

Register Variation and Pragmatic Functions of Lexical Shift in Military and Non-Military Interactions in 13 Hours

Gibran Gaffar¹, Badri²

¹Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia

²Universitas Primagraha, Indonesia

INFO ARTIKEL

Sejarah artikel:

Diterima 18/08/2025

Disetujui 18/08/2025

Diterbitkan 20/05/2025

Penulis Korespondensi*:

Gibran Gaffar

Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia

Gibrangaffar353@gmail.com



©2025 Penulis. Diterbitkan oleh PT. Good Novelty Group. Ini adalah artikel akses terbuka di bawah lisensi CC BY SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

ABSTRACT

This study examines register variation and the pragmatic functions of lexical shifts in institutional interactions portrayed in *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi*. The research focuses on how military personnel, intelligence officers, and diplomatic actors adapt their language according to institutional roles, authority relations, emotional pressure, and operational urgency. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study applies discourse and pragmatic analysis to selected dialogues and scenes from the film. Data were collected through observation, transcription, categorization, and contextual interpretation of interactions involving Global Response Staff (GRS) personnel, CIA members, diplomats, and local militia groups. The findings indicate that GRS personnel demonstrate the most dynamic register shifts, particularly in high-risk situations. Lexical shifts serve various pragmatic functions, including authority negotiation, persuasion, intimidation, operational coordination, conflict escalation, and de-escalation. Furthermore, institutional hierarchy, emotional intensity, and situational demands significantly influence communication patterns and discourse strategies throughout the film.

KEYWORDS: register variation, lexical shift, pragmatics, institutional discourse, military communication.

INTRODUCTION

Language constitutes one of the most fundamental instruments through which individuals interpret reality, coordinate collective action, and establish social relationships. Within institutional settings, language performs functions that extend far beyond the mere exchange of information. It serves as a mechanism for expressing authority, maintaining organizational structures, constructing professional identities, and negotiating interpersonal relationships. Consequently, language use within institutions is highly sensitive to contextual factors, particularly when communication occurs under conditions of uncertainty, risk, and conflict. In such circumstances, speakers are often required to adapt their linguistic behavior rapidly in order to meet changing situational demands, resulting in observable variations in register and lexical choice.

The relationship between language and context has long been recognized as a central concern within discourse studies and pragmatics. Communication is rarely static; rather, it evolves dynamically according to the participants involved, the objectives being pursued, and the broader social environment in which interaction takes place. Different institutional actors frequently employ distinct communicative styles that reflect their professional responsibilities, organizational cultures, and strategic priorities. As a result, interactions occurring between members of different institutions often reveal competing perspectives, contrasting communication norms, and varying

interpretations of authority. These differences become particularly evident in environments characterized by operational urgency and heightened emotional pressure.

Conflict situations provide a unique context for examining the adaptability of language. During periods of crisis, communicative efficiency becomes increasingly important as participants attempt to manage threats, coordinate responses, and make rapid decisions under stressful conditions. In these circumstances, linguistic choices are rarely neutral. Speakers often modify their vocabulary, tone, and communicative strategies in response to immediate situational requirements. Such modifications may involve shifts from formal to informal language, from diplomatic to confrontational discourse, or from mitigated expressions to highly direct commands. These linguistic transformations are not arbitrary; rather, they serve specific pragmatic functions that help participants achieve particular communicative objectives.

The film *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi* offers a compelling representation of institutional communication under crisis conditions. Based on events surrounding the 2012 attack on United States diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya, the film depicts interactions among various institutional actors operating within an environment characterized by uncertainty, danger, and intense operational pressure. Throughout the narrative, military contractors, intelligence personnel, diplomatic officials, and local militia members engage in a series of complex interactions that illustrate how language adapts to evolving circumstances. The film therefore provides a rich source of data for exploring the relationship between register variation, lexical choice, and pragmatic function.

One of the most notable features of communication portrayed in the film is the frequent occurrence of lexical shifts. Characters regularly alter their language according to changes in threat level, organizational priorities, emotional states, and interpersonal relationships. For example, military personnel often employ concise and action-oriented language when responding to immediate threats, whereas intelligence officers may rely on bureaucratic and procedural discourse when discussing operational decisions. Similarly, diplomatic actors frequently use persuasive and relationship-oriented language designed to foster cooperation and maintain political legitimacy. These variations illustrate how language functions as a strategic resource through which institutional actors pursue different goals within the same communicative environment.

From a pragmatic perspective, lexical shifts are particularly significant because they reveal how meaning is negotiated through context. Words do not possess fixed meanings independent of their situational environment. Instead, their interpretation depends on factors such as speaker intention, audience expectations, institutional roles, emotional conditions, and communicative objectives. Consequently, a change in lexical choice often reflects more than a simple linguistic preference; it may indicate a shift in authority, a change in communicative strategy, or an attempt to influence the behavior of others. Understanding these functions is essential for explaining how institutional communication operates under conditions of crisis.

Previous studies within discourse analysis and pragmatics have demonstrated that language plays a crucial role in the construction and negotiation of power relations. Research has shown that authority is frequently established, challenged, and maintained through linguistic practices. Similarly, studies concerning conflict discourse have highlighted the importance of emotional language, persuasive strategies, and argumentative structures in shaping communicative outcomes. Although substantial scholarship exists regarding institutional discourse and pragmatic communication, relatively limited attention has been devoted to examining how register variation and lexical shifts interact within cinematic representations of crisis communication. Furthermore, few studies have explored how multiple institutional identities coexist and compete through language within a single conflict-oriented narrative.

The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating register variation and pragmatic functions of lexical shifts in *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi*. Rather than treating linguistic variation solely as a stylistic phenomenon, this research conceptualizes language as a dynamic social resource through which institutional actors negotiate authority, construct professional identities, manage emotional pressure, and coordinate collective action. By examining interactions among military personnel, intelligence officers, diplomatic representatives, and local actors, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how language operates within complex institutional environments.

Specifically, this research focuses on two central questions. First, what types of register

variation are employed by military and non-military institutional actors throughout the film? Second, what pragmatic functions are performed through lexical shifts during high-risk interactions? Addressing these questions will contribute to a deeper understanding of how language reflects and shapes institutional relationships during periods of crisis. Moreover, the findings are expected to enrich discussions within discourse analysis, pragmatics, institutional communication, and conflict studies by demonstrating the interconnected nature of language, power, emotion, and organizational identity.

Ultimately, this study argues that register variation and lexical shifts should not be viewed merely as linguistic phenomena. Instead, they represent complex communicative responses to changing social, institutional, and psychological conditions. Through the analysis of discourse in *13 Hours*, the research demonstrates that language serves as a critical instrument for navigating uncertainty, exercising authority, negotiating legitimacy, and ensuring operational effectiveness in conflict-driven environments. The findings therefore offer valuable insights into the ways institutional actors use language strategically when confronted with situations that demand rapid adaptation, high levels of coordination, and continuous management of interpersonal and organizational relationships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Register Theory and Discourse Analysis

Register is a variation in a language which are influenced by situational context, social roles, and purpose of communication. In *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, register is explained through three main aspects: field (topic or activity), tenor (relationship between participants) and mode (method of communication). Variations in these three aspects result in differences in lexical choices and language structure. In the context of military and other institutional member's interactions, differences in register becomes particularly noticeable. The military tends to use a more technical, concise, and direct language, while civilians tend to be more descriptive and flexible. This difference unveils different power relations, hierarchies, and communication goals.

2. Pragmatic Theory and the Construction of Meaning

Pragmatics studies how meanings are constructed through context and interaction, according to Attardo, Pickering, and Kroeger, meaning can be derived not only from linguistic structure, but also from speech acts, implicature, situational context and speaker intent. This suggests that communication not only involves what is said explicitly but also the actions performed and the implied meanings interpreted by the participants within certain context. In conflict interactions, language is often used to perform actions such as giving orders, justifying decisions, or influencing others. Lexical shifts in this case are not only linguistic but also have specific pragmatic functions.

3. Theory of Emotion and Language in the context of conflict

The study "Emotion in Politics in Times of War" found that emotions such as fear, anger, and solidarity play a significant role in shaping language choices, emotional language functions not only as an expression but also as a rhetorical tool to influence perception and action. In conflict situations, emotional stress can lead to language intensification, a more direct use of words, and rapid changes in register. This is particularly noticeable in military interactions under crisis or high stress conditions

4. Argumentation and Authority Theory

According to Oswald, argumentation is a verbal interaction that develops from conflict or a clash of interests. In this process, assertive speech acts are often used to justify actions and influence others. Meanwhile, Lewinski explains that authority in communication is not fixed, but can be negotiated and even challenged, which allows for a dynamic where a party with a lower position can present arguments to challenge or modify the decision of the party who holds authority. In both military and civilian contexts, interactions often involve negotiations of authority, which are shown through language choices and communication strategies

5. Identity Theory, Mitigation, and Communication Strategy

According to Bella, in professional settings, speakers often formulate strategies that balance assertiveness and politeness, which is achieved through mitigation, which is softening speech

without losing the main point. Furthermore, speaker identity is also dynamic and can change according to the role and purpose of communication, and in certain scenarios, someone may shift from a formal to an informal style of speech or from mitigated to direct speech. In the context of this research, register shifts and lexical shifts can reveal changes in identity, role, and communication strategies in dynamic situations.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach by integrating discourse analysis and pragmatic analysis to investigate register variation and the pragmatic functions of lexical shifts in institutional interactions portrayed in *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi*. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the primary objective of the research was not to measure linguistic phenomena statistically, but rather to interpret how language functions within specific social and institutional contexts. The study focused on understanding how communication patterns change according to situational demands, authority relations, emotional pressure, and communicative objectives during high-risk interactions.

Qualitative discourse analysis allows researchers to examine language as a social practice that reflects institutional roles, power relations, and interactional dynamics. Through this perspective, language is viewed not merely as a collection of words and grammatical structures, but as a medium through which participants construct meaning, negotiate authority, and coordinate actions. Meanwhile, pragmatic analysis was utilized to identify the communicative functions underlying lexical choices and register shifts, including speech acts, implicatures, persuasive strategies, authority negotiation, and conflict management. By combining these two approaches, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how linguistic variation operates within institutional communication under crisis conditions.

The research specifically examined interactions involving military personnel, intelligence officers, diplomatic representatives, and local militia members depicted throughout the film. Particular attention was given to scenes characterized by operational urgency, conflict escalation, authority disputes, and emotionally charged communication. These situations were selected because they provide rich examples of register variation and lexical shifts that reveal the relationship between language use and institutional dynamics.

Research Instruments and Data Sources

The primary data source of this study consisted of the film *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi* directed by Michael Bay and its corresponding movie script. The data included utterances, conversations, and interactional exchanges produced by various characters throughout the narrative. These linguistic data were selected because they contain numerous examples of communication occurring within military, intelligence, diplomatic, and conflict-oriented settings.

The research instrument consisted of the researcher as the primary analytical instrument, supported by the movie script, observation notes, and data classification tables. As commonly found in qualitative research, the researcher played a central role in identifying, interpreting, categorizing, and analyzing relevant linguistic phenomena. Observation sheets and analytical notes were utilized to record important contextual information, including participant roles, communication settings, interactional goals, and situational factors influencing language use.

The study focused on dialogues that demonstrated noticeable shifts in register, lexical choice, communicative style, and pragmatic function. Particular emphasis was placed on interactions involving members of the Global Response Staff (GRS), CIA personnel, Ambassador Stevens, local security groups, and militia members. These interactions were considered highly relevant because they reflect different institutional identities and communication practices within a shared conflict environment.

Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected through observation and documentation techniques. First, the researcher watched the film repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the storyline, character relationships, and institutional contexts represented in the narrative. Repeated viewing was necessary to ensure accurate interpretation of communicative situations and to identify interactions containing significant register variation and lexical shifts.

Second, the movie script was examined in detail to facilitate the transcription and verification of selected dialogues. The use of the script helped ensure the accuracy of linguistic data and enabled more systematic identification of lexical patterns. During this stage, utterances considered relevant to the research objectives were highlighted and documented.

Third, the selected dialogues were categorized according to their contextual characteristics, including speaker identity, institutional role, interactional purpose, emotional intensity, and situational urgency. The researcher then organized the data into thematic categories associated with register variation, authority negotiation, conflict escalation, de-escalation strategies, professional identity construction, and operational communication. This categorization process allowed the researcher to identify recurring discourse patterns and communicative strategies throughout the film.

Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative discourse and pragmatic analysis. The analytical process began with the identification of register variations occurring within selected interactions. The researcher examined how speakers modified their lexical choices, communicative styles, and discourse strategies according to changes in context, institutional role, and interactional objectives.

Following the identification process, the data were interpreted pragmatically by analyzing speech acts, implied meanings, persuasive techniques, mitigation strategies, authority negotiations, and expressions of emotional intensity. Particular attention was given to the pragmatic functions performed by lexical shifts and how these shifts contributed to the achievement of communicative goals within specific situations.

The analysis also considered broader contextual factors such as institutional hierarchy, professional identity, operational urgency, and conflict conditions. Each interaction was examined in relation to the circumstances surrounding its occurrence in order to understand why particular linguistic choices were made and how they influenced communication outcomes. The findings were then interpreted using theories of register, pragmatics, authority, emotion, and identity discussed in the literature review.

Through this analytical procedure, the study sought to explain not only the forms of register variation found in the film but also the social and pragmatic functions underlying those variations. The analysis ultimately aimed to reveal how language operates as a strategic resource for negotiating authority, managing conflict, expressing institutional identity, and coordinating action within high-risk communication environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Result

The analysis of selected interactions in *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi* reveals that register variation and lexical shifts occur frequently throughout the film, particularly during situations characterized by operational urgency, institutional disagreement, and conflict escalation. The findings demonstrate that language use is highly adaptive and reflects the complex relationship between institutional roles, authority structures, emotional pressure, and communicative objectives. Different groups of actors employ distinct communicative styles; however, these styles often change as the intensity of the situation increases.

Overall, the findings indicate that Global Response Staff (GRS) personnel display the most dynamic register variation among all institutional actors represented in the film. Their language shifts repeatedly between informal, tactical, confrontational, and survival-oriented registers depending on situational demands. In contrast, CIA personnel generally maintain a more bureaucratic and institutionally regulated communication style, while diplomatic actors tend to use persuasive and relationship-oriented discourse. Nevertheless, extreme crisis conditions frequently reduce these distinctions as communication becomes increasingly direct, emotionally intensified, and focused on immediate action.

The analysis further demonstrates that lexical shifts serve several pragmatic functions beyond information exchange. These functions include authority negotiation, operational coordination, intimidation, persuasion, conflict escalation, conflict de-escalation, and professional identity construction. The findings also suggest that institutional hierarchy and emotional pressure significantly influence communicative behavior, often determining the form and intensity of language used by participants during interaction.

1. Authority Negotiation During Crisis Situations

One of the most prominent findings concerns the negotiation of authority between GRS personnel and CIA leadership during crisis situations. Several interactions illustrate how institutional actors employ different registers when attempting to influence decision-making processes. These interactions reveal a recurring conflict between operational urgency and bureaucratic authority.

During the roadblock checkpoint incident, Rone and Jack request immediate support after becoming trapped in a dangerous environment. While the headquarters instructs them to remain in position and wait for assistance from local forces, Rone responds with visible frustration and skepticism. His language reflects a tactical and operational register centered on immediate threat assessment. In contrast, CIA personnel maintain a more restrained and institutional register that emphasizes organizational procedures and decision-making structures.

A similar pattern appears during the attack on Ambassador Stevens' compound. As the security situation rapidly deteriorates, Rone repeatedly urges the CIA Chief to authorize immediate deployment. His language becomes increasingly direct and urgency-driven, emphasizing both tactical realities and moral responsibility. However, the CIA Chief continues to rely on bureaucratic reasoning, highlighting legal limitations, jurisdictional concerns, and institutional protocols. This interaction demonstrates a clear contrast between operational discourse and administrative discourse.

As the crisis intensifies, authority negotiation gradually transforms into operational defiance. When communication from the compound becomes increasingly desperate and survival appears to be at risk, Rone abandons persuasive argumentation and adopts a command-oriented register focused exclusively on action. The shift illustrates how extreme situational pressure can override institutional constraints and reshape authority relationships within organizational communication.

2. Register Escalation Under Threat

Another major finding concerns the escalation of register in response to perceived threats. Throughout the film, communication patterns become increasingly confrontational as danger intensifies. Lexical choices often shift from cooperative and diplomatic language toward direct, intimidating, and emotionally charged expressions. This phenomenon is particularly evident during the roadblock confrontation involving local militia members. Initially, communication is relatively cooperative, as GRS personnel attempt to negotiate passage through the checkpoint. However, as the possibility of violence increases, language becomes more coercive and psychologically strategic. The interaction eventually develops into a confrontation characterized by explicit references to military capability, surveillance, and potential consequences.

Additional examples occur during interactions involving members of the 17 February Brigade. Existing distrust toward local security forces significantly influences communication patterns. When unexpected incidents occur, GRS personnel immediately adopt more aggressive and accusatory language. Rather than seeking clarification through neutral communication, participants frequently interpret ambiguous situations as potential threats, resulting in rapid escalation of register. The second attack on the CIA annex provides further evidence of this phenomenon. During intense combat situations, uncertainty regarding the identity of attackers contributes to increasingly compressed and emotionally intensified communication. Language becomes highly focused on survival, threat recognition, and immediate response. Even previously restrained speakers adopt more direct and aggressive registers as operational realities replace procedural concerns.

These findings suggest that threat perception plays a central role in shaping register variation. As danger increases, communication becomes more direct, less mitigated, and increasingly oriented toward immediate action. Emotional pressure and situational urgency therefore function as significant factors influencing lexical choice and communicative behavior.

3. Pragmatic De-escalation Through Register Adaptation

Although many interactions involve conflict escalation, the analysis also reveals several instances of pragmatic de-escalation. These situations demonstrate that language can function as a mechanism for reducing tension and restoring cooperation despite the presence of significant risks. One notable example occurs during the interaction between GRS personnel and local arms dealers. As tensions rise and the possibility of armed confrontation becomes increasingly likely,

communication unexpectedly shifts from tactical coordination to informal and culturally adaptive interaction. Rather than responding with threats or force, participants employ relaxed expressions and culturally recognizable forms of communication to reduce hostility.

The success of this strategy illustrates that military communication is not exclusively characterized by confrontation and coercion. Instead, participants demonstrate considerable flexibility in adapting their language to achieve desired outcomes. Register shifts in these situations function pragmatically to regulate emotions, build temporary rapport, and prevent unnecessary conflict.

A similar pattern emerges near the conclusion of the film when surviving personnel encounter approaching armed vehicles. Instead of immediately assuming hostile intent, participants recognize familiar symbolic gestures associated with earlier cooperative interactions. Although verbal communication is limited, the interaction demonstrates that pragmatic meaning can also be conveyed through shared cultural symbols and non-verbal communication. These findings indicate that de-escalation strategies play an important role within conflict environments. Language and symbolic communication can function not only to intensify conflict but also to restore cooperation and reduce perceived threats.

4. Institutional Identity and Professional Positioning

The final major finding concerns the construction of institutional identity through language. Throughout the film, participants consistently position themselves and others according to organizational affiliations, professional expertise, and perceived legitimacy. Interactions involving GRS personnel and CIA members frequently reveal competing constructions of professional competence. CIA personnel often present themselves as strategic decision-makers possessing specialized knowledge and diplomatic expertise, while GRS personnel are positioned primarily as security operators responsible for implementing decisions. These distinctions are reinforced through lexical choices, conversational control, and authority claims.

At the same time, GRS personnel actively challenge these institutional categorizations by emphasizing operational experience, tactical awareness, and practical competence. Their language frequently reflects a professional identity grounded in action, risk assessment, and battlefield realities. This contrast contributes to recurring tensions between bureaucratic authority and operational expertise. Ambassador Stevens represents a different form of institutional identity. His communication style is characterized by diplomatic language, persuasive discourse, and relationship-building strategies. Unlike military personnel, who prioritize security concerns, Stevens consistently emphasizes cooperation, trust, and interpersonal engagement. His discourse reflects the communicative norms associated with diplomatic leadership and political representation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that language serves as a powerful mechanism for constructing and maintaining institutional identities. Register variation and lexical shifts reflect not only situational changes but also broader struggles concerning authority, legitimacy, expertise, and professional positioning. These communicative patterns contribute significantly to the representation of institutional interaction throughout the film.

B. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that register variation and lexical shifts in *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi* are strongly influenced by institutional roles, communicative objectives, emotional pressure, and operational urgency. The analysis confirms that language use within conflict-driven environments is highly adaptive, reflecting the dynamic relationship between context and communication. This finding supports register theory, which argues that linguistic variation emerges as a consequence of changes in field, tenor, and mode. Throughout the film, participants continuously adjust their language according to evolving circumstances, institutional expectations, and interpersonal relationships. Consequently, communication becomes a strategic resource through which individuals respond to rapidly changing situations.

One of the most significant findings concerns the distinction between military and non-military institutional discourse. GRS personnel consistently employ concise, direct, and action-oriented communication, particularly during high-risk situations. This pattern aligns with register theory, which suggests that language reflects the practical requirements of specific professional environments. Military communication prioritizes efficiency, clarity, and rapid decision-making,

making concise lexical choices particularly valuable in situations involving immediate threats. In contrast, CIA personnel and diplomatic actors generally maintain more formal and institutionally regulated registers that emphasize organizational procedures, coordination, and authority. These differences illustrate how professional roles influence communicative behavior and contribute to the construction of distinct institutional identities.

However, the findings also reveal that these communicative distinctions become increasingly unstable during extreme crisis situations. As emotional pressure and operational urgency intensify, participants across different institutional backgrounds begin adopting more direct and emotionally charged forms of communication. This observation supports theories concerning the relationship between emotion and language in conflict contexts. Emotional stress appears to reduce the use of mitigation strategies and increase the frequency of direct commands, confrontational expressions, and survival-oriented discourse. Under such circumstances, communicative efficiency often becomes more important than maintaining institutional formality. Therefore, language adaptation can be understood as a response to both practical and psychological pressures within crisis environments.

The study further demonstrates that lexical shifts perform a wide range of pragmatic functions. Rather than serving solely as linguistic variations, changes in lexical choice frequently operate as strategic communicative tools. Through lexical shifts, speakers negotiate authority, coordinate actions, express urgency, persuade others, and manage conflict. This finding supports pragmatic theories emphasizing that meaning is constructed through context and communicative intention rather than through linguistic forms alone. The same lexical item may perform different functions depending on the situation in which it is used, highlighting the importance of contextual interpretation in discourse analysis.

Another important finding involves the negotiation of authority between GRS personnel and CIA leadership. Several interactions reveal tensions between formal institutional authority and operational expertise. While the CIA Chief possesses organizational legitimacy and decision-making power, GRS personnel repeatedly challenge those decisions based on tactical realities and immediate threat assessments. This finding supports Lewiński's argument that authority is not always fixed but may be negotiated through discourse. In the film, institutional hierarchy remains influential; however, operational competence frequently becomes an alternative source of legitimacy, particularly during life-threatening situations. As a result, authority emerges as a dynamic construct shaped by both organizational structures and communicative interaction.

The findings also highlight the role of language in constructing and maintaining professional identity. Throughout the film, participants position themselves and others according to institutional affiliation, expertise, and perceived competence. Military personnel frequently emphasize tactical awareness, operational readiness, and practical experience, whereas CIA personnel emphasize intelligence, strategic planning, and organizational control. Similarly, Ambassador Stevens consistently adopts a diplomatic register characterized by persuasion, cooperation, and relationship-building. These patterns demonstrate that professional identities are not merely organizational labels but are actively produced and reinforced through discourse. Language therefore functions as a mechanism through which institutional actors communicate not only information but also social status, expertise, and legitimacy.

An additional contribution of this study concerns the identification of pragmatic de-escalation strategies within conflict discourse. Although many interactions involve confrontation and disagreement, the film also presents instances in which participants successfully reduce tension through adaptive communication. Informal language, culturally recognizable expressions, and symbolic gestures are used to restore cooperation and prevent unnecessary escalation. These findings suggest that effective communication in high-risk environments requires flexibility rather than constant assertiveness. The ability to shift registers appropriately allows participants to respond to changing circumstances while maintaining interactional effectiveness.

Overall, the findings indicate that register variation and lexical shifts should be understood as multidimensional phenomena shaped by contextual, institutional, emotional, and pragmatic factors. Language in conflict environments functions simultaneously as a medium of communication, a tool of authority, a marker of identity, and a mechanism for managing interpersonal relationships. The interaction between these functions demonstrates the complexity of institutional discourse and highlights the importance of examining language within its broader social and situational context.

Although the study focuses on a cinematic representation rather than direct real-world

observation, the interactional patterns identified in the film remain relevant for discourse and pragmatic analysis. The film provides a meaningful depiction of how institutional actors communicate under pressure and how linguistic choices reflect broader social dynamics. Consequently, *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi* serves as a valuable source for exploring the relationship between language, power, identity, and communication in conflict-oriented environments.

CONCLUSION

This study examined register variation and the pragmatic functions of lexical shifts in *13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi*. The findings indicate that language use in the film is strongly influenced by institutional roles, authority relations, emotional pressure, and operational urgency. Different groups employ distinct communication styles, with GRS personnel demonstrating the most dynamic register shifts as they move between informal, tactical, confrontational, and survival-oriented discourse depending on situational demands.

The analysis also reveals that lexical shifts perform various pragmatic functions beyond information exchange. Language is used to negotiate authority, coordinate actions, express urgency, construct professional identities, escalate conflict, and facilitate de-escalation. Furthermore, the study shows that authority within institutional interactions is not entirely determined by organizational hierarchy, but can also be shaped by operational expertise and situational relevance. As a result, communication becomes a key mechanism through which participants influence decisions and manage crisis situations.

Overall, the study highlights that register variation and lexical shifts are adaptive communicative strategies that reflect the interaction between context, institutional identity, and communicative objectives. Although the film represents a dramatized version of real events, its discourse patterns provide valuable insights into how language functions as a tool for negotiating power, maintaining professional identity, and coordinating action within conflict-oriented environments.

REFERENCES

- Attardo, Salvatore, & Pickering, Lucy. (2021). *Pragmatics and Its Applications to TESOL and SLA*. Wiley Blackwell.
- Bella, Spyridoula. (2025). Mitigation, Rapport, and Identity Construction in Workplace Requests. *Languages*, 10(8), 179. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages10080179>
- Bourgeois, Samuel, & Bousfield, Derek. (2025). *Pragmatics in Contested Interpretation*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grisot, Cristina. (2018). *Cohesion, Coherence and Temporal Reference from an Experimental Corpus Pragmatics Perspective*. Springer International Publishing.
- Hyland, Ken, et al. (2021). *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Kroeger, Paul. (2022). *Analyzing Meaning: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics* (3rd ed.). Language Science Press.
- Lewiński, Marcin. (2022). Challenging Authority with Argumentation: The Pragmatics of Arguments from and to Authority. *Languages*, 7(3), 207. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages7030207>
- Mestre-Mestre, Eva M. (2023). Emotion in Politics in Times of War: A Corpus Pragmatics Study. *Corpus Pragmatics*, 7(4), 323–344. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41701-023-00147-w>
- Oswald, Steve. (2023). Pragmatics for Argumentation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 203, 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.12.001>
- Pentti Haddington, et al. (2022). Noticing, Monitoring and Observing: Interactional Grounds for Joint and Emergent Seeing in UN Military Observer Training. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 200, 119–138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.06.005>