Pragma-Semiotic Analysis of Iraqi Parliamentary Election Campaign Billboards: A Multimodal Approach

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Abstract

This study analyzes the electoral billboards used by candidates during (2018) Iraqi parliamentary elections, and investigates their semiotic designs, implicit meanings and their influence on voters' insight. The candidates utilized these billboards as an effective tool in their electoral campaigns. The data of the study constitute (50) arbitrarily chosen billboards. The study attempts to identify the strategies utilized by candidates in designing their billboards. It provides a pragmatic and multimodal analysis of the slogans employed in the billboards. Searle's (1979) speech act theory has been exploited to realize the messages that candidates intend to convey to their voters. In addition, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal perspective is adopted to analyze the design of the billboards. It is hypothesized that the candidates adopt varied communicative strategies in

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their electoral billboards, exploiting linguistic and visual-grammar framework. The results reveal that the candidates employed (6) strategies that communicate different implications. It has also been shown that they highly prefer using white and blue colors in creating their billboards. Their crafting of slogans tends to be concise and phrasing, yet bear effective messages. The results also show that the most recurring kinds of speech acts utilized in the electoral slogans are representative and expressive which either convey implicit meanings of promising or asserting. Additionally, it has been concluded that the visual components including images, symbols, and wording interact with the slogans in order to produce significant messages targeting at impacting the voter's attitude.

Keywords: speech acts, metafunctions, multimodality, electoral billboards, and Visual Grammar.

تحليل تداولي-سيميائي للوحات الإعلانية لحملة الانتخابات البرلمانية العراقية: منهجية تعدد الوسائط

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الـمـسـتخـلـص

تحلل هذه الدراسة اللوحات الإعلانية الانتخابية التي استخدمها المرشحون في الانتخابات البرلمانية العراقية لعام (2018) ، كما تستقصي تراكيبها السيميائية و المعاني الضمنية وتأثيرها على تصورات الناخبين. استخدم المرشحون هذه اللوحات كأداة فعّالة في حملاتهم الانتخابية. تُحلل الدراسة (50) لوحة إعلانية تم اختيارها عشوائيًا، وتسعى لتحديد الاستراتيجيات التي استخدمها المرشحون عند تصميم هذه اللوحات. تُقدم الدراسة تحليلًا تداولياُ ومتعدد الوسائط للشعارات المستخدمة في هذه اللوحات، حيث تم توظيف نظرية أفعال الكلام لـ (1979) Searle لفهم الرسائل التي حاول المرشحون إيصالها إلى ناخبيهم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، استعملت منهجية (2006)Kress and van Leeuwen متعدد الوسائط لتحليل تصاميم اللوحات الانتخابية. تفترض الدراسة أن المرشحين يتبنون استراتيجيات تواصلية متنوعة في لوحاتهم الانتخابية، مستفيدين من الإطار اللغوي والنحوي البصري. تشير النتائج أن المرشحين استخدموا (ست) استراتيجيات تحمل معانٍ مختلفة، كما أظهرت انهم يفضلون استخدام اللونين الأبيض والأزرق في تصميم لوحاتهم. و تميل صياغة شعاراتهم إلى

أن تكون موجزة وذات عبارات تحمل رسائل فعّالة. كما تُظهر النتائج أن أكثر أنواع أفعال الكلام تكرارًا في الشعارات الانتخابية هي التمثيلية والتعبيرية، والتي تنقل معانٍ ضمنية إما للوعد أو التأكيد. خلصت الدراسة إلى أن المكونات البصرية، بما في ذلك الصور والرموز والكلمات، تتفاعل مع الشعارات لإنتاج رسائل مهمة تستهدف التأثير على موقف الناخب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أفعال الكلام، الوظائف، التعددية الوسائطية، اللوحات الإعلانية الانتخابية، النحو البصري.

1. INTRODUCTION

In May (2018), Iraq's political scene was shaped by parliamentary elections, during which multiple candidates initiated their electoral campaigns, exploiting billboards and posters as pivotal tools for communication with voters. Crafting electoral billboards or posters involves a professional advertising policy, and advertising is based on ideas in the sense that Goddard (1998) states that "advertising is often an index of attitudes". He further adds that advertising is a type of discourse which is a method of forming ideas about our world. Billboard is one of the advertising tools that the candidates foster in order to persuade the audience to vote for them. Billboard advertising is the practice of employing a massive print advertisement to promote a corporation, product, service, or political campaign (Baack, et al., 2016). Turnbull (2022) ensures that a billboard can be used to engage audiences and capture their attention and be influenced by the messages communicated. Since billboards are placed on roadsides, this means that potentially people who are walking or driving can read them (Mogaji, 2021). In Iraq, billboards are placed in highways, roads, over high buildings and small or big posters are pinned to the house or building walls.

According to Makinde and Adejumo (2024), billboards and posters enlighten voters about political candidates, their platforms, and their ideologies. These billboards are filled with various textual and visual features, including bright colors and political slogans. So the candidates carefully choose the size of the billboard or colors, the dimension of their personal photos and where to position in the left or right side. Candidates use billboards and posters to influence voters' emotions, and their focus lies on the wording of the slogans, which are usually catchy, short and rhetorical. Surveying the existing scholarly research has shown that no researcher has tackled the electoral billboards in terms of pragma-semiotic framework.
However, this research is significant as it provides the readers with a semiotic analysis that can reveal the strategies which are employed by candidates to frame their billboards. Semiotic analysis reveals how political candidates construct their image and persuade voters by decoding the symbols, colors, images, and slogans' wording utilized to convey political viewpoints. Scholars and researchers can explore how the viewers perceive an

electoral billboard or poster by pragmatic analysis, which takes into consideration the billboard's cultural and political context.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Pragmatic Perspective: Speech Acts

Pragmatics deals with the study of meaning as conveyed by a speaker or a writer and as understood by a listener or a reader (Yule, 1996). It is concerned with the linguistic forms produced by the speaker or writer and how the listener or reader perceives them. Pragmatics has certain concepts that are adopted to analyze the linguistic forms including speech acts – direct and indirect acts and implicatures. The foundation of the Speech Act Theory was laid by philosopher J. L. Austin, who observed that some speech acts seem to have a specific status since they not only describe an action, but also actually lead it to take place (Birner, 2021). Austin classified speech acts into three types, locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts (Chapman, 2011).

The locutionary act refers to the literal forms of words, while illocutionary act is concerned with the speaker's intended meaning. Perlocutionary act indicates the effect the utterance produces on the listener. The illocutionary acts are the most crucial element in uncovering the speaker's intentions, such as conveying warning, requesting, promising, or ordering act (Huang, 2014; Cruse, 2000; Cutting and Fordyce, 2021). Searle (1979) found that Austin's classification of speech acts is weak, hence he categorized the speech acts into five types: (1) Representative acts (Assertive), (2) Commissive acts, (3) Directive acts, (4) Expressive acts, (5) Declarative acts. The representative acts obligate the speaker to believe something with a verifiable truth condition, by which the speaker can assert, state, describe, report, claim, or predict something. Commissive acts commit the speaker to some future course of action. Directive acts are used to get the listener do something, such as orders, invitations, requests, and suggestions. Expressive acts show the speaker's emotions represented by apologizing, thanking, wishing, congratulating, promising, offering, vowing, and disliking. Declarative acts refer to declaring something or judging (Xiang et al., 2024).

In pragmatics, speech acts are classified into direct speech acts and indirect speech acts. The direct speech acts represent the form of the sentence which matches with its function, for example, "close the window" is a direct command. On the other hand, indirect speech acts indicate that the form (structure) does not explicitly conform with the function performed. Clark (2022, p. 123) emphasizes that "indirect speech acts are implicatures", which refer to the speakers' intended meanings.

2.1.1. Implicature: Speaker's Intended Meaning

Implicature is a concept proposed by Grice in his theory *Conversation Implicature* where he illustrates how listeners can grasp the meanings which are not clarified explicitly in conversations. According to Grice, implicature refers to speaker's meaning, more specifically it refers to what is said by the speaker and what he implies (Kecskes, 2014; Levinson, 2000; Carston 2002). So implicature is concerned with uncovering the implicit

meaning of a given utterance uttered by the speaker and is not concerned with the explicit structure of the utterance. For instance, when Jack tells his friend Davis, living with him in the same room in a hot summer day, 'that it is very hot', while the AC is turned off, Jack wants to inform Davis implicitly to turn on the AC. Therefore, some people do not convey their requests , intentions or messages directly or explicitly rather they convey them indirectly and implicitly and the listener must dig deep to understand these hidden meanings.

Grice (1975) categorizes implicature into distinct types: conversational implicature and conventional implicature. Both convey implicit meanings other than the semantic meaning of the words used in a given context. Conversational implicature relies on types of words which effectively communicate the underlying meaning that tactfully leads the listener to go beyond the surface structure and perceive the intended meanings, while the conversational implicature conveys the intended meaning derived from the context in which the words are mentioned. Consequently Conversational implicature is strictly connected with the context in which it takes place. Additionally, it is also based on assumptions derived from specific situations, whereas the conventional implicature does not depend on the context, rather is based on specific words from which the intended meaning can be perceived. Words like conjunctions 'but', 'and', 'for', and 'even' (Thomas, 2013). Grice also subdivided the conversational implicatures into particularized and generalized implicatures. Particularized conversational implicature involves two elements, context and knowledge which both enable the listener to understand the speaker's intention. On the other hand, generalized conversational implicature does not depend on context, which means to perceive the implied meaning conveyed by the speaker, regardless of the context (Levinson, 2000). Particularized implicature fits the analysis of slogans because earlier there is a political and social context, in addition to existing background knowledge for the voters about the past and current situations. Thus, particularized implicature results from the interaction between a particular context and the background knowledge which is supposed to be shared by both the speaker and the listener.

2.2. Visual Semiotics: Principles of Visual Grammar

The word 'semiotics' was derived from the Greek word "semeiotikos", which refers to the interpretation of signs (Hall, 2012). Hall (2012) specifically defines semiotics as "the theory of signs". As signing is the cornerstone of all communication, it is counted as indispensable to human existence. Since the mid of the 20th century, semiotics has broadened into an immense field of study that covers, among several other topics, the study of everything that people use, invent, or adopt to produce meaning, encompassing body language, art forms, visuals, gestures, road signs, slogans, drawings, posters, billboards, advertising language, and photography, Consequently, this proves that signs are significantly varied (Danesi, 2004; Hébert, 2020, Hall, 2012).

Multimodality is a crucial concept in semiotics and communication studies. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) view multimodality as "the use of several semiotic modes and their combination within a socio-cultural domain which results in a semiotic product or event".

This means that modality has a varied range of modes which result from an event. Additionally, it is concerned with interpreting multiple modes of communication including images, colors, typography, texts, slogans, graphics and so forth. Meanings are created throughout integrating these modes together as practically can be seen in billboards or posters in which colors, personal images, words, numbers and frames are used. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and (2021) offer a model which can be exploited to analyze such modes. They derived their three metafunctions from Halliday's *Systemic Functional Grammar* (1978) (henceforth, SFG); the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions. Halliday (1994) maintains that the theory of SFG relies heavily on the concept of metafunctions. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) assure that the grammar of a language can be expressed in terms of the three functional components of meaning; they are the ideational, interpersonal, and textual components.

Accordingly, Kress and van Leeuwen in their consecutive versions (2006) and (2021) adopt these three metafunctions and reclassified them into representational (ideational) metafunction, interactive (interpersonal) metafunction and compositional (textual) metafunction. The representational metafunction refers to how real-world items are reflected. It can be understood through two processes: narrative and conceptual. The narrative process involves action including vectors depicted by directions or movements, and exercised by the participant, emotion, verbalization, and circumstances incorporating time, and place. The conceptual process reveals categories, relationship, structure, symbols and meaning.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) indicate that an interactive metafunction is an interaction between the participant on the image (representing participant) and the participant outside of the image, which refers to the one who views the billboard's contents (interactive participant). This metafunction is based on four components: contact, social distance, perspective, and modality. Contact requires a gaze with demand denoting intent, whether direct, indirect, or through a gaze denoting an offer, while social distance involves intimate or personal or impersonal mode. Perspective examines the angle of the image as being vertical or horizontal. In addition, Modality illuminates the brightness of the color as having dark tone or low value.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) emphasize that the compositional metafunction has three interrelated systems: information value which indicates the placement of elements encompassing information value which is related to how pieces in an image, such as participants and their relationships, are organized to communicate meaning. Various zones have different meanings as being left or right, top or bottom, and center or margin all affect how viewers perceive the visual message. The facial expressions – specifically 'eyes' and appearance (clothing) in the image are regarded the significant elements because they attract the viewers' attention. Semiotically, the participant is the major subject of the image, while the viewer is the person who analyzes the components of the image including its size, color and words. Driscoll et al. (2020) state that the lighting, framing, and dimension of the image being at the bottom or top side patently produce a great difference in the viewer's reaction to the image and motivate him to take an action and respond to the image.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve the goals of this study, the study addresses the following questions:

RQ.1. What types of speech acts are communicated in electoral billboards?
RQ.2. What are the implicatures conveyed in slogans used in billboards?
RQ.3. How do semiotic resources such as colors, slogans, and images influence voters' attitudes?
RQ.4. What strategies do candidates adopt in designing their electoral billboards?

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data Collection

The data of this research are gathered from different websites: Getty Images Website (*Iraq Voting*: https://n9.cl/maulky), and Google Search Inquiry (*Iraqi Election Commission*: https://rb.gy/0lgmls), featuring a various collection of billboards related to candidates participated in the election of (2018). The data are distributed to totally (50) billboards which are selected randomly. Since the method of this research is mixed; (6) selected billboards are analyzed qualitatively, whereas the whole (50) billboards are analyzed quantitatively. A series of steps have been followed in gathering the data: (I) Selecting (6) billboards indiscriminately from the concerned websites in order to analyze them by means of pragmatic and multimodal concepts. (II) Sorting out each billboard's contents and determining the candidate's slogan (expressions he/she used), images, colors and other contents. (III) Determining (50) billboards to analyze them statistically. The qualitative data help to measure the frequency of certain elements of semiotic resources used in designing the candidates' electoral billboards.

4. 2. Research Design

The type of approach adopted in this research is typically descriptive, which is concerned with analyzing specified billboards in order to find out the strategies that the candidate adopts in promoting his/her electoral campaigns. It specifically adopts a mixed approach; a qualitative-quantitative approach, which is used to analyze the data qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative part is allocated for analyzing the linguistic aspect in the billboards, whereas the quantitative part is designated to offer statistical analysis of the frequency and percentage of pragmatic elements and semiotic resources.

4. 3. Approach of Analysis

This section concentrates on analyzing the selected billboards throughout investigating their significant features and the effects they generate to persuade the voters. The researchers are concerned with examining how these billboards bring the viewers' attention and communicate certain messages. These help to realize their effectiveness in interacting with the components of the billboards. There are certain procedures that must be followed during the analytical process.

(I). Identifying the slogans and specifying their structures to analyze them in terms of speech acts and conversational implicatures, exploiting Searle's model (1979) of *Speech Act Theory*. (II). Analyzing the semiotic resources including images, colors and frames are analyzed according to Kress & van Leeuwen's metafunctions (2006). (III) identifying

the implications conveyed in each billboard. (IV) Carrying out a statistical analysis to recognize the types of speech acts utilized in the candidates' billboards. Moreover, it is necessary to show the frequency of the candidate's more desirable colors, image profiling and structures used.

5. PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SLOGANS EMPLOYED IN ELECTION BILLBOARDS

The slogans used by candidates in their electoral billboards are analyzed pragmatically in terms of speech acts according to Searle's typology of speech acts proposed in 1979. Further, these slogans are also analyzed by means of conversational implicatures in order to perceive the candidate's intended meaning expressed in slogans. The slogans are short yet they are expressive and denotative which imply messages like promising or assuring or stating. The table below illustrates the pragmatic analysis.

Table (1): Pragmatic analysis of some selected slogans

No.	Candidates' Slogans	Speech Act Types	Illocutionary Act	Particularized Conversational Implicatures
1	" بأصواتكم نسترد حقوقكم" "With your votes, we reclaim your rights"	Expressive	Promising	This implies voting for this candidate will restore lost rights, implying that the previous politicians have failed to protect them.
2	"العراق يتقدم " "Iraq moves forward"	Representative	Stating	The slogan implicates that the country is growing and correlates this achievement to the candidate's leadership, barely distinguishing it from the opposition.
3	"راجعلهم" "Returning to them"	Commissive	Threatening	It implies confronting with a potential opponent, stressing on the necessity for retaliation, and responding to feelings of rage.
4	"إحنا كدها " "We can manage it"	Representative	Asserting	The slogan implies that there are serious challenges, but the candidate assures that he can surpass them.
5	"عراق موحد .. بناء وتغيير" "A united Iraq Building ...and changing "	Expressive	Promising	This slogan promises progress and societal enhancement, denoting that current conditions are inappropriate and the speaker promises a glittering future.
6	"نحمي الدولة ونحتمي بها" "We protect the state and are protected by it"	Representative	Asserting	It implies that we are loyal to our state and stick to its constitution.

It appears that the representative and the expressive type of speech acts are commonly frequent in the electoral slogans raised by the political candidates. Candidates predominantly use promising acts, asserting acts or stating acts, but they highlight the promising act because their campaign is based on promising their voters to achieve different projects after electing them. Slogans are chosen carefully because they represent the candidate's future program. Candidates create their slogans depending on certain issues; they typically create short and concise structures, as they opt for specific words signifying building, restoration, make changes, development or reclaiming your rights. When the voter reads their concise slogans, he potentially implicates something, for instance, the slogan "Coming back at them" implicates that the candidate threatens to confront his opponents who are corrupt and he will punish them legally. Clark (2022) elucidates that particularized conversational implicature is generated from the interrelation of linguistic meaning and assumptions deduced from specific context. This means the voter can understand the implicit meaning of any candidate's slogan throughout interacting between the meanings of slogan's words and background knowledge of context of the situation that the nation goes through.

5.1. Analyzing Metafunctions of Selected Billboards

The representational, interactive and compositional metafunctions (meanings) proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) are utilized as a model of analyzing electoral billboards' designs. The approach of analysis depends on interpreting the components of each metafunction of the chosen billboards.

1. Sample One

Figure (1): Candidate's electoral billboard of Tamadun Coalition

(A). Representational Analysis: The narrative process shows that the candidate is represented in a formal pose where he wears a blue suit and he holds bundles of wheat stalks, an action that symbolizes prosperity and showing interest in the agriculture field. It stresses his high confidence as the light smile indicates trust. The conceptual process is represented in two symbols; the wheat stalks are a symbol of agriculture growth and economic prosperity. The conceptual process is manifested in the blue color representing the billboard background and the blue color of the candidate's suit that denotes trust. The

logo is positioned to the upper side of the billboard, while the electoral number is positioned at the bottom part.

(B). Interactive Analysis: This candidate makes straight eye contact with the audience (demanding gaze), which denotes closeness and interaction. The medium close-up shot creates a kind of familiarity and validity, keeping him a more approachable person and this view is supported by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) who confirm that the medium shot denotes a type of social relationship. The eye-level angle indicates impartiality, which qualifies him as a personable politician. Clear font of graphics, appealing color, and close-visual prove the candidate's genuineness and trustworthiness.

(C). Compositional Analysis: The billboard shows that Al-Jubouri's personal photo is placed on the left of the billboards, which reflects the (given information) which keeps him recognized, whereas his logo, full name, list number, his number sequence are new information, which maintain the outstanding distribution of the billboard's components, as they manifest key information for the viewers. As concerns the salience, the candidate's image is the most prevailing feature, which captures the viewer's attention promptly. Hence, Mogaji (2021) asserts that an image is the most significant element which can disclose a thousand words. It can "convey a message with a text or no text at all" (p. 96). The script, written with bold white letters, and a blue background space make it easily read and assure magnitude. Eventually, the frame of this billboard is prominent because it contains sharp demarcations between text, image, numbers, open book topped by Iraqi flag, and logo which produce an organized visual hierarchy.

2. Sample Two

Figure (2): Candidate's electoral billboard of AL-Nesar bloc

(A). Representational Analysis: The above billboard in figure (2) mostly incorporates a conceptual process which highlights the identity of the candidate whose personal photo is static because he makes no action like pointing his finger forward or waving by his hand. His uniform is an official suit, which includes a dark suit, a white shirt, and a red tie, symbolizing official status. His facial expression is neutral but focused, denoting seriousness. The coalition logo 'Victory' and his number (158) bolster his political identification, while the motto 'Iraq Moves Forward' signifies national development and growth. The organized and formal standing status in this visual illuminate his role as an effective figure.

(B). Interactive Analysis: The gaze of the candidate (participant) is directed to the viewer, which is classified as a demand gaze, creating a sense of direct connection with viewers. The close-up shot highlights his face and upper part of his body, making him

appear reliable and trustworthy. The perspective of the angle is frontal that portrays him as a leader engaging the people, presenting him as familiar to the viewers. High modality is accomplished throughout choosing good lighting, attractive colors and formal structure of the candidate's personal photo that creates an equal status of sight between the participant and viewer who can glance at him closely or remotely.

(C). Compositional Analysis: the information value is embodied in having the candidate placed at the left side of the billboard, while the name, logo, numbers are located at the right side, and this is called the left-right distribution of elements. The salience feature is achieved via different distinguished colors, the logo's words are written with big clear form, but his name is written with small white font in a small triangle with red color. So the frame is blue containing attractive colors – white and red. The logo is obviously situated in the middle of the right side and beneath it while the candidate's name is below. The components of the billboard are harmonious.

3. Sample Three

Figure (3): Candidate's electoral billboard of Saarun bloc

(A). Representational Analysis: The image of the candidate in figure (3) above embodies the conceptual process because there is no action involved by the candidate in the image. He looks at the viewer directly. His image on the left conforms with the goal of offering him as a 'given' or distinguished character to the public. His image shows that he wears the religious uniform indicating that he is a fair and religious person. The image of the candidate is situated on the left side yet the image's size is less than the sizes of the earlier candidates' images, while his name, logo, electoral number and bloc's title are located on the whole right side with larger fonts of graphics. He focuses on his name and logo rather than his small-sized image.

(B). Interactive Analysis: The candidate creates a straight gaze for the viewer which exhibits a sense of commitment and confidence, thus he establishes a demanding gaze in this billboard. He uses the personal pronoun 'we' in his logo "We will return", suggesting that he minimizes the social distance between him and people, making a kind of solidarity with his people. He forms a short logo, but it is suggestive, hence Keller (2013) maintains that a slogan is a brief and catchy phrase, which is produced to convey a message. Close-up shot proves that he is socially close to his audience. The orange color is attractive which highlights the candidate's name that is written in white.

(C). Compositional Analysis: The distribution of the information in this billboard is similar to Sample Two, but there is a slight difference in that his image is smaller and kept in the left side exactly, while the name of the bloc to which he belongs Saa'eroon is positioned on the top right side, and below it, his name is placed in a big white font. He places his slogan with a big distinct form tagged with a white hashtag. The two numbers are written in the black color to easily differentiate them from his name. As for salience, his name is more salient than the other components followed by his image. Blue, white, orange and black are the colors used in this billboard, but the blue one represents the background that covers the entire billboard. The frame of the billboard is big ; therefore, it is placed over the building's roof.

4. Sample Four

Figure (4): Candidate's electoral billboard of National Wisdom Movement

(A). Representational Analysis: The process used in Sample Four in Figure (4) above is conceptual because the candidate makes no action in the visual due to having direct look at the viewers. Deng (2023) points out that the conceptual process is static, emphasizing the relationships among even participants via classifications, symbolic process and analytical process. The visual contains the candidate's personal photo, script indicating the logo, numbers of the electoral list and candidate and her prominent status within the visual. The candidate's slogan "Iihna gadha" (We can manage it) mirrors confidence and determination to take on responsibilities, enhancing her obligation to her voters. The billboard's dark blue color bears trustworthiness, while the yellow color highlights the billboard.

(B). Interactive Analysis: The candidate's direct gaze at the viewer's direction makes a demand communication, which reveals engagement between the participant and the viewer. The close-up shot of her image minimizes social distance, which makes her approachable and close to people. The frontal angle of the image forms a horizontal

perspective where the candidate's photography is highly attractive. The image has a high modality due to having prominent colors and striking script printed with brilliant yellow color.

(C). Compositional Analysis: the tips of information take three zones, the right side contains a big image of the candidate. Usually, the left side (new information) is allocated to the portrait of the candidate, but she made the opposite when positioned it in the right side. The script is written in Arabic language with a big font. The bottom of the billboard has the full name of the candidate. Salience is seen in the candidate's photograph as having main size and the bold yellow words are put on the dark blue background which implement an intriguing visual contrast. The frame is well-designed and each side is allocated for a given thing.

5. Sample Five

Figure (5): Candidate's electoral billboard of National Wisdom Movement

(A). Representational Analysis: The above billboard displays a strong and clear focal image of the candidate, which proves that the billboard undergoes a conceptual process that emphasizes his identity and complexion. The image encompasses the personal photo of the candidate, which is the only photo used in this billboard. He makes no action and he is static only. He appears in an official suit with red tie. He focuses on showing his head and shoulders and on his direct look at the public.

(B). Interactive Analysis: The candidate's image is centrally positioned on the billboard, creating a direct connection with the public and making him the focus of attention. Hence, he establishes a demand gaze which is directed to the viewer straightforwardly. The image's clarity and size indicate an effort to establish familiarity and trust with viewers. Since it is a close-up shot, the image exhibits an intimate social relation with the

viewer. The image demonstrates only the face and shoulders. The candidate is shown from a frontal perspective, directly facing the viewer. The use of colors dark blue, yellow and white yields an impressive contrast that might depict a kind of optimism and trust. The slogan's words "United Iraq, Building and Changing" react as a call to action, asking viewers to participate in the promised future.

(C). Compositional Analysis: as for the information value, the photo of the candidate represents the given information, but the right side contains his logo, coalition's number (180), rank (1) and this represents the new information. The bottom part contains his full name printed with clear yellow color, and at the upper part of the right side there is a symbol of the coalition. Both his photo and his name printed with a big font are the salient elements in this billboard. The framing of this billboard is nicely designed due to the good choice of colors, font, red color of numbers and background. Kress and Leeuwen (2021) emphasize that the red color is prominent and more conspicuous than other colors. Consequently, this interprets how many candidates highlight their electoral numbers and bloc's numbers in red. The yellow color harmonizes with the entire color of the billboard as well as it harmonizes with white color used for the text and red used for numbers. Lines are also used to indicate divisions of the billboard.

6. Sample Six

Figure (6): Candidate's electoral billboard of National Coalition

(A). Representational Analysis: The billboard sample six in figure (6) above has a conceptual process which is manifested in different elements. The image is still and has no action because the candidate's photo is fixed having no move or bearing nothing in his hand. His image is placed on the right side yet his look is made in a fringing way, directing laterally to the left side. Unlike the earlier personal photos, this personal photo is not directed to the viewers directly instead he moves his face to the left side embodying his strong character and proving that he is self-confident and reliable. The text, logo, slogan and his electoral number are positioned on the left side of the billboard where the words are written with big clear font – the bloc's name was written with the red color, while the slogan was written in black. The logo is a crescent forming the Iraqi flag and in the middle a green palm tree was placed. At the bottom of the palm trunk, the Arabic word 'wataniya' is put.

(B). Interactive Analysis: The candidate's gaze is not direct towards the viewers because the contact is directed to the left side and according to Kress and Leeuwen (2006), this is called an offer gaze. The distance of the shot is close where the viewer can see the candidate's facial expressions closely. The left angle, he makes, shows that he is confident and authoritative. Since he used the white color for the whole billboard, this reveals that the visual has a higher level of modality. The distribution of the visual's components are well-organized and the white color fits with the personal photo of the candidate.

(C). Compositional Analysis: the photo is positioned on the right side, embodying the given information in this billboard, while the logo, slogan, text are written on the right side capturing the new information. Accordingly, Zhang (2023) contends that the left-right arrangement pertains to new and given information. Practically, Iraqi candidates designate the left side to their personal photos, while the other details (new information) are placed on the right side, but a few of them make the opposite. The salient elements are the candidate's photo and slogan's words which are written with a black color. The bloc's logo is also a distinguished symbol that incarnates patriotism. The method of framing this billboard relies on focusing on the white color that covers the entirety of it.

5.1.1. Analyzing Visual Elements Utilized in Billboards

Visual modes encapsulate different components used in a visual, billboard, or image. They might indicate images, colors, text, numbers, symbols or designs. These modes are effective in structuring any electoral billboard or posters. Colors are carefully selected, also the fonts and colors of texts are chosen painstakingly. Thus, professional persons must design these billboards and integrate the components together to get typical structures. The table below illustrates the frequency and percentage of various visual modes utilized in the electoral billboards.

**Table (2): Statistical analysis of visual modes in campaign billboards**

No	Background Colors	Freq.	Perc.	Text Color	Freq.	Perc.	Num Color	Freq.	Perc.
1	White	14	%28	White	23	%46	White	14	%28
2	Blue	20	%40	Blue	2	%4	Blue	5	%10
3	Yellow	7	%14	Yellow	5	%10	Yellow	7	%14
4	Green	3	%6	Green	1	%2	Green	0	0
5	Orange	2	%4	Orange	0	0	Orange	0	0
6	Violet	4	%8	Violet	0	0	Violet	0	0
7	Black	0	0	Black	8	%16	Black	11	%22
8	Red	0	0	Red	11	%22	Red	13	%26
	Total	**50**	**%100**	50	50	**%100**		**50**	**%100**

According to the statistical analysis in the aforementioned table, the blue color is used (20) times as the billboard's background, which obtained the highest percentage (%40). The white color occupies the second rank as a background color which is exploited (14) times, rated (%28). The yellow color achieves the third rank where it is used (7) times, and violet (4), green (3), while orange obtains (2), which gets the lowest percentage (%4). On the other hand, many candidates chose the white color for texts used in the billboards in the sense that the white color is used (23) times, which is the largest proportion used as color for texts, which is rated (%46). The red color gets the second rank of occurrence whose percentage reaches (%23). The black color appears (8) times, while yellow is used (5) times, and blue is utilized (2), but the lowest frequency of the green color is (1) only with a mean percentage of (%2). As concerns the color of the numbers indicating the candidate's number or bloc's number, the white color again is used (14) with a percentage of (%28), followed by red which is used (13) times with a rate of (%26). Black is ranked third of its occurrence in coloring the numbers in the billboard which is used (7) times with a percentage of (%14). The blue color attains the lowest frequency of use (5), which is rated (%14).

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1. 6.1. Interplay between Pragmatics and Semiotics in Analyzing Billboards

Pragmatics can be interacted with semiotics to analyze electoral billboard's contents because both are utilized to realize the implicit meanings conveyed throughout an image, color, slogan, logo, or text. Pragmatics can be exploited to analyze slogans, logos, and colors. Slogans are analyzed by means of speech acts whether they denote promising acts or threatening acts or asserting acts or pledging acts in addition, the words of slogans are analyzed in terms of implicatures which bear implicit meanings for the viewers who must dig deep to grasp these implicatures. Logos and colors are analyzed by virtue of conversational particularized implicatures. On the other hand, semiotics analyzes images, colors, slogans, logos, text, and font's size by way of symbolism, denotations, connotations and signs whose core purpose is to realize the implicit meanings communicated in these semiotic modes. Consequently, pragmatics and semiotics have something in common which is to comprehend the implicit meanings expressed in these modes. The diagram below illustrates the interplay between these two fields.
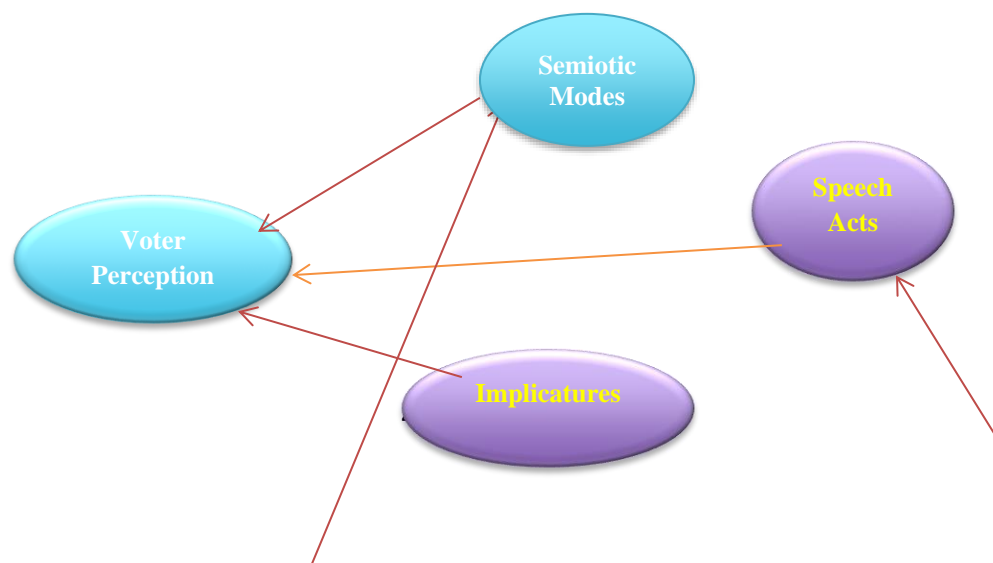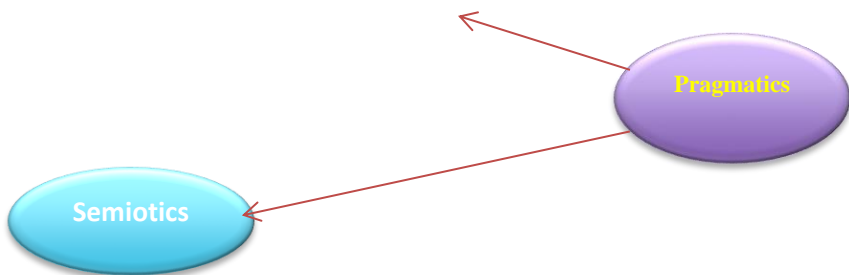
Diagram (1): Pragma-semiotic Interplay for Analyzing Billboards

Colors and logos comprise pragmatic perspective – more specifically they can be interpreted by means of conversational particularized implicatures which express implicit meanings within the context – the context is a billboard organized for parliamentary election and the candidate aims to make the audience, who have some background knowledge about him, to vote for him. Hence, in sample one, the candidate uses the blue color for his billboard's background which semiotically denotes calmness and responsibility, while pragmatically it implicates that the candidate (AL-Juboury) is trustworthy and he is able to shoulder responsibility after electing him. On the other hand, he places a logo in his billboard forming a white open book and puts in the middle of this book an Iraqi flag. Semiotically, the book is a symbol of knowledge and education, but pragmatically the open book implicates that he is honest and open to everybody when he is elected, he will help his voters and meet their requests faithfully. The existence of the Iraqi flag over the book implicates that he is patriotic. Correspondingly, this candidate carries stalks of wheat in his hands which semiotically indicates that the billboard undergoes a narrative process, but pragmatically two aspects can be tackled, speech acts and implicatures. Thus, the candidate asserts that he is deeply interested in agriculture (representative speech act), and it implicates that he will develop the field of agriculture in his country.

In figure (6), the candidate uses a white color representing his billboard's background. Semiotically, the white color symbolizes purity, virture and cleanless.

Btoosh (2014) affirms that the white color symbolizes courage, purity, wisdom and nobility. Pragmatically, it implicates that his life and career are pure and he is eligible to be an MP. The logo that he uses in his billboard is semiotically symbolic and suggestive. It consists of a crescent shaped by the Iraqi flag and inside it there is a green palm tree, which is a symbol of elevation and growth. Pragmatically, the palm tree implicates that he is strong and chivalrous and is committed to his country. Accordingly, analyzing the speech act of the white color proves that it bears an asserting act – a type of act that belongs to the representative type. Ultimately, pragmatics and semiotics can be employed to analyze semiotic modes found in billboards and posters.

6.2. Strategies Adopted in Designing Electoral Billboards

The analysis of the candidates' slogans by means of speech acts and implicatures demonstrates that representative and expressive speech acts are the crucial types used by the candidates. Conversational particularized implicatures are also examined in order to show each candidate's intended meaning conveyed in these slogans. The particularized

conversational implicature helps grasping the candidate's implicit meaning because it depends on the context incorporating the political, social and economic status of the nation. In addition, it is important to depend on the background knowledge to understand the messages communicated in the candidate's slogan.

Examining of candidates' billboards uncovers different strategies adopted in crafting their electoral billboards.**The first strategy**: Featuring sizeable, left-aligned personal photos in the candidates' billboards where these photos are considered the salient mode that the Iraqi candidates exploit. It has been proved that most of the candidates place their personal photos on the left side of the billboard, and such position brings the attention of the viewers immediately. **The second strategy**: The right side of the billboards is dedicated to the textual material to highlight candidate's names, electoral numbers and slogans. These things bear semiotic indications because each one has specific color and font. **The third strategy**: Creating concise, catchy, and thought-provoking slogans. These slogans consist of few words yet their implicatures are effective and suggestive. The slogans encapsulate pragmatic aspects because their wordings have speech acts and implicatures. They have messages which either denote promsing or asserting or threatening or pledging acts. They also have implicatures in the sense that through a slogan the candidate could implicate that he promises to progress the economic field when he is elected.

The fourth strategy: Designing text in white, highlighting numbers in red or yellow for contrast, but black is sparingly used. Candidates utilize primary colors to highlight some semiotic modes, but these colors also have pragmatic implicatures. For instance, if the candidate uses the orange color, the particularized implicature denotes that the candidate is energetic, and if he is elected, he will work hard to satisfy the voters' needs. **The fifth strategy**: Symbols of national pride, patriotism, love of country or political identity are implemented in the electoral billboards including map of Iraq, Iraqi flag, palm tree and emblems typifying the candidate's respective bloc. All these symbols have pragmatic implicatures and semiotic representations. **The sixth strategy**: The blue and white colors are chosen for the billboard's background in order to get the other components of the billboard more prominent. Semiotically, white symbolizes purity and wisdom, but pragmatically it implicates that the candidate is pure and honest to his audience and eligible to be elected. So the white color conveys the message of asserting as being honest, hence the white color in the billboard bears a representative speech act type.

Candidates significantly focus on using their personal photos which must be large, and their eyes are mostly directed immediately to the viewers (demand gaze) who can see them clearly. Few candidates use profile photo (offer gaze) rather than using the frontal direction, believing that this position might make them more distinguished than the frontal direction. It has been noted that slogans are brief which are almost written with white color. The blue and white colors are widely used for the billboards' backgrounds due to their high brightness and they help in highlighting the other elements in the billboards. The deliberate choice of font size and its white color profoundly enables the viewers to read the text patently and capture their attention swiftly.

7. CONCLUSION

It has been concluded that the billboards designed for Iraqi parliament elections are professionally crafted in the sense that every element in these billboards are chosen intentionally starting from the colors to the slogans. These slogans are brief and short, yet they express effective meanings, which primarily form promising and asserting types of speech acts. It has been demonstrated that the representative and expressive acts are the most frequently occurring types of speech acts in the electoral billboards, whereas the commissive speech act is the least frequently occurring type. They also express implicit meanings where the readers must dig deep to realize the candidate's intention when he/she uses two or three words forming them in a catchy phrase. Consequently, specific messages are inserted within the logos' phrasing, which commit the viewer to decipher and interpret their concealed meanings. The application of Kress and Leeuwen's model (2006) to the billboards' structures has proved to be successful because it discloses that candidates use six different strategies to design their billboards. For the billboard's background, candidates used blue and white colors, but 'blue' is the most frequent color, prevailing in diverse genuine and artificial background. They also use large personal photos putting on formal suits placing them mostly on the left side of the billboards. They allocate a good space for revealing their photos in a distinguished form. Once more, the white and red colors are remarkably used to highlight the words in the text.

The colors used to indicate the numbers of the candidates and their blocs are white, red and black, others have yellow, blue and green, which is notably less used. It has been noted that most of the candidates place their photos in a straight and frontal position (demanding gaze), oriented to the viewers directly, which offer to the viewers a close-up shot where he/she can see the candidate's facial expressions clearly. Additionally, they keep their eyes straight to the viewers, trying to capture the viewers' attention promptly. The other salient component that the candidates utilize in their billboards is the national symbols encompassing the Iraqi flag, the geographical map of Iraq, palm tree, or wheat stalks – a symbol of being interested in developing agriculture in Iraq. Eventually, designing an electoral billboard or poster involves different elements, but the most important thing is how to fuse these elements together and get a distinguished electoral billboard.

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