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## Construal Operation of Specificity as a Cognitive Mechanism in Selected American Election Billboards

Lecturer. Dr. Midya Rafiq Majeed \*

University of Garmian

[media.rafiq@garmian.edu.krd](mailto:media.rafiq@garmian.edu.krd)

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### Abstract

Human mind has the ability to construe events or things from several perspectives. Construal is one of the central concepts in cognitive semantics and is used to describe and characterize this ability. The use of Construal Operation of Specificity, for investigating the construction of meaning in election billboards is thought to be significant. The current study aims to show the flexibility of this operation of construal to election billboards. To this end, four election billboards of Trump and Biden were selected from American general election (2020). Langacker's Specificity as one of the most significant Construal Operations (2008) theory is used to demystify how meaning is constructed in the billboards. The results obtained show that the construal operation of specificity in election billboards significantly depends on the interplay between verbal and visual modes. Besides, the central message of the billboards is effectively conveyed through an analysis of the specific visual and verbal modes present in the design. It is concluded that the construal operation of specificity can account for meaning construction in electoral billboards and in addition to the semantic contents of the elements in the billboards, specificity makes up a principal element in constructing the meaning of the billboard.

Key Words: Election billboards, Conceptualization, Construal operation of specificity, Meaning construction.

\* Corresponding Author: Dr. Midya Rafiq Majeed, Email: [media.rafiq@garmian.edu.krd](mailto:media.rafiq@garmian.edu.krd)

Affiliation: Garmian University - Iraq

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## تأويل عملية التحديد كآلية إدراكية في لوحات الإعلانات الانتخابية الأمريكية المختارة

### الملخص

يتمتع العقل البشري بالقدرة على تفسير الأحداث أو الأشياء من عدة وجهات نظر. التأويل هو أحد المفاهيم المركزية في الدلالات المعرفية ويستخدم لوصف هذه القدرة وتوصيفها. يُعتقد أن استخدام عملية التأويل للتحديد للتحقيق في بناء المعنى في اللوحات الإعلانية الانتخابية أمر مهم. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى إظهار مرونة عملية التأويل هذه على اللوحات الإعلانية الانتخابية. ولتحقيق هذه الغاية، تم اختيار أربع لوحات إعلانية انتخابية لترامب وبايدن من الانتخابات العامة الأمريكية (2020). تُستخدم النظرية لانجاكر كواحدة من أهم نظريات عمليات التأويل (2008) لإزالة الغموض عن كيفية بناء المعنى في اللوحات الإعلانية. تُظهر النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها أن عملية التأويل للتحديد في اللوحات الإعلانية الانتخابية تعتمد بشكل كبير على التفاعل بين الأنماط اللفظية والبصرية. إلى جانب ذلك، يتم نقل الرسالة المركزية للوحات الإعلانية بشكل فعال من خلال تحليل الأنماط المرئية واللفظية المحددة الموجودة في التصميم. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن العملية التفسيرية للتحديد يمكن أن تفسر بناء المعنى في اللوحات الإعلانية الانتخابية، وبالإضافة إلى المحتوى الدلالي للعناصر في اللوحات الإعلانية، تشكل التحديد عنصراً رئيسياً في بناء معنى اللوحة الإعلانية

الكلمات المفتاحية: لوحات إعلانية انتخابية، المفهومية، العملية التفسيرية للتحديد، بناء المعنى.

## 1. Introduction

In the process meaning construction, human perception plays a significant role. The flexibility of the human mind to conceive the same situation in several ways is adequately supported by evidence. 'Construal' is the term used in cognitive semantics to characterize this conceptual ability. *Specificity*, which refers to "the level of precision and detail at which a situation is characterized" (Langacker 2008), is the construal operation that is of special interest to the present study, as it pertains to the degree of detail with which we analyze or interpret a scene, in the case of this study; a billboard. The current study hypothesizes that the central message of the American billboards is effectively conveyed through an analysis of the specific visual and verbal modes present in the design. The study is carried out to answer the following questions:

1. How meaning is enacted and how it is equated to conceptualizations in the selected billboards?

2. In election billboards, the construal operation of specificity depends on the verbal, visual or the interplay between these two modes?
3. To what extent the construal operation of specificity will help in internalizing the meaning within the billboards?

For achieving these research aims, four American election billboards from the general election of (2020) is selected randomly by the researcher to be analyzed in the light of Langacker's the construal operation of specificity (2008).

## **2. American Election Billboards**

Billboards grew in popularity through the 1990's and are one of the fastest growing forms of communication (Lithgow,1999). It is the most frequently used outdoor advertisement vehicle and they are large structures that are put in public locations to display advertisements to passers-by. Billboards are most commonly found on main highways with a high volume of passing motor and pedestrian traffic; but, they can be found at any site with a large number of visitors, such as train stations, shopping malls, buildings and stadiums (Azad & Boushehri: 2014). The two terms *billboards* and *advertising* have similar connotations. Billboards are a sort of advertising that uses large, fixed structures to show messages to passers along roadsides and other public transportation routes. They present (usually) large advertisements to passers-by so as to engage them while they move around their neighborhoods (Elrod & Fortenberry, 2017). According to Chopra (2017), the term "billboard advertising" refers to a large outdoor advertising space that is specifically designed to attract both pedestrians and motorists' attention. Its aim is to engage audiences as they move about their neighborhoods. Hence, billboard is the message of a medium used by the manufacturer with behavioral expectations that is designed in accordance with the purpose of the message ( Suprayinto, 2016). In order to motivate and persuade people in elections, (Panagopoulos & Ha, 2015) claim that political campaigns use billboards as a kind of mass *media* that connect candidates with the electorate. Thus, an election billboard or poster is "a static or moving image that announces the existence of a candidate and promotes his or her image" (Monica & Madalina, 2013).

Concerning *American election billboards*, (Kaid, 2006) suggests, *historically*, political advertising in early elections in the United States took the form of posters, billboards, and printed materials and the form and style of American political billboards change throughout history. *Concerning the style, design and the graphic component* of political billboards\posters in America, (Craven ,2013) indicates that, in developed countries such as the United States of America, established laws, organizations, or companies guide both designers and advertising companies in their activities in the advertising industry. As for the choice of *graphic components* to be included in a design, this is frequently influenced by whether the billboard is part of a campaign or made independently. All parties in recent American elections have used styled designs that are sometimes little more than big corporate type logos, devoid of photographic pictures. Their posters have a lot in common, with stylized flags and sans-serif letters dominating against a blue background (Siedman,2008). More so; *issues* (issues concerns) and *images* (personal attributes) are two more important contents of political billboards in United States. *Symbolism* and *visual symbols* are also two more elements of billboard designs in American political ads that facilitates the delivery of politically relevant information to the voters (Nikolskaya &

Pavlina,2021 and Sidman,2017). Further, *written statements* is another element of election billboards, that should be succinct and sloganized according to designers, and that ornate lettering and artistic renderings should be avoided since they may divert attention away from the essential message ( Siedman ,2008). To conclude, it is worthy to note that, as Seidman (2008) declines, effective election campaign ads grab voters' attention, present a targeted message simply and clearly, and may even persuade them to support a candidate or party. To achieve these objectives, it may be necessary to use powerful and appealing visuals, bright color, effective font size and suitable persuasive language that affect the viewers

### **3. Cognitive Semantics: An Overview**

According to Croft & Cruse (2004) the term "cognitive linguistics" refers to an approach of studying language that emerged in the 1970s and has been more prevalent since the 1980s. It comes in response to growing dissatisfaction with formal approaches to language (Evans & Green, 2006). In the study of language and the mind and how they interact, as (Evans, 2007) indicates, cognitive linguistics places a significant attention to the role of meaning, conceptual processes, and embodied experience. However; some followers of this school of linguistics divide the cognitive linguistics into two main branches: cognitive semantics and cognitive grammar (see, e.g., Evans & Green, 2006). Cognitive semantics (CS) as Evans & Green (2006) assert, is not a unified theory, much like the broader field of cognitive linguistics. It represents an approach for the investigation of the mind and its interaction with culture and embodied experience. In order to uncover conceptual organization and structure, it uses language as the main methodological tool. It began in the 1970s as a reaction against the objectivist world-view assumed by the Anglo-American tradition in philosophy and the related approach, truth-conditional semantics, developed within formal linguistics. Cognitive semantics considers linguistic meaning to be as an expression of conceptual structure: the nature and association of psychological representation in the entirety of its lavishness and variety, and this is the thing that makes it a particular way to deal with linguistic meaning (Rao,2021). Conceptual structure and conceptualization are two crucial facets of meaning that cognitive semantics investigates. The former focuses on how knowledge is represented in the human conceptual system, whereas the later discusses how meaning is generated (Evans, 2007).The second facet of meaning is the focus of this study. The fundamental tenet of cognitive semantics is that meaning is conceptual in nature. As a result, research in cognitive semantics focuses on modeling the conceptual structures and processes that underlie linguistic meaning (Murphy & Koskela, 2010).

### **4. Construal: Theoretical Background**

The cognitive semantic theory of construal is an approach that links the meaning of an expression to the concept in the mind of the person who produces it. The ability to perceive a scene or scenario from different perspectives and make distinct remarks on it, depending on what we want to say about it and how much information we want to include in our description, is one of the most fundamental cognitive abilities (Casad,1995). The meaning of a linguistic expression does not reside solely in its conceptual content, but also in the particular way of construing that content. That is; construal refers to the speaker's ability

to conceptualize a situation in a variety of ways and to use various linguistic expressions to reflect these conceptualizations in discourse (Hamawand, 2009). This ability is a feature of the human mind; specifically, it is a component of cognition and is clearly reflected in language (Verhagen, 2007). According to (Hamawand, 2009) two lexical items may have the same content but differ in how the speaker interprets it. With each alternative, the speaker modifies his or her conceptualization and concentrates on a particular aspect of the situation they are describing. Each alternative is realized in language in a unique way. Consequently, according to cognitive linguists, linguistic meaning is composed of conceptual contents as well as the ways that language users perceive these conceptual contents.

Construal to (Radden & Dirven:2007) is a cognitive process that frequently strikingly resembles the basics of visual perception. For example, I may say that a bottle is half full or half empty, for instance. Half full refers to the amount of liquid still in the bottle, whereas half empty refers to the amount of liquid that has already been. The descriptions obviously vary depending on the viewpoint adopted, whether it is from the perspective of a full bottle or an empty one. Hence, construal is a key concept in cognitive semantics, as was already mentioned. In sum, *construal* is a cognitive operation that allows a specific scene to be described and imagined in different ways. Because there are various but overlapping versions of the construal operations in cognitive linguistics, the cognitivists constructed a variety of construal models, among those, Langacker (1987) "focal adjustment", "Four Imaging systems" model of construction by Talmy (1988), the two earlier models were modified and added to by Croft and Cruse (2004), Radden and Dirven (2007) used a different paradigm and put out nine construal aspects that are crucial to grammar. In essence, there is disagreement among scholars over the taxonomies of construal operations. Langacker (2008 & 2013) revised his construal model in an advanced form. The construal operation of specificity of Langacker will be the model adopted in the current study.

## **5. Construal Operation of Specificity as Analytical Lens**

Langacker (2008; 2013) recently revised his taxonomy, reclassifying construal mechanisms or operations into the four major types: Specificity, Focusing, Prominence and Perspective. It is worth mentioning that the current study focuses on one of these dimensions namely; *specificity*.

Specificity refers to the level of specificity and detail at which a situation is characterized (Langacker, 2008). For example, one can state that it is hot, but with increasing levels of specificity, it can also be remarked that it is in the 90s, around 95 degrees, or precisely 95.2 degrees. In a similar manner, the term "aunt" provides more specificity than "relative" and "large brown rat" is more specific than "rodent." Thus, the same entity can be construed with different levels of precision ranging from less to more specific. An alternative term to specificity is granularity. A highly specific expression articulates a situation with meticulous detail and clarity. In contrast, expressions that lack such specificity result in broader descriptions, characterized by low resolution that only highlights general features and overall structure (Langacker, 2013).

The converse of specificity is *schematicity*. Thus; 'relative' is schematic with respect to 'aunt and 'rodent' with respect to 'large brown rat'. In plain words, the schematic

description of an expression is elaborated by a more specific example which changes its coarse -grained schematicity into a fine-grained specification (Langacker, 2013). Accordingly, a more specific expression tends to be longer than a schematic one. While a schematic expression is characterized by its abstract nature and minimal detail, a specific expression is concrete and rich in detail. A successful, schematic taxonomy must be developed with a substantial number of examples. It is worth mentioning that the concepts of specificity and schematicity extend beyond lexical items to encompass novel expressions of any size as well. However; schemas and elaborative relationships play a crucial role in the structure of language. According to Cognitive Grammar, all linguistic generalizations emerge through the process of schematization from more specific structures. In other words, it is applied to every level of language such as in the realm of semantics, phonology, as well as grammar.

Obviously, it is the construal operation of specificity that is of special interest to the present study, since it is concerned with the level of detail with which we examine or construe a billboard. Besides, it will show how the interaction of both verbal and visual modes construct meaning cognitively and how conceptualizers' perceptions (viewers) of the billboard play a significant role in the meaning construction of both the participant's expressions and the a whole billboard. It is worth mentioning that the way in which a billboard is perceived by the viewers including the researcher differs depending on how the billboard is described or laid out by the designer , that is to say; the viewer's judgment vary depending on the way the billboard is described and designed.

## **6. Methodology**

To tackle the research questions outlined in the section 1. *Introduction*, four American billboards from the 2020 general election have been randomly chosen from internet sites as the data sources for this study. The billboards have chosen to show how meaning is cognitively constructed through the combination of visual and verbal modes., how meaning is equated to conceptualization, and how the meaning of any entity whether visual or verbal in the billboards beside its semantic contents, depend on the way the conceptualizers construe the elements in the billboards or the billboards as a whole.

### **6.1 Methods of the Analysis**

The examination of each billboard will commence with an introductory overview of the billboard itself. The purpose of the billboard and its intended impact on the addressee will be taken into consideration next. The focus then will turn to how the billboard designer constructs the meaning that is conveyed by the billboard and how the viewers' conceptualize the meaning of the billboard both visually and verbally alongside its semantic content.

### **6.2 Data Analysis**

The current study is a qualitative study that examines four election billboards in the perspective of the *construal operation of specificity* of Langacker (2008). The billboards were chosen from the American General Election of 2020 campaigns. The aim of the whole work is to examine the visual and verbal modes objectively as depicted in the selected

billboards. Analysis of the visual modes will be conducted first, followed by analysis of the verbal modes.

### **6.2.1. Billboard No.1**



**Figure (1)**

Political Billboard of the candidate of the Republican Party, Donald Trump

#### **On the Billboard**

This electoral billboard features Donald Trump, the candidate for the American Republican Party in the 2020 presidential election. The intention behind this billboard is clear; the designer seeks to persuade the American public to support Trump by effectively combining visual and verbal modes. The designer through the two modes tries to show the viewers the importance of voting in favor of Trump and to participate in keeping America's greatness. All in all, it can be said that the designer wants to show Trump as a deserving, courageous, and devoted politician who concerns up and works for the future of America and assurances a bright future for her if he wins the election.

#### **The Analysis**

##### **A. Visual Modes**

Election billboards, as a form of political discourse, exemplify the principle that specificity can be identified in every linguistic unit. The central message of the billboard, which advocates for *voting for Trump*, is effectively conveyed through an analysis of the specific visual modes present in the design. At a higher schematic level, all the aspects are combined to create a unified image of Trump as a powerful presidential candidate who can keep America's greatness. Each minor visual cue shows a particular aspect of the billboard's basic idea at a low specific level. For instance, Trump's image, the way he stands, facial expressions, and hand gesture all suggest that he is powerful and confident in winning the presidential election. In a similar vein, his expression of distance in his gaze symbolized his perspective on the future of America. The schematic and specific construal of the visual

modes in this billboard can be shown in this way: *Trump as a strong candidate for president*> *Trump's gaze*> *Trump's hand gesture*.

### **B. Verbal Modes**

A spectrum ranging from specificity to schematicity defines the process of conceptualizing the verbal components presented in this billboard. According to Harrison et al. (2017), each linguistic unit elicits a degree of specificity. Consequently, the linguistic elements provide a variety of items that span from highly schematic to extremely specific. Thus; it can be said that the linguistic or verbal modes just like the visual ones are also described in terms of specificity and schematicity criteria. Naming and syntagmatic elaboration are used to accomplish this description. For instance, the slogan "Keep America Great" is schematic and it represents the main idea of the billboard. In order to keep America great as it is now, billboard designer asked the viewers to participate and get involved in the process of keeping America's greatness by voting in favor of Trump. Thus; the written text "keep America great" invokes a more finely-grained conceptualization of the image. By using other verbal modes like "Trump," it is further strengthened and supported. The designer tends to convey the idea that Trump will win the election, and keep America great. In addition to syntagmatic elaboration, naming is used in this billboard to indicate the semantic content of the verbal modes. The person depicted on the left side of the billboard is specified by the noun *Trump*. The region of countries is designated by the noun *AMERICA*. In a similar way, the numerical expression 2020 indicates both the year of the election and the domain of the number. In a similar manner, at the bottom of the billboard, the phrases "Promises made" and "Promises kept" exemplify the verb schema through the verbs "made" and "kept." While the concept of verbs is quite broad, the specific verbs "keep," "made," and "kept" serve as particular instances of this broader notion.

#### **6.2.2 Billboard No.2**



**Figure (2)**

Political Billboard of the candidate of the Democratic Party, Joe Biden

### **On the Billboard**

This election billboard features Joe Biden, the presidential candidate for the American Democratic Party in the 2020 election. It is evident that the designer aimed to encourage American citizens to support Biden by integrating symbolic, linguistic, and visual modes into the billboard. Taking the whole design into consideration, it can be seen that the American flag is put at the very top of the billboard which hence specifies Biden's strong loyalty to the American nation which leads them to trust his leadership. Besides, the predominant color of the billboard 'blue' profiles Biden's membership with the Democratic Party. While the three red banners in Biden's name is reflection of Biden's investment in America because it contains nods to the American flag. The three stripes represent both the strength of Biden's unity and the three main components of the federal government. All in all, the designer wants to show Biden's loyalty to America and Americans and that supporting him will be the best choice.

### **The Analysis**

#### **A. Visual Modes**

The analysis of the visual modes in billboard No.2 at both the general and specific levels can be done using the construal operation of specificity. At the level of the general schematic, a distant look at the visual modes of this billboard gives us an overall idea of the general meaning of the billboard. A deeper examination enables the viewers to more thoroughly understand and scrutinize each of the billboard's visual modes at a lower degree of specificity. Hence, conceptually, at a schematic level, this billboard underscores the notion that Biden is worthy of being elected as the President of the United States, while also highlighting his views on unity and togetherness. Each separate visual mode emphasizes a certain aspect of the schematic idea of the billboard at the specific level. For instance, the image of the American flag conveys Biden's fierce dedication to the American people, inspiring their confidence in his ability to govern. Meanwhile, the predominant blue tone of the billboard signifies Biden's affiliation with the Democratic Party, while the three red banners accompanying Biden's name delineate the three fundamental pillars of the federal government and the robustness of Biden's unity.

#### **B. Verbal Modes**

On the verbal level, in terms of specificity and schematicity parameters, the schematic verbal modes in this billboard are specified through syntagmatic elaboration. As a result, the linguistic expression "Your vote" is only schematic, and "does matter" is further specify it. In the same manner, the names Biden and Harris are schematics and "We are in this together" is further elaborate and specify it. The structure of this design conveys the notion that voters ought to support Biden and Harris, as they are portrayed as a unified team that will all work together to enhance America. In this sense, specificity is evoked by syntagmatic elaboration as represented by the following diagram: *Your vote > does matter > we're in this together > vote Biden Harris.*

The conceptual substance of the verbal modes presented in this billboard is defined through both naming and syntagmatic development. The linguistic terms Biden and Harris serve to identify the candidates for the US general election in 2020. Furthermore, the verbs "does" and "vote" exemplify and clarify a general verb schema.

### **6.2.3 Billboard No.3**



**Figure (3)**

Political Billboard of the candidate of the Republican Party, Donald Trump

### **On the Billboard**

This political billboard features Donald Trump, the Republican Party's candidate for the 2020 presidential general election. Similar to other election billboards, it is evident that the designer aimed to influence American voters to support Trump through this compelling design. Taking the whole design into consideration, it can be seen that Trump's stance and hand gesture, invites the viewers to vote for him as he is a symbol of success, wealth and opulence (represented in the smart suit and tie worn by the figure). Regarding the verbal modes of the current billboard, it can be clearly seen that all the phrases have been capitalized; the pronouns within the three central phrases have been colored in red; as well as the top phrase (the name with year) has been located on the left-side of the image over the figure. Such a combination maintains that 'Trump' is the only president who deserves to be voted for and he will be their only president. However; the language used in this billboard exploit a parallel structure of pronouns to give a sense of involvement, that 'this man belongs to all of us, he is America's man', thus, he should be supported.

### **The Analysis**

#### **A. Visual Models**

This billboard provides detailed information regarding each of its modes whether visual or verbal from a cognitive and specificity viewpoint. Taking the visual modes into consideration, one can say that the various visual modes all together portray Trump as a confident candidate worthy of the presidency at a higher schematic level. Conversely, a more specific interpretation of each individual visual detail serves to activate a particular facet of the billboard's overarching message. For example, Trump's facial expression, gaze, stance, hand gesture and his overall appearance convey a sense of confidence, courage, and an expectation of electoral victory.

#### **B. Verbal Modes**

The verbal or linguistic modes in this billboard are described in terms of specificity and schematicity parameters. This is achieved through instantiation and syntagmatic elaboration. For instance, the linguistic expression "Trump 2020" is schematic but is

further specified and defined by the other verbal models of the construction, "my president," "your president," and "America's president," all of which exhibit a definite identification of Trump that that 'this man belongs to all of us, he is America's man', thus, he should be supported by all of us as Americans. Here, the amount of specificity is scaled from low to high or from the most general to the most precise explicit description. This hierarchical structure tends to convey the idea that Trump will defeat his opponent, win the election, and become the next president of the United States. In this sense, syntagmatic elaboration evokes specificity as shown as: *Trump 2020*> *my president*>*your president*>*America's president*.

The semantic value of the verbal modes in this billboard is specified by naming in addition to syntagmatic elaboration. The name of the figure pictured on the left side of the billboard is the linguistic expression TRUMP. The domain of countries is specified by the noun AMERICA. The numerical expression 2020 specifies the domain of numbers in a similar manner.

#### **6.2.4 Billboard No. 4**



**Figure (4)**

Political Billboard of the candidate of the Democratic Party, Joe Biden

#### **On the Billboard**

This election billboard features Joe Biden, the Democratic Party's presidential candidate for the 2020 election. The designer clearly intended to motivate American citizens to support Biden by incorporating verbal and visual modes into the billboard. Taking the visual modes into consideration, it can be noticed that Biden's image as it is located on the right side of the billboard and it's the only figure, is positioned in a way that attracts the attention of the passersby. His facial expression and the fact that he is not looking directly at the viewer but rather at a great distance convey the impression that everything will go well under his leadership. While the color and the structure of the verbal modes indicates that the designer wants to convey to the viewer that 'Joe Biden' is against discrimination and racism and he is for all families 'Americans' and that all people will be equal under his leadership.

## **The Analysis**

### **A. Visual Modes**

The primary message of the billboard, which promotes voting for Biden, is clearly articulated through an examination of the specific visual modes incorporated in the design. At a schematic conceptual level, all components work together to form a cohesive representation of Biden as the president of all America'. Hence, he is the man of all without discrimination and regardless of racism. Each subtle visual mode reflects a specific facet of the billboard's schematic idea at a more specific level. For instance, Biden's image, including his posture and facial expressions, conveys a sense of strength and assurance regarding his prospects in the presidential election. Likewise, the distance reflected in his gaze represents his vision for the future of America.

### **B. Verbal Modes**

The verbal or linguistic modes present in billboard No.4 are characterized by the parameters of specificity and schematicity. This characterization is accomplished through the processes of instantiation and syntagmatic elaboration. For instance, the linguistic expression 'Joe Biden' is schematic but is further specified and elaborated by the other verbal models of the construction, 'for all families' all of which exhibit a definite identification of Biden this man is for all of Americans without discrimination and racism thus, he should be supported by all of us as Americans. This hierarchical framework suggests that Biden is a confident candidate; he will win the election, and assume the presidency of the United States. In this context, syntagmatic elaboration brings forth a sense of specificity as demonstrated by: *Biden*> *for all of our families*>*America's president*.

The semantic content of the verbal modes in this billboard is specified by naming in addition to syntagmatic elaboration. The name of the figure placed on this billboard is the linguistic expression *Joe Biden*. The domain of kinship network is specified by the noun *families*.

## **7. Results and Discussion**

- The preceding analysis indicates that the *construal operation of specificity* possesses suitable mechanisms for the examination of election billboards.
- Election billboards, as a form of political discourse, exemplify the principle that specificity can be identified in every linguistic unit.
- The construal operation of specificity aids viewers in understanding the process of meaning construction, highlighting that the meaning of the billboard's elements extends beyond their semantic content.
- It is also proven that the viewers' conceptualizations of the billboard are crucial in shaping the meaning construction of the elements of the billboard.
- The analysis also showed that the design style of the billboard significantly influences the perception of its intended message.
- It is also found that the construal operation of specificity in election billboards significantly depends on the interplay between verbal and visual modes.

- As for the visual design, the analysis reveals that American billboards often embody a more symbolic or mythological essence, providing insights into American culture. They focus on ideologies, promises, and the potential contributions of the party and its candidates, rather than emphasizing the personal issues, images, and qualifications of the candidates themselves.
- The analysis also indicates that the central message of the billboards is effectively conveyed through an analysis of the specific visual and verbal modes present in the design.
- The visual and verbal modes in the billboards undergo specific and schematic construal so as to shape the billboard's main idea. At the general schematic level, a distant view of the elements in the billboard gives us a general impression of the billboard's general meaning. At the specific level, each individual component highlights one facet of the billboard's schematic idea
- Regarding the language used in American billboards, it is found that it is characterized by positivity and brevity. The phrases and sentences are carefully selected and worded to enhance effectiveness. The interplay of visual and verbal modes on these billboards engages the viewers. The political messages presented are clear, as the wording is precise, nuanced, and clearly integrated to encourage viewers to vote for this candidate over others.
- The analysis showed that specificity is evoked by every linguistic unit. Thus, the verbal modes offer a range of items from quite schematic to very specific. That is to say; the elements are organized into hierarchies in which each specific linguistic expression provides fine-grained instantiation or elaboration for the one that precedes it.

## **8. Conclusion**

A cognitive analysis of the four randomly selected American election billboards reveals that their overall design aligns with the conveyed content and message. The primary objective of these billboards is to persuade voters to support the designated candidate and to evoke people's feelings that choosing such a candidate is the best decision for a better future. Additionally; billboards play a crucial role in political campaign elections. Examining them reveals that the interpretation of linguistic expressions, including both visual and verbal modes, is not solely reliant on the dictionary meanings of the words involved, but rather, depends in part on how the interlocutors view the situation and how they conceptualize it. Thus, it can be concluded that the application of the construal operation of specificity proves to be good tool for investigating and examining electoral billboards, as it helps to raise ones awareness about the purposes, meaning and the way electoral billboards are designed.

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