

AXIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PROXIMIZATION

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1. Introduction: the concept of proximization

This paper is a sequel to my earlier work on *proximization* (cf. Cap 2006, 2008), which I consider a cornerstone strategy in obtaining legitimization effects in political (interventionist) discourse.¹ Proximization is a pragmatic-cognitive strategy that draws on the speaker's ability to present the events on the discourse stage as directly affecting the addressee, usually in a negative or a threatening way. In Cap (2006, 2008) I have defined three aspects of proximization (spatial, temporal, axiological) which conceptually bind the entities localized inside the *deictic center* (cf. Chilton 2004, 2005) of the stage (speaker, addressee, the so-called *IDCs*) with the alien, outside-the-deictic-center entities (*ODCs*). The spatial aspect of proximization involves construal of the ODC-instigated events as physically endangering the IDCs, i.e., the addressee and the speaker. The temporal aspect involves presenting the events as momentous and historic and thus of central significance to both the addressee and the speaker. The axiological aspect, which this paper is gradually concentrating on, involves a clash between the system of values adhered to by the speaker and the addressee on the one hand, and, on the other, the values characterizing the ODCs (whose actions threaten the IDC entities). The cumulative result of application of the three proximization strategies, spatial, temporal and axiological, is legitimization. It is assumed that addressees tend to legitimize the speaker's pre-emptive actions against the ODC threat if they construe it as personally consequential.²

¹ I take legitimization in the CDA-favored sense of linguistic enactment of the speaker's right to be obeyed (cf. Chilton 2004, 2005; Fairclough 2000, 2006; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Van Dijk 1998; Weiss and Wodak 2003; Wodak and Chilton 2005, etc.). The claim to rightness and the resulting enactment of legitimization mean that the speaker's rhetoric is grounded in his implicit claim to inhabit a particular social or political role, and to possess a particular authority (cf. Van Dijk 1998, 2005; Martin and Wodak 2003). The possession of authority, usually accompanied by the asserted absence thereof in the audience or in the adversary, provides argumentative rationale (cf. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004; Dedaic 2006, etc.) for listing reasons to be obeyed. Listing such reasons usually involves a symbolic assignment of different ideological principles to different parties on the discourse stage (cf. Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Chilton 2004, etc.), assertion of the addressee's wants in the moment of crisis (cf. Graham, Keenan and Dowd 2004; Martin and Wodak 2003; Hodges and Nilep 2007; Lakoff 1996, etc.), and construal of charismatic leadership matched against an emerging threat (cf. Chilton 1996; Chilton and Lakoff 1995; Chouliaraki 2007; Hodges and Nilep 2007, etc.). All these goals and techniques are addressed in the present paper, which organizes them into a formal discussion of how cognitive and especially axiological aspects of legitimization can be studied through lemma patterns.

² Since this paper uses data from the American political rhetoric, one could draw a working analogy between the IDC-ODC dichotomy and the traditional, post-isolationist 'Us vs. Them' divide (cf. e.g. Huntington 2004). In the process of proximization the ideological as well as physical distance between 'Us' and 'Them' is construed as shrinking, which eventually produces a clash. To prevent the clash, the speaker solicits legitimization of pre-emptive actions, which are thus in direct, personal interest of his audience ('Us', i.e. IDCs).

2. The STA proximization model, thus far and current goals

The *spatial-temporal-axiological (STA)* model of proximization proposed in Cap (2006, 2008) presupposes the constancy of the macro function of legitimization within a defined timeframe. If, as a result of external factors, geopolitical changes, etc., one strategy of proximization is downplayed or abandoned, the overall balance and legitimization effects are usually redressed by an increase in the salience of another strategy.

The functional redressability of proximization has been tentatively verified in Cap (2006, 2008), in pilot corpus studies on the language of the US administration during the Iraq war, between March 2003 (commencement of the allies' military operations in Iraq) and June 2004 (delegation of select executive powers to the new Iraqi interim government). I have analyzed the total of 64 presidential addresses within the two functionally distinct phases of the period: "Phase One," March-November 2003, and "Phase Two," December 2003-June 2004.³ The conclusions have been that while the former sees as the major premise for war the alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction (henceforth: WMD) by the Saddam's regime, the latter is dominated by a "compensatory" rhetoric (mostly ideological), aimed at keeping the legitimization of the Iraqi intervention in place despite the already substantiated failure of the WMD argument.⁴ The changes in the extralinguistic reality i.e. in the geopolitical context of the conflict have shown to affect the proximization pattern applied throughout the entire involvement period.

It has been postulated that in Phase One texts there is a dominance of spatial-temporal proximization, which follows from the US administration's easy access to the WMD premise for legitimization of the pre-emptive strike in Iraq (cf. Silberstein 2004). The discourse stage is thus construed in predominantly spatial-temporal terms; for instance, the analogy to 9/11 events is built to invoke the aura of physical danger closing in to impact the IDC entities. However, the later loss of the main argument for going to war (i.e. the alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction by the Hussein's regime) means a gradual but consistent redefinition of the pro-war rhetoric and hence a change in the overall proximization pattern. What happens in Phase Two is thus a decline in the spatial-temporal proximization, and a corresponding increase in the more universally appealing axiological proximization (cf. Pomeroy 2005). The latter's principal function is to broaden the geopolitical spectrum of the Iraqi conflict and to deepen its ideological anchoring (cf. Chang and Mehan 2006), thereby claiming legitimization on a more global scale. At the same time the collapse of the original argument is downplayed and the WMD intelligence failure is construed in terms of an isolated incident in a series of successful operations governed by irrefutable ideological tenets (cf. Cap 2006, 2008).

These conceptual shifts have thus far been only partly corroborated in corpus research. In Cap (2008) there is a proposal for the framework of spatial-temporal (S/T) proximization which makes possible the abstraction of the key lemmas responsible for the enactment of S/T proximization in both Phase One and Phase Two of the Iraq war. The particular categories of the framework seem to work fine in elucidating the phase differences in the lexical counts; they clearly indicate the dominance of S/T proximization in Phase One, as well as its diminishing value in Phase Two. They are, however, incapable of explaining in the same

³ The 64 presidential speeches on the Iraq war, covering the period March 2003–June 2004, were downloaded, in July 2004, from the official White House site <http://www.whitehouse.org>. All 64 speeches on Iraq available from the site in July 2004 were used in analysis, there were no left-out cases.

⁴ Similar points are raised in a number of journalistic texts on the Iraq war. They indicate a gradual change of the rhetorical stance, from emphasizing the closeness and immediacy of physical threat, to ideological juxtapositions and boundary-making. The change is, however, attributed not only to the WMD factor, but also to Bush's attempts at softening his rhetoric in general, to save the dwindling approval ratings. See, for instance: *USA Today*, Nov. 23, 2003; *Washington Post*, Nov. 2, 2003; *Boston Globe*, Jan. 2, 2004.

lexical terms the essence of axiological proximization. Notably, it has been pre-postulated that axiological argument can keep the overall legitimization pattern intact, notwithstanding the decrease in the salience of the S/T strategy. Thus, the current task is to formalize the description of the axiological aspect of proximization, in order to show i) how axiological proximization works as a result of the interaction of language forms captured in different categories of the axiological proximization framework, and ii) what kind of potential it exhibits for the redressability of the general function of legitimization, whenever there is a diminishing input from another proximization strategy.

In what follows I first review the S/T framework (cf. Cap 2008) for its explanatory power as regards the reflection of the extralinguistic (geopolitical) changes in the type and degree of the proximization strategy applied over time. Then, using the same Phase One – Phase Two data of the 64 presidential texts, I provide an original postulate for the axiological framework. The four categories of the axiological framework are meant to encompass the language forms responsible collectively for not only the operation of axiological (A) proximization in its own right, but also for the functioning of the A strategy as compensation for the absence of another strategy, specifically the spatial-temporal one. Altogether, the envisaged account of the S/T-A mutual redressability is an attempt at refining the STA model of proximization in terms of further formalization of the dialogue between the conceptual and the lexical constituents of legitimization. In other words, we want to delve deeper in the methodological question *how cognitive constructs can be studied through the analysis of lexical configurations*. From an interpretive standpoint, the application of the refined model in the present paper not only makes the critical discussion of the rhetoric of the Iraq war more organized and precise, but, potentially, opens up interesting research avenues for other applications within the field of political (interventionist) discourse. These may involve a number of issues which the model of proximization takes for granted in its own composition: the construal of crisis situation, symbolic distancing, ideological categorization, threat inflation, and more.

3. The spatial-temporal (S/T) proximization framework

I argue in Cap (2008) for a six-category framework of spatial-temporal proximization which applies directly to the rhetoric of the Iraq war, but potentially, to any kind of discourse which seeks legitimization of a pre-emptive reaction to a seemingly imminent threat. The six categories of the framework, involving traditional syntactic units such as noun and verb phrases, express a variety of conceptualizations of the discourse stage elements which differ in their deictic status:

- 1) Noun phrases (NPs) conceptualized as elements of the deictic center (IDCs);
- 2) NPs conceptualized as elements outside the deictic center (ODCs);
- 3) Verb phrases (VPs) of motion and directionality conceptualized together as indicators of movement of ODCs towards the deictic center and vice versa;
- 4) VPs of action conceptualized as indicators of contact between ODCs and IDCs;
- 5) NPs expressing abstract notions conceptualized as anticipations of potential contact between ODCs and IDCs;
- 6) NPs expressing abstract notions conceptualized as effects of actual contact between ODCs and IDCs.

Let us first identify these six categories in a sample text from the Iraqi corpus. Consider an excerpt from the US ultimatum urging Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq within 48 hours to avoid war. The ultimatum was issued on March 17, 2003:

[...] The danger is clear: using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapons, obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of

innocent people in our country, or any other. [...] The United States and other nations did nothing to deserve or invite this threat. But we will do everything to defeat it. Instead of drifting along toward tragedy, we will set a course toward safety. Before the day of horror can come, before it is too late to act, this danger will be removed [...]

To start with categories 1) and 2), the IDC elements involve lexical items and phrases such as “United States,” “other nations,” “innocent people,” “our country,” “we,” etc. The conceptualization of indefinite entities (cf. “other nations”) as members of the deictic center occurs through the implication of mutual relation, or sameness, triggered by the conjunction “and.” At the other end of the event stage are the ODCs: “Iraq,” “terrorists” and “their ambitions.” Again, a relation of shared identity is established between some of these elements. “Iraq” and “terrorists” are put on common ground through the presupposition of lasting cooperation (viz. “help”), and the sheer proximity of their lexical occurrence in the text. The relative distance between IDCs and ODCs is shrinking as a result of two processes: a) the ODC elements are construed as aspiring to physically affect the IDC territory (“kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country”), which invokes the aura of “catastrophe” or “tragedy” (not-yet explicitly stated as such); b) the IDC elements are construed as partly inert and thus sooner or later exposed to contact with ODCs, a clash resulting in “tragedy” (stated explicitly to fit in with the previously invoked aura). These two processes involve lexical items from all the four remaining categories: 3) (“drifting toward”), 4) (“kill”), 5) (“danger,” “threat”), and 6) (“tragedy,” “horror”). The presence of elements representing, within a markedly short text sample such as above, all of the six categories distinguished, goes a long way towards proving the pervasiveness of spatial-temporal proximization in the Iraq war and, specifically, in its early stage (“Phase One”) which sees a consistent attachment to the WMD premise for war. But there is perhaps more to the picture and the S/T framework might be in need of complementation from a less “tangible” module. Moving beyond the proposed category distinction and looking at the use of modality in the quoted excerpt, it can be postulated that the process of spatial-temporal proximization is heavily aided by the “zooming in” on the probability of the conflict. First, a relatively remote possibility is drafted (“could fulfill their stated ambitions”), only to be replaced by a more concrete prediction (“before the day of horror can come”). Such a strategy can hardly be accounted for in “spatial” or “temporal” terms alone for it relies on the construal of the initially *ideological* conflict which turns, over time, into a *physical* threat. Thus, it binds together the spatial-temporal and the ideological ingredients of proximization, leading to *axiological* considerations addressing the issue of the spatial/temporal-axiological dynamics (and fuzziness!) of the discourse stage. Arguably, there exist some entities (cf. *threat*) whose construal as evidently “spatial,” “physical” or not (i.e. not yet) depends on how radical or physically consequential has been the development of events on the discourse stage before the conceptualization takes place. Thus the S/T parameter alone might be insufficient to explain some of the more temporally-extensive legitimization processes, characteristic of a growing likelihood of construal shifts occurring as a result of extralinguistic (viz. geopolitical) changes. I shall take these important observations as a starting point for the discussion of the relationship between the “S/T” and the “A” proximization strategies later in the paper.

For now, the explanatory power of the S/T framework gets substantiated if we abstract the key lemmas and major phraseological concordances representing each of the six categories (some of the key lemmas can in fact be abstracted directly from the quoted text) and compare their frequency of occurrence in the 34-text corpus of Phase One, both among themselves and against the only slightly smaller, 30-text corpus of Phase Two. Since the difference in the overall number of words in both corpora is negligible, such a quantitative comparison provides a fertile ground for qualitative considerations:

Table 1. Phase differences in the number of lemmas defining spatial-temporal framework of the Iraq war rhetoric

Category	Key Lemma/Concordance ⁵	Phase One	Phase Two	
1.	<i>United States or America</i>	426	613	
	<i>free and/or democratic world</i> (inclusive of synonyms such as <i>people</i>)	194	415	
2.	<i>Iraq</i>	330	165	
	<i>terrorists</i>	255	112	
3.	<i>head</i> (of IDCs, followed by preposition and ctg. 6 abstract NP, like in <i>head toward tragedy</i> , inclusive of multiple passive synonyms such as <i>drift</i>)	126	41	
	<i>expand</i> (of ODCs)	with reference to <i>WMD</i>	88	6
		without reference to <i>WMD</i>	61	55
4.	<i>destroy</i> (of ODCs)	105	30	
	<i>confront</i>	of ODCs	18	38
		of IDCs	47	31
5.	<i>threat</i>	127	52	
	<i>danger</i>	96	51	
6.	<i>tragedy</i>	60	55	
	<i>catastrophe</i>	45	7	

These corpus data yield important observations, drawn from both the “vertical” and the “horizontal” readings, where the former involve comparison of frequency hits of different lemmas within the exclusively Phase One domain and the latter involve comparison of identical lemmas across the two phases.

Naturally enough, the explanatory power of the S/T framework is most readily reflected in the “vertical” readings which illustrate the case for war construed as a response to a tangible, physical threat. Within the first category, there is a striking gap between the vast number of hits indicating the US, the central IDC (involving the major discourse parties such as the speaker and the direct audience), and the relatively limited number of hits indicating the other IDCs (e.g. some other democracies sharing the US principles of freedom, equality, etc.). This difference reflects the predominant rhetorical ploy of Phase One, the strategy of alerting the American addressee to the proximity of physical danger following from the alleged possession of WMD by the Iraqi regime and, consequently, terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda. Since the most desired, home-front success of this strategy depends on the US addressee’s conceptualization of the threat as maximally realistic and thus demanding a quick and radical response, the primary scope is temporarily narrowed down to cover the principal IDCs. In other words, although the overall range of the threat may be worldwide, it is the temporary centralization of the anticipated impact that ensures the fastest legitimization effects regarding the response, involving the very commencement of military operations, the funding priorities, etc.

In contrast to the above, the difference in the number of hits indicating the major ODCs (“Iraq” and “terrorists”) is rather insignificant. In fact, what we’re dealing with here is a conflation of the two concepts, which results in the perception of the Iraqi regime in terms of a terrorist entity representing a major threat to countries conceptualized as IDC elements. The conflation process relies heavily on the textual proximity of the two lemmas and, while Table 1 does not give this information, it should be noted that most of the time “Iraq” and “terrorists” occur in sufficient syntactic closeness to swiftly generate a link of relationship. Furthermore, as can be seen from the ultimatum excerpt, they are often construed within one causative pattern. The overall proximization effect of such a conflation is that, with the 9/11

⁵ Inclusive of pronouns where applicable.

analogy constantly in operation, an Iraqi threat is virtually becoming a terrorist threat and vice versa.

The concept of “threat,” involving the anticipated impact of ODCs on the IDC elements, brings us to considerations of the relative distance between the two domains, a coordinate defined by VPs constituting the third category of the S/T framework. Since the success of the proximization strategy depends on the construal of the eventual clash between the ODC and the IDC entities, the most salient lemmas are those which indicate a conflict-bound movement on the part of both ODCs and IDCs, though the latter can also be construed as passive or inert and thus easily “invadable.” As can be seen from Table 1, the overall number of hits referring to both domains is largely comparable in terms of VP occurrence, however, on the ODC side there is a remarkable role played by the “WMD” complementation, which will cease in importance as the war goes on. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the presence of the IDC-related lemmas indicating both activity (as in “head”) and inertia (as in “drift”) reflects two and apparently conflicting characteristics of the spatial-temporal proximization rhetoric. One is a desire to justify the extremely radical response to the threat, which entails measures such as adding the maximum of momentum to the picture of the event stage—and hence the lemmas such as “head”—while the other is an equally dire need to enhance the spirit of leadership of the US president and the administration, by portraying their determination and resolve in a stark contrast to the general aura of passivity (viz. “drift”).

The fourth category, involving VPs of action conceptualized as indicators of contact between ODCs and IDCs, features lemmas directly responsible for the pragmatic impact of spatial-temporal proximization. The pervasiveness of “destroy” (which obviously occurs in phrases where an ODC element is the agent) is staggering, and so is the difference in the use of “confront,” a lemma occurring 2.6 times more frequently with an IDC-related agent than with an ODC-related one. The fact that the ODC-governed “destroy” easily surpasses in number the IDC-governed “confront” corroborates the existence of two regularities. First, as the war begins the most dynamic element of the event stage is Iraq and its alleged terrorist allies, and it is their (anticipated) actions that serve as a basis for most of the spatial-temporal proximization rhetoric. Second, as the ODC elements threaten to invade the deictic center, the IDCs (and the US in particular) are construed as steering a middle course between the pursuit of defensive measures and the legitimization of a pre-emptive strike. The duality of the stance adopted by the IDCs is expressed precisely in the use of the lexical item “confront,” which implies a weaker or a stronger response to the ODC threat. Thus, in a sense, the second regularity is in line with the conflicting characteristics of the spatial-temporal proximization rhetoric that have been postulated with regard to the occurrence of VPs of motion and directionality. It is important to observe that while “confront” is a popular lexical choice in IDC-related phrases, its occurrence with ODC-related agents is minimal. This finding clearly contributes to the feasibility of the S/T module in bringing on a *causative* picture of the Iraqi war. Apparently, it is the Iraqi side that is the instigator of the conflict and the US takes up a merely self-defensive role. The idealistic connotations of “confront” and its general tendency to take on such appealing lexical items as “poverty,” “misery,” “injustice” or “danger,” some of the phrases indeed coming up in the corpus, only add to the picture.

While we will eventually find the fifth and the sixth category of the S/T framework conducive to many axiological considerations and thus a borderline case deserving a complex theoretical account, let us acknowledge that the lexical items included in these two classes are primarily part and parcel of the spatial-temporal premise for war, at least in terms of the legitimization of the initial strike. This time the “vertical” differences in the number of the particular lemmas are of secondary importance; what matters, however, is their combined occurrence i.e. the total number of hits reflecting the key concepts of “threat,” “danger,” “tragedy” and “catastrophe.” The number, 328, is massive by itself but consider that *all* these

hard-hitting words occur, within a cause-and-effect pattern, in phrases involving the spatial coordinates of IDC and ODC, as well as the mobile coordinate, which altogether define the spatial arrangement of major forces of the Iraqi conflict. Thus, the main elements in the arrangement substantially profit from the appeal of “potential contact” and “actual effect” concepts – in the sense of enhancing their own status and pragmatic force. Still, the most convincing argument for the validity of the fifth and the sixth category members in the spatial-temporal proximization strategy is perhaps the dramatic decline in the occurrence of the four lemmas in Phase Two where, as will be seen from the axiologically profiled analysis, the premise for war is no longer the narrowing of the physical distance between the ODC and the IDC entities.

In fact, the axiological aspect comes up already in many of the “horizontal” readings of Table 1, but we shall address these first from the perspective of their original scope, i.e. a contribution to the spatial-temporal matrix. Within the first two categories, there is a remarkable increase in the number of hits indicating IDCs, at the expense of the ODC-related lemmas. This proves, following the original function of the S/T module and without yet engaging in ideological considerations, that in Phase One of the Iraq war the event stage is indeed dominated by the (anticipated) activity of ODCs and that the construal of the latter as physically threatening the members of the deictic center is the cornerstone of spatial-temporal proximization as well as the major premise for legitimization of the IDC response to the threat. The activity of the ODCs is salient in the relatively large number of VPs containing lemmas which involve the steady closing of the gap between the ODC and the IDC entities (viz. “expand,” category three). This process is construed as momentous and inherently devastating, which can be seen from the unbalanced, 105:30 ratio characterizing the Phase One–Phase Two distribution of the “destroy” lemma, within the fourth category. Finally, the picture of the proximity of the threat is made complete by the vast number of lemmas indicating (effects) of the potential impact of ODCs on the deictic center—the “horizontal” reading of hits within the fifth and the sixth category shows, by comparison with the timeframe of Phase Two, how important these lemmas are for the complex strategy of spatial-temporal proximization.

4. Limitations of the S/T framework and implications for an axiological study

It seems that the six categories of the spatial-temporal framework of proximization are largely capable of defining and measuring, in the very “bottom” lexical terms, the character and intensity of the “legitimization via proximization” strategy applied at the outset of the Iraq war, whose initial premise was the alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein’s regime. There is a good reason to believe that they could in fact account for any lexical groundwork of proximization that draws on the presence of a material entity which can be construed as IDC-threatening and thereby necessitating a pre-emptive response. Furthermore, the last two categories of the framework, as well as the lemmatic-numerical differences that the application of the framework yields with regard to a more temporally extensive development of the discourse stage (viz. the cross-phasal lexical readings above), appear to possess explanatory power that goes beyond a merely spatial-temporal analysis and entails a more complex, axiological study. Still, such a refined analysis, one that could explain conditions for the continuity of legitimization and, specifically, the essence of compensation for a loss of the material premise for proximization, cannot entirely rely on the interpretation of figures generated by the S/T module, even if they spread across the two phases. As has been mentioned before, the S/T parameter is insufficient to explain some of the more temporally-extensive legitimization processes since they are characteristic of a growing

become distinctive enough for the axiological proximization to work. Thus, if the government of a country such as Iraq is to be conceptualized as a “regime,” and if a continuing solidification of this regime is to be construed as a threat to “all democratic world,” the latter must first be described in due quantitative detail and in such a way that the addressee receives a broad spectrum of “antithesis triggers.” These are, from the axiological perspective, all the ideological premises that the addressee identifies with and, consequently, whose conceptual oppositions he or she would find not only unacceptable but also plainly threatening.⁷

All this explains why Phase Two sees a radical increase in the number of the IDC-related lemmas, especially the NPs indicating the discourse stage agents (cf. Table 1, ctg. 1, recapitulated in the first two lines of Table 3 above). Particularly striking is, obviously, the increase in those IDC lemmas which define the non-US deictic center entities (194 to 415, in the case of “free” and/or “democratic world” and the synonyms). Of course, such a broadening of the geopolitical spectrum of the Iraqi conflict (note that an extended representation of IDCs entails an extended representation of their activity fields) means that the war is no longer construed in terms of a clash of particularized interests held by a limited number of parties; instead, the reasons for the ongoing US involvement have, apparently, a deeper ideological anchoring. The latter gives a license, valid both prospectively and retrospectively, to pursue actions whose sheer range justifies a certain degree of fallibility; logically, if the IDC agents operate multidirectionally and on a global scale, one cannot expect unequivocally positive effects. Thus, as we shall see later and especially from the text of the Whitehall address, a crucial rhetorical ploy of Phase Two is treating the Iraqi operation in terms of “one of the many,” which opens up a most comfortable possibility of construing select negative aspects of the (military) involvement as virtually unavoidable given the size of the issue at stake.

Most of the textual examples of the Phase Two axiological proximization, though not all, reveal the following regularity. First, there is a description of the ideological composition of the IDC parties. Then, a temporarily static juxtaposition is built against the rather vague category of ODCs—after all, with the WMD premise and the 9/11 analogy both missing from the argument, the invoked antagonistic values can only occasionally be ascribed to concrete countries or groups. Finally, in line with the essence of the concept of proximization as such, the ODC-related values are construed as dynamic, in the sense of potentially prompting actions which could involve a physical IDC-ODC clash. This is where the future-oriented argument ends. At the same time, however, a stance of legitimization of the IDCs’ activity is maintained retrospectively through multiple references to the ideologically alien (if not just plainly abhorrent) past actions of the principal ODC (i.e. the Iraqi regime) in and before Phase One of the war:

The work of building a new Iraq is hard, and it is right. And America has always been willing to do what it takes for what is right. But as democracy takes hold in Iraq, the enemies of freedom will do all in their power to spread violence and fear. [...] Let me repeat what I said on the afternoon of December the 14th: the capture of Saddam Hussein does not mean the end of violence in Iraq. We still face terrorists who

⁷ This echoes Capone’s (2008) and Duranti’s (2006b) ideas of shifting responsibility for adopting a particular course of action, from the political speaker, to the addressee – whose beliefs and ideals are ultimately responsible for the proposed measures. In building up the IDC-ODC opposition, Bush makes use of the American people’s predispositions, “in order to show that he correctly represents the needs and sentiments of his nation, thus being entitled to represent them as a political leader and to do what is good for them” (Capone 2008: 88). In a broader perspective, most of the communication of ideology in Bush’s speeches on the Iraq war (especially in Phase Two) is also congruent with what Duranti (2006a) refers to as a complex *translocutionary act*, an attempt to construe messages “jointly” with the addressee. Such a goal often involves using intrinsically vague concepts in order to get the addressee to exercise the authorial rhetorical work. We shall see in section 5.1 below that in invoking such notions as “threat” or “danger”, Bush relies on his audience to fill in the exact meanings and thus co-assume responsibility for the effects these meanings might have on the unfolding policies.

would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the heart of the Middle East. (January 20, 2004)

America and all freedom-loving countries are fighting on the side of liberty -- liberty in Iraq, liberty in the Middle East and beyond it. This objective serves the interests of the Middle East, of the United States and of the whole democratic world. As the greater Middle East increasingly becomes a place where freedom flourishes, the lives of millions in that region will be bettered, and the American people and the entire world will be more secure. [...] As the June 30th date for Iraqi sovereignty draws near, a small fraction is attempting to derail Iraqi democracy and seize power. In some cities, Saddam supporters and terrorists have struck against coalition forces. In other areas, attacks were incited by a radical named Muqtada-al-Sadr, who is wanted for the murder of a respected Shiite cleric. Al-Sadr has called for violence against coalition troops, and his band of thugs have terrorized Iraqi police and ordinary citizens. These enemies of freedom want to dictate the course of events in Iraq and to prevent the Iraqi people from having a true voice in their future. They want America and our coalition to falter in our commitments before a watching world. In their aspirations, they are a threat to all democratic people and to the people in our own country. (April 10, 2004)

In these two excerpts, the axiological composition of IDCs involves i) a full and unflinching commitment to universally acceptable norms and values (“democracy,” “freedom,” “liberty,” the economic well-being of the people salient in “the lives of millions in that region will be bettered,” etc.), and ii) a commitment to steadfast, continual enactment of these values (“has always been willing to do what it takes for what is right,” “are fighting on the side of,” etc.—note the use of progressive forms). Antithetical to this groundwork is the ensuing description of the ODCs’ ideology which involves the rule of dictatorship (“a small fraction [...] want to dictate the course of events in Iraq”), giving rise to “violence” and “fear.” The ODCs are then construed as potentially invading the IDCs’ home territory or the territories which have been converted to the IDCs’ ideology (“will do all in their power to spread [violence and fear],” “is attempting to derail Iraqi democracy and seize power,” “are a threat to all democratic people and to the people in our own country”). Finally, throughout the entire account, painful memories of the Iraqi regime (“would rather go on killing the innocent,” etc.) are invoked (whether directly or by analogy), in order to strengthen the legitimization of the ongoing US involvement in Iraq as a whole.

5. The axiological (A) proximization framework

The goal of the axiological proximization framework is, analogically to the S/T framework presented in 3., to provide a set of criteria and categories whereby one can define the lexical components of axiological proximization, in order to measure the axiological proximization (balancing) effects between different phases of the entire legitimization process i.e., in our case, between Phase One and Phase Two (or perhaps reversely, Phase Two and Phase One, considering that the analysis of axiological proximization is anchored in the question of compensation for a legitimization premise whose loss marks the end of “Phase One”). The intensity of these effects can be partly foreseen from the qualitative considerations thus far and, while we want precise lexical data to complement the picture in a quantitative manner, it seems logical to start from what the functional analysis of the sample texts has shown. Thus the axiological proximization framework, apart from its obvious roots in foci missing from the S/T model, draws on the ingredients/stages of the IDC-ODC axiological conflict as described above: the conflicting ideological characteristics of IDCs and ODCs, and the possibility of the ODC-related antagonistic values materializing within the deictic center. Altogether, we arrive at the following four categories of the framework:

- 1) Noun phrases (NPs) expressing abstract notions conceptualized as values and/or value sets / ideologies of IDCs;
- 2) Noun phrases (NPs) expressing abstract notions conceptualized as values and/or value sets / ideologies of ODCs;
- 3) Linear discourse sequences involving
 - 3a) Ctg. 2 NP, embedded in or elaborated on by a “departure VP” (VP1), to produce the *remote possibility* script,
 - 3b) NP expressing (effect of) IDC-ODC physical contact (conflict), embedded in or elaborated on by a “destination VP” (VP2), to produce the *actual occurrence* script,

in which the 3a-3b change in the scripts has a value set / ideology of ODCs *materialize* in the form of IDC-ODC physical contact (conflict);

- 4) NPs expressing abstract notions conceptualized as effects of IDC-ODC physical contact (conflict), NOT embedded in or elaborated on by a “destination VP” (VP2).

Admittedly, the composition of some of the categories, esp. 3), is complex enough to require a thorough text explanation. The following excerpts come from Bush’s Whitehall Palace address of November 19, 2003. As I have remarked before, this speech can be considered a manifesto of the Phase Two rhetoric in the Iraq war:

[...] The greatest threat of our age is nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons in the hands of terrorists, and the dictators who aid them. This evil might not have reached us yet but it is in plain sight, as plain as the horror sight of the collapsing towers. The danger only increases with denial. [...]By advancing freedom in the greater Middle East, we help end a cycle of dictatorship and radicalism that brings millions of people to misery and brings danger and, one day, tragedy, to our own people. By struggling for justice in Iraq, Burma, in Sudan, and in Zimbabwe, we give hope to suffering people and improve the chances for stability and progress. [...]The stakes in that region could not be higher. If the Middle East remains a place where freedom and democracy do not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation and anger and violence for export. And as we saw in the ruins of the towers, no distance on the map will protect our lives and way of life [...]

The categories 1), 2) and 4) are, compared to 3), relatively straightforward and thus we shall illustrate them first. Category 1) involves lexical items whose collective function is to define, in terms of a set of value-positive abstract concepts, the ideological groundwork of the IDC agents. In the text above these are, chronologically, the lexemes such as “freedom,” “justice,” “stability,” “progress” and “democracy.” Opposing this groundwork are the ODC-related lexemes which make up a set of value-negative concepts captured in the second category – “threat,” “evil,” “danger,” “dictatorship,” “radicalism,” “anger” and “violence.” The last NP-based category, 4), involves items such as “horror,” “misery” and “tragedy,” which lexicalize conceptualizations of physical contact between IDCs and ODCs. Of course, there is a certain degree of simplification and fuzziness involved, as conceptualizations of e.g. “threat” and “danger” are at the same time construals of elements of the antagonistic ideologies as such and construals of potency these elements exhibit in terms of materialization (cf. Pomeroy 2005; Hartman 2002) within the IDC territory. Furthermore, the fourth category must include not only the concepts which come explicitly in the form of the corresponding lexical items, but also the ones that need to be worked out inferentially in a manner similar to recovering implicatures (cf. e.g. Levinson 2000). Take, for instance, the closing excerpt “no distance on the map will protect our lives and way of life” – while no lexicalization of the effect of the IDC-ODC physical contact occurs explicitly, we do get enough data to recover the *loss of life* implicature which adds to the count alongside all the other NP-based concepts that fill in the

category. Finally, as could have been guessed from the earlier discussion of categories 5 and 6 of the S/T framework and, generally, as the intrinsic complementarity and dynamics of the S/T-A model would suggest, the current A framework must involve (a) few concepts whose corresponding lexicalizations (viz. “threat,” “danger,” “tragedy”) have shown a considerable potential for enacting spatial-temporal proximization as well.

To account for the remaining third category with due precision coupled with an adequate body of data, we might want to break the text down into three separate excerpts (i, ii, iii), with each one offering a specific example of the VP-NP interface:

(i)

The greatest threat of our age is nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons in the hands of terrorists, and the dictators who aid them. This evil might not have reached us yet but it is in plain sight, as plain as the horror sight of the collapsing towers. The danger only increases with denial.

(ii)

By advancing freedom in the greater Middle East, we help end a cycle of dictatorship and radicalism that brings millions of people to misery and brings danger and, one day, tragedy, to our own people. By struggling for justice in Iraq, Burma, in Sudan, and in Zimbabwe, we give hope to suffering people and improve the chances for stability and progress.

(iii)

The stakes in that region could not be higher. If the Middle East remains a place where freedom and democracy do not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation and anger and violence for export. And as we saw in the ruins of the towers, no distance on the map will protect our lives and way of life.

In (i) the ctg. 2 NP is primarily “This evil,” but one may in fact enrich it with concepts such as “terrorism” and “dictatorship” since they get subsumed under the cover concept of “evil” via a clear anaphoric link. The NP is used to initiate the *remote possibility* script which is further enacted by VP1 (“might not have reached us yet”). The modality of VP1 is such that it makes the addressee embark on merely the *departure stage* of the IDC-ODC conflict scenario (hence naming the VP1 a “departure VP”), without yet construing the antagonistic concepts in terms of tangible threats. Later, however, the *destination stage* of the scenario has the conflict fully materialize within the IDC territory (viz. analogy to “the collapsing towers”). The construed materialization of the conflict comes in the *actual occurrence* script which involves, first, a “destination VP” (VP2–“is in plain sight”) which enhances the probability of the conflict and, second, the NP (“the horror sight”) expressing its devastating effects. Thus, altogether, the (axiological) proximization of the ODC impact is dependent on the (ctg. 2 NP–VP1)–(VP2–NP-of-effect) segments operating in a linear sequence involving a gradual shift from an ideological conflict to a physical clash. In this very example the sequence starts and finalizes within one complex sentence, but we shall see from (iii) that its segments could operate over two adjacent sentences as well.

Meanwhile, let us deal with (ii). Here, the remote possibility script is initiated by “a cycle of dictatorship and radicalism” (ctg. 2 NP), which combines with “brings millions of people to misery” (VP1) to encourage construal of the ODC values as breeding social chaos, unrest and, conceivably, violence which might be spreading beyond the ODC territory. Following this formula is again the ODC impact (actual occurrence) script whereby the effect marker (“tragedy”) is embedded in a verb phrase (VP2) which materializes (via the “danger”-to-“tragedy” route) the gathering threat. Compared to (i), the current materialization is not just the matter of a conceptual shift from “the abstract” to “the concrete,” esp. at the superior level of the verbal framework. It also consists in an act of geopolitical specification salient in a premeditated choice of nominal phrases – the remote possibility script involves reference to “millions of people,” while the actual occurrence script has this broad concept narrowed down to “our own people.”

While example (iii) conforms to the design of the third category in the general terms of its elements and their relations, it involves two interesting deviations from the layouts in (i) and (ii). First, the sequence of the verb phrases (VP1 vs. VP2) develops not within one sentence, but over two adjacent sentences; second, the actual occurrence script in the latter sentence involves an implicitly communicated NP of effect. The presence of these “irregularities,” with all the distinctive features of the category otherwise met, counts as an incentive for a corpus search more extensive than the former examples would prompt.

Looking closer, the ctg. 2 NP is “a place of stagnation and anger and violence for export,” a phrase possessing not only the expectable ideological load, but also a considerable potential for suggesting its impact (viz. “for export”). The construal of the impact is at this stage in hypothetical terms, though the verbal embedding – “it will remain [...]”(VP1) – makes its due contribution to seeing the threat as gathering. Thus the remote possibility script is concluded and the proximization mechanism continues in the next sentence. There, the actual occurrence script takes on an implicit form and the consequences of the ODC impact need to be worked out inferentially. Since, given the continuity of the threat leading to its final materialization within the IDC territory (the latter worked out from “the ruins of the towers”), there is “no distance” that could “protect our lives,” the NP-of-effect is calculated from the conception that the ODC entities will be *crossing the distance* to annihilate the IDC entities. Thus, the NP-of-effect is *loss of life* on the part of the IDCs. Interestingly, this final inference relies on the former conceptualization of the ODC movement (*crossing the distance*) which is itself communicated indirectly. Altogether, what we deal with here is an (actual occurrence) script in which the verbal component (VP2) possesses a status comparable to an explicature (cf. e.g. Carston 2002) whose successful recovery ensures that the implicature (NP-of-effect) is worked out correctly.

The composition of the third category of the axiological proximization framework reflects the essence of axiological proximization as a conceptual mechanism. It accounts for the phenomenon of the continual narrowing of the distance between two different and opposing ideologies (ODCs’ vs IDCs’), and treats the eventual axiological conflict in terms of a trigger for the actual occurrence of events construed within the spatial-temporal domain. In so doing, it integrates the proximization potential of entities classed in the other categories, esp. the 2nd category which holds lexicalizations of concepts constituting the ideological groundwork for the ODC impact.

By now we have been looking at axiological proximization as primarily a self-contained mechanism; except for a few comments on its relationship to the S/T framework, we have not made yet a systematic attempt at showing its potential for redressing the macro function of legitimization (of the Iraq war), in view of a vanishing contribution by another proximization strategy (i.e. spatial-temporal). This methodological aspiration entails that we approach the particular categories of the axiological framework in lexical terms, providing corpus counts for the most representative members of each category. Then, for a complete picture of the compensation, we shall analyse the cross-phasal (Phase Two vs. Phase One) occurrences of the particular lexemes (in the case of categories 1, 2, 4) as well as the lexicogrammatical sequences (in the case of 3). Of course, in accordance with the conceptual relation we have established for the S/T and A modules, the analysis must also relate the axiological counts to the formerly provided spatial-temporal counts. Specifically, we shall assume that as the war unfolds, at least some of the drops in the number of lexemes reflecting the S/T proximization are neutralized by a general increase in the number of lexical carriers of the A proximization. This makes us consider all the axiological figures in constant interaction with the counts generated by the S/T framework.

5.1. The axiological counts

The following table includes counts of the key lemmas representing categories 1, 2 and 4 of the A framework, as well as counts of linear discourse sequences which make up the third category. The same corpora have been used as in the case of the S/T framework – the 34-text Phase One corpus and the 30-text Phase Two corpus:

Table 4. Phase differences in the number of lemmas and linear discourse sequences (ctg. 3) defining axiological framework of the Iraq war rhetoric

Category	Key Lemma or Linear Discourse Sequence (ctg. 3)	Phase One		Phase Two		
1.	<i>freedom</i>	100		221		
	<i>democracy</i>	76		150		
	<i>peace</i>	31		50		
	<i>justice</i>	12		19		
	<i>progress</i>	7		34		
	other IDC values	16		21		
	TOTAL category 1	242		495		
2.	<i>dictatorship</i>	44		71		
	<i>radicalism</i>	27		71		
	<i>terrorism</i>	154		90		
	<i>threat</i>	with reference to <i>WMD</i> (marker of ODC-IDC impact)	95	127 (cf. Tbl. 1)	12	52 (cf. Tbl. 1)
		without reference to <i>WMD</i> (marker of ideology operating within the ODC camp)	32		40	
	<i>danger</i>	with reference to <i>WMD</i> (marker of ODC-IDC impact)	70	96 (cf. Tbl. 1)	13	51 (cf. Tbl. 1)
		without reference to <i>WMD</i> (marker of ideology operating within the ODC camp)	26		38	
	other ODC values	16		21		
	TOTAL category 2	464		356		
	3.	linear discourse sequence ((ctg. 2 NP-VP1 _{departure})- (VP2 _{destination} -NP-of-effect))	9		63	
TOTAL category 3		9		63		
4.	<i>tragedy</i>	60 (cf. Tbl. 1)		55 (cf. Tbl.1)		
	<i>misery</i>	24		67		
	<i>horror</i>	32		49		
	<i>murder</i>	40		33		
	other NPs-of-effect	11		18		
	TOTAL category 4	167		222		

There are, apparently, two basic conditions under which these category counts corroborate the legitimization-redressing capacity of the A framework. First, the Phase Two counts should be generally higher than the Phase One counts, as the emerging axiological proximization must be given a lexical backup substantial enough to make up for the lexical losses incurred by the diminishing role of the spatial-temporal proximization. Second, within the first and the second category, the IDC counts in Phase Two should be higher than the ODC counts, as the rising role of the ideological aspect entails that IDCs are endowed with a multitude of values to broaden the source of comparison and contrast and thus increase the odds that the obviously antithetical values spotted in ODCs are automatically rejected (mark the concept of “antithesis triggers” in 4.1). The accompanying rationale is, of course, that Phase Two sees a minimized

contribution from the WMD premise, a concept originally associated with the activity of the ODC entities.

It doesn't take long to see that both conditions are largely met, though only a deeper look yields a number of interesting analytic observations, some of which have to do with the S/T-A conceptual and lexical borderline.

Starting with the more general first condition, the first thing to notice is the staggering cross-phasal increase in the number of linear discourse sequences, responsible for construal of materialization of antagonistic ideologies. Their Phase Two occurrence is in fact seven times (!) higher than the Phase One occurrence, which corroborates the cornerstone role of the third category in the general layout of the axiological proximization framework. The very count, (9:63), might not impress when compared with the total counts yielded by the other categories, but one has to allow for the internal complexity of the third category, which poses ultra-high qualification requirements.

The dominance of axiological proximization in Phase Two is further substantiated by the Phase One – Phase Two ratios of the total counts in categories 1 and 4, while the 464-to-356 decrease in category 2 seems an exception, at least in bare quantitative terms. In actuality, it results from a twofold conceptual origin of the two member lemmas, “threat” and “danger.” Much as they contribute to the ideological constitution of the ODC camp as such, they are also exponents of the spatial impact which the ODCs might exert upon the IDC territory. The latter quality is in fact one that makes the two lemmas feasible for the S/T framework as well. Altogether then, the borderline status of “threat” and “danger” makes the second category of the A framework include both their physically and ideologically oriented readings since it is difficult to draw a clear boundary between the underlying concepts, especially considering the temporal extensiveness and geopolitical variability of the entire legitimization process. Hence, of course, the seemingly large Phase One total count in the second category and its resulting dominance over the Phase Two count, but mark the fact that no such relation would hold if we were to disregard the evidently “WMD-related” readings. With no reference to WMD, both “threat” and “danger” increase in Phase Two. And finally, even if the ODC Phase One count (464) is apparently higher than its Phase Two counterpart (356), it is still smaller than the IDC Phase Two count (495), which keeps evidencing the primacy of the ideological *self*-description in the process axiological proximization.

Returning to the third category, let us note that the increase in the application of the linear discourse sequence (which materializes the ideological threat) is only possible because of the increase in most of the lemmas carrying the ODC ideological load. Especially important are the growing occurrences of “dictatorship” (44:71) and “radicalism” (27:71) since these two lemmas are among the most frequent axiological constituents of the remote possibility script. In contrast, such a compositional contribution is much smaller in the case of “terrorism,” a lemma which addresses the past rationale for war and thus only occasionally appears in the linear discourse sequence.

The sequence also benefits from the Phase One – Phase Two increase in many of the NPs-of-effect, with the exception of those few which, again, bring back the past legitimization stance (viz. “murder”). In fact, the lemmas making up the fourth category of the axiological framework show an interesting re-orientation of focus as compared to the fifth and the sixth category of the S/T module: from a clear emphasis on the physically devastating effects of the ODC-IDC clash, to a vague indication of *some* kind of consequence, whether physical or not. Hence the phasing out of such items as “catastrophe” (viz. its obvious associations with the WMD impact), to replace them with lemmas which relate to physical impact only potentially

and even if one does settle on the “physical” interpretation, the vagueness of “tragedy” or “misery” is such that the impact seems at least not necessarily WMD-related.⁸

These observations prove the fulfillment of the first condition for the legitimization-redressing capacity of the A framework. That the less complex second condition is also met is evident from the comparison of the number of the IDC (category 1) and the ODC (category 2) hits in Phase Two of the war. The ratio, 495:356, is convincing enough but consider again the contribution to the latter figure from the “borderline lemmas,” i.e. “threat” and “danger.” Without this contribution, the picture gets even clearer.

6. Concluding remarks

Altogether, the readings from Table 4 indicate a compensatory mechanism of axiological proximization, which can make up for a decline in spatial-temporal strategies. The postulate for such a regularity is novel by itself but it bears relevance to a number of well established and widely applicable concepts: symbolic distancing in discourse, assignment of disparate values to discourse parties, projection of a crisis situation to solicit legitimization, etc. Thus, to corroborate the current findings, the S/T-A relation should be looked out for and analyzed in further case studies of interventionist rhetoric. Arguably, interventionist solicitation of legitimization is firstly reliant on material premises since these are initially easier to obtain and possess a more direct appeal to the audience, which can grant an immediate approval of the speaker’s actions. Yet, the attachment to a material premise for intervention is, in the long run, disadvantaged by geopolitical changes and evolution of the discourse stage, which often have the initial premise disappear. Then, a compensation from ideological premises is nothing but natural, considering that axiological groundworks are, first, much less vulnerable to the impact of geopolitical changes and, second, they contribute to setting up discourses which are essentially abstract and involve less specific interpretations (cf. Hartman 2002; Lemos 1995). This does not mean that arrangements of the discourse stage which are based on axiological construals are incapable of generating more material premises in the long run. As we have seen from the Iraqi case, a material threat which was initially construed as “standing in the IDC doorstep,” was later temporarily set aside, but only to accumulate (and, possibly, reappear in a similar form) as a result of the growing axiological conflict.

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⁸ Thus, category 4 of the axiological (A) framework is not a mere reformulation of categories 5 & 6 of the spatial-temporal (S/T) framework. Categories 5-6 in the S/T framework assume unequivocally physical contact between ODCs and IDCs. Category 4 in the A framework contains lemmas which leave the eventuality of physical contact between ODCs and IDCs open to interpretation. The meanings of “horror”, “misery”, etc. may or may not be construed in physical terms; they may also be construed as different stages of progress in the sequence of materialization (viz. the third category). While construal of “horror” is perhaps close to the physical extreme of the sequence, construal of “misery” may remain vaguely non-physical or even ideological (*misery* could be considered as merely part of a social arrangement), unless there is context specification. The point of having the fourth category as part of the A framework is exactly this, i.e. to show the reliance of axiological rhetoric on deliberate vagueness and imposition of antithetical (ideological vs. physical) construals. The fourth category is a class that incorporates meanings which exhibit different degrees of potentiality of the ODC impact and whose ratio is significantly (167:222) unequal across the phases. This quantitative difference supports the conclusion that, because of the need to redefine the rhetoric without harm to the already communicated messages (viz. the WMD-based argument), Phase Two naturally invites more implicit information than Phase One.

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