another subclass of repetition under this heading, personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, demonstrative adverb and the proverb 'do' with or without 'so'.

4. Ellipsis (deletion) when the structure of one sentence is incomplete, the missing element(s) can be recovered from a previous sentence unambiguously. It is common in speech.

5. Paraphrase: It is divided into simple and complex paraphrase. Simple paraphrase occurs when one of two items can substitute another without any change in meaning. Simple substitution is divided into simple partial paraphrase and simple mutual paraphrase.

6. Complex Paraphrase: involves a change in grammatical class. Complex paraphrase can be divided into mutual and partial paraphrase.

The characteristics found can be classified into:

1. Same Word
2. Antonyms
3. Synonyms
4. Exclamation
5. Wh-question/ yes, no questions

Table (1) Form Analysis

Sara's Writing	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. Simple Repetition	35	35%
2. Complex Repetition	4	4%
3. Substitution	40	40%
4. Ellipsis	7	7%
5. Complex Paraphrase	14	14%
Summer's Writing	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. Simple Repetition	20	20%
2. Complex Repetition	4	4%
3. Substitution	27	27%
4. Ellipsis	3	3%
5. Complex Paraphrase	7	7%
Sama's Writing	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1 Simple Repetition	30	30%
1 Complex Repetition	10	10%
1 Substitution	53	53%
1 Ellipsis	3	3%
1 Complex Paraphrase	95	95%
Aseel's Writing	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. Simple Repetition	42	42%
2. Complex Repetition	4	4%
3. Substitution	11	11%
4. Ellipsis	3	3%
5. Complex Paraphrase	90	90%
6. Simple and Partial Paraphrase	17	17%

Repetition:

The researchers have found the following:

A. Simple Repetition

1. Same Word: Allah, Islam...etc.

2. Different grammatical form (a finite and a non finite verb-phrase, 'play', 'playing', 'paint', 'painting'.

- B. Complex Repetition: It is either a change of grammatical class e.g.

live, life, happy, happiness, brotherhood, free, freedom.

C. Substitution: It includes personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, demonstrative adverb and proverb 'do' with or without 'so' (Ibid.).

e.g. "Baghdad you were sweeter than the honey that cures!"

"My salutation to you, the nation, country, Iraq. I like this place for I was born there and my people and all my loved ones live there".

D. Paraphrase: 1. Simple paraphrase: "It can be said to occur whenever one of two items can substitute another in a partial context with no discernible change in meaning" (Ibid: 110).

E. Simple mutual paraphrase: both words can substitute each other in a context, e.g. synonyms: Allah, Lord, the Preserver, Al-Mighty, Iraq, home, country.

F. Simple partial paraphrase: only one of the two words can replace the other in a context, e.g. Islam, religion, remedy, answer, judge, punish, war, battle, defend, fight, win, triumph

2. Complex Paraphrase

Antonyms

War # peace, dignity # humiliation, win # lose, love # hate and hatred, the

right # the wrong (satanic deeds), invade # defend, destroy # reconstruct, light # darkness, day # night, white hearts # black hearts, life of light # life of darkness, believers # unbelievers, happy # lonely, soldiers of right # soldiers of wrong, future # past, happiness # grief.

3. Synonyms: Allah, Lord, Al-Mighty, the Preserver, the merciful, the compassionate, country, home; answer; remedy; clean and tidy; judge; punish; war; battle; defend; fight; win triumph.

B. Structure:

4. Exclamation

"What a beautiful sky you got at night" [Sarah].

"What a country! Whoever wants to cross borders can do so very easily" [Zahra].

We can not kill people and say "Allah Akbar!" [Aseel].

5. Why - questions/ yes, no questions:

Why..?

6. Connotation

a. Patriotism: country, home, homeland, honour, dignity, steadfast, martyrs, independence, flag, freedom, fraternity, civilian.

b. Religion: Allah, God, Lord, Islam, His teaching, disobey, religious, backwardness, worship,

sectarianism, the devil, satanic, evil, punish, judge, doomsday, faith, Mohammad's Nation.

c. War: war, battle, fire, blood, bloody, red. Kill, destroy, rub, burn, poison, arms, arrest, bombard.

6.2 Content Analysis

In content analysis, children express themselves by various ways, by writing, speaking, painting and mocking sometimes. This is done through concentrating on some concepts. These concepts dominate the whole five texts. The researchers found that the most common concepts that are expressed by nearly all the kinds are:

1. Expressing themselves by various ways: writing, speaking, painting and mocking.
2. Love for Iraq and Baghdad.
3. Hatred of the war that has destroyed everything.

4. Faith in Allah and necessity of patience.
5. Faith in Islam as a unifying power and rejection of sectarianism.
6. Faith in Iraqis and their capability of reconstruction.
7. Unity of Iraqis and breadth of mind.
8. Iraq is part of the Arab Homeland
9. Divine punishment of the evil people sooner or later
10. Rejecting submission and defending the freedom of Iraq
11. Faith in childhood as the hope for Iraq
12. Fighting against terrorism
13. Wishing the Iraqi children the best life.
14. Hating the hostile practices of the American forces regarding bombing and illegal arresting

Table (2) Content Analysis of the Writings

Sara's Writings	Sara's Writings Frequency	Sama's Writings Frequency	Summer's Writings Frequency	Asseel's Writings Frequency
1. Love for Iraq and Baghdad	20	17	25	5
2. Hatred for the war that has destroyed everything	18	4	14	10
3. Faith in Allah and necessary of patience	21	10	4	6
4. Faith in Islam	10	10	6	10
5. Faith in Iraqis...	21	4	4	10
6. Unity of Iraqis...	22	4	4	10
7. Iraq...homeland	4	4	4	10
8. Divine punishment of evil...	14	4	4	10
9. Rejecting submission	30	4	4	10
10. Faith in childhood as the hope for Iraq	27	10	4	6
11. Frightening terrorism	17	5	4	10
12. Wishing children best life	19	5	4	10
13. Hating the hostile practices as regard bombing and illegal arresting	2	6	4	10

6.3 Figures of Speech

The kinds found in the texts under discussion are:

1. Simile: " is a comparison between two things which differ in kind, but are alike in the particular point to which attention is directed" (Oliphant:159). Asseel says "the devil whispers in terrorists ears as if it were poison in their hearts which controls them and turns them into robots".

2. Metaphor: is "an implied or condensed simile. The likeness is embodied in a single word, and that word is put forward as if it were always possible to expand" (Ibid.: 190). Sara writes " candles of victory and peace help me".

3. Personification: " A figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstract ideas are endowed which human qualities or actions" (Dictionary of Literary Terms: 86). "

The moon is imprisoned and so are we” Zahra’ says.

4. Apostrophe: is an “exclamatory address made in the course of a public speech, or in a poem, either to a personified objects or to an absent one” (Oliphant:162). Sara addresses terrorists “ Don’t you know that you will be judged at Doomsday? God is capable of everything. Who are you? Are you believers in Islam or unbelievers?

5. Rhetorical questions: “ A question propounded its rhetorical

effect and not requiring a reply or intended to induce a reply” (Dictionary of Literary Terms: 99). Sama inquires: “ we belong to the same country, we believe in the same religion, so why there conflicts and distruction of our own country?”

6. Irony: “ A device by which a writer expressing a meaning contradictory to be stated or ostensible one” (Ibid.: 61). Zahra’, looking to so many pictures of leading figures exhibited everywhere, says: “The only picture they haven’t shown is mine!”.

Table (3) Figures of Speech

	Sara	Summer	Sama	Asseel
Simile	5	6	4	4
Metaphor	2	10	4	4
Personification	2	5	2	2
Apostrophe				
Rhetorical Questions	10	5	10	10
Irony	4	2	4	4

7. **Discussion of Results**

After analyzing the content of the sample of the research, the researchers reached the following

results depending on frequency and the percentages for all items of the analysis.

Table (4) First Item of the Samples

Love for Iraq and Baghdad	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	20	66.66	17	76.66	25	83.333	5	16.66	

This item reveals that Love for Iraq and Baghdad scores high frequency. The percentage 16.66% is the last repetition while 83.333% is the higher repetition. The average of

repetition is (16.75) which is higher than the standard average which is (15). The results prove that Iraq is for its entire people who have deep rooted civilizinship and belonging.

Table (5) Second Item of the Samples

Hatred of the War	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	18	60	4	13.333	14	46.666	10	33.333	

The least frequency for this item is 13.333% while the highest is 60%. The average of repetition is

(11.5). This fact proves that the ware is unjust.

Table (6) Third Item of the Samples

Faith in Allah	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	21	70	10	33.333	4	13.333	6	20	

The least frequency for this item is 13.333% while the highest is 70%. The average of repetition is

(10.25). This proves that children have a great faith in Allah.

Table (7) Fourth Item of the Samples

Faith in Islam	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	10	33.333	10	33.333	6	20	10	33.333	9

The least frequency for this item is 20% while the highest is 33.333%. The average of repetition is

(9). This proves that power of Islam is a unifying factor.

Table (8) Fifth Item of the Samples

Faith in Iraqis	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	21	70	4	13.333	4	13.333	10	33.333	11

The least frequency for this item is 13.333% while the highest is 70%. The average of repetition is (11).

This proves that children have a great faith in Iraqis' abilities to rebuild their country.

Table (9) Sixth Item of the Samples

Unity of Iraqis	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	22	73.33	4	13.333	4	13.333	10	33.333	10

The least frequency for this item is 13.333% while the highest is 73.33%. The average of repetition is

(10). This proves that Iraqis are obviously united.

Table (10) Seventh Item of the Samples

Iraqis is part of their Homeland	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	4	13.333	4	13.333	4	13.333	10	33.333	5.5

The least frequency for this item is 13.333% while the highest is 33.33%. The average of repetition is

(5.5). This shows that clinging of Iraqis to their homeland.

Table (11) Eighth Item of the Samples

Divine punishment of Evil	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	14	46.66	4	13.333	4	13.333	10	33.333	8

The least frequency for this item is 13.333% while the highest is

46.66%. The average of repetition is (8). This shows that children's belief in

good deed which is a symbol of kind-hearted people, otherwise they are punished by Allah.

Table (12) Ninth Item of the Samples

Rejecting Submission	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	30	100	4	13.333	4	13.333	10	33.333	12

The least frequency for this item is 13.333% while the highest is 100%. The average of repetition is

(12). This proves that Iraqis have the right resistance of the invasion.

Table (13) Tenth Item of the Samples

Faith in Childhood as the Hope for Iraq	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	27	90	10	33.333	4	13.333	6	20	11.75

The least frequency for this item is 13.333% while the highest is 90%. The average of repetition is

(11.27). This emphasizes the effect of the purity of childhood in flourishing life in Iraq again.

Table (14) Eleventh Item of the Samples

Fighting Terrorism	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	17	56.66	5	16.66	4	13.333	10	33.33	9

The least frequency for this item is 13.333% while the highest is 56.66%. The average of repetition is

(9). This is a real manifestation of resisting those who bomb children and people.

Table (15) Twelfth Item of the Samples

Wishing Children best Life	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	19	63.33	5	16.66	4	13.333	10	33.33	

The least frequency for this item is 13.333% while the highest is 63.33%. The average of repetition is

(9.5). This shows that eagerness towards a bright future for all children in the world.

Table (16) Thirteen Item of the Samples

Hating the Hostile Practices	Sara's Writings		Sama's Writings		Summer's Writings		Asseel's Writings		Frequency Average
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	2	6.66	6	20	4	13.333	10	33.33	

The least frequency for this item is 6.66% while the highest is 33.33%. The average of repetition is (5.5). This is a clear rejection to all evil actions against civilians.

Conclusion

In the light of the analysis revealed in this study and the relation

to the researchers' observations, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The Iraqi children's clear minds and pure hearts fully understand and feel the beyond endurances circumstances their country is facing. Such understanding should be the mirror to all Iraqis and the ideal way they should follow.

2. Many moral lessons can be learnt regarding their way of thinking:
 - a. Trusting Allah, Islam and community spirit which is evoked by the Prophet Mohammad by saying: 'Do you would be done by'.
 - b. Rejecting communal disturbance, which is intended to be the apple of discord and stopping those who play their cards well, following the saying "let sleeping dogs lie".
 - c. Claiming Iraqi children's rights parallel to the children of the world.
 - d. Resisting the enemy's slogan "Divide and Rule".
 - e. Fighting terrorist acts of all kinds
 - f. Reinforcing the focus on the future.

Some related extracts are:

1. Open up a new page
2. Forget the past

The complexity of the period that Iraqis underwent appears, however, in the simple but noble writings of the kids. Kids' conviction of peace was supported by the fact that much of their writings, from the researchers' viewpoint, are appeals for reconciliation, statements of hope and forgiveness. They ask Iraqis to open their mind and heart to others. They hate war because as Taim, the daughter of one of the researchers justifies: "I do

not like to see someone, or a human being-killed. I love Allah because He loves children and protects them. We have to follow the Quran's guidelines. God saves Iraq and children from the terrorists. I do not like the Americans, they kill the people". War does affect children and influences their health, psychological, mental health as well as their expressions in their writing. We need a heart similar to children's and innocence the same as children's honesty to build and reconstruct the destruction of war.

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معاناة سارة واطفال آخرين:- عودة الى البراءة لأتقاذ العراق

الاستاذ المساعد شذى السعدي الاستاذ المساعد اميرة عبادي

قسم اللغة الانكليزية - كلية التربية للبنات - جامعة بغداد

الخلاصة:

يركز البحث على تحليل كتابات وكلام مجموعة من الأطفال العراقيين تحليلاً لغوياً لبيان انعكاس حالة الحرب وما خلفته من اوضاع قاسية على اطفال العراق، حيث تؤكد العديد من الدراسات والتقارير ان الاطفال والشباب العراقيين هم ضحية لحروب متتالية كان لها تأثيرها النفسي والصحي بشكل عام. وقد اثبت الاطفال انهم هم الامل لان عمق نظرتهم الى ما يحصل يدل على صفاء الروح والذهن والذي يحتاجه العراقيين الكبار لتجاوز الذات الضيقة لما فيه خير الجميع. انه درس صادق لمن يريد ان يبني بصدق.