

A Linguistic Analysis of Diplomatic Discourse

A Linguistic Analysis of Diplomatic Discourse:

*UN Resolutions on the Question
of Palestine*

By

Germana D'Acquisto

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FOREWORD

In this corpus based study, the author, competently, applies methods from corpus linguistics to investigate diplomatic discourse in UN Resolutions concerning the main events related to the troublesome Arabi-Israeli conflict from 1947 to the present day.

The book opens with Kofi Annan's quotation "words have a remarkable power which can be for good or ill" and it is in the light of these words that the wide-ranging corpus has been examined and its linguistic and pragmatic functions taken into account. The author considers and evaluates the specialized language in diplomatic negotiations with particular regard to lexicon and the strategic means utilised for communicative interactions.

The core of the analysis focuses on the role of the verb forms in the English language. Particular attention has been given to the quantitative and qualitative analysis of English modal verbs and the expressions of deontic, epistemic, dynamic, volitive, directive and commissive modality. The study also examines the use of prescriptive and performative verbs expressed in the diplomatic negotiation documents under scrutiny between the legal authority, the United Nations, and the addressees, the Member States and the International Community.

I have seen Germana D'Acquisto grow and develop in her latest research project, an achievement which has been pleasing to witness, as it undoubtedly provides a contribution to the application of corpus linguistics in investigations on a variety of areas. This monography will certainly add a new insight into existing publications on the field of linguistic analysis on political documentations, enriching this area of research.

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INTRODUCTION

This book centres on the language of United Nations Resolutions concerning the Question of Palestine taking into account that since the beginning of the conflict all diplomatic negotiations have been carried out in English, despite both Palestine and Israel not being English speaking countries. The corpus (see Appendix I) includes two sub corpora: sixty-six Security Council Resolutions (2965 words) and forty General Assembly Resolutions (2529 words) from 1948 to 2006 (see Appendix I) related to the main events of the conflict starting from the Plan of Partition of Palestine territory established in the General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947), up to the present day (see Appendix II)¹.

In particular, the aim is to investigate the role of the English verbal system and archaic expressions in relation to modality in the institutional language of the United Nations as well as the different pragmatic purposes of its normative text types, taking into account the communicative interaction between the legal authority, the United Nations, and the addressees, the Member States and the International Community. As Williams (2007: 11) asserts: “Interpreting the intention of the lawmakers

¹ The reason why I have taken into account both sub corpora is due to the consideration that they have different roles within the Organization. As a matter of fact, the General Assembly is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations comprising all 193 Members of the United Nations and it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion on the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter whereas the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 Members, and each Member has one vote. Under the Charter, all Member States are obliged to comply with Council decisions. The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to peace or an act of aggression. It calls upon the parties in a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security. The Security Council also recommends to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary-General and the admission of new Members to the United Nations. And, together with the General Assembly, it elects the judges of the International Court of Justice. See: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/>

and those who drafted a particular law inevitably entails a detailed scrutiny of the language used [...] the mere absence of a definite article in an expression can give rise to heated and prolonged interpretative debate”². The linguistic investigation refers to the use of prescriptive and performative verbs to express different degrees of obligation in the documents of the United Nations. Specifically, the starting point is the definition of prescriptive legal texts issued by international organizations and in particular by the United Nations and the linguistic and pragmatic functions of these text types.

This analysis develops two main themes:

- 1) A macro analysis concerning: sentence structure with regard to the length and patterns of coordination and subordination, style and structure of the prescriptive legal text, distribution of modal forms and semi-modal forms, lexical choices including archaic or rarely used words, foreign words and expressions.
- 2) The analysis of the context, including an overview of the origins and causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the role of the United Nations in the conflict in the light of the relationship between language and diplomacy

The quantitative - qualitative analysis is based on Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar (2004), a Corpus linguistics approach supported by Antconc 2.0 software, Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (1995, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2007) and studies on Genre (Bhatia 2001; Trosborg 1997; Williams 2007; Cohen 2001; Nick 2001).

Chapter 1 focuses on diplomatic discourse from the past to present times and on the importance of language as a specialised means in diplomatic negotiations with a particular regard to lexicon.

Chapter 2 analyses:

1. The style and structure of the prescriptive legal text. Lexical choices including archaic or rarely used words, foreign words and expressions taking into account the guidelines of the Plain English Movement..

² The translation of a legal text into different languages can cause misunderstandings. For example, one of the most controversial of the UN Resolutions, S/RES 242 (1967), has two different versions in English and French. In the English version the lack of a definite article “withdrawal of territories”, present in the French version “des territoires”, gave rise to a prolonged interpretative debate.

Chapter 3 focuses on English Modality and in particular on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of English modals in the United Nations Resolutions³ considering:

³ The United Nations Resolutions are normative texts issued by an authoritative source, which refer to measures that do not become laws. The United Nations Charter establishes that the Security Council has the power to intervene also with the use of military force if a State undermines peace and Security among Nations: Article 41

The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.

Article 43

All Members of the United Nations, in order to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, undertake to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, armed forces, assistance, and facilities, including rights of passage, necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.

Nations sometimes resort to international arbitration when faced with a specific question or point of contention in need of Resolution. In the past, there were no official or formal procedures for such proceedings. Nowadays, these proceedings are often carried out by the International Court of Justice, or other formal commissions, agencies and tribunals working under the United Nations.

The language used to write and disseminate texts represents one of the most relevant problems in diplomatic negotiations. In the past there were periods when one language had the predominant role resulting from the political, strategic, economic, cultural domination in international relations (Nick 2001: 39-47). Nowadays, most international negotiations are carried out in English, the modern global language or *lingua franca*. Treaties and other important documents are very often drafted in English and international organizations conduct most of their operations in English. The use of an International language such as English is important for the efficient handling of international affairs but, at the same time, it can generate problems of cross-cultural misunderstandings (Cohen 2001: 67).

Despite the existence of a universal model of the basic procedures in negotiations, the misunderstanding in negotiation lies in the different meanings attached to some words, which are strongly influenced by cultural factors. Cohen (2001:67-91) points out,

The language of diplomacy is yet a further refinement of language as medium of communication [...] Language is often a cause for misunderstanding and conflict [...] The case for the importance of language and culture lies on the view that semantic distinctions reflect different interpretations of reality and normative

- English modal verbs and modality: deontic, epistemic, dynamic, volitive, directive, commissive;
- English expressions of modality: adjectives, participles, nouns, modal lexical verbs;
- Finite verbal constructions, Mood including passive vs. active forms, positive vs. negative forms;
- Non / finite verbal constructions (non / finite ing forms, non / finite ed form, infinitives).

The book offers some examples of possible activities with a didactic aim aimed at students.

modes of behaviour [...] Ambiguity in diplomatic text may help to give up a state of warfare, or hostility and at the same time it could be wise and convenient

CHAPTER ONE

THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

*Language is an essential attribute of human nature.
Without it, we could not communicate any but the very simplest
thought [...]
So language connects us to one another.
But ever since the Tower of Babel, it has also divided us [...]
Words have a remarkable power, which can be for good or ill [...]"*
—Kofi Annan

1.1 The role of UN Resolutions in the Middle East conflict

At the end of the First World War with the disintegration of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, Palestine was placed under the administration of Great Britain according to the Mandatory System. This decision failed to take into account the wishes of the people of Palestine.

In principle, the Mandate was originally meant to cover a period of transition until Palestine attained the status of a fully independent nation, a status provisionally recognized in the League's Covenant, but sadly the Mandate's historical evolution did not lead to the emergence of Palestine as an independent nation. The mandate had as its main aim the implementation of the *Balfour Declaration* issued by the British Government in 1917, which supported the establishment of “a national home for the Jewish people”.

By the turn of the century, the “Eastern question” was a predominant concern of European diplomacy, as the Great powers manoeuvred to establish control or spheres of influence over the territories of the declining Ottoman Empire.

In 1916 negotiations between Britain, France and Russia, later also including Italy, led to the secret Sykes-Picot¹ agreement on the allocation

¹ The Sykes-Picot-Sazanov Agreement of 1916 was a secret understanding between the governments of Britain and France, with the assent of Russia, defining

of Ottoman Arab territories, the spheres of influence of the European Powers and the recognition of an “independent Arab State” or “confederation of Arab States”.

The *Balfour Declaration* 1917 became an integral part of the Mandate, it underpinned its aims and was incorporated in the Mandate. Its implementation sparked off Arab opposition and revolt and despite growing anti-Semitism in Europe, only small groups of Jews settled in Palestine.

In 1947 (see Appendix IV) after several attempts to solve the question Great Britain decided to turn the problem over to the United Nations resulting in the partition of Palestine with two independent States, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish.

The United Nations by 1948 was inextricably involved in the Palestine question. The General Assembly Resolution 181 (1948) known as the partition Resolution, did not provide a solution to the Palestine problem and in March 1948 the United States drafted a proposal to enable the Council to act on the partition Resolution which had failed, with the Council only calling for an end to the violence in Palestine.

Later that year, on 22 November, the Security Council unanimously adopted, after much negotiation, Resolution 242 (1967), laying down the principles for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. The Resolution stipulated that the establishment of an equitable and lasting peace should include the application of two principles:

- Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the recently occupied territories and
- The termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and the acknowledgement of sovereignty

In 1950 with the Resolutions 377(V)(1950), 377(V)B (1950) and 377(V)A “Uniting for peace”, the UN reaffirmed the importance of unanimity of “veto” among the permanent members of the Security Council on all problems which are likely to threaten world peace. Furthermore, it reaffirmed article 43 of the UN Charter in which the responsibility of the Security Council was established in the peace

their respective spheres of influence and control in west Asia after the expected downfall of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. By the terms of the agreement, Britain reserved the area which became Transjordan, France was to obtain Iraq (other than Mosul and its district), Syria and Cilicia,. Russia was to obtain Constantinople and the Ottoman Armenian vilayets.

agreement and negotiations and stated clearly that the Security Council could under no circumstances shed this responsibility:

[...] Resolves that if the Security Council, because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in any case where there appears to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures, including in the case of a breach of the peace or act of aggression the use of armed force when necessary, to maintain or restore international peace and security[...]

Resolution 242 (1967) is the most controversial of the Security Council Resolutions. According to D. Pehar (2001:177) “it was the result of bargaining between the powers sitting in the Security Council and it reflected the deeply polarised political opinion at the United Nations in the period following the war”. The reason why it is considered the most controversial resolution lies in its numerous ambiguities. One example is given by the following expression “Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in recent conflict”. The omission of the article “the” before the word territories, present in the French version, is ambiguous since it is not clear whether Israel is asked to withdraw from all the territories occupied in the recent conflict or just certain territories. Resolution 242 (1967) was thus formulated to be intentionally vague so as to assure at least a formal acceptance by the state of the region-

Particular attention should be given to this Resolution and to its translated version in French since some differences have fired debates and controversies.

Below are the English version of Resolution 242 (1967), and then the French version of the same Resolution:

1) Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967

The Security Council,

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,

Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security,

Emphasizing further that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

1. *Affirms* that the fulfilment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

(i) ***Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict***²

In the French version of Resolution 242 we can notice that the underlined sentence in English omits the definite article “the” which is present in the French version “des territoires”. Furthermore the withdrawal refers to “Every State” and we know that Palestine has never been recognized as a “State”. (this is omitted in the quote)

Résolution 242 (1967) du 22 novembre 1967

Le Conseil de sécurité,

Exprimant l'inquiétude que continue de lui causer la grave situation au Moyen-Orient,

Soulignant l'inadmissibilité de l'acquisition de territoires par la guerre et la nécessité d'œuvrer pour une paix juste et durable permettant à chaque Etat de la région de vivre en sécurité,

Soulignant en outre que tous les Etats Membres, en acceptant la Charte des Nations Unies, ont contracté l'engagement d'agir conformément à l'Article 2 de la Charte,

1. Affirme que l'accomplissement des principes de la Charte exige l'insaturation d'une paix juste et durable au Moyen-Orient qui devrait comprendre l'application des deux principes suivant :

i) **Retrait des forces armées israéliennes des territoires occupés lors du récent conflit**³

The Jarring negotiations were conducted on the basis of Resolution 242 (1967), and thus did not address the fundamental issue of Palestinian national identity, which underlay the conflict in the Middle East. Security Council Resolution 242, adopted on 22 November 1967, and Resolution 338, adopted on 22 October 1973, are generally considered the axes on which all subsequent discussions of a Middle East peace settlement rest.

With the question of Palestine unresolved, an uneasy peace, punctuated by violence and acts of force, continued in the region from 1950 until 1967, when Israel came to occupy the entire area of the former British Mandate of Palestine. Earlier armed conflict had erupted in 1956, when, on 29 October, Israel embarked on military operations against Egypt, joined later by France and the United Kingdom. In a politically charged atmosphere, Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal in July of that year. The

² My bold type

³ My bold type

crisis ended with a ceasefire called for by the General Assembly at an emergency special session.

Since 1978 the Palestinian question has remained in the forefront of debate in the United Nations. During the years conflicts have changed their shape from inter-State conflicts to intra-State conflict and we know that one of the limits is the respect of territorial sovereignty. Despite this change, the main aim of the Security Council is still to balance and mediate conflicts and find a solution even if this entails the use of force when a State threatens peace and security among Nations.

Consequently, the main concern of the United Nations is to intervene, by helping refugees and protecting archaeological and cultural sites.

In July 2000, United States President Bill Clinton invited the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to peace talks at Camp David, Maryland. The summit ended inconclusively, with the two sides unable to reach an agreement on the final status issues. As a result, the situation in the Middle East took a turn for the worse..

At the end of September 2000, a new wave of protest and violence erupted in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Unfortunately recent years have not seen an improvement in this situation. A series of subsequent negotiations led to the mutual recognition between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization but a long lasting peace has still not been achieved.

1.2 Language and Diplomacy: UN Resolutions and negotiations in the Arabi-Israeli conflict

An important aspect in a diplomatic negotiation is represented by the language or by the strategic means of communicative interactions. As Scott (2001:153) points out:

In conference diplomacy, the successful diplomat engaged in the negotiation of texts will often strive to persuade his interlocutors to reach agreement on a form of words, which combines precision with ambiguity. The two can be brought together in the same paragraph or longer text, more rarely in the same sentence. The precision will as a rule serve the purposes of his own side in stipulating claims or limits to commitments; the sought-for ambiguity will serve to allay anxieties on either side or to secure a margin for subsequent interpretation. As conference diplomacy has steadily gained in importance, the terminology that it employs has evolved, sometimes reflecting the simultaneous pursuit of both precision and ambiguity.

Scott (2001:154) underlines the boundaries between precision and ambiguity. In detail ‘precision’ according to his definition includes accuracy of expression while ‘ambiguity’ is related to the possibility of interpret a sentence in two or more possible senses or it refers to uncertain. Thesetwo values - dual definition of ambiguity – gives rise to two different concepts: duality and vagueness.

In particular, the author (2001: 155,156) suggests that:

When reflecting on the narrower subject of the uses to which diplomacy may put ambiguity, the following points would seem to emerge from what we have seen so far:

- Ambiguity occurs spontaneously or naturally (i.e. unintentionally) in languages because, in order to be flexible, they do not spell everything out and thus leave scope for alternative interpretations induced by contextual factors.
- It is possible (even probable) that different languages, emerging from and reflecting distinct cultures, offer varying scope for ambiguity, intended or unintended. Some maintain, for example, that the Chinese are predisposed to underspecification and ambiguity as a culture-conditioned stance in interpersonal communications; [...]

Diplomacy has long been of interest to linguists, (Hofstede 2001: 79-135)⁴ considers *Power Distance*, *Uncertainty Avoidance*, *Individualism/Collectivism*, *Masculinity/Feminility*. (Hall 1985,1990) important factors of cross cultural discrepancies. He further outlines two different levels for cultural differences which are: a. **Low Context Cultures** characterized by clear and direct communication and b. **High Context Cultures** characterized by an implicit and indirect communication in which non-verbal communication and the manner of expression are important factors. American English Languages, for instance, are characterized by Low Context Cultures, meanwhile Arab languages by High Context Cultures.

Taking into account the differences exposed above, diplomacy⁵ can be defined as the art and practice of conducting negotiations between representatives of groups or states and improving international relations with regard to issues of peace-making, trade, war, economics and culture. The ability to practice diplomacy is one of the defining attributes of a

⁴ Available on:

http://books.google.it/books?id=w6z18LJ_1VsC&pg=PR7&hl=it&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false

⁵ This paragraph is mostly based on the information available on:

<http://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/books/language-and-diplomacy>

State, and diplomacy has been practiced since the first city-States were formed.

Regarding the origins of modern diplomacy Nick (2001: 39-47) points out that it dates back to the states of Northern Italy in the early Renaissance, when the first embassies were established in the thirteenth century. Modern diplomacy slowly spread to Eastern Europe and Russia by the early eighteenth century. After the fall of Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna of 1815 established an international system of diplomatic rank. There are also incentives in diplomacy to act reasonably, especially if the support of other actors is needed. The benefits of winning one negotiation may be outweighed by the increased hostility expressed by other injured parties. This is also called soft power. According to S. Nick (2001:39) :

The term *Language in diplomacy* can be interpreted in several ways [...] the speech used by one nation, tribe, or by a large group of people. It can also refer to a special way of expressing the needs of the diplomatic profession including a particular form, style, manner or tone of expression. In any of these senses, the use of language in diplomacy is very important, but at the same time there are some problems: diplomats often are not able to communicate in one language, common to all participants.

According to Cohen (2001) the Middle East Negotiating Lexicon includes a series of key negotiating words in Arabic, Farsi, Hebrew and Turkish. It is important to pay attention to how certain concepts such as “right”, “peace”, “document” are interpreted in different cultures focusing on the special features of use, the possible religious and historical connotations, and analysing the social and cultural associations evoked by the word for the native speaker. Here are several interesting examples provided by the author: “the term ‘peace’, for example, in English refers to a relationship established by treaty between states at the conclusion of a war, an ideal prophetic vision of harmony, and tranquillity while the reference term ‘Shalom’ shares in the Biblical vision of universal accord but lacks the legal features that ‘peace’ acquired in the European state system thanks to centuries of diplomatic practice”. Another example given by the author is ‘Delegation’ “which is a neutral word in English denoting a group of people authorized to represent their country in a diplomatic or cultural capacity. By contrast, its Arabic equivalent is linked to the Arab tradition of visiting”. Furthermore, “Negotiation concepts are lodged within traditions, social organization and culture. Government agencies in the West do not issue orders to economic and social groups but negotiate with them. Whereas in highly hierarchical societies the free exchange of ideas is discouraged”.

Finally, Cohen (2001) suggests the term ‘Compromise’ which “is fundamental in the English-speaking world, is closely connected to the concept of ‘agreement’. According to the Anglo-Saxon philosophy of negotiation, it is the very process of ‘give and take’”.

CHAPTER TWO

A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF UN RESOLUTIONS

2.1 An overview of legal texts. Resolutions: hybrid text

In this paragraph it is useful to make some references to the features of legal discourse in order to focus the analysis on the co-text and context of the analysed documents. In detail, I've taken into account Trosborg (1997: 32) distinction between "legal language", "the language of the law" and "the language of legal documents". The author affirms that the former refers to "language as realized specifically in legal documents, i.e. texts covered by the scope or statute law and common law, namely (i) legislation, and (ii) simple contracts and deeds. The second "Legal language" refers to legal discourse in general. The expression "The language of the Law" refers to written prescriptive texts. Finally "the language of legal documents" which refers to "any form of legal discourse which can range from the language of legal documents to the law reports published in newspaper to certain forms of oral language such as legal instructions which are read out to jury members". (Williams 2007:23). This chapter focuses on the second definition, "Language of the Law", since Resolutions are texts which suggest the idea of an "authority Speaking" even if they are not legally binding documents since their aim is only to give recommendations.

Moreover, I've taken into account some definitions of genre. In detail, Swales (1990:58) defines genre:

A class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale and influences and constrains choice of content and style.

While Bhatia (1993:101) points out that 'The language of the Law':

[...] Encompasses several usefully distinguishable genres depending upon the communicative purposes they tend to fulfil, the setting or contexts in which they are used, the communicative events or activities they are

associated with, the social or professional relationship between the participants [...] the background knowledge that such participants bring to the situation [...]

Based on these assumptions we can conclude that the members of United Nations are a “diplomatic speech community” who share a set of communicative purposes and that Resolutions being written legal texts have a particular function, being to report the decisions made by the Organs during their meetings after negotiations.

Another important point is that in English speaking countries legal texts are drafted in British English even though each member country has adapted the language to its own needs. The United Nations Resolutions are drafted in English and French, the two working languages, and the negotiations in the peace process to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict are carried out in English. Although the UN headquarters are in New York the language used derives from the legal English of Great Britain (Williams 2007:167:192).

2.2 Analysis of UN Resolutions: function, structure and genre

United Nations Resolutions are formal expressions of the opinion or will of United Nations organs. They generally consist of two clearly defined sections: a preamble and an operative part. The preamble generally presents the considerations on the basis of which action is taken, an opinion expressed or a directive given. The operative part states the opinion of the organ or the action to be taken. United Nations documents have a symbol, which serves as a unique identifier. Each symbol is composed of letters and numbers, which indicates the organ to which the document is being submitted or the organ that is issuing the document. As clarified on the UN web site section “Working documents”¹, the basic format for the symbols of Security Council documents is: S/[year]/[sequential number], e. g., S/1998/318. From 1946 to 1993, the format was S/[sequential number], e. g., S/24111.

Resolutions of the Security Council have a symbol and the following format: S/RES/[sequential number] ([year]). For more information on the documents symbol, it is possible to visit the UN Documentation Research Guide designed for researchers and information professionals who aim at an overview of the various types of documents and publications issued by

¹ See: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/>

the Organization (e.g. reports, resolutions, meeting records, sales publications, press releases) and gives guidance on how to work with them².

As regard the methodology, I've taken into account a key concept in Halliday's (2004) approach which is the context of situation and linguistic "function". Halliday (2004:61) identifies four metafunctions: Experiential, Interpersonal, Textual, Logical.

In detail, the Textual function which includes vocabulary use, register and is related to the coherence and cohesion of a text have been taken into account; Interpersonal, which includes the analysis of involvement and detachment, the use of pronouns, interactive items showing the position of the speaker related to relational aspects highlighted in the text; Ideational, which includes the analysis of modality and modal auxiliaries, modals of obligation (*must, should*); modals of ability and possibility (*can, could*); modals of epistemic possibility (*may, might*); modals of volition and prediction (*will, shall*); hypothetical modals (*would, should*) related to the capacity / ability of representing reality.

Furthermore, Halliday (2004: 44 - 45) in his functional grammar considers the transitivity System as an aspect of the Ideational Function of language, a cognitive function that allows the mental representation of the semantic meaning of words, sentences and the whole text. Generally speaking, in a transitivity System, Actors are the Agents that cause Processes (causation) aimed at Goal. This cognitive representation of an action can be expressed syntactically by both Active and Passive forms of sentences with sentences being the framework of the whole text.

Moreover, Halliday (2004: 301) describes a number of Processes that represent experience and inform the Transitivity System reflected in the structure of clauses. He claims that there are two primary Processes representing two essential aspects of experience: a. Outer experience, representing the processes of the external world; b. Inner experience, representing the processes of the conscious mind. Thus, Halliday (2004: 177, 310, 335, 351-54) points out that the cognitive representation of a process consists of three experiential components:

- the Process itself, syntactically realized by a Verb (or Verbal Group-i.e. Verb Phrase);
- the Participants in the Process (e.g. Actors and Goals in material Processes) syntactically realized by Nouns (or Nominal Groups-i.e., Noun Phrase);

² See: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/>

- the Circumstance (of time, place, manner), syntactically realized by Adverbial Groups (Adverbs and Adverbial Phrases) or Prepositional Groups (Phrases that enclose prepositions).

Finally, Halliday defines six primary Processes: 1) material Processes expressing the outer experience (concrete actions of doing); 2) mental Processes, expressing the inner experience (thoughts, emotions, perceptions); 3) relational Processes, expressing classification and identification; 4) behavioural Processes, expressing the outer manifestations of processes of the conscious mind or physiological processes; 5) verbal Processes, expressing the enactment of cognitive construction in the form of spoken or written language; 6) existential Processes, expressing the existence or happening of every kind of phenomena.

Starting from these theoretical considerations I will analyse the structure of the Resolutions, in particular the clauses, the verbal system and the lexical choices.

2.3 The linguistic analysis of verbal system of United Nations Resolutions

As regards the frequency distribution of tokens in the two subcorpora it is illustrated in table 1. :

Text type	Tokens
Security Council Resolutions	36925
General Assembly Resolutions	60199

Table 2. Frequency distribution of tokens in the two subcorpora.

Based on the assumptions expressed in the previous paragraph, the Security Council Resolutions generally begin with a title and are introduced by the Logical Subject that is the Security Council and the General Assembly, a series of paragraphs, which begin with verbs in the present tense such as *affirms*, *requests*. Linguists have noticed the presence, in prescriptive legal texts, of the auxiliary modal *shall* and *must*, but they have stressed the presence of the present simple which is also the most widely used tense in everyday conversation. As Williams affirms (2007:153): “Whereas *shall* and *may* tend to be used frequently in main clauses which regulate human behaviour [...] the present simple is the verbal construction that is necessarily used when conveying explicit performatives, to be found abundantly in Resolutions”.

We can notice a series of non- finite -ing forms: *reaffirming*, *recalling*. Swan (1997:277) observes that:

When -ing form are used as verbs or adverbs, they are often called “present participles”. (This is not a very suitable name, because these forms can refer to the past, present or future). When they are used more like nouns, they are often called “gerunds”. In fact, the distinction is not really as simple as this, and some grammarians prefer to avoid the term “participle” and “gerund”.

In UN Resolutions the non-finite - ing form occurs at the beginning of clauses. We can notice a syntactic discontinuity in all the Resolutions between the subject (Security Council or General Assembly) and the main verb, which is separated by a series of *recitals* which according to Trosborg’s (1997: 65) definition consist of information that forms the foundation or background for the document. Generally they are introduced by WHEREAS despite this word being archaic depending on the context. In the UN the verbs are generally performative such as *reiterate*, *call*, *instruct*, *resolve*, *decide* or *requests* which is the most frequently used in the General Assembly Resolutions with a frequency of 114 and a percentage of 0,19 and “calls” which is the most frequent verb in the Security Council Resolutions. It occurs 37 times with a percentage of 0,27. In the United Nations Resolutions we can notice the most frequent non-finite - ing form is *including* as we can see in figure 1.:

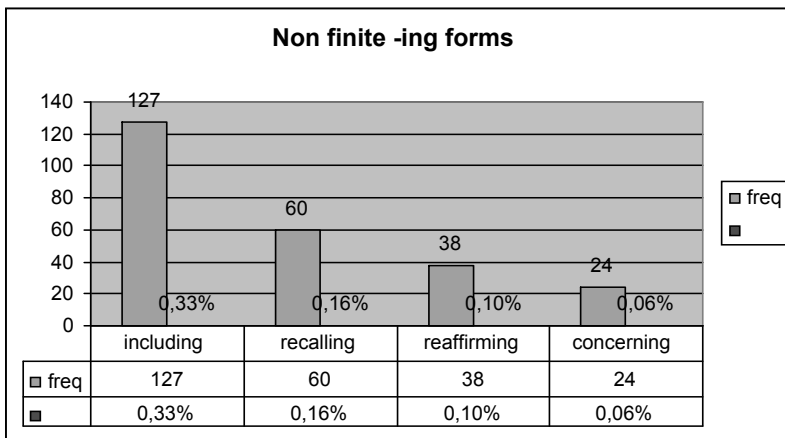


Figure 1. Occurrences of -ing forms in sixty-six Security Council Resolutions from 1948 to 2006 .

In the United Nations Resolutions we can also find occurrences of the perfect non-finite -ing forms and in the Security Council Resolutions this particular structure/pattern occurs fifty-one times “having considered”, “having noted”, “having heard”, “having studied”.

In the General Assembly Resolutions too the most frequent non-finite -ing form is “including” as we can see in the following figure:

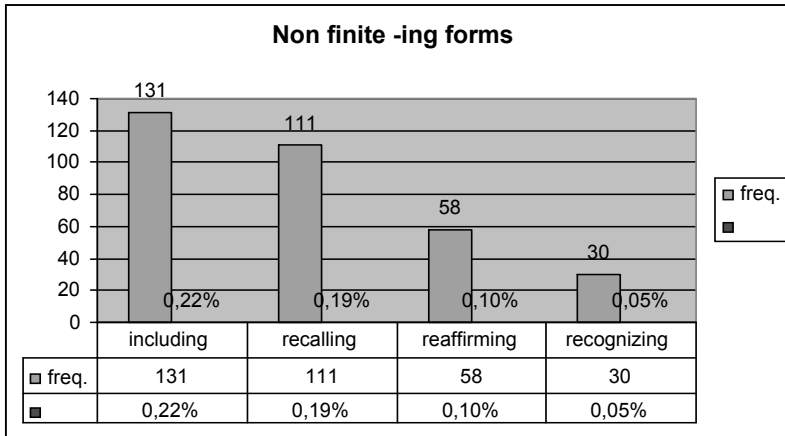


Figure 2. Occurrences of the -ing form in forty General Assembly Resolutions from 1948 to 2006.

The presence of these forms contributes to creating a depersonalised style since the Agent is not expressed. The presence of non-finite -ed participles such as *guided*, together with repetitions at the beginning of the paragraphs of the infinitive forms *to assume*, *to carry out*, *to undertake* can be noted. Furthermore, the words *convinced*, *determined* and *concerned* are often present at the beginning of the clauses. Non-finite -ed forms are not necessarily performative verbs but they “typically express a (collective) state of mind, generally of concern about a situation or of determination to resolve it.” (Williams 2007: 164). In some examples this state of mind expresses consternation such as the frequent expression “shocked and alarmed”.

2.4 Enactment clauses

We can find the so- called enactment clause: “Deeply concerned over the **enactment** of a *basic law* in the Israeli Knesset proclaiming a change

in the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, with its implications for peace and security,” in which the nominalization blurs the agent. In the UN Resolutions the so called application provision is frequent (Resolution 1540 2004): “Gravely concerned by the threat of terrorism and the risk that non-State actors such as those identified in the United Nations list established and maintained by the Committee established under Security Council Resolution 1267 and those to whom Resolution 1373 **applies**, may acquire, develop, traffic in or use nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery”. According to Williams (2007:44): “Application provisions thus define the scope of a given law or regulation”. A distinction can be made between mandatory provision and directory norms. The former entails that the performance of a specific act is required and are to be found in statutes; the latter can be found in administrative regulations. In both cases permission is given by a source of authority. The final part of a prescriptive text contains commencement provisions, which specify under which conditions an agreement may come into force.

In the United Nations Resolutions we find a wide range of explicit performative verbs usually in the non-finite -ing form. In the central part of Resolutions we find explicit performative verbs in the present simple as in the following examples:

Affirming that prevention of proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons should not hamper international cooperation in materials, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes while goals of peaceful utilization should not be used as a cover for proliferation,

Decides that all States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery;

The structure of Resolutions consists of: the name of the authorizing body followed by subordinate sentences beginning with the -ing form, -ed participles and a series of finite performative verbal constructions in the present simple tense.

A strong presence of nominalizations represented by finite -ing forms, -ed forms and *declares, calls upon, instructs* can be isolated identified in the corpus. The presence of non-finite -ing forms and of -ed participles and of noun phrases, *enactment, acquisition, acceptance, fulfilment*, reveals a strong presence of nominalizations. The sentences are mainly

declarative and are used to state facts, to give information from a sender to an addressee whose role is that of a receiver.

2.5 Personal pronouns

The use of personal pronouns is important to investigate the role of Agency agent. In the United Nations Resolutions we can notice the use of gerundive forms and verbs in the present tense in the third person both singular and plural. The occurrences of personal pronouns is very low and we can notice that in the Security Council Resolutions there are no examples of the use of the personal pronoun “We”, which is present, instead, in the General Assembly Resolutions:

Text type	I	you	he	it	we	they
Security Council Resolutions	0,04%			0,15%	0,04%	0,05%
General Assembly Resolutions				0,14%	0,01%	0,04%

Table 3. Frequency distribution of Personal pronouns in the UN Resolutions ptw.

In both the Security Council Resolutions and the General Assembly Resolutions the most frequent pronoun is “it”, this is unsurprising in that Resolutions are normative texts and consequently the impersonal form is extremely frequent in prescriptive legal texts. In the General Assembly Resolutions we can note the presence of the personal pronoun “we”, which does not occur in the Security Council Resolutions. The personal pronoun “I” occurs only when the addresser introduces the content of Resolutions as in “I have the honour”:

S/1226

26 January 1949

24 January 1949

I have the honour³ to transmit herewith the text of the resolution concerning Palestine which was adopted by the General Assembly at its 186th meeting on 11 December 1948.

³ My bold type