

# Semiotics in Political Discourse. An Analytical Treatment of Political Text Criticisms Since 2003: The Case of the Discourse of Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the function of semiotics in political discourse after the socio-political processes taking place in Iraq since 2003 and its role in the development of textual criticisms of some Iraqi politicians, analyzes the reasons for its functioning in the speech of politicians. The research is mainly focused on finding out to what extent political text studies draw on sign systems that can store and transmit information, the nature of its purpose and the use of available fields for the purpose to be achieved. The chief purpose of the study is to investigate and also clarify the symbols and signs appear within the framework of discursive Iraqi politicians, the nature of the symbols used, and the meanings that are included in the discourse in terms of structure, context, and form. Moreover, it has been attempted to define semiotic features in the texts of Iraqi politicians; and elicit structure, style and wording, and the degree of convergence of meaning and form in the semiotic application.

**Keywords:** Semiotics, political discourse, political text, discourse analysis, Iraqi politicians.

## INTRODUCTION

The tumultuous social-political events in Iraq taken place since 2003 and the appearance of many parties and political leaders have resulted in a severe fight between them, and the number of political textual criticisms is increasing to support their positions; therefore my articles deal with linguistic phenomena in political discourse, for example, Euphemism in Translation Practice (Jasim and Hadi Nahla, 2019). But today there is an imminent urgency to study semiotic aspects and their place in Iraqi political discourse, the texts of some Iraqi politicians for a certain period, which has certain meanings (Landqvist 2019).

The importance of symbols has been increasing with the increasing complexity of life and the diversity of its types and their interweaving to such an extent that it almost turns our life into a world of signs. Symbols serve as indicators and help to better understand the world around us, which means living in harmony with it. And that these growing symbolisms have exerted an obvious influence on the declamatory sphere of action, turning it from a linguistic structure into a mixture of symbols and icons, which are no less important than the linguistic aspects (Marttila 2015).

Any discourse, not only political, aimed by its nature at the suggestion, considers the views of a potential interpreter in order to modify the intentions, opinions and, motivation of the audience. As A. Schopenhauer

once noted, the art of persuasion consists of the skilful use of barely contiguous concepts of man. Precisely because of this, those unexpected conversion from one belief to another occurs, sometimes unexpectedly for the very speaker. (Jessop 2006; Osuri 2009)

Discourse has become a complex mechanism of linguistic and nonlinguistic signs interacting with each other to have an effect and the beliefs under the influence of verbal and symbolic means of communication which take forms, images, and colours as the means to achieve their goal. And an increased degree of interference and interpretation between the linguistic side of discourse and the aspects of form and its influence on its content has led to increased complexity of its analysis. It has become therefore important to use semiotic analysis to decipher the codes of discourse and determine its foundations, elements, its effect, and the degree of interconnectedness between them, for it suggests an analytical ability that allows it to go beyond the analysis of text and the analysis of forms and symbols (Selg and Ventsel, 2018).

Discourse requires interpretative reading in order to extrapolate the text and analyze its components in order to identify indicators and indications related to its goals and what explicit and implicit messages and semantic meanings it contains, and its connection with the conditions of their production and its needs, or rather how it corresponds to the wishes of the audience and its harmony with the surrounding reality.

It is easy to talk thereof, but it is difficult to find out its details, and if it is revealed, its use by leaders and

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those who understand discourse as a tool to achieve their goals is advantageous, since semiotics is a complex one, and its complication occurs due to its tangled branches and the ambiguity of its details.

Political discourse is a phenomenon that society faces every day. However, it can be assumed that there is no precise definition of the term “political discourse”. One analyzes a wide and narrow variety of political discourse. One of the scholars considering a comprehensive definition of political discourse is E.I. Sheigal. The linguist understands the political discourse as “any speech formations, the contents of which belong to the sphere of politics” (Sheigal 2000).

According to E. I. Sheigal, political communication embraces not only official control of the phenomena of social life, but also political discussions from all perspectives – every day, literary, journalistic, etc. An important function in political communication is an affecting one. It is the achievement of impression in communication that a politician is guided by when choosing linguistic devices. In the study, the scholar brings the existing linguistic approaches to the study of the three main types of political discourse – descriptive (rhetorical analysis of the linguistic behavior of politicians), critical (identifying social inequality expressed in discourse), and cognitive (analysis of frames and concepts of political discourse) (Landqvist 2019)

And the Dutch linguist, van Dijk (1989) supports the consideration of a narrow definition of political discourse. He believes that political discourse is a certain class of genres that are limited to a certain social sphere, the sphere of politics. This shows that discourse is not just speaking from the point of view of context and construction, but this structural correlation connects the structure of the discourse with the social conditions of its production, and that political power seeks to use political discourse to influence society in accordance with its ideological tendencies, and that the process of its constructive interaction between discourse and the conditions “Social Context” makes political discourse an instrument for the formation of a social system (van Dijk 1989) and the impact on its level of awareness to achieve a specific goal.

Sorokin (97) defines political discourse in terms of relationship of political discourse and ideological discourse, “Political discourse is a kind of ideological discourse. The difference is that political discourse is explicitly pragmatic and ideological discourse is

implicitly pragmatic ... The first kind of discourse is sub-discourse, the second type of discourse is metadiscourse” (Sorokin, 1997, p. 57).

So, in linguistic literature, the term “political discourse” is used in two senses: narrow and broad. In a broad sense, it comprehends such forms of communication in which at least one of the components relates to the sphere of politics: a subject, addressee, or content of the message. In a narrow sense, political discourse is a form of discourse the goal of which is to gain, preserve and exercise political power. We, taking account of a broad understanding of discourse, also include in it the process and result of the generation and perception of texts, and extralinguistic factors affecting their generation and perception. In addition, we believe that the term “discourse” in modern linguistics is used to denote different types of speech and speech products, the interpretation of which should be based on the totality of linguistic and nonlinguistic factors.

Some linguistic and semiotic works, dictionaries and collections agree that semiotics is a science the concern of which is signs. This is how, Georges Mounin (1981), others defined it. It seems that Mounin’s definition is more accurate and the best, for he defines semiotics as “a general science that studies all kinds of signs or symbols, thanks to which communication between people is attained.” We can draw a conclusion from this definition that “Semiotics defined as a science conforms to certain rules and laws, like other sciences, but there are other definitions and opinions that consider semiotics as a plan or method or a method of research, so Mounin points to a standpoint that semiotics is a means of action (“research method”). Therefore, we are embarrassed at Mounin’s words: sometimes he refers it to “semiology” as a general science that studies various symbols, and sometimes he defines it as a way of research.” We find this confusion in works by some Arab scholars who define semiotics as a science and away at the same time.

Thus, semiotics tends to explore the structure depths and go beyond the visible, rather than dwell on the word and turn to it through analyzing it, then semiotics here revolves around the signified and the symbol of deliberate efforts that can be achieved only via forms – a style that has an obvious influence on the process of perception.

## METHODS

The main aim of the survey is to analyze the symbols and signs appear within the framework of discursive Iraqi politicians, the nature of the symbols used, and the meanings that are included in the discourse in terms of structure, context, and form

The relationship between the significant and the signified is characterized by close association and there cannot be a division between them, so we have had the opportunity to create a specific sign that helps us realize something, because a sign here is "a unit that is inseparable between the significant and the signified, and that the production of a sign requires two stages, the first is coding that works on creating a certain indicator that carries signals, analyzing them in accordance with inner reserves, a certain perception is achieved in order to accept a deviation, and then moving to the next stage – a reference to the function that has been determined, and thus, the product is used. And this component will not be rigidly blocked in accordance with the data presented by the pragmatic reality, which imposes change and replacement through using it in accordance with the temporal and spatial conditions and in accordance with that the social mobility imposes on, and thus changes the signified refers to in terms of the meaning that society produces, but to that which is not specific to it, but to another concept, for example,

The word Al-Hawasim which the former president, Saddam Hussein, used to call his battle with the international coalition, which led to the overthrow of the government and entered into chaos, which has resulted in the emergence of the quasi-term "الحواسم" [al-Hawasim] – the name of groups of people illegally making money. Some of these groups were involved in looting government departments, institutions and banks. This name has emerged after the toppling of Saddam Hussein in Iraq (Jasim and Pozdnyakova 2013).

This is an analytical approach that allows achieving the results of scientific benefit in terms of complementarity and public benefit. Three principles related to each other achieve the realization of meaning.

The first is a linguistic aspect or a style, for it is an important axis in semiotic analysis, because it deals with the meanings of words, phrases and paragraphs, as well as the analysis of meanings, which is

conceptually and semantically aimed at creating meaning. The second is a pragmatic aspect that imitates the interests of society and tries to bring its functions closer to the level of interests of society. While the third defines the political aspect which is based on monitoring, interpretation, and understanding of the general ideologies and beliefs that make up the structure of the discourse, and cultural, ideological and, psychological contexts play an important role in reading and understanding texts.

Al-Maliki N.K. in his speech delivered after the martyrdom of the commander of the eighth division, Brigadier General Mohammed al-Qarawi and a group of his officers in an ambush in the Al-Anbar desert, the Prime Minister began his speech with a verse from the Holy Scripture of Koran "Do not in any way consider those dead who were killed in the way of Allah. No, they are alive and receive a destiny from their Lord" (Ali Imran, Surah 3: 169th ayah), because of the glorification of the martyrs and martyrdom,

Then he spoke about the martyrs, "Today several of our sons were buried," this sentence has a psychological effect, evoking feelings and does not contain military command and nickname, replacing it with sons. After that, he tried to put heart into the soldiers, as it turned out that "the cause of martyrdom was a blackblow and Iraqi soldiers could destroy Al-Qaida's castles in the Anbar desert."

After this presentation, in which he dealt with the borders and extremes of the battle, he appealed to the people of Anbar, calling for their Arab jealousy and due to their being a tribal society, he tried to show his knowledge of the social structure of the population, "I appeal to a noble resident of Anbar," it is in the singular to show that they are one people, and then he informed them of imminent danger, he tried to arouse their feeling of excitement and enthusiasm in the process of confronting these "ravens" (i.e., Al-Kkaidas, as he called them).

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, a number of conclusions can be made, which are as follows:

- Semiotics is not restricted to the analysis of the word, as in linguistics, but also delves into its structure and explains its purpose and the nature of the formulation of interpretation. The meaning is not related to the syntactic structure of the

word, but rather to its interpretation, and pragmatical functions

- Semiotics turns out to be two-sided in nature with content and form. Since the form influences the process of designating in order to evoke the meaning of the recipient through mental exclusion, it involves body language, as well as facial expressions and voices
- The production of meaning depends on the social factor and its level of action, taking into account personal experience. Thus, the social subject plays a clear role in achieving non-structural meaning. The sign is translated using background knowledge and is not separated from the general and subcultural system or social pattern.
- The adoption of moral and national judgments by using the factor of index exchange in the production of positions by establishing a connection between the dualities inherent in historical and popular heritage, and the relations of the present, and thus double and good and evil arose, as well as charity and denial, noble and outsider.
- To bring as evidence the standpoints of religious, national figures and influential people from the local spatial environment (from Iraqis) to extend to the world community, to strengthen his position and explain the strength of his support, because he "i.e. al-Malikiy" fights against terrorist groups persecuted all over the world, and that his acts are internationally popular, and not just officially.

Thus, he forced the whole of Iraq to confront them, because they caused car bombings, suicide bomber's belts, and explosions in various regions of Iraq." He was able to give reasons and then draw conclusions by saying, "The world is chasing after someone from Al-Qaeda in any country in the world, and we have a headquarters for them.

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Received on 02-11-2020

Accepted on 10-12-2020

Published on 26-12-2020

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2020.09.214>

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