

RESEARCH TITLE

SEMIOTIC STUDY OF IRAQI ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

Prof. Dr. Salih Mahdi Adai Al-Mamoory (Ph.D.)¹

Ahmed Fleih Hassan²

¹ English Department, College of Education for Human Sciences, Babylon, University, Iraq.

Email: salih_mehdi71@yahoo.com

² University of Babylon, Irap

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Abstract

This paper is to deal with the various strategies that the Iraqi candidates follow in their parliamentary electoral campaign. There are certain techniques that are used by the candidates to persuade the voters to vote for them. Four photos are chosen to investigate the effective way that candidates used to distribute either clothes or food to groups of voters. It is clear that the society is facing harsh conditions to the extent that people could be persuaded to elect someone for just a simple meal or clothes.

1. Introduction

The mission of defining language can vary according to the point of view language is considered. The main definition that can generally characterize language is that it is mainly a tool of communication. However, language as "Language is a means of communication between members of the public symbol of the sound produced by means of said human"(Keraf, 1980) .

Sitindoan (1984) states that language is defined as "Language is a symbol of the sound produced by means of said human, and the system has means that are arbitrary; used by men in her life as a means of communication between each other to form, express, and communicate thoughts and feelings ,cultural social nature". Many other linguists come to defined language as system of signs which incorporated gestures, written symbols or vocal sounds. This system is meant mainly to encode information. Human, as most animals, are seen to have verbal and nonverbal language as they can communicate by signs or even sounds with one difference between animal communications which is the social identity that overrides the human use of language.

2.The aim of the study

The aim of the current study is to investigate the ways that candidates use to reach the persuasion of people through the process of distributing simple services for the voters.

In order to archives the aims of the study, there are certain questions to be answered

- 1.How do candidates try to persuade voters to vote for them?
- 2.What do they present to voters as a concrete immediate service?

3. Semiotics

Humans live in a society that can form its meanings through the combination of various semiotic means such as the spoken or written language as well as visual imagery and mathematical symbols. The meanings between people can also be conveyed by the use of architecture, gestures and many other psychological frameworks. The modern modals of semiotic analysis are mainly established by two famous scientists namely, the well-known Swiss scientist Ferdinand De Saussure and the American philosopher who is considered a leading figure in this field, that is to say, Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce referred to his system as semiotics which then becomes a dominant term to call for the science of signs, while the terminology of De Saussure is semiology. It is clear that there are some differences in some aspects, yet, both terms are mainly used to refer to the study of signs (Chandler, 2007).

Semiotics covers a wide field of study that is concerned with the study of the multiple kinds of signs or the sign message that is conveyed by channels and media of the developed sign systems. The origin of the this science can be traced back to the time of ancient Greek in that that is related to the symptoms of medical and philosophical fields branch. Semiotic is considered the basis where semantics comes to the surface. The unit of the semiotic study is the sign. The traditional definition of the concept 'sign' is something stands for something. The modern application of semiotics has come to cover wide range of domains such philosophy, literary and

cultural studies, language and literacy studies, psychology, and even biology (Paul, 2014).

The general concern of semiotics is “study of signs”. However, there is no full agreement between semioticians about the scope of semiotics. Umberto Eco (1976) comes to set forth an attempt to map out the area of semiotics as he stated that “*semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign*”. Therefore, semiotics is viewed to have not only the concept of signs but anything that represents or stands for something else.

Moreover, Charles Morris(2006) offered an interpretation for the concept of signs as he put signs into three parts which are the study of relationship between the sign and other signs. This concept is related with study of syntax. The communication refers to the relationship of the signs and its users which is related to the study of pragmatics. On the third level, he manifested the relationship of the signs as they represent other things which are concerned of semantics.

In addition, Van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001) social semiotics is related exclusively to visual communication that include the description of things by using words or images. This social semiotics can include other visual tools of communication. It can also be concerned with the fact that what people say or do is fully connected to images that are related to their interpretations.

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), visual semiotics concentrates on what is called as ‘lexis’ rather than focusing on grammar or vocabulary. It is mainly concerned with the process of describing the individuals and placed by the use of images. They added that visual imagery can take various forms such as video, print, internet format as so on. It is clear that by use of signs such as colours and symbols varieties of meanings are made up. However, the visual communication is conveyed by the manipulation of colours and symbols for the sake of exposing particular message.

It is significantly noticed that the images are often interpreted without depending on any spoken or written information. The use of images then can be a tool by which individuals are directed or motivated. The use of images can help to spread the sense of melancholy and sadness or help to promote joy and happiness. The use of image can also be used to convey nostalgic reflections by the use of codes and colours where they are determined by the use of general context (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001).

4. Signs and Modes

The daily life is seen to have various types of signs that are routinely sprung in the mind such as the sign on goods, roads or on maps. According to the Swiss scientist Ferdinand De Saussure (1915-1966), a sign is viewed as a combination of two major things that are a concept and an image. These two parts are inseparable. Then, he comes to modify his terms to be more sufficient and clear as he added that the word sign ‘signe’ retains to represent the whole and replace the concept and the sound image by the terms ‘signifié’ and ‘signifiant’ (significant) are used to indicate the confrontation that insulates them from each other as being two parts. Saussure model is a dyadic one as it manifests the relationship between the two major parts that are signifiant and signifié. This modal is arbitrary and crucial as there

is no logical connection found between word and a concept or between the signifier and signified. A sign is viewed to refer to anything that can generate meaning. De Saussure's sign is seen to be a material object with meaning that is termed as signified and signified. The signifier then refers to the sign that is the images of the audience or members of the same culture who speak and use the same language (Fiske , 1990).

Charles Sanders Peirce who was a pragmatics and logical philosopher presented his own modal of sign and the taxonomies of signs. Pierce presents his triadic modal which is consisting of three main parts. The first one is the 'representamen' where the sign doesn't take the form of material and this concept is often termed as 'sign vehicle'. The second part is the 'interpretant' which is the sense that is made up the sign. The third one is the 'object' which is beyond the sign and it is termed as a referent. Pierce presents three types of modes of connection between the sign and what it refers to or signifies. These three types are icon, index and symbol that are considered the analyzing tool for semiotics in the study of sign language (Peirce, 1985).

The three modes of signs are explained in detail in Fiske (1982) that can be manifested as follows:

1-The symbol: is a mode of sign that the signifier doesn't look like the signified. The sign is sent to have no connection between itself and object. The connection is arbitrary or conventional. The relation in this mode has to be learned and agreed upon. This relation can be seen in the language in general, word, alphabetical letters, traffic light, national flags , phrase and so on.

2-Icon: is the second mode of sign that exposes similarity with the object in some technique. The signifier is seen to be similar or reflect imitation of the signified. This similarity is recognized in the appearance or sounding or it can be similar in feeling, tasting or smelling. This similarity can be reflecting in showing up some qualities. The visual sing is considered to be the best example of the iconic sign. This icon mode is found in images and cartoon, the icon mode can be found verbally in onomatopoeic verbal language and in realistic sounds. An icon basically means a visual reflection of representation of something. The iconic mode can be graphic or illustrative.

3-Index: is the third mode of sign in which the signifier is not arbitrary but it is directly connected to something. The signifier is 'causally or physically' connected to the signified. The link of the signifier and the signified is either inferred or observed. This mode can be like natural sign such as smoke, echoes, footprints, flavour and odours. This mode can also be a 'medical sign' such as the rash or pulse rate. The index can also be found with measuring instrument such as weathercock and thermometer; or with signals such as a knock on a door or phone ringing. Indexical pointer can also be example of this mode such as the pointing a finger, or directional sign post. The indexical mode can also have the recording such as a film or a photograph, television, video or recording voice. The indexicality can also include personal marks such as handwriting or slogans.

5. Electoral Campaigns

The process of elections is now considered as experience where almost all countries have come through. The most important attempt of this process is to accomplish the effective political communication. The entire electing process is made for political communication. The communication is necessary among the campaign leaders, campaign volunteers, donors, activists and supporters. The election procedure aims at making the entire process to be attractive and advertising process. It is meant to build up relationship and connection among the groups. The whole political campaign is meant to make the political communication to be massively influential and operative. The electoral campaign can be spread out via various media communication (Strömbäck, & Kioussis, 2014).

The political visual communication is considered one of the effective means of electoral communication where many aims and strategies are designated to draw the attention of the voters. The use of posters and picture for the purpose of making propaganda for the election parties seem to have well-known and widely spread phenomena in all of the countries especially during the election time. The poster techniques remain as one of the best activities done by the political figures to make their programs and credentials available to the public. The primary role for picture and poster is to make up a political campaign (Gass & Seiter, 2010).

The time of the election is considered the cherished time for these political posters and pictures that use a culturally political choice. The use of the posters can also explain the ideology of the candidates and the need for voters (Baker & Ellece, 2011).

The use of poster and picture can also reflect power in the election where it can convey common grounds with the voters. It is clear the use of poster and picture can help to promote motivation in the electing time and can be a means of winning the election as the propaganda is made up in such a way that help attract the community to adopt certain political ideas or opinions (Dumitrescu, 2011).

6. Methodology

Roland Barthes (1968) model is used as analyzing tool for the collected data where there are two main levels to accomplish the real meanings for various things. The first level is termed as a denotation; whereas the second is termed as connotation. The denotation is regarded the fundamental meaning with which everyone general agrees. The connotation is the second level that often comes to the surface as a traditional categorization that supports the process of comprehending.

7. Data Analysis

This section is to deal with the data analysis that each two photos are to be about the same main notion in the analysis.

Figure (1)



photo(1)

photo(2)

Denotational Level Analysis

In the above photographs, the candidates appear with number of people. There are some simple presents carried by the Candidates to be given to the people coming in groups. The man candidate appears in the photograph with some his private guards and there are some people around. The women candidate appears in group of women carrying some clothes to check whether they fit the women to take. She appears in a shop of clothes.

Connotational level Analysis

In those two photographs, the candidates use simple presents to persuade voters to elect them as a member in the parliament. They try to distribute simple things to people to get their loyalty. The photographs shows the fact that the voters are really in a poor living condition to the extent that they agree to vote top someone just by giving cloth to wear. This shows that those ordinary people cannot buy clothes, having no economic states to support even the simple needs. The photo indicates that these candidates ties to exploit the poor people to by their votes.

The way that the people grouped around the candidates indicates that they are really in need for even the simple primary in living presented by clothes. The photos also indicate the candidates try to go to the poorest regions or groups since the community that live in these areas often lack even the simplest services that is why they are sure that they are going to guarantee the votes of those people.

The photos also show that fact that the bad economic and political status that the community whiteness and how low level of communication as compared with electoral campaign in other Arabic and European countries concerning the service since candidates are previously responsible for presenting the service to the society and they must have done and presented what proves their ability to leadership or they

are new candidates and they try to seek for another way of persuading people to vote for them, but seemingly they could by attention take and distribute such photos to get more poor people to guarantee their votes.

Figure (2)



photo (1)



photo (2)

Denotational Level Analysis

In the above photo, there are two situations in which food is to be presented to people. In the first photo, a candidate puts his photo with sandwich and in the second photo meat is to be distributed. In the first photo a sandwich is folded and held by someone, in the second photo meat is weighted as if there is a particular occasion in which meat is cooked or distributed

Connotational Level of Analysis

In these two photos, food is to be given to people. The food is from those who are candidates for the Iraqi parliament. Candidates are to persuade voters to vote from them. The photos can indicate that people or voters are facing severe and harsh conditions to the extent that are in need for the simple meal to eat or to feed their families. The candidates aren't foreigner but they are from the same society that is why they try to give something that people are urgently in need to. Ordinary people or voters are seemingly under harsh and poor living that they can be persuaded by a sandwich or simple meal or a kilo of meat.

Candidates exploit the conditions that the society suffers from and try to persuade them with very poor and simple services. If the society was in a better living level, they would never accept that poor service that candidates present for the sake of voting for them. Voters in common society are to ask for education, transforming, decreasing fees and employment but not for a sandwich or a kilo of meat.

Society such as the Iraqi society lives in a rich country, they must ask for something better and they must not vote for someone just for a sandwich. The way that

candidates used in distributing for as the electoral campaign indicates that voters are really in need of food and that they are suffering from starvation. They are deprived from the simple rights in a rich country.

The two photos indicate the low economic level the voters live that they can be persuaded and vote for someone to be their representative in the parliament with a very simple meal. The photos indicate the low political system holding the sensitive positions in the government and how poor people are neglected by the system of the government.

Conclusion

It is concluded that parliamentary candidates use different strategies and techniques to persuade voters to vote for them. Candidates try to give simple presents and services to people who are indeed in lack of even the simple rights. People are seen as just as tools that are to be directed and used by the candidates.

It is also concluded that candidates try to group people and give them some food or clothes. During the distribution of their presents, they try to have photos taken in order to show that they help poor people in order to gain a good reputation among those living harsh conditions.

Many voters are very simple-minded that they just think of getting some immediate concrete benefits not permanent services represented by employment, transportation, education and the real solution to the big problems that the Iraqi society in general suffers from.

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