

HOW THE USA AVOIDS FROM THE WORD “GENOCIDE”: LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES OF MANEUVERING GENOCIDE RECOGNITION.

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Armenian Genocide recognition has become one of the greatest issues, hence in every scientific field there are being carried out various studies. The article touches upon the lingo-semantic analyses of the USA official standpoint on the Armenian genocide. The theory provided here serves as a key to reveal the meaning of discourse, which comes to be that of maneuvering in our study. So, the US politicians do maneuver and do avoid talking about the events in a simple way. We understand their thoughts through context and logical-semantic structure.

Key words: political discourse, maneuvering, event semantics, syntactic-semantic representation, context and event models, structure.

On the Armenian Genocide issue the United States of America has its own standpoint which is crucial, as the States is the great power and can impose its political views on the world. Recognizing and adopting the Armenian genocide, the USA will spread light in the prevention of such kind of events as well as in the internationalization of the Armenian Genocide recognition. However, from American political discourse one cannot make judgments because of their speech ambiguity. Hence, three types of political discourses we identify in this context: asserting, denying and avoiding¹. These latter we call as *maneuvering discourse*

¹ Zolyan S. His report at the conference arranged by the society of Armenian studies, Workshop in Yerevan 3-5 October 2014.

and it is in our research point.

Politicians often need to apply to composite audience characterized by heterogeneous values and beliefs. In order to do so they turn to techniques of ambiguity that make their positions seem broadly applicable. The use of ambiguity can positively engage a composite audience insofar as it allows for polysemic multiple readings of the same text. Leah Ceccarelli described this technique as “strategic ambiguity”², a kind of polysemy that occurs when a text is rhetorically designed by its author to allow distinct groups in the audience, characterized by diverse ideologies and attitudes, to see different meanings arising from the same text.

Robert Stalnaker presents an elegant model of discourse designed to solve philosophical problems arising, in part, from his identification of propositions which function from possible world states to truth values and his restrictions of the epistemic possible to the metaphysical possible. Stalnaker’s model is based on the insight that considerably more goes into determining what is said by an assertive utterance than the meaning of the sentence uttered. Additional assertion-determining factors include (i) objective features of the context of the utterance, such as the speaker, audience, time, place and the world-state of the context, (ii) salient beliefs and assumptions known to be shared by conversational participants. These latter encompass beliefs and assumptions about who is speaking to whom, what words are being uttered and what they mean, what is happening in and around the speech situation, the topic of conversation, what has already established or taken for granted and what remains in the conversational agenda³.

It is a historical fact, therefore, that 1.5 million Armenians were massacred by the Ottoman Turkey authorities in 1915. The fact is included in history books, in the memoirs of the eye-witnesses and in political document-resolutions.

Maneuvering Discourse: Analyzing political discourse from the maneuvering point of view, we adopt van Emereen and Houtlosser’s⁴ definition of rhetoric as the “theoretical study of the potential effectiveness of argumentative discourse in convincing or persuading an audience in actual argumentative practice”⁵. So we can consider rhetorical strategic ambiguity as a modality of strategic maneuvering, with the potential to be particularly effective for the heterogeneous audience of political discourse. Strategic maneuvering as theorized by van Emereen and Houtlosser “is a systemic integration of rhetorical considerations into a dialectical framework of analysis”⁶ According to Zarefsky strategic maneuvering is essential in political argumentation , where speakers aim at construc-

2 Ceccarelli, Leah “Polysemy: Multiple meanings in Rhetorical Criticism”, Quarterly; Journal of speech 84; 1998 p. 395-415.

3 Stalnaker, R. “Assertion” syntax and semantics 9 ; 1978,p.315-32, reprinted in Stalnaker (1999) p 78-95).

4 Van Emereen, Frans H, “Strategic maneuvering in argumentative discourse” Amsterdam (2006 /2010) pp.131-159.

5 Ibid p.383.

6 Ibid p.135.

tive result in persuading composite audience. Zarefsky lists several “means of strategic maneuvering” for political discourse, including: (1) change the subject (2) modifying the relevant audience (3) appealing to liberal and conservative presumptions (4) reframing the argument (5) using condensation symbols⁷

Our study will expand on the discussion about maneuvering discourse of the American politicians about the events took place in 1915. In order to illustrate this, we came to use the data of a comparatively new linguistic theory called **event semantics**. According to this very theory through syntactic–semantic representation the hidden meanings of the utterance can be revealed. The deep semantic–syntactic analyses through context and event semantics permits to re–structure the deep meaning and significance of the sentence. In language philosophy and in cognitive linguistics there are numerous studies about the linguistic expressions of events in the text⁸. According these theories, a linguistic text transforms to a formal logical–semantic structure (i.e. deep structure) through which the surface structure of the text is represented. We understand the text in its deep structure taking into considerations an implicit and contextual meanings as well. It is worthy to mention that here we have something to do with context models, suggested by Teun van Dijk⁹. Language users not only form an update model of events and situations they communicate about, but also of the communicative event in which they participate. A communicative event or situation, that is context includes the following categories: Setting (Time, Place), Circumstances, Participants and Action(and their modifiers), including those that represent opinions).These define the mental (and hence subjective) counterpart of the canonical structure of a communicative situation or context as are presented in a vast literature in ethnography, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, social psychology (Cook 1990; Forgas 1985;Givo’n 1989;Gumperz & Hymes 1972;Hymes 1972;Watson and Seiler 1992).Context models feature evaluative propositions, or opinions: speech participants usually have opinions about each other, about the actual text and talk of the other as well as about other features of the context (time, place, circumstances).

Within this framework, we identify two types of event structures: communicative event and complex event (outer and inner events) representing the deep structure of the talk or writing. The theory of event semantics provides a large analytical tool for analyzing word meaning. A new synthesis has emerged in recent years which attempts to model verb meanings as complex predicative structures with rich event structures. The research has developed the idea that the meaning of a verb can be analyzed into a structured representation of the event that that the verb designates. This literature has further contributed to

7 Zarevski D. “Strategic Maneuvering through persuasive definitions: Implications for Dialactetic and Rhetoric, *Argumentation* 20 (4) 2006, p.400.

8 Pustejovsky, James. “Type Theory and Lexical Decomposition.” *Journal of Cognitive Science* ,2006.

9 Dijk T., *Discourse semantics and ideology //Discourse and society*, London, Saga publications. 1995, vol. 6, N2, pp.243–285.

the realization that the grammar recognizes the existence of complex events having an internal structure. Complex events are structured into an inner and outer event, where the outer event is associated with causation and agency, and the inner event is associated with telicity and change of state.

The United States of America having a great power in the world’s political views talked to Armenian genocide from different angles; in their yearly speeches on Armenian remembrance day, in different official documents and resolutions, etc..

Studying the presidential statements we noticed an interesting phenomenon; nearly all the presidents expressed the same thought in the same structure¹⁰.

EXAMPLE 1: US President Barack Obama on the Armenian genocide

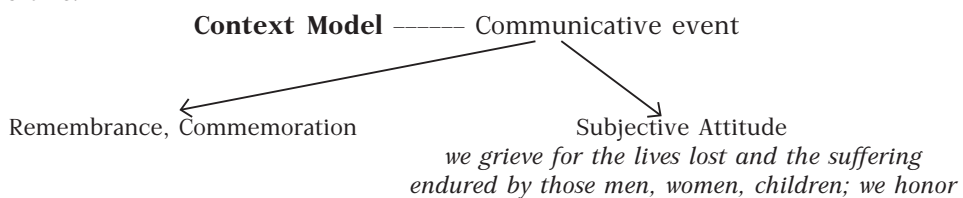
Each year we pause to remember the 1.5 million Armenians who were subsequently massacred and marched to their death in the final days of the Ottoman Empire (Statement of president Barack Obama on Armenian remembrance day, April 24, 2009)

Today we commemorate the Meds Yeghern, one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century. In doing so, we honor the memory of the 1.5 million Armenians who were brutally massacred or marched to their death in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire (April 24, 2012)

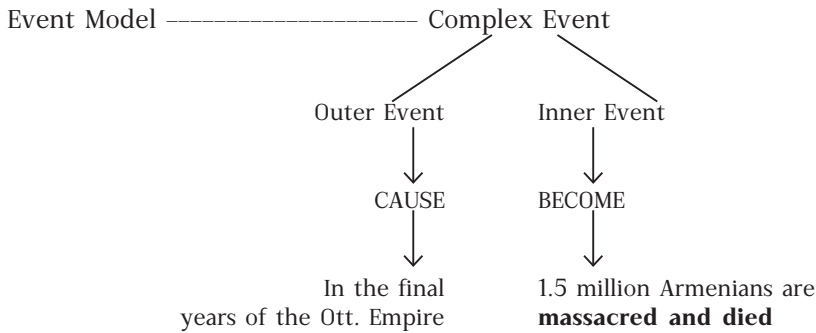
Ninety eight years ago, 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire (April 24, 2013)

Today we commemorate the Meds Yeghern and honor those who perished in one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century. We recall the horror of what happened ninety-nine years ago, when 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their death in the final days of the Ottoman Empire, and we grieve for the lives lost and the suffering endured by those men, women, children. (April 24, 2014)

All the statements can be regarded as one text, because they express the same ideology and the same thoughts. The structure of the text is represented like this:



¹⁰ http://www.anca.org/genocide/president_statements.php 21.10 .2014.



CAUSE-BECOME relation becomes significant in this point. The so called causer argument makes an object (1.5 ml. Armenians) undergo a change of state. One interesting point should be taken into consideration that in the deep semantic context the causer of the event, i.e. agent, comes to be represented by the adverbial modifier of time. In Obama’s statements it is not clearly mentioned who realized the events. The history gives us a hint, that in 1915 1.5 million Armenians were massacred by Young Turks. This very history is familiar to American presidents as well. Indeed, they refuse to mention the exact doer of the action.

Here a kind of structure rises;

MASSACRE ————— kill ————— BECOME NOT ALIVE

The examples taken from Obama’s statements give us a sense that Armenian people are the grammatical passive (Armenians were massacred and marched to their death) subject of the sentence (event) but the agent and cause of the real event (massacre) is not presented, i.e. who did the event, who caused 1.5 Armenians to be massacred and killed is not mentioned though. In Obama’s statement **Meds Yegehrn** is an event; only EVENT-RESULT is mentioned, but EVENT-CAUSE is missing.

The same structure is formed in almost all the US presidents’ statements. Let’s consider some of them as well.

EXAMPLE 2: The Presidential statements of George W. Bush, William Clinton, George H.W. Bush.

Today, we **remember** one of the horrible tragedies of the 20th century—the **mass killings** and forced exile of as many as 1.5 million Armenians **in the final days of the Ottoman Empire in 1915. We mourn this terrible chapter of history** and recognize that it remains a source of pain for people in Armenia and for all those who believe in freedom, tolerance and the dignity. (G.W. Bush, April 24, 2006)

Today, we **remember** a great tragedy of the twentieth century; the deporta-

tions and **massacres** of roughly one and a half million Armenians **in the final years of the Ottoman Empire**. I join Armenians around the world, including the Armenian–American community, **in mourning** the loss of those innocent lives. (William J. Clinton April 24, 2000)

On this seventy–fifth **anniversary** of the massacres, I wish to join with Armenians and all people in observing April 24, 1990 as a day of remembrance for the more than a million Armenian people who **were victims** (George H.W. Bush, April 20, 1990).

Different dates, different presidents but the same text and ideology. The point is that there are not only meaning relations of the sentence that define coherence, but rather referential relations, i.e. relations between the “things” the sentence in a text denote. Here we have something to do with the notion of macrostructure. The point of macrostructures is that texts not only have local or micro–structural relations between subsequent sentences, but they also have overall structures that define their global coherence and organization.

The maneuver strategies are used in Senate Resolutions as well. A very interesting phenomenon is calculated; it seems the resolutions serve as samples of presidential statements. Their statements is somewhat like the statements found in resolutions or other official documents.

Example 3: U.S. Senate Concurrent Resolution 12 February 9, 1916

The people of the United States are deeply impressed by the deplorable conditions of insecurity, starvation and misery now prevalent in Armenia.

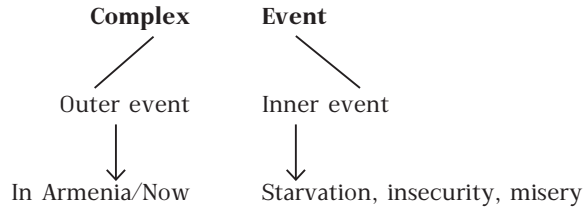
Whereas **the people of the United States** of America have learned **with sorrow** of this terrible plight of great numbers of human beings and have most generously responded to the cry for help whenever such an appeal has reached them

U.S House of representatives Joint Resolution 148

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, that April 24, 1975, is hereby designated as “National Day of Remembrance of Man’s Inhumanity to man” and the President of the United States is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such day as a day of remembrance for **all the victims of genocide**, especially those of **Armenian ancestry who succumbed to the genocide perpetrated in 1915...**

In that period in Armenia there were deplorable conditions of insecurity, starvation and misery. The adverbial modifier *now* gives an important hint; *now*–means, that they are aware of the situation and events taking place in Armenia. They know what is going on and who is carrying the action. As T.van Dijk states indexical expressions (here, now, there) present not only time and place of the

action, but also social roles, relations and attitude¹¹.



EVENT 1: Starvation is prevalent in Armenia now.

1.1 Starvation → to starve

Who becomes starved?

EVENT 2: Insecurity is prevalent in Armenia now.

2.1 Insecurity → to endanger¹²

Who endangers?

Who becomes endangered?

Here states rather than events are presented. Someone caused the Armenians undergo change of STAE. The causer agent is again missing, so through traces we come to understand the event talked.

In the conclusion I draw together the threads that I have been woven throughout the examples. The American avoiding politics in genocide recognition is expressed by the linguistic strategies used in their talk. US authorities do adopt the history but maneuver it serving as the conciliatory role. Their politics is avoiding because they devalue talk dismissing it as “rhetoric”. In their yearly statements US presidents refuse to talk about the events took place in 1915 in their full sense. They just **introduce** the communicative event (*Today we **commemorate** the Meds Ygehrn; Today, we **remember** one of the horrible tragedies of the 20th century. etc.*) or **describe** the event being discussed (*the deportations and massacres of roughly one and a half million Armenians in the final years of the Ottoman Empire; 1.5 million Armenians were massacred or marched to their deaths in the final days of the Ottoman Empire*). They **evaluate** the event (*The Meds Yegehrn is a devastating chapter in the history of the Armenian people; and we must keep its memory alive, in honor of those who were murdered and so that we do not repeat the grave mistakes of the past;*) by **mentioning** the Armenians and Armenian Community’s contribution to their nation (*Millions*

¹¹ Dijk T., Discourse semantics and ideology //Discourse and society, London, Saga publications. 1995, vol. 6, p. 141.

¹² New Webster’s dictionary and Roget’s Treasures, New York: 1991.

of Americans proudly trace their ancestry to Armenia. Their faith, traditions, and patriotism enrich the cultural, political, and economic life of the United States; our own society has benefited immeasurably from the contributions of Armenian-Americans. They have enriched every aspect of American life, from science, to commerce, to the arts. For the past eight and a half years, the Armenian people have been engaged in an historic undertaking to establish democracy and prosperity in the independent Republic of Armenia).

So, they do maneuver and do avoid talking about the events in a simple way. We understand their thoughts through context and logical-semantic structure. The whole American discourse about the Armenian Genocide is structured as follows;

[AGENT CAUSE [1.5 million Armenians MASSACRED or MARCHED to their death]

[AGENT CAUSE [1.5. million Armenians MASS KILLED and FORCE EXILED]

The AGENT position is empty (X), but, however, there is some X and that X is AGENT.

The structure of the American political discourse about the Armenian Genocide

Context Model <i>Americans express their attitude and sympathy</i>			Event Model <i>1.5 million Armenians were</i>	
We mourn this terrible chapter of history	The people of the United States are deeply impressed by the deplorable conditions	We honor the memory of the 1.5 million Armenians	Massacred	Marched to death
			Deported	Mass Killed
			Annihilated	Force exiled
			Starved	Became insecure
			EVENT----- -----RESULT The CAUSER is X.	

**ՄԻԱՑՅԱԼ ՆԱՀԱՆԳՆԵՐԻ ԽՈՒՍԱՓՈՒՄԸ
«ՑԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ» ԵԶՐՈՒՅԹԻՅ. ԼԵԶՎԱԿԱՆ
ՌԱԶՄԱՎԱՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐ, ՈՐՈՆՔ ԿԻՐԱՌՎՈՒՄ ԵՆ
ՑԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՃԱՆԱԶՄԱՆ ԽՈՒՍԱՆԱՎՄԱՆ
ՀԱՄԱՏԵՔՍՈՒՄ**

Սոնա Հակոբյան

*Եվրասիա միջազգային համալսարանի Օտար լեզուների և
գրականության ամբիոնի վարիչ,
բանասիրական գիտությունների թեկնածու*

Սույն հոդվածն անդրադառնում է հայոց ցեղասպանության ճանաչման գործընթացներին լեզվաբանության և խոսույթի հայեցակետից: Այսօր տարբեր բնագավառներում իրականացվում են բազմաբնույթ գիտական հետազոտություններ սույն հիմնահարցի վերաբերյալ: Մեր ուսումնասիրությունը ներկայացնում է ԱՄՆ-ի պաշտոնական հայտարարությունների լեզվա-իմաստաբանական վերլուծություն, և ներմուծված նոր տեսության շրջանակներում բացահայտվում է քաղաքական խոսույթի այս կամ այն տեսակը, որը մեր դիտարկմամբ անվանում ենք *խուսանավող*: ԱՄՆ պաշտոնյաները խուսավում են ներկայացնել իրադարձությունները ամբողջությամբ, և ըստ այդմ, նրանց խոսքի իմաստներն ընկալվում են միայն համատեքստում և տրմաբանական-իմաստաբանական կառույցում:

Հիմնաբառեր. քաղաքական խոսույթ, խուսանավում, իրադրային իմաստաբանություն, շարահյուսաիմաստաբանական նկարագրություն, համատեքստ, իրադրային կառույց, մոդել:

КАК СОЕДИНЕННЫЕ ШТАТЫ УКЛОНЯЮТСЯ ОТ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ ПОНЯТИЯ «ГЕНОЦИД»: ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ СТРАТЕГИИ, ИСПОЛЬЗУЕМЫЕ ПРИ МАНЕВРИРОВАНИИ В ПРИЗНАНИИ ГЕНОЦИДА

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Данная статья рассматривает процесс признания геноцида армян с точки зрения лингвистики и концепции дискурса. На сегодняшний день в различных областях проводятся разносторонние научные исследования относительно данной проблемы. Наше исследование представляет собой лингво-семантический анализ официальных заявлений США и в рамках внедренной новой теории раскрывает тот или иной тип политического дискурса, который мы в наших наблюдениях называем маневрированием. Официальные лица США /американские чиновники/ избегают говорить о событиях целиком и, таким образом, смысл слов воспринимается только в контексте и в логико-смысловой конструкции.

Ключевые слова: политический дискурс, маневрирование, ситуационная семантика, синтактическо-семантическое описание, контекст, ситуативная структура, модель.