

**Generalizations as Indicators of
Stance in American Television
Interviews**

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* Dr. Miranda Mohamed Khamis El-Zouka

Abstract

In television interviews, stancetaking can be manifested clearly because participants interact and react to each other. They also express their own views and stances regarding various issues of general interest. One linguistic device they use to do this is generalizations. The study deals with four kinds of generalizations that refer to general classes. These are: lexical noun phrases, and generic *you*, *we* and *they*. The study investigates the various functions of these generalizations regarding stance. It also examines the similarities and/or differences in the use of the analyzed kinds of generalizations by interviewers and interviewees in American television interviews. The study reveals that broadening the extent of a given stance using the analyzed generalizations gives it more power and credibility.

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Key Words: Stance, Generalizations, Stance Triangle, Television Interviews

1-Introduction

Stance has recently become a very important concept in linguistic studies, such as Englebretson (2007) and Jaffe (2009). Many of these studies show that stancetaking has a dialogic nature (Damari, 2010; Keisanen, 2007; Rauniomaa, 2007). In daily conversations, speakers, by interacting and reacting to each other's positions, take a stance. Many linguistic devices can be used to express the stance of the speaker towards a given issue. One of these devices is generalizations. Berman (2005) indicates that generality is one of the three dimensions of discourse stance. In addition, van Leeuwen (1995) maintains that generalizations are important when analyzing different kinds of texts. Television interviews are one kind of spoken texts in which different kinds of generalizations are used. This study examines the functions of four different kinds of generalizations used by interviewers and interviewees in television interviews. These are lexical noun phrases (NPs), and generic *you*, *we* and *they*.

2-Aims and Methodology of the Study

The study deals with four kinds of generalizations that refer to general classes. These are: lexical NPs and

generic *you*, *we*, and *they*. The study investigates the functions of these generalizations, which are related to stance, in American television interviews. It examines the similarities and/or differences in the use of the four kinds of generalizations by interviewers and interviewees in the television interviews under analysis. The study also presents a quantitative analysis of the analyzed kinds of generalizations in the data. The data consists of 14 recorded hours obtained from the television programmes *Amanpour*, *Fareed Zakaria GPS*, *Inside Politics*, and *State of the Union* shown on the CNN channel. These programmes have been chosen because they provide a deep analysis of the current issues discussed, and present various viewpoints regarding these issues. The analyzed kinds of generalizations are italicized in the extracts for clarification.

The present study combines two methodologies, namely **Du Bois'** (2002) theory of stance and conversation analysis (CA) techniques. These two methodologies are used as they support each other to reach a full understanding of the speaker's stance in the data investigated. Du Bois' (2002) theory of stance offers a framework that helps in analyzing various linguistic devices that help indicate the speaker's stance regarding a given issue. However, this theory does not consider the contexts of use of these linguistic devices. Also, this theory does not



focus on how stancetaking is managed in a given interaction. CA focuses on the organization of a given interaction and the way it is sequentially organized. It also analyses the use of various linguistic devices in natural settings. Thus, it describes what actually happens in the analyzed data. By combining the two methodologies a full view of the stances of participants in a given interaction is manifested. This also shows the ways the sequential position of participants affect their stances.

3-Theoretical Background

Stance is a key facet of human discourse. Biber and Finegan (1989: 93) indicate that it is a speaker-based evaluation of propositional content expressed by an utterance. This is done using lexical and grammatical expressions of attitudes, feelings, judgments, or commitments concerning the propositional content of a message. Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) define stance as "*personal feelings, attitudes, judgments, or assessments that a speaker or writer has about the information in a proposition*". Stance is also a speaker-based orientation towards others. Thus, stance is a person's expression of his/her relationship with both his/her talk and interlocutors (Goodwin & Yaeger-Dror, 2002; Kiesling, 2005: 96). Haddington (2004: 101) maintains that stance refers to the speakers' or writers' subjective attitudes towards a given issue. Wu (2004: 3)

indicates that "*stance is a speaker's indication of how he/she knows about, is commenting on, or is taking an affective or other position toward the person or matter, being addressed*". In addition, Du Bois (2007: 163) defines stance as "*a public act by a social actor achieved dialogically through covert communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others,) and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the socio-cultural field*". Finally, Tracy (2011: 66) indicates that stance involves the speaker's interactional display of evaluation. The above definitions indicate that stancetaking is a kind of an evaluation of a given issue or person.

There are two main kinds of stance. The first is *epistemic stance* which focuses on the degree of certainty or doubt a speaker has about a given issue. This kind of stance includes markers, such as adjectives (e.g. *clear* and *obvious*), adverbs (e.g. *perhaps* and *clearly*), verb forms (e.g. *demonstrate* and *indicate*), and modals (e.g. *might* and *should*). The second kind is *affective stance* which refers to an assessment of a person, issue or event. It is concerned with states, emotions, and attitudes, and can be expressed by verbal and nonverbal means. The communicative expression can vary depending on the style of speech (Biber & Finegan, 1989; Biber et al., 1999; Tracy, 2007).



Since stance is an expression of a speaker's or writer's subjective attitude, it can be manifested clearly in spoken discourse. In this kind of discourse, two or more participants are involved, and each has his/her individual opinion or stance, and thus expresses a subjective attitude. In this case, stancetaking is subjective. In the ongoing interaction, speakers also express their subjective attitudes or opinions. In this case, stancetaking is intersubjective. The presence of two subjectivities in the ongoing interaction is an important requirement for an intersubjective interaction (Haddington, 2004:107). Jaffe (2009: 20) also emphasizes that stance is an interactional and intersubjective achievement, and not just a subjective phenomenon. Stances are not only expressed in a single turn. Rather, they are constructed across several turns in a given interaction.

Stance involves the three acts of evaluation, positioning, and alignment to a proposition. *Evaluation* is the process through which the "*stancetaker orients to an object of stance and characterizes it as having some specific quality or value...Positioning is the act of situating a social actor with respect to responsibility for stance and for invoking sociocultural value*" (Du Bois, 2007:143). Positioning can be shown when the stancetaker indicates his/her epistemic or affective stance or indicates different degrees of certainty regarding the issue discussed. *Alignment* is "*the act of calibrating the relationship between*

two stances, and by implication between two stancetakers" (Du Bois, 2007: 144).

One of the prominent linguists in the area of stancetaking is Du Bois who developed a *theory of stance* in 2002. This theory is a discourse-functional approach to language and grammar. It aims at clarifying the functions of linguistic devices in naturally-occurring discourse (Du Bois, 2002; 2007: 163). The theory maintains that stance is a shared intersubjective activity accomplished in a given

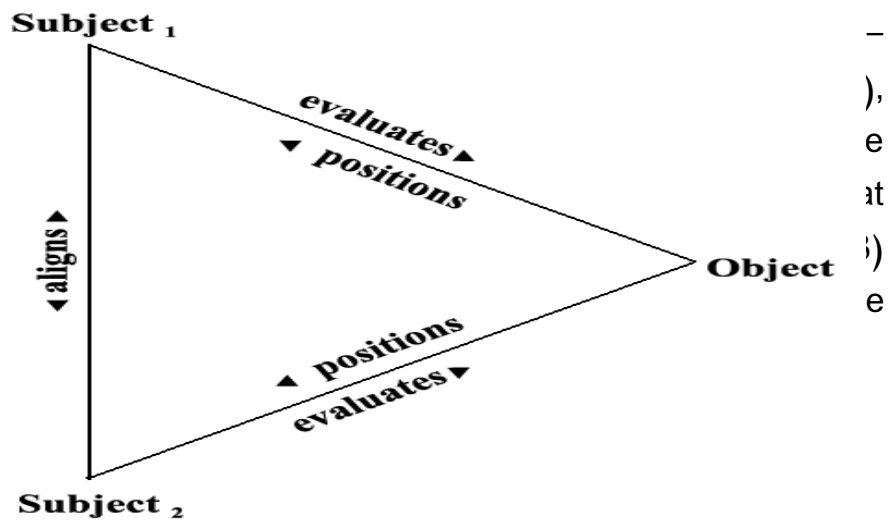


Figure (1): Du Bois' Stance Triangle (2002; 2007: 163)

The *stance triangle* emphasizes the dialogic and intersubjective nature of stancetaking as it focuses on participants' turn-by-turn negotiation of stance in



conversations (Damari, 2010:609). In this theory, subject (1) introduces a stance object in an utterance which evaluates this object. Thus, he/she clarifies his/her stance regarding it. In this way, he/she establishes a relationship between him/her and the stance object as well as between himself/herself and subject (2). This latter relationship is called *forward-type intersubjectivity* in interaction. Then, subject (2) evaluates the same issue evaluated by subject (1), and positions himself/herself in relation to it, and thus aligns with subject (1). This is called *backward-type intersubjectivity* in interaction. Alignment does not only mean agreeing but also the ways participants position themselves in relation to each other (Du Bois, 2007: 164). Therefore, according to this theory, stancetaking is an intersubjective social and collaborative activity in which participants indicate their stances by aligning with the stances of the other participants.

Television interviews are characterized by conveying both objective and subjective information (Biber et al., 1999: 859). Thus, many of what is said in these interviews is highly evaluative as participants indicate their views, feelings, and attitudes regarding a given issue (Bybee & Hopper, 2001: 7). Therefore, stancetaking is clearly manifested in this kind of discourse. Television interviews usually revolve around questioning and responding (Heritage & Roth, 1995: 1). The main aim of questions in these interviews is to elicit responses and information from



the interviewees. In these responses, politicians or public figures express their stances and defend them (Haddington, 2004: 102). Usually the interviewer's questions require answers from the interviewee. The interviewer forms the question asked in a way to set a given position regarding the issue discussed. In other words, the question asked leads to the construction of a given stance. The stance included in a given question or question preface by the interviewer provides paths for the interviewee relevant both as a response to the question asked and as a response to the stance indicated in the question (Haddington, 2004: 121–122). In television interviews, both interviewers and interviewees express stance by allying themselves with each other. Thus, stances can be jointly constructed.

Van Leeuwen (1995: 47, 99) indicates that generalizations are frequent in naturally-occurring discourse, especially texts that deal with legitimizing and delegitimizing actions to give credibility to what is expressed. Any given text can be either specific or general in reference to persons, places, or times. *Generality*, according to Berman (2005: 108), refers to "how general or specific reference is to people, places, and times mentioned in the text". He maintains that generality is one of the dimensions of discourse stance found in a given text. Discourse stance includes two other dimensions,



namely orientation (relation between sender, text, and recipient), and attitude (epistemic or affective). Regarding the dimension of generality, linguistic features regarding reference are coded according to three levels. These are: personal and specific (e.g. *This girl's book*), generic (e.g. *People/We/You/ They think*), and impersonal (e.g. *It's known*). Generality is a continuum which includes linguistic features that are personal and intimate at one end and impersonal and distant at the other end (Berman, 2005: 107– 108).

A speaker/writer indicates his/her stance regarding a given issue using generalizations based on personal and societal beliefs (Jaffe, 2009: 128). Stances expressed using generalizations also reflect beliefs and opinions that may be shared by other participants in an on-going interaction. These generalizations, then, help in manifesting solidarity among participants. Thus, using generalizations help in reflecting shared societal attitudes and beliefs (Clark, 1996: 80). Because generalizations refer to general classes, the evaluations and stances expressed have a broad range of application. Therefore, generalizations have broadening functions, and express a speaker/writer's stances or opinions, solidarity among participants, and shared societal opinions and attitudes. Hence, generalizations are helpful in indicating stance in an on-going interaction.

Biber and Finegan (1988: 2) maintain that many linguistic functions express stance. These include expressions of certainty, generalizations, and actuality. These functions manifest a speaker's/writer's attitudes to what is expressed. Several linguistic devices express generality of meaning such as adverbials of time (e.g. *We go camping during the Summer*) and place (e.g. *living here is different from other places*). However, the focus of this study is on lexical NPs, and generic *you*, *we*, and *they*. Concerning lexical NPs, they include plural nouns (e.g. *solutions, quarrels*), verb-related nominals (e.g. *agreement, discussion*), words referring to groups of people (e.g. *women, children, Americans, the Egyptian people*), institutional entities (e.g. *the media, political parties*), and hyperbolic subjects (e.g. *everyone, anybody*). As for generic *you*, previous studies show that it is used to universalize an experience and formulate morals and truisms (Kuo, 2002: 35; Maitland & Wilson, 1987: 497). Other studies manifest that generic *they* is used to generalize an experience, characterize others as outsiders, and express a general consensus (Pennycook, 1994: 177). Concerning generic *we*, previous studies maintain that it is used to include others, and to invoke a general attitude regarding an issue (Allen, 2006: 9; Wales, 1996:142).



There are many studies about the functions of pronouns in political speeches, such as Allen (2006) and Maitland and Wilson (1987). There are also studies about stancetaking that deal with how the shifts from the speaker's native language to another indicate a shift in stance, such as Rampton (1995, 1999). Moreover, there are studies about the syntactic aspects used to indicate stance in television interviews, such as Bull and Mayer (1993) and Bull (1994). Furthermore, Clayman and Heritage (2002) and Heritage (1985) deal with sequential aspects of indicating stance in television interviews. In addition, there are other studies about stance markers, such as Fox (2001), Karkkainen (2003), and Keisanen (2007). However, to the researcher's knowledge, there are no studies about the stance-related functions of lexical NPs, and generic *you*, *we* and *they* as used by interviewers and interviewees in television interviews. Thus, the present study attempts to fill in this gap.

4-Analysis

4.1 Lexical Noun Phrases (NPs)

The study shows that there are some functions of lexical NPs that are common between interviewers and interviewees. These are: to express shared responsibility, general truths, and invoke a given attitude regarding an issue or a person. These functions are shown in the following extracts:

Extract (1)

Generalizations as Indicators of Stance

King: We're sort of done with the fun and the fact that he's an interesting and a different candidate. When do we decide this is not actually someone who, I think, belongs in the Oval Office? *The people* are the ones who will decide if they really support him.

Lee: *The Americans* will be deciding. In the latest poll, Mr. Trump is their frontrunner: 22 percent in Iowa; Carson at 14 percent; Walker at 9 percent; Cruz at 8 percent; Fiorina at 7 percent. This Iowa poll tells you that Mr. Trump is getting a lot of votes....

(*Inside*

Politics, CNN, 16/8/2015)

The Interviewer, John King, is talking with M.J. Lee, the CNN Political Reporter, about the presidential candidate Donald Trump. King uses the lexical NP "*the people*" in "*The people are the...him*" to indicate that Americans in the elections will say whether they support Trump or not. In this way, King tries to convince the public that it is their shared responsibility to elect an appropriate president. Lee agrees with him in his stance because American voters are the ones who will be deciding. He uses the lexical NP "*the Americans*" in "*The Americans will be deciding*" to leave this decision in the hands of Americans because Trump is a frontrunner, according to the latest poll results. Thus, by



using "*The Americans*", Lee also tries to indicate that choosing an appropriate president is a shared responsibility among all Americans.

Extract (2)

King: And you know, *every candidate* at some point deals with some kind of investigation. Some of these mistakes are uncovered by *the media*. The problem for the Clintons is that this has baked into their image over so many years.

Henderson: Yes, *the candidates* keep saying the "Times" is essentially out to get us. That's how they framed it. You haven't had the kind of full campaign and attack ads that you'll see going against Walker, going against Bush, Trump, and whoever the nominee is....

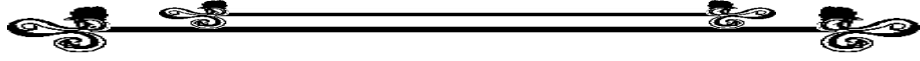
(*Inside Politics*,
CNN, 26/7/2015)

The interviewer, John King, and Malika Henderson, CNN Political Senior Reporter, are discussing the issue that Hillary Clinton is pending investigation because of using a public server for her official emails. King uses the lexical NP "*every candidate*" in "*every candidate at some point...investigation*", which is a hyperbolic subject to show that all candidates may face investigations for anything

illegal they may have done. By using this NP, King tries to generalize what he says to make his stance seem to be a general truth or fact which applies to all candidates. He also uses the lexical NP "*the media*" in "*Some of these...by the media*" to state that it is a well-known truth that all kinds of media may uncover some mistakes of all presidential candidates. Thus, by using this NP, King tries to prove what he says and show that it is a fact. This shows his stance that he is convinced that presidential candidates can be watched by the media. Henderson agrees with him in his stance saying "Yes", and he uses the lexical NP "*the candidates*" in "*the candidates keep...get us*" to show that all candidates, with no exceptions, are being watched by the media, and that they all know this. Thus, by using this NP, Henderson indicates that what he says is a well-known truth or fact.

Extract (3)

Zakaria: ...if Kerry was serious about the peace process, why did he seem intent on shaking Israel's fate? My only question to you is, do you think that the United States government, when appointing special envoys, should worry about the sensibilities of *the Israelis*?



Oren: I have known Martin Indyk for many years and appreciate his knowledge and experience in diplomacy.

The Israelis respond to feeling secure. They do not respond to threats. They do not respond to pressure. I always would say, try love. Try love. If you embrace us, make us feel secure, we will go that extra mile....

(Fareed Zakaria

GPS, CNN, 28/6/2015)

The interviewer, Fareed Zakaria, is talking with Michael Oren, Foreign Israeli Ambassador to the United States, about appointing US special envoy, Martin Indyk, to Israel in the Israeli–Palestinian negotiations. Zakaria uses the lexical NP "*the Israelis*" in "*My only question to you is... should worry about the sensibilities of the Israelis?*" to show that he is concerned about the Israelis as a people, and that their opinion must be taken into consideration regarding any decision about them. Thus, it is obvious that he takes the sides of the Israelis and wants to make his interviewee agree with him to convince viewers to adopt a positive stance regarding the Israelis. Oren agrees with Zakaria's question. He uses the lexical NP "*The Israelis*" in "*The Israelis respond to feeling secure*" to show that all the Israelis are peaceful. Thus, he uses this NP to invoke a general attitude of support for the Israelis to show that they are good people and not aggressive at all. Both the

interviewer and the interviewee express their common stance and use the same lexical NP "*the Israelis*" to reflect their solidarity with the Israeli people. They try to orient their viewers to the view that Israelis are not bad but they only need to feel secure.

Interviewers use lexical NPs only to keep a neutral position, as manifested in the next extract:

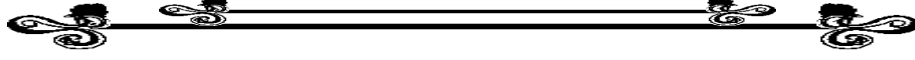
Extract (4)

King: ... His comments about Mexican immigrants didn't do it. His comments about John McCain didn't do it. Is there any reason to believe that this assault on Megyn Kelly and his whining about the debate will hurt? *Some people* think it might actually help again.

Fournier: This is up to *the American voters*. And we really do need to separate Donald Trump from his voters. His voters have a real and justified reason to be upset with the political system because they have to be anxious about where we are in these times. This anger is going to outlast Donald Trump and it's going to go somewhere outside of the system and hopefully change politics, either for the better or for the worse....

(*Inside Politics*,

CNN, 9/8/2015)



The interviewer, John King, is talking with Congressman Ron Fournier about Donald Trump, the presidential candidate, who accused his critics bluntly of being stupid in a debate. King says, "*Some people think it might actually help again*" in which he uses the lexical NP "*some people*" without specifying the people who think that his performance in the debate will benefit him. He does this to keep a neutral position to avoid any responsibility. Fournier responds by saying, "*This is up to the American voters*" in which he uses the lexical NP "*the American voters*" to indicate that the political future of Trump is in the hands of the American voters. This lexical NP indicates the shared responsibility of Americans in choosing their president. Fournier uses this lexical NP to express his stance that he knows that the performance of Trump in the debate might negatively affect his image because Americans are already upset with the whole political system. Therefore, it is not Trump who they should be worried about. Fournier implies that Americans need a complete change of the political system. Thus, he does not agree with what the interviewer says.

4.2 Generic You

The study reveals that there are two functions of generic *you* that are common between interviewers and interviewees in the analyzed data. These are: to express general truths and to assign a major role to the

addressee(s) to convince them of a given stance. This is manifested in the next extracts:

Extract (5)

King: How long can he get away with that? I get the idea if *you* create more jobs there's more tax revenue coming in to Social Security. But if *you're* looking 15, 20, 30 years down the line, Social Security is easier than Medicare but *you* still have to deal with question do *you* raise the retirement age again or do *you* carry out a means-test benefit?

Costa: This is quite true, with the kinds of major problems we have in this country, *you* have to take all this into consideration. According to Trump allies, they want to go into debate with the right standing. They want to make sure they're leading the polls and they want to give him an opportunity in the debate to unveil some

specifics....

(*Inside*

Politics, CNN, 26/7/2015)

The interviewer, John King, is discussing with the *Washington Post* reporter, Robert Costa, the bad economic situation and the problem of unemployment Trump, as a possible future president, has to deal with. King repeats the



generic *you* five times in "*I get the idea...benefits?*" to assert that what he says is a general truth because if jobs are created, more taxes will be paid, and thus social security will be more beneficial than Medicare. His use of generic *you* shows that anyone who will be president will face the same problem, and thus will be faced with the two options of whether to raise the retirement age or carry out a means-test benefit. Thus, by using generic *you*, King expresses his stance to convince viewers of what he says because it is a general truth. He wants viewers to share his opinion. Costa agrees with King and uses generic *you* in "*you have to take all this into consideration*" to show that taking the problems and choices mentioned by King into consideration is a well-known truth known by all people. Thus, his stance is the same as that of King.

Extract (6)

King: Do you think the media has affected your performance in the debate? I mean, do you think, they are responsible for it?

Trump: I'm very disappointed in Fox News. I think they probably had an agenda. But certainly I don't have a lot of respect for Megyn Kelly. She's a lightweight. And you know, she came out there, reading her little script, and trying to, you know, be tough and be sharp. And when *you* meet her *you*

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realize she's not very tough and she's not very sharp.
She gets out and she starts asking me all sorts of
ridiculous questions. She was off base....

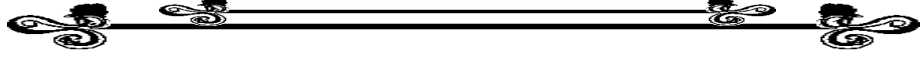
(*Inside*

Politics, CNN, 9/8/2015)

The interviewer, John King, is discussing with Donald Trump, the presidential candidate, his bad performance in a presidential debate. Trump blames the moderator of the debate, Megyn Kelly, for his performance. In an attempt to convince viewers of what he says so that they would adopt his stance regarding what happened, Trump uses generic *you* twice in "*when you...you realize...sharp*". He does this to assign to the audience his role in the debate to indicate that they would have acted exactly like him if they had been in his place and had a moderator like Kelly.

Extract (7)

King: In fact, at the moment, Hillary Clinton loses all three of those states to Jeb Bush, to Marco Rubio, and to Scott Walker. So if *you're* a Republican and *you're* looking at the map in 2016, this is Obama versus Romney. That's a tough map to look at for Republicans. But play out what we just saw. What if Republicans win Colorado, win Iowa, and win Virginia? Now, under this scenario Hillary Clinton would next -- still be the next president



of the United States. Does this email issue affect her chances for presidency?

Lerer: There's little question that this email thing is a problem for Hillary Clinton. Folks in the campaign, the Clinton camp say "we know there's a section of the country that will never vote for Hillary Clinton". This email situation reaffirms what they already think. All Americans saw that with Mitt Romney, right. Democrats were really effective, painting him as this heartless plutocrat....

(*Inside Politics,*

CNN, 26/7/2015)

The Interviewer, John King, is discussing with Lisa Lerer, from the Associated Press, the chances of Hillary Clinton in winning the presidential elections after the problem of her use of a public server for her official emails. King uses generic *you* twice in "*if you're a Republican and you're looking at the map in 2016... Romney*". By doing this, he is assigning to his viewers the role of being Republicans to make them understand that in this case it will be the same as Obama versus Romney because this is what happened in the previous elections. Thus, King clarifies his stance that he is convinced that Clinton has a strong possibility of winning the presidential elections. Lerer, the interviewee, disagrees with him because

members of Clinton's campaign know that there are those who will not vote for her. Thus, Lerer's stance differs from that of King's.

Only interviewers use generic *you* to express shared opinions. This is clarified in the following example:

Extract (8)

Bash: ...People are going to stay in this country after overstaying a visa. But when the person who went home follows the law, he doesn't get the same opportunity. We're going to fix the immigration system. Americans are quite aware that there must be a match between supply and demand for labor. Once *you* do that *you* can have a conversation about people who were here before.

Navarro: Amnesty is when *you* forgive everything. When *you* have a process where they have to go through lengthy tests, when they have to go through multiple obstacles, that is not amnesty.

(State of the Union,

CNN, 12/7/2015)

Dana Bash, the interviewer, is discussing with Anna Navarro, a political analyst, ways of fixing the American immigration system proposed by many of the presidential



candidates. To express her stance, Bash uses generic *you* twice in "*Once you do...before*" to show that this is a shared opinion among all Americans in the case of immigrants because the only general measure to be considered when accepting new immigrants is creating an equilibrium between supply and demand for labour. Navarro uses generic *you* twice in his response when he says, "*Amnesty is when you...amnesty*", in which generic *you* refers to anyone to indicate that this is a general truth. Navarro does this to show his stance that amnesty is achieved by removing obstacles and not by putting them.

4. 3 Generic We

The study manifests that invoking a general attitude regarding a given issue is the only function of generic *we* that is common between interviewers and interviewees. This is clarified in the following extracts:

Extract (9)

Amanpour: ... It'll be interesting for a long time, especially because you have said "I'm a Hungarian; I'm a politician. I'm a human being first." *We* are watching the current Hungarian government behave in a very different way than you are behaving. These people are stranded at the train stations. They're stuck on trains. They're being treated very badly.

Gyurcsany: It is not only Hungary. *We* and all European countries need to give these people their basic needs in life. When they are waiting for the opportunity to leave their country to Germany or Denmark, basically to work, they only need some basic things. It's not a question of money. It's a question of some kind of humanity.

(*Amanpour,*

CNN, 3/9/2015)

Christiane Amanpour, the interviewer, is discussing with Ferenc Gyurcsany, Hungary's former Prime Minister, the issue of Syrian refugees. Amanpour favours providing support for the Syrian refugees, so she uses generic *we* in "*we are watching...behaving*" to invoke a general attitude of sympathy towards these refugees to convince European countries to support them and to convince viewers that this is the humane thing to be done in this case. Gyurcsany uses generic *we* in "*we and all...life*" to express his stance that it is not the responsibility of the Hungarian government alone, but all European countries must cooperate in solving this problem. Thus, his use of generic *we* indicates the shared responsibility of all European countries in lightening the burden thrown on Hungary because of these refugees.



Extract (10)

Acosta: What do you make of that, congressman, the President's assessment last week that America is not losing?

Kinzinger: You're not losing and you're not winning. *We*, as Americans, have to understand that the goal is the destruction of ISIS. A lot of people want to join ISIS because they want to be martyrs. I think *we* are going to continue to see this problem with foreign fighters....

(*State of the Union*,
CNN, 24/5/2015)

The interviewer, John Acosta, is discussing with Congressman, Adam Kinzinger the threat of ISIS to the Arab World. Acosta is mentioning what Obama has said, which is that America is winning the war against ISIS, in order to be neutral as an interviewer. He does this to make his interviewee express his stance regarding what is said. Third party statements help in maintaining a neutralistic stance (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). Kinzinger uses generic *we* twice in his response. The first is in "*we, as Americans...ISIS*" in which *we* refers to all Americans to convince them that ISIS is a serious threat, so all of them must cooperate in the destruction of this threat. The second one is "*I think we...fighters*" in which *we* also refers to all Americans to convince them that the American

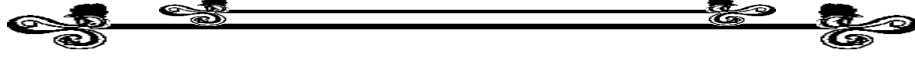
society as a whole will suffer from these foreign fighters when they return home. Thus, ISIS is a great threat that must be destroyed before the American society itself begins to suffer. By using generic *we* twice, Kinzinger tries to assert his stance that fighting ISIS is the responsibility of all Americans, and thus he tries to invoke a public support for Obama's air raids to destroy ISIS.

Interviewees use generic *we* only to express shared responsibility, as clarified in the next example:

Extract (11)

Amanpour: You know, again, as an aspiring E.U. nation, you're listening now to the leader of Europe, Angela Merkel, talking about reassessing the whole principle of Schengen and passport free travel around the continent. How does that strike you? Is that a solution?

Stefanovic: What *we* wanted to show is whatever the solution is, *we* have to show that these people, who came to Europe, should be treated in the European way. *We* have more and more people that *we* can settle here in Europe. So far, not many of them expressed the desire to stay in Serbia. But *we* are



prepared to speak to the European Union about
possible solutions....

(*Amanpour*, CNN, 31/8/2015)

The interviewer, Christiane Amanpour is interviewing Nebosa Stefanovic, Serbian Interior Minister, and they are discussing the issue of Syrian refugees in Europe. Amanpour is using what Merkel said about reassigning the principle of Schengen in order to appear neutral as an interviewer. Then, she asks the yes/no question "*Is that a solution?*" By using this question, the interviewee is forced to indicate his stance regarding the issue discussed. In Stefanovic's response, he uses generic *we* five times to assert his stance that solving the problem of these refugees is a shared responsibility among all countries of the European Union as they must cooperate to solve this problem and provide a humane life for these Syrian refugees since their number is increasing in all European countries.

4.4 Generic *They*

The study shows that only interviewers use generic *they* to express a neutral position to avoid responsibility. This is clarified in the next extract:

Extract (12)

Generalizations as Indicators of Stance

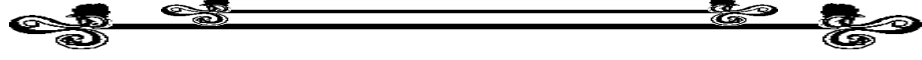
Zakaria: Last time Germany told the European Central Bank to provide the funds. It wrote the checks. *They* say this time seem different?

Faroohar: I think this time is different. And I think, you know, you're right that it seemed like Germany's leaders were really working to make a deal. But if you spend any time in Germany you see that the public at large really never wanted a deal with Greece. *They* have never believed that the Greeks were good for their word in terms of reforms....

(Fareed Zakaria GPS,

CNN, 12/7/2015)

The interviewer, Fareed Zakaria, is discussing with Rana Faroohar, an economic analyst, the economic problem of Greece. Zakaria uses generic *they* in "*They say this time is different*" in which *they* does not refer to any specific person in order to be neutral so as not to impose a given stance on viewers. He also uses it to distance himself from any responsibility. Faroohar responds by agreeing with Zakaria that this time the situation is different because Germany does not want to provide any funds for Greece to solve its economic problem. He uses the lexical NP "*the public*" in "*the public at large really never wanted a deal with Greece*" which refers to all Germans to show that this



is a public opinion shared by all Germans. He, then, uses generic *they* in "*They have never...reforms*" which refers to the German public again to assert that this is a shared public opinion. He does this to show that this is not only his personal stance but also the stance of Germans.

Interviewees use generic *they* for many functions. These are: to emphasize the us/them separation, project a negative image of the opponents, and express shared opinions. These functions are demonstrated in the following extracts:

Extract (13)

Zakaria: Ken, what does this tell you? It does seem as though the Bush and Obama administrations give credit to Hank Paulson, Tim Geithner, and Ben Bernanke, who handled the American economic problems in an efficient way, and it was resolved quickly. Many countries are, in fact, facing a bad economic situation, especially Greece recently. What do you think of this?

Rogoff: Yes America actually succeeded in facing economic problems to a large extent. When Greece appeared, their debt was too high. *They* were cut off from the world market because the debt hasn't been written down enough. Germany is giving out money to

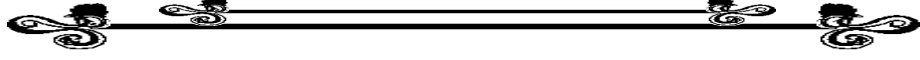
Greece to keep it in a better position, but the economy is still crippled....

(Fareed Zakaria GPS,
CNN, 12/7/2015)

Fareed Zakaria is discussing with Keneth Rogoff, a Professor of Economics, the economic problems in America and Greece. Zakaria asks Rogoff about his opinion regarding this problem. Rogoff uses generic *they* in "*They were cut off from the world market*" to show that the Greek economic situation is different from the American one, which succeeded in dealing with the economic problem. Thus, by using generic *they*, Rogoff emphasizes the us/them separation in his stance to present the American way of dealing with the problem positively, and at the same time draw a negative image of the Greek economic situation and the way the Greek government dealt with it. By indicating differences in the ways America and Greece dealt with their economic problems, Rogoff tries to convince viewers of his stance.

Extract (14)

Zakaria: You don't think you're going to get any support.



Obama: Well, I didn't say that. What I said was that there are those who, if *they* did not read the bill before *they* announced their opposition, if *they* are not able to offer plausible reasons why *they* wouldn't support the bill or plausible alternatives in preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon other than potential military strikes, then that would indicate that *they're* not interested in the substance of the issue. *They're* interested in the politics of the issue.

(Fareed *Zakaria GPS*, CNN,

9/8/2015)

The interviewer, Fareed Zakaria, is discussing with Barack Obama, the American President, the nuclear agreement with Iran. Zakaria tells Obama that he is not getting any support regarding this agreement. Obama in his responses uses generic *they* six times to refer to all those who do not support the agreement. He does this to project a negative image of all those who oppose the agreement. At the same time, he draws a positive self-image to present himself as a capable President who knows how to deal with Iranian threats. This indicates that Obama completely supports this agreement with Iran, and tries to convince viewers of his stance.

Extract (15)

Zakaria: what do you make of the phenomenon of Donald Trump? *They* say his increasing popularity is unprecedented.

Huntsman: Well, this is where we are. And I have to tell you that, having been involved in the last election cycle, there is anger among the people because of all economic and political policies. *They've* been angry for two or three election cycles. I think what Trump represents is the ultimate big protest vote....

(Fareed Zakaria GPS,

CNN, 16/8/2015)

The interviewer, Fareed Zakaria, is discussing with Jon Huntsman, Former US Ambassador to China, the popularity of Donald Trump, the presidential candidate. Zakaria uses generic *they* in "*They say his increasing popularity is unprecedented*" to refer to all people to keep a neutral stance and distance himself from what these people say. Huntsman responds also using generic *they* in "*They've been angry for two or three election cycles*" to refer to all Americans who have been angry during the last elections. He says so to show that this is a general public stance shared by all Americans, and not his own. He also uses the epistemic stance marker "*I think*" in "*I think what Trump*



represents is the ultimate big protest vote" in which he admits that Trump is different from all other presidential candidates in the previous elections because he is someone who can express their protests against all kinds of problems in the American society. Huntsman admits that he agrees with the stance of the public by saying, "*having been involved in the last election cycle*" to show that he has been personally involved in how policies are made and how candidates try to convince the public of these policies.

5- Results and Discussion

In this section, the results obtained from the data analysis are presented. Table (1) demonstrates the frequency of using each of the four kinds of the analyzed generalizations:

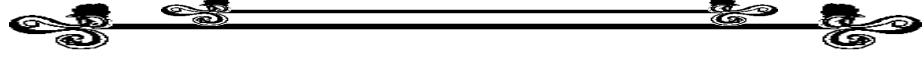
Table (1): The frequency of using each of the four kinds of generalizations in the data

Kind of Generalization	Frequency of Usage
Lexical NPs	471 (40.7%)
Generic <i>They</i>	334 (28.9%)
Generic <i>You</i>	187 (16.3%)
Generic <i>We</i>	163 (14.1%)
Total	1155 (100%)

Table (1) shows that the total number of the analyzed markers of generalizations in the data is 1155.

Generalizations as Indicators of Stance

Lexical NPs are the most commonly used kind of generalizations (471 times, 40.7%), followed by generic *they* (334 times, 28.9%), generic *you* (187 times, 16.3%), and the least used is generic *we* (163 times, 14.1%). Lexical NPs occur more frequently than the other kinds of generalizations due to the fact that they refer to whole groups or classes of people, institutions, places, and entities which are addressed or discussed in the analyzed television interviews. Thus, interviewers and interviewees must be explicit when referring to them so that viewers can understand the issue discussed clearly. The second most commonly used kind of generalizations is generic *they* because both interviewers and interviewees use it to express a given stance regarding a given issue as a shared opinion among the public. It is also used as a distancing strategy to keep a seemingly neutral stance to avoid any attack against the person speaking. Interviewers and interviewees use it because they want to convince viewers of their opinions. The third most commonly used kind is generic *you*. One reason for this is that when discussing a controversial issue, both interviewers and interviewees try to show that their stance regarding the issue discussed is a general truth and/or a shared opinion, and thus it is the most acceptable one. By using generic *you*, they try to indicate the importance of what they try to convince viewers of, and therefore their stance must be



taken into consideration. Moreover, in order to be more convincing, generic *you* is sometimes used to assign a given role to viewers to make them understand clearly the issue discussed. The least used kind of generalization is generic *we*. A possible explanation for this is that in television interviews both interviewers and interviewees try to make viewers share their stance by invoking a general public opinion or attitude regarding the issue discussed. However, both interviewers and interviewees must be cautious when using any of the four kinds of generalizations because viewers do not like being forced to adopt a given stance.

In the analyzed television interviews, the turns are determined for the participants based on their institutional roles. The interviewers ask the questions and the interviewee answers them. The interviewer, in his/her turn, introduces the exact point of discussion. The interviewer's question may be preceded by a preface to give the audience background knowledge about the issues discussed. The data reveals that sometimes the interviewer indicates his/her own stance regarding a given issue (forward-type intersubjectivity in interaction) and sometimes maintains a neutral position because he/she must be objective in dealing with various issues. Therefore, Du Bois' (2002) stance triangle has been modified to express the interviewer's neutralism towards the issue

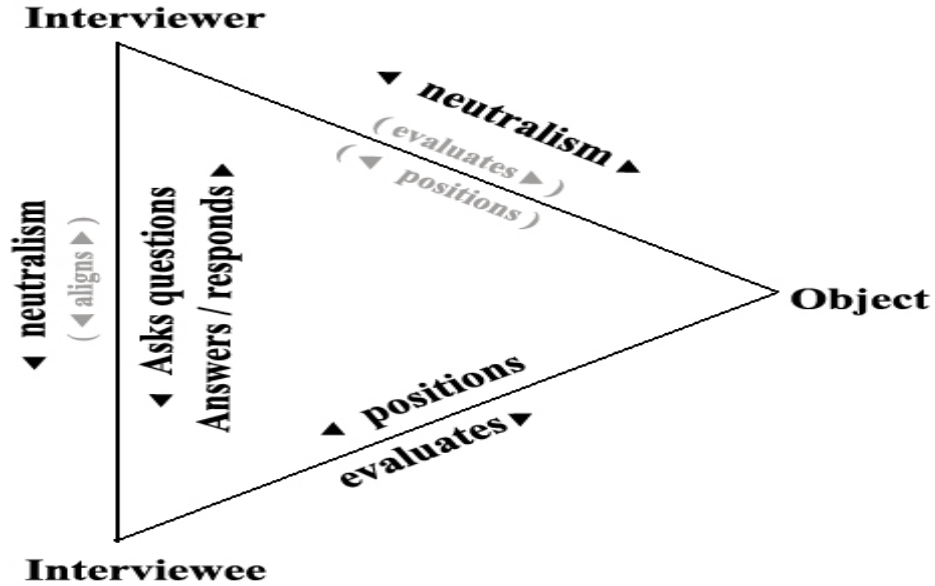


Figure (2): The modified version of the stance triangle as indicated by Haddington (2004: 125)

The analyzed television interviews also show that sometimes the interviewer is not totally neutral and introduces, in his/her turn, the stance of a third party to distance himself/herself from direct responsibility. To do this, the interviewer uses one or more type of generalizations in his/her turn. Then, the interviewee responds to what the interviewer is asking and indicates his/her stance regarding the issue discussed (Backward-type intersubjectivity in interaction). The interviewee also uses one or more type of generalizations to either agree or disagree with the stance that may be indicated in the question asked or in the prior question-preface. To give credibility and power to their stances, interviewers and interviewees use one or more of the analyzed generalizations in their turns to broaden the extent of their stances regarding the issues under discussion. It can be



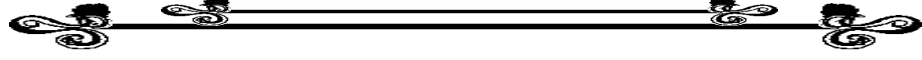
said that participants in television interviews use all possible ways to convince viewers of their stances.

6- Conclusion

The focus of this study has been to examine the functions of four kinds of generalizations, namely lexical NPs and generic *you*, *we*, and *they*, in American television interviews to determine similarities and/or differences between interviewers and interviewees in using them. The study reveals that lexical NPs are the most commonly used generalization, followed by generic *they*, generic *you*, and the least used is generic *we*. By using Du Bois' (2002) *theory of stance* and CA techniques, it has been possible to clarify the functions of the analyzed generalizations by interviewers and interviewees in television interviews. The study shows that regarding lexical NPs, there are some common functions between interviewers and interviewees. These are: to express shared responsibility, general truths, and invoke a given attitude regarding an issue or a person. In addition, only interviewers use lexical NPs to keep a neutral position. Concerning generic *you*, there are two functions that are common between interviewers and interviewees. These are: to express general truths and to assign a major role to the addressee(s) to convince them of a given stance. In addition, only interviewers use generic *you* to express shared opinions. It is worth noting that the analyzed television interviews has not revealed any

functions of lexical NPs and generic *you* that are specific to interviewees. As for generic *we*, the only function that is common between interviewers and interviewees is to invoke a general attitude regarding a given issue. Also, only interviewees use generic *we* to express shared responsibility. There are no functions of generic *we* that are specific to interviewers in the analyzed television interviews. Regarding generic *they*, interviewers use it to express a neutral position to avoid responsibility. Only interviewees use generic *they* to emphasize the us/them separation, project a negative image of the opponents, and express shared opinions. Furthermore in the analyzed data, there are no common functions of generic *they* between interviewers and interviewees. In fact, the use of the generalizations under investigation in the analyzed interviews helps participants indicate their stances regarding various issues.

The analyzed data shows that utterances containing these generalizations show subjective uses such as to evaluate a given issue and avoid responsibility, as well as intersubjective ones such as to express general truths and shared opinions. Therefore, by using these generalizations, participants link their own subjective and intersubjective stances towards various issues of public interest to societal and cultural norms.



The use of generalizations in television interviews manifests that stancetaking depends on collaborative efforts between participants. In these television interviews, participants, whether interviewers or interviewees, refer to people, places, or issues generally to attract viewers to what they say and convince them of the stances indicated. Sometimes generalizations are used to reflect jointly held societal beliefs to confirm adherence to generally held norms and beliefs.

Participants in television interviews use different kinds of generalizations to broaden the extent of a given stance, which gives it more power and strength. If the stance expressed spreads widely and is accepted by the people, it can become a public attitude. Therefore, the use of generalizations in an on-going interaction can be influential in creating a shared public stance regarding issues of general interest in a given society.

Further studies can deal with markers of epistemic stance in different languages. They can also deal with various ways of expressing stance in different types of discourse. These studies can also manifest gender differences in methods of expressing stance in various discourse types.

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