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Available online at: <https://eduj.uowasit.edu.iq>Akram Mohammed
RashidAsst. Prof. Khalida
Hashoosh Addai (Ph.D.)University of Wasit
College of Education for
Humanities,

Email:

akrmoh101@gmail.comkhalidaalghzezzy@gmail.com

009647808129288

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Investigating Iraqi's Election Propaganda Posters

A B S T R A C T

The current study aims to explore the phenomena of election propaganda posters. A political slogan is viewed as one of the most important ways for political parties and candidates to communicate with voters, particularly when party identification is declining. Political advertising in Iraq began with the use of posters, flyers, and other printed materials. The present study sheds light on how candidates and political parties in Iraq communicate with their audiences. Also, it tries to answer the research question, that is, what are the types of presuppositions that are used in the Iraqi election propaganda posters. It studies Iraqi election propaganda posters from a pragmatic point of view and takes Yule's theory (1996) of presupposition as a model for data analysis. The data concerning the candidates are chosen from different Iraqi provinces to investigate those electoral campaigns pragmatically. Furthermore, this study deals with various aspects in terms of the utterances used for the purpose of influencing the voter's decision for the right candidate. The current study concludes that the candidates use different types of presuppositions in their electoral campaigns.

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تقصي ملصقات الدعاية الانتخابية العراقية

أ.م.د. خالد حاشوش عداي

الباحث: أكرم محمد راشد

جامعة واسط / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

المستخلص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى تفحص ظاهرة صور الدعاية الانتخابية العراقية. يعتبر الشعار السياسي أحد أغلب الطرق المهمة للمرشحين السياسيين والاحزاب لغرض التواصل مع الناخبين خصوصا عندما تضمحل شخصية الحزب. بدأت الدعاية السياسية في العراق باستخدام منشورات ، ملصقات والمواد المطبوعة الاخرى. تسلط الدراسة الحالية الضوء على كيف يمكن للمرشحين والاحزاب السياسية في العراق التواصل مع جمهورهم . أيضا تحاول هذه الدراسة أن تجيب على

سؤال البحث وهو ماهي انواع الافتراضات المستخدمة في ملصقات الدعاية الانتخابية العراقية. حيث تدرس صور الدعاية الانتخابية العراقية من وجهة نظر تداولية وتم أخذ نظرية يول (1996) للافتراض كنموذج لتحليل البيانات. تم أخذ البيانات من محافظات عراقية مختلفة لغرض كشف الدعاية الانتخابية تداوليا. علاوة على ذلك، تتناول هذه الدراسة جوانب مختلفة من حيث الاقوال المستخدمة لغرض التأثير على قرار الناخب للمرشح المناسب. توصلت الدراسة الحالية بأن المرشحين يستخدمون انواع مختلفة من الافتراضات في دعايتهم الانتخابية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدعاية ، الإقناع ، الانتخابات البرلمانية ، الافتراض

1. Introduction

Language is utilised to convey messages or information from the speaker to the receiver (Levinson, 1983). In order to convey messages or information, individuals must engage in conversation or use media such as advertisements, books, and magazines. According to Fromkin (1988), language is much more than spoken words; this implies that people can use the written language to communicate messages or information. Depending on the perspective from which a language is considered, the mission of defining it can vary. Language is primarily a communication tool, according to the primary definition that can be applied to it in general. Thus, language is identified as “a means of communication between members of the public symbol of the sound produced by means of said human”(Kerf, 1980. p.20).

In addition to what it has been mentioned above, language is regarded as a sophisticated and multifaceted mode of communication. The words and their combinations in a language are frequently employed in a politically and socially charged manner. This advanced instrument of language is frequently used by political figures to manipulate the public into accepting their opinions and policies by making the language more persuasive and convincing. Politicians primarily employ this language to mediate and compromise a particular ideology (van Dijk, 1997).

The candidates employ a unique way of showing their slogans or their electoral program during the parliamentary elections. To do this, the candidates seek in the first place how to choose words or expressions that can manipulate or persuade the voters. This can be obvious in the Iraqi parliamentary propaganda posters.

However, the current study investigates the types of presuppositions that are implemented in the Iraqi electoral parliamentary propaganda 2021. Additionally, this study tries to propose the following question: (What are the types of presuppositions that are utilized in the Iraqi election propaganda?)

This study is limited to the Iraqi election propaganda 2021. The researchers have chosen four electoral propaganda posters.

1.2 The Iraqi Political System

In July 2012, Iraq had a total population of 30 million people. Six countries border Iraq: Jordan and Saudi Arabia to the southwest, Turkey and Syria to the north, and Iran across

the Arabian Gulf to the east. The January-elected Iraqi National Assembly drafted a new constitution to be ratified in a national referendum on October 15, 2005, which has remained unchanged to this day. The constitution established Iraq as a republic with an elected parliament. The president is chosen by the parliament, who then chooses the prime minister. When a prime minister is appointed, he is responsible for forming his government by selecting ministers and then obtaining parliament's approval. The parliament, on the other hand, consists primarily of elected representatives. Iraq has been previously divided into 18 electoral districts. Parliamentary elections are the nation's highest-level contest.

According to the Iraqi constitution, the 375 members of parliament are elected every four years. Therefore, it is essential to include the fields and terms that define the framework of election activity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Propaganda

The phenomena of propaganda have indeed been defined by a wide number of writers from many disciplines such as sociology, psychology, politics, mass communication, and history, due to its controversies. The definitions below can help understand what propaganda is all about.

Lasswell (1937) was the first writer who defined propaganda as “the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representations; these representations may take: spoken, written, or musical forms”(p.521).

Ellul (1964) claimed, from a sociological point of view, that propaganda is an endeavor to achieve consistent behaviour in everyone’s everyday life. In terms of the persistent social context, it also influences the individual’s thoughts and attitudes.

Doob, a psychologist, defined propaganda in 1948 as the endeavor to influence and control the behaviour of individuals toward unscientific goals in an area at a particular time (cited in Willcox, 2005). It is important to mention that the term “unscientific” is fundamentally expressive since it emphasizes the negative connotations of the term propaganda. It also implies that the propagandist's goals are ineffective. As a result, Doob’s definition falls short of demonstrating propaganda’s true value. To sum up, such a definition considers propaganda to be negative (Willcox, 2005).

In terms of politics, propaganda is described as a politician’s attention to manipulate a large group of people (Merril & Lowenstein, 1971). This definition emphasizes the manipulative nature of the word “propaganda”, whose ultimate aim is to promote something.

Additionally, according to Walton (1997), propaganda is fundamentally indifferent about the reality; that is, it disseminates information, whether accurate or inaccurate, good or bad, in order to persuade a target audience to recognize the propagandist's preferred attitudes or beliefs. Propaganda is mainly defined as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist”(Jowett & O’Donnell, 2012, pp.6-7). As a result, propaganda is defined merely as persuasion. According to this meaning, the term simply refers to the ability to convince masses.

2.2 The Language of Persuasion

To deliver a message to the people, modern propaganda could be spread across a variety of organizations or institutions such as radio stations, newspapers, television stations, libraries, etc. Propaganda communications are built on language that may be written, auditory, or visual in nature. Emotion, formation of connotations, repetition, and reduction of reality are fundamental components of propagandist language (Mesthrie et al., 2000).

According to Jowett and O'Donnell (2012), propagandists may use word symbolism to generate a sense of dominance. The language is connected with authority characters like as parents, teachers, and national leaders. Agents of propaganda can also utilize sacred symbols and authority in order to influence the recipient's and the public's perspective of society. Furthermore, propaganda's use of language serves to determine the cause while dissipating opponents. During times of war, propagandists may allude to the enemy like a savage or cruel to convey the murderousness and criminality of the enemy in a linguistically effective manner.

2.3 Propaganda and persuasion

The most common definition of propaganda, as stated on earlier pages, is “any attempt to persuade anyone of any belief” (William & Keith, 1949, p.2). Pratkanis and Aronson (1997) opined that modern propaganda involves using convenient persuasion methods. It is a mission to take advantage of and manage the cognitive masses' poor capacities. Propaganda is associated with the qualities of modern persuasion and takes the form of messages focused at a suitable setting. The recipient's capacity to persuade makes it really hard to think seriously about crucial topics and decisions. Qualified propagandists have the power and freedom to utilize a variety of strategies in order to persuade the target audience.

Propaganda is a weapon of mass persuasion for public opinion, as Willcox (2005) pointed out, especially during wartime. As a result, it is vital to research the occasions where propaganda is deployed, as well as the methods by which messages are delivered. Propaganda is used in the press and other forms of media, as well as in governments and in establishing belligerents' roles in conflicts. Therefore, propaganda employs tactics that are identifiable by the general population easily.

Hennigan (2010) established a complete and unbiased definition of propaganda, stating that it is a form of persuasion designed to affect the masses' sentiments, attitudes, actions, and beliefs for ideological, political, or economic goals. This is accomplished by distributing one-sided messages that may or may not be factually accurate via direct mass media channels.

Additionally, Miller (1980) defined persuasive communication as the process of shaping, reinforcing, or changing reactions. These replies take the form of messages, which are frequently connected with coercive force or are indirectly coercive by eliciting an emotional response from the addressee. Persuasion, generally, refers to the processes of mediated communication.

Al Ghezzezy (2020) stated that researchers interested in election campaigns, public speeches, political forums, legislation ...etc., have studied the language of politics extensively. According to Jowett and O'Donnell (2012), persuasion is a distinct communication style from propaganda utilising techniques to achieve its persuasion goals. A vital aspect of persuasion is interactive communication, which implies that both the audience and the speaker can alter their roles immediately throughout the speech. While propaganda is a one-way communication method, the recipient cannot reply or exchange discourse. In other words, persuasion is a process that involves speech and direct communication.

It is usually considered that propaganda is little more than the art of persuasion, which succeeds in influencing attitudes and beliefs. There is little question that persuasion is one of the purposes of propaganda, but in fact, it is restricted and connected. Propaganda is concerned with current patterns and views. It is a fallacy that propaganda is nothing but a form of falsehoods and falsity, but it essentially operates on various levels of truth, from an open lie to a half-truth to the entire fact taken out of context (Cull et al., 2003). Algezzzy (2017) also asserted that “political cartoons have been used by newspapers and magazines as a method of criticizing the governments and political figures” (p.3).

2.4 Parliamentary Elections

Elections are a critical component of each democratic country's political system. It is vital to the government's operation and institutional system. Election, in general, is the process of selecting a person or group by the public. According to Collins Dictionary (n.d.), an election is “a process in which people vote to choose a person or group of people to hold an official position”. By such a process, citizens can choose the appropriate person in giving their votes for the right one. In democratic countries, Iraq is among them, elections can give freedom for the person to elect the one who deserves his or her vote. Many countries around the world apply such a system.

Elections are now viewed as a process that practically all countries have successfully handled. The primary objective of this system is to ensure effective political communication. The entire electoral process has been designed to facilitate political communication. Communication between campaign leaders, volunteers, contributors, activists, and supporters is critical. The election system is designed to make the entire process pleasant and public. It is intended to promote relationships and connections amongst groups. The entire political campaign is designed to maximize the influence and effectiveness of political communication. The political campaign can be conveyed via a variety of media channels (Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2014).

Parliamentary elections can be conducted in order to select the members of the council of representatives. After that, they choose the President, who chooses the Prime Minister. When the prime minister is appointed, he is responsible for forming his government by selecting ministers and obtaining parliament's agreement. Parliament, on the other hand, is primarily composed of elected members. Iraq is divided into eighteen electoral districts. Parliamentary elections are the country's highest-ranking race. Elections are conducted to elect the council of representatives (329 members) every four years based on the Iraqi Constitution.

Medvic (2010) opined that any campaign action requires communication, the majority of which is persuasive in design. Additionally, he notes that they employ arguments designed to persuade voters to support their position because candidates seek votes.

Additionally, political campaigns fulfil four main functions. To begin, they assist citizens in formulating their preferences and ultimately choosing who to vote for. Secondly, it is a communicative event where voters, parties, candidates, and the media engage in "crosstalk" as the campaign unfolds. Thirdly, it enhances citizen participation. Political campaigns can affect an individual's intention to elect. Collectively, these campaigns motivate voting through their self-interested search of additional adherents for their causes. Lastly, and perhaps most crucially, political campaigns provide an opportunity for persons living abroad to vote and participate in elections (Medvic, 2010).

3. Methodology

The current study uses data concerning the Iraqi election propaganda photos (2021) gathered from different Iraqi provinces from social media such as Facebook. This study follows a qualitative research. Shank (2002) maintains that it is "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (p. 5). The term systematic in this meaning refers to being organized and according to established rules among qualitative researchers. On the other hand, the term empirical implies that this method of study is supported by specific knowledge and experience, so that the researchers can create sense about their own experiences. In qualitative analysis, Moleong (2009) and Nakhilawi (2016) opine that the researcher serves as the planner, interpreter, collector, analyst, and reporter of research findings.

Annie and Blair (2012) maintain that the researcher is the main instrument in qualitative research since he or she gathers words, does inductive analysis, and examines the speakers' or authors' utterances. There are several steps for data gathering, including study preparation, selection of data, categorization of data, analysis of data, and interpretation. The researchers collect posters from social media in order to analyze them in terms of the types of presuppositions utilized in the Iraqi election propaganda.

Murray and Chamberlain (1998) maintain that when qualitative researchers pick a sample, the sample should both represents the full population under research and is controlled. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), when a sample is said to be representative of the full population, it implies that when the sample is analyzed, the researcher will obtain the same results as if he investigated the entire population. In other words, a well-selected sample should be typical of the population it reflects.

3.1 The Model of the Study

The current paper is devoted to analyse Iraqi election propaganda posters (2021) from a pragmatic perspective and also how those expressions can persuade the voters. To do so, Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition is taken as a model for the current study.

3.2 Yule's (1996) Theory of Presupposition

The presupposition is a linguistic term that develops into a critical vital concept in semantics. Levinson (1983) coined the term 'presupposition' to refer to the relationship between a speaker and the appropriateness of a sentence in the context in which it is delivered. In this sense, a presupposition is an assumption made by someone in his mind when he hears, reads, or speaks an utterance or sentence. The speaker has a presupposition rather than the sentence. For certain cases, individuals must indicate their goal indirectly, which is accomplished through the use of assumption. It represents a significant role in the production and comprehension of the speaker's spoken or written message.

As Hudson (2000) observed, presupposition is a statement made during a conversation that emphasizes other information. It is widely assumed that the speech is organized as an assertion, denial, or query and can be associated with a particular lexical item or grammatical category in the utterance. Moreover, "presupposition deals with the necessary preconditions for statements to be true. It refers to assumptions implicitly made by speakers and listeners which are necessary for the correct interpretation of utterances" (Finch, 2000, p.173).

On the other hand, the presupposition is described as "a piece of information or a proposition whose truth is taken for granted in the utterance of a sentence. Its main function is to act as a precondition of some sort for the appropriate use of that sentence" (Huang, 2014, p.85).

Moreover, Potts (2014) opined that a sentence's presupposition is the information that the speaker assumes in order for his speech to be understandable in the context in which it happens. There are two fundamental sorts of presupposition: semantic and pragmatic. The former examines presuppositions from a logical and semantic perspective; the later examines presuppositions from a pragmatic perspective. This study follows the second one.

Presupposition, as defined by Yule (1996), is "a speaker or writer's assumption about what the listener or reader already knows or believes to be true" (p.25). In other terms, a presupposition is a clue to a statement's logical meaning or to the meanings logically related with or implied by a sentence. Yule (1996) categorizes presuppositions as follows:

1. Existential presupposition

It is the assumption made by the speaker regarding the existence of entities stated and presumed to be existent in a noun phrase. It is considered to be present not only in possessive phrases (your, her, etc.), but also in any definite noun phrase referring to the presence of a particular entity. In this sense, the speaker is determined to the real-world existence of the entity named. For example: "Mary's dog is cute" (Yule, 1996, p.26). This presupposes that Mary exists and she has a dog from the presence of the possessive construction. Another example concerning the presence of definite noun phrase such as: "The king of Sweden" presupposes that Sweden has a king (Yule, 1996, p.27).

2. Factive presupposition

It refers to the assumption that is true and identified by the presence of certain verbs, such as "realize", "regret", "be" (with aware, odd and glad). These verbs allude to what follows as a fact, for example: "she didn't realize that he was ill"(Yule, 1996, p.28). In this

sentence from the verb 'realize' the factive presupposition is that he was ill. Therefore, the speaker's use of a particular expression is interpreted to imply the reality of the subsequent information.

3. Lexical presupposition

Yule (1996) noted that in lexical presupposition "the use of one form with its asserted meaning is conventionally interpreted with the presupposition that another (non-asserted meaning is understood" (p.28). This is indicated by using verbs such as 'stop', 'start', and 'again'. For instance, Mike stopped smoking, in this case lexical presupposition (that he used to smoke) can be drawn from the verb stop. Thus, the speaker's use of a particular term is seen as implying the existence of another (unexpressed) concept.

4. Structural Presupposition

In this type of presupposition, Yule (1996) mentioned that "certain sentence structures have been analyzed as conventionally and regularly that part of the structure is already assumed to be true" (p.28). In this aspect, we may say that speakers can employ such structures to regard information as presupposed (i.e. supposed to be true) and thereby to have the listener accept it as true. For instance, "where did you buy the bike?" (p.29), presupposes that you bought the bike. This presupposition is indicated through the information following the wh-forms.

5. Non-factive presupposition

According to Yule (1996), non-factive presupposition is the assumption that is held to be untrue. It is commonly connected to a number of verbs, including (imagine, pretend, dream etc). This indicates that what comes after such verbs is not true. For example, in the sentence "he pretends to be ill" (p.29), non-factive presupposition exists from the verb 'pretend' which presupposes that he is not ill.

6. Counterfactual presupposition

Yule (1996) maintained that counterfactual presupposition is the presumption that what is presupposed is not merely untrue, but is the reverse of what is true, or contradictory to facts. For instance, some conditional structures, typically called counterfactual conditionals, presuppose that the information at the time of utterance in the if-clauses is not true. For example, "if you were my friend, you would have helped me" (p.30). From if-clause, this sentence presupposes that you are not my friend (contrary to facts).

4. Data Analysis

This section is devoted for data analysis. The study takes Yule's theory of presupposition (1996) as a model to be adopted.

Poster 1



Pragmatic Analysis of Poster 1

Pragmatically speaking, the candidate uses the utterances “*We will make your mark the secret of your smile.*” and “*The orphans and the disabled are our responsibility. We will make life smile for you*”. In terms of presupposition, a kind of presupposition exists in this poster that is existential. The words *the orphans* and *the disabled* presuppose that the orphans and the disabled exist. There is also another type which is lexical presupposition. From the verb *smile*, it presupposes that they lack such a state.

Poster 2



Pragmatic Analysis of Poster 2

From a pragmatic point of view, the candidate uses the utterances “*Just as you triumph in the battles of terrorism, let us triumph against the corrupt*”. The audience addressed in this poster is not mentioned, from the content and the chosen words, it seems that the candidate addresses the soldiers. In this poster, the candidate invites the soldiers to vote for him and together they can triumph against the corrupters and the candidate here emphasizes the power and strength of the Iraqi Armed Forces when he mentions these words in his electoral post. The technique of persuasion that is used by the candidate in this photo in order to convince his target audience is that he tells them that he is honest and courageous to fight the corrupt. The word the terrorism indicates that Iraq has been conquered by ISIS and by those armed forces they defeated ISIS. The candidate here uses words that imply the victory against terrorism and also the corruption of the politicians.

The word alternative in this poster refers to the right choice for the Iraqi armed forces in this 2021 parliamentary elections. He claims to be a supporter of them. In addition to that, there is a metaphor here in this poster when the candidate uses the image of the war against ISIS and compares it to the war or battle against corruption.

Furthermore, a kind of presupposition exists in this poster that is a factive presupposition. The utterance “*just as you triumph in the battles of terrorism*” presupposes that the Iraqi army actually achieved victory in many events. This indicates that they can achieve victory as they did before in their battles. There is also another type which is an existential presupposition. From the verb *triumph*, it presupposes that they indeed won the battles. It is said that an existential presupposition is to be found in those expressions from the word *the corrupt*. This noun phrase presupposes that this country has many corrupters in various fields such as education, health, and so forth.

Poster 3



Pragmatic Analysis of Poster 3

The candidate in this poster uses the utterances “*Oh patience women of Iraq*” and “*Change is near, in sha' Allah*”. These words denote that the Iraqi women have been taken away their rights and have not been given their basic rights. He seeks to ask for these points when he wins. In this sense, he tries to persuade the women to give their votes to him. Thus, he announces that the change is going to occur soon.

As far as presupposition is concerned, it is said that a factive presupposition is to be found in this expression when the candidate uses verb ‘be’. It presupposes that a change is going to occur in order to give their rights in many fields. Here the candidate addresses women to be patient since they will be in a better state. Furthermore, an existential presupposition is expressed here in the words “*Oh patience women of Iraq*” because the entity woman exists.

Poster 4



Pragmatic Analysis of Poster 4

Pragmatically speaking, this poster carries an implied meaning. The candidate states in his electoral campaign that he aspires to submit a request for residency in the province of Basra. The words that are used by the candidate denote that the province of Basra needs to be independent to take its right because it suffers a lot throughout the previous governments. Basra is a very rich province in which oil represents the most important product. Those words “*Asking and presenting a request for setting Basra region*” are invitations for establishing Basra region.

The pragmatic aspect the researcher takes in consideration in analyzing the electoral propaganda is presupposition according to Yule (1996). The candidate uses the words ‘*asking and submitting a request for establishing Basra region*’ to enhance his electoral propaganda. An existential presupposition can be identified here in this photo. It is existential because it presupposes the existence of the entity Basra.

Conclusion

The current study finds out that the Iraqi parliamentary election propaganda employs a unique style or language to show their political propaganda in a way that may influence the reader or the voter. In such case, the candidates try to choose certain words or expressions that can manipulate the audience. Such language can create extra effect among the voters in order to attract their attention. The candidates are in a strong competition among themselves so that they do their best to show their propaganda in a distinctive way, which in turn can affect the opinions of the voters. Different types of presuppositions are implemented in the electoral campaigns such as existential, factive and lexical. It is obvious from the analysed data that the most frequent type of presupposition is existential. Therefore, the Iraqi election propaganda contains some types of presupposition according to Yule’ theory of presupposition (1996).

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