

# Visual Rhetoric in Election Posters: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis Approach

Elham M. Qadir

Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Koya University, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

## ABSTRACT

This study upholds that the visual semiotic choices in election posters are bound to catalyze particular rhetorical repercussions; hence, it primarily purports to delve into the visual rhetorical strategies deployed in election posters to yield a favorable representation of candidates establishing their visual ethos, visual pathos and visual logos, drawing on the visual semiotic resources employed in election posters which are presumed to be a matter of strategic production and distribution. It is principally couched in the theoretical frameworks of visual rhetoric and multimodal critical discourse analysis. More precisely, the study attempts to illustrate how multimodal critical discourse analysis can be exploited to unbury the subtle ideological discourses which are disseminated, legitimated and naturalized visually in election posters and examine what rhetorical influence these discourses try to exert on the electorate. To this end, the study brings together concepts from Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) model of visual/multimodal semiotics and classical rhetoric, and draws on Van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor theory as well as Van Leeuwen and Wodak's (1999) recontextualization of the social practice. The study adopts an eclectic analytic interpretive qualitative approach. In particular, it explores four election posters for the Iraqi parliamentary election in Kurdistan Region in September, 2021. The results show that election posters are ideologically and programmatically designed visual artefacts wherein various visual rhetorical strategies at the representational, interactive, and compositional levels of meaning are employed to construct a positive picture of the candidates, which in turn build up the candidates' visual ethos, pathos and logos.

**KEY WORDS:** Visual Rhetoric, Election Posters, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, Visual Ethos, Visual Pathos Visual Logos.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Although the notion of rhetoric as being intrinsically about verbal discourse has persisted to date, it has become more and more disputed. Over the past two decades, rhetorical studies began to incorporate non-verbal semiotic resources (images, photographs, symbols, color, layout...etc.) in their accounts of rhetoric for visual communication offers far greater force, immediacy, and impact than verbal communication, as envisaged by Blair (2004, p. 53). Eisenhart and

Johnstone (2008), maintain that "The focus of rhetoricians' attention is widening, however, from public to private spheres, from official to vernacular rhetoric, from oratory to written and multimedia discourse ..." ( P. 4 ). In addition, rhetoric is pervasive and can encompass any type of mode or text, including voice, written text, visuals, posters, films, documentaries, news articles, etc. It is, hence, essential as well as crucial to navigate the muddy waters of visual persuasion and rhetoric.

Goggin (2008, p. 87) challenges the predisposition to bifurcate the verbal and visual rhetoric and holds that the correlations between the two are inflexible and rely on the cultural, social, economic, and technological spheres whereby the available semiotic resources for disseminating and consuming meaning alter in accord with purposes and material practices. Furthermore, he calls this propensity into question, arguing that many theories of communication tend to privilege "logocentric approaches and perspectives", despite their treatment of

Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (KUJHSS), Volume 6, Issue 1, 2023.

Received 5 Sep 2023; Accepted 30 Oct 2023,

Regular research paper: Published 30 Nov 2023

Corresponding author's e-mail: [Elham.majeed@koyauniversity.org](mailto:Elham.majeed@koyauniversity.org)

Copyright ©2023. Elham M. Qadir, this is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.



an ever-expanding variety of semiotic resources and practices in addition to scripted and printed pages. In this regard, Gunther Kress (2005, p. 153) makes a compelling case for the 'hegemony of logocentrism' in his appeal for novel approaches to semiotic systems: the exclusive and intensive emphasis on language as the supreme mode of communication has resulted in an ignorance and repression of the prospects i.e. potentialities of all the representational and communicational modes in various cultures, and consequently impeded progress in an in-depth understanding and theorizing the conventions by which meaning is circulated in visual artifacts and also the processes through which they exert influence on viewers.

Elsewhere in literature, it is held that rhetoric is intrinsically multimodal in that it is not limited to verbal language or communication. Its relationship to modes and media is diverse. It presupposes that a variety of modes will be in play during the act of communication and that their interplay is essential to comprehending how communication and persuasion occur. The aesthetic aspect of rhetoric must also be considered. The integration of modes is a conscious, strategic decision, driven by the design of multimodal or visual constructs (Andrews, 2014).

Notwithstanding these recent developments in the study of discourse-based rhetorical theories, much of the previous work on rhetoric and persuasion in political communication, with a few major exceptions (Lirola 2016; Benderbal, 2018), was conducted in the linguistic tradition of monomodality i.e. they focused on language as the central semiotic mode of communication, representation, and persuasion, and disregarded other semiotic resources which are very prevalent in political messages such as election posters. Besides, previous studies on election posters (henceforth EPs) mainly focused on the multimodal essence of EPs; relied on one single theory namely multimodal discourse analysis; and overlooked the persuasive power of EPS as well as the multifaceted or the intricate nature of visual rhetoric which has lately come to the limelight of scholars. Subsequently, studies which cast light on Eps as an example of visually persuasive discourse from a critical multimodal perspective are scarce, particularly in the literature on discourse studies and political communication in the Kurdish language whereby multimodal discourse studies are in their very early infancy (Sherwany and Omer, (2020); Kareem and Qadir, (2023)). What is more, rhetorical analysis from a multimodal critical angle is lacking in the Kurdish academic scholarship. Yet, globally, a substantial amount of work in rhetoric as well as critical discourse analysis is still monomodal, let alone the Kurdish

language. These provide a compelling ground that makes this contribution surpassingly feasible.

In this regard, it is important to note that more than ever, contemporary texts are frequently more visually saturated i.e. dense as the authors have the power to (re)construct images and to adjust formatting and typeface to achieve a special effect, and, in bountiful cases, images are deployed to carry essential information in a text, as Tardy (2011, p. 59) professes. Conversely, multimodal or visual texts such as Eps cannot be adequately examined without a quintessential focus on the visual artefacts which have inevitably a rhetorical impact. This paper is thus a scholarly endeavor to explore and analyse the visual rhetorical strategies rendered in selected Kurdish EPs from a multimodal critical discourse analysis perspective.

### Research Questions

The central research question to be answered is:

- *What visual rhetorical strategies are deployed in EPs?*

However, to explore how EPs rhetorically operate and what visual rhetorical strategies they exploit is to explore the very nature of EPs and also the visual semiotic choices made available to represent the candidates in EPs; ergo, this broad central research question can be broken down into a number of secondary research questions:

1. In what ways are the candidates represented in EPs and what rhetorical impacts do these representations trigger?
2. What ethical, emotional, and logical appeals do the visual semiotic choices give rise to? And
3. How could these appeals be associated with the candidates' subtle ideologies i.e. their hidden message: their values, identities and presumptions to produce effect in the electorate?

### Research Hypotheses

To provide appropriate answers to the research questions, the following hypotheses are projected to frame and direct the current study:

1. EPs are ideologically as well as programmatically designed visual artefacts/texts which deploy various visual rhetorical strategies.
2. The visual semiotic choices in EPs seek to yield a favourable and genuine representation of candidates that has necessarily a rhetorical force and prompts the electorate to take the action in demand.
3. The visual semiotic choices in EPs trigger ethical, emotional, and logical appeals which seek to imbue the candidates with particular identities, values and themes, and reinforce the rhetorical essence or power of the poster.

## Research Significance

Practically, the study promotes critical visual awareness i.e. 'visual literacy' as Kress (2011) prefers to call it, about how EPs aim to visually naturalize or legitimize particular ideologies beyond the linguistic level, manipulate the electorates' thinking, and attempt to persuade them, holding that the subtle ideologies buried in EPs have a rhetorical impact. Theoretically, it adds to the body of existing literature on visual rhetoric and multimodal critical discourse analysis both of which, according to van Leeuwen (2013) and Mayr (2016), are scarce and coveted. Moreover, at the scholarly level, it integrates concepts in the theoretical frameworks of different strands of discourse analysis vis classical rhetoric, visual rhetoric, multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), and multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA); it reinforces the correlations among them; and it enhances their breadth and application to a multimodal text such as EPs.

## Methodology

The study adopts an analytical, descriptive qualitative, interpretive method inasmuch as the depth of analysis provided by qualitative research admits the deconstruction of discourse to reveal nuances and shades of meaning that surpass the benefits of a purely quantitative approach (Devereux 2007, P. 79).

## Data for Analysis

The data for analysis involves four election posters in Kurdistan Region of Iraq for the 2021 Iraqi parliamentary elections compiled during the election campaigns in October 2021, highlighting the visual rhetorical strategies from an MCDA perspective. Two of the posters campaign for candidates affiliating with the two major political parties in the region: Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK); the other two EPs present neutral candidates. Each poster is given a serial number (EP1, EP2...etc.).

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### Election Posters

EPs form a crucial part of any election campaign across the globe. In essence, they employ a range of visual semiotic resources such as the candidate's photograph with a specific posture, facial expression, gaze, body language, clothing, political party logos, political emblems and background images all of which contribute to the positive depiction of the candidates, making them a vivid instance of a multimodal, multisemiotic, or visual text. What is more, the visual elements particularly the political candidate's

photograph takes the pride of place in any EP; hence the message in an EP is largely conveyed through the visual elements. Conversely, as a multimodal text or a visual artefact, it produces meaning in different articulations, taking a particular visual design which, according to Kress (2012, p35), derives from a rhetorical approach to communication. This aligns with what Gries (2020, p.384), relying on Charles Kostelnick (1996, p. 10), advocates that visual designs (of which EPs are an example) are essentially 'rhetorical' inasmuch as designers employ them to interact with viewers to attain particular goals, namely to shape certain ideologies and persuade them. Most visual designs or artefacts are far from being documentary; they are conceived as "communicative symbolic action" (ibid). In addition, as Wodak (2011, p.44) evinces, presuming Critical Discourse Analysis' concern with issues of ideology and power inequity, it is hardly surprising that a significant portion of theoretical as well as applied critical discourse analysis addresses persuasion and rhetorical approaches. Thus, visual rhetorical analysis of EPs from a multimodal critical perspective remains a path that visual rhetoric researchers should explore as it offers a deep insight into the way such posters operate rhetorically.

According to Popova (2012), EPs, akin to other components of mass-persuasion crusades, have traditionally been employed for propaganda and persuasion purposes during elections. They are, therefore, an efficacious means not only to inform but also to persuade the electorate. Drawing on the above mentioned perspectives; on Per Ledin and Machin's (2020: 18) view that no visual design or artefact is innocent i.e. neutral; and on Van Leeuwen and Jewitt's (2011, p. 9) account of visuals 'constructs' rather than 'records', EPs can be thought of as visual semiotic materials which are loaded with specific beliefs, values, and assumptions about candidates and/or political parties which in turn pursue altering the disposition and behavior of the public in their benefit. In this vein, they are ideologically designed multimodal/visual texts that orient to visually impress and persuade the electorate to vote for a particular political candidate via favourable representation of the candidates, generating visual ethical, emotional, and logical appeals. In this regard, Kress and Bezemer (2023, p.41) argue that the question of choice and design originate from a rhetorical predisposition to human communication. The following three sections will establish the grounds and outline an analytical framework to conduct a visual rhetorical analysis of EPs from multimodal critical discourse analysis approach.

### Visual Rhetoric

In its most widely accepted articulation, rhetoric has

been defined as "the art of persuasion or effective communication"(qtd. in Fernandes and Oswald, 2022, p. 1 of 21). In his treatise on rhetoric, Aristotle (1355, p.27-28) defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (qtd. in Richardson 2007, p. 156). Furthermore, he posited that persuasion is premised on three precepts that a rhetor can employ to convince his audience: 1) "Ethos: the appeal to good wills and personal sensibilities", 2) "Pathos: the appeal to emotion", and 3) "Logos: the appeal to good reason" (ibid). Surprisingly, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* provides one of the best descriptions of the rhetorical triangle (i.e. ethos, pathos, and logo); though it was written well over two millennia ago, it remains the most influential and phenomenal work in its discipline. Following Aristotle, Reisigl (2008, p. 96) characterizes rhetoric as the art and science of efficacious or proficient public speaking or writing; it is the art and the science of employing persuasive language or "it is", as Locke (2004, p. 20) avers it, "the art of making language work" given that spectators compose messages or texts with a particular target in mind namely to attain a 'desired result' with a specific audience (ibid).

However, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to a burgeoning acknowledgement of the pervasiveness of images and their significance in the circulation and reception of information, views, and opinions— a process that lies at the core of all rhetorical practices, social movements, and cultural practices, several scholars from different orientations have made an attempt to develop the study of visual phenomena into a new field variously termed 'visual rhetoric,' 'visual culture studies,' 'image studies,' and more recently 'visual rhetorical criticism' (Gries 2020, p. 381) . This proposed new area would bring together the work being done by experts in a myriad of disciplines, such as, to name just a few, anthropology, art theory, cultural studies, rhetoric, discourse studies, and media studies. Conversely, the previously indisputable hegemony of verbal text or verbal rhetoric is being called into question by what Mitchell (1994) terms the "pictorial turn" (Helmets and Hill, 2008, p. 19).

The most principal grounds for examining visual rhetoric is to construct a more panoramic and inclusive rhetorical theory. Throughout the rhetoric's lengthy history, discursive constructs and theories have enjoyed ideological hegemony, limiting the scope of study to language artefacts, implying that visual symbols are insignificant or inferior, and largely ignoring the visual's impact on the world. Due to the fact that rhetorical theory has been developed almost exclusively from the study of language, rhetoricians lack a sophisticated knowledge of the conventions by which meaning is formed in visual artefacts and the mechanisms by which they influence viewers (Foss,

2008, p. 303). Furthermore, Foss (ibid, p.304) considers visual rhetoric as a communicative artefact and defines it as a purposeful production or formula of colors, shapes, layout and other forms manifested in multimodal texts, with the intention of communicating with an audience.

Notably, Finnegan (2008) gives an excellent account of visual rhetoric when she propounds that "visual rhetoric is a mode of inquiry, defined as a critical and theoretical orientation that makes issues of visibility relevant to the rhetorical theory" (p. 198). She also adds that a rhetorical approach to visual artefacts constitutes a specific way of viewing images- a set of lenses through which visual data can be perceived as communicative or rhetorical phenomena (ibid, p. 197). In simple terms, for her (2008, p. 197), visual rhetoric is a product that identifies a category of rhetorical discourse that relies on other semiotic modes (e.g. images, photographs, posters, color, layout...etc.) rather than words or text to establish its meaning. Precisely, Cheng (2014) acknowledges that visual rhetoric is about making visual semiotic resources relevant to the study of rhetoric.

In a nutshell, as Gries (2020) expounds it, visual rhetoric as a perspective or approach is concerned with " how visual artefacts are designed, produced, and/or appropriated, how they are distributed to and/or performed for specific audiences, and what functions they take on as they circulate, transform, and become embroiled in various activities" (p.382). Moreover, Gries details visual rhetorical analysis as "a three-step process" that involves "identifying a rhetorical situation in which a visual artefact is embroiled; analyzing diverse strategies that contribute to the artifact's abilities to address that situation and take on some function; and identifying and assessing the implications of function entailing the perpetuation of certain ideologies and representations"(ibid, p.382-3).

In addition, it should be stressed that some scholars acknowledge that there exists a vehement relationship between rhetoric and discourse analysis. In this regard, Van Dijk (1985; 1998, p. 208) avers that preeminent figures in the rhetorical tradition (e.g. Aristotle) were primarily discourse analysts and stresses the crucial role rhetoric plays in ideological manipulation and argues that rhetoric is fundamentally directed towards the persuasive communication of cherry-picked models of social events, and hence governs how recipients will assume and especially appraise such events, for instance as a function of the participants' interests. Tracy (2003, p. 727) claims that rhetorical criticism and discourse analysis share a dedication to the rigorous and circumstantial examination of texts within their social context. Johnstone (2008) adds that "rhetorical study has always involved discourse analysis, explicit or not, as

rhetoricians have analyzed relatively self-conscious, public, strategically designed talk and writing to see what makes it work" (p. 7).

The two fields, ergo, as Andrus (2013) puts forward, can reasonably be paired as they have derived methods and concepts from each other. There are numerous parallels between Aristotle's rhetoric and the goals and methods of critical discourse analysis (Bloor and Bloor, 2007, p. 68). Wodak (2011, P. 44) lists rhetoric under the approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis. Thus rhetoric provides discourse analysis with toolkits that theorize persuasion, authority, unequal power relations, and political action. Strikingly as well as unsurprisingly, critical discourse analysis and rhetoric share certain fundamental presumptions, for example, that "discourses shape the world and discourse is shaped by the world" (Fairclough and Fairclough 2013, p. 81), that various semiotic choices are painstaking and determined i.e. purposeful, and that language does not only depict the world but also manufactures reality about it. Accordingly, as elaborated by Andrus (2013), it is entirely rational for scholars to combine critical discourse analysis and rhetoric as their research paradigm. By the same token, these views provide a rationale for interlinking the newly emerging subfields of visual rhetoric and multimodal critical discourse analysis as long as they can be considered as extensions to the previously established strands of discourse analysis known as rhetoric and critical discourse analysis, respectively.

### **Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies**

The theory of multimodal discourse, originated in Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory of the grammar of visual design (1996; 2001; 2006), variously referred to as "multimodal discourse analysis", "multimodality", "multimodal analysis", "multimodal semiotics" and "visual semiotics" (O'Halloran 2011, p.120; van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2011), bestows a new impetus to the traditional discourse studies in that they take into consideration aspects of non-verbal or non-linguistic communication or representation. It primarily emerged as a counteraction to the more traditional, monomodal, language centered approaches to discourse studies and called attention to the study of visual communication and representation (O'Halloran 2011: p. 120). The term is broadly employed to "designate a theoretical approach as well as a multifaceted scholarly practice" (Maiorani and Christie 2014, p. 1).

More recently, the endeavor to explore visual communication has been integrated with studies in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) leading to a new emerging strand within discourse studies namely Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis ( hereafter

MCDA) which is often called 'Social Semiotic Multimodality' (Zhao et al. 2017, p.10). Thus, whilst CDA's major concern has been to analyse verbal discourse, some CDA analysts shifted attention to multimodal discourses, owing to the increasingly crucial role these play in various social and political contexts (Mayr 2016). Discourse theorists and scholars (e.g. Machin and Mayr 2012; Van Leeuwen 2013; Mayr 2016) issue calls for the critical study of multimodal discourse as much work in CDA has remained predominantly monomodal and overlooked the fact that not only language, but also other modes or levels of communication are framed by power relations and ideology.

In this vein, whereas visual analysis has traditionally been the areas of fields such as Media and Cultural Studies, discourse analysts such as Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006), O'Halloran (2004), Baldry and Thibault (2006), Machin and Mayr (2012), Mayr and Machin (2013), and Mayr (2016) have initiated to develop their analytical frameworks that rely on similar levels of precision and more methodological forms of descriptions that permeated the approach to language in CDA, where the objective is to reveal buried ideology in multimodal texts whereby a number of semiotic resources are usually coordinated to disseminate certain views, beliefs and values (Machin and Mayr 2012, p.1; Belgrimet and Rabab'ah 2021).The major goal of MCDA, according to Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 9), is to single out and expose the choices made by writers when designing and selecting multimodal texts and pictures by a thorough process of description led by the tools given. MCDA analysts are interested in demonstrating how visual texts produce meaning so as to better grasp the content or message an author is attempting to convey. The aim is to find "ideas, absences, and taken-for-granted assumptions" in such texts so as to show the hidden ideologies (ibid, p. 10).

In line with these, Ledin and Machin (2018, p. 191 ) posit that visual artifacts are employed to achieve diverse objectives, placing particular emphasis on the idea that discourse and ideology are embedded into everything authors or designers create, driving social practices. They aver that a critical perspective is highly recommended in order to unmask these discourses and ideologies. From a similar perspective, Catalano and Waugh (2020: p. 187) propose that integrating CDA and MDA is a promising step forward and have various striking contributions to make for the study of the hybrid multimodal texts which have in the last couple of decades become very prevalent. Moreover, they evince that the meanings that are conveyed through photographs, images, gestures...etc. in such texts are frequently more indirect than language. Accordingly, they stress the multi-modal and potentially articulate

nature of multimodal/visual constructs or designs in current societies, recognizing that these have a particularly critical role due to their less denotive and more symbolic nature in comparison to language. The main aim, though, of the critical analysis of multimodal discourse is to showcase how different semiotic resources allow certain aspects of reality to be shown while substituting and abstracting others. In a nutshell, MCA is concerned with the systematic description of the diverse socially located semiotic resources that participants draw on in a particular communicative event. It is basically concerned with, as Conolly and Philips (2002) postulate, investigating a text through various semiotic modes of communication i.e. it inquires into how various modes combine to create meaning in a single semiotic event ( qtd. in Bateman and Schmidt 2012).

It is important to note that the discourses that require "the scrutiny of a critical eye are now overwhelmingly multimodal... that take multimodality entirely for granted." (Van Leeuwen 2013, p. 1417), and hence are disseminated not only via political speeches and news reports, but also via posters and films (Machin 2013, p. 347). It is also acknowledged that multiple semiotic modes are currently employed in novel methods and can be exploited by diverse types of interests to transmit articulate ideological goals in multimodal texts. These camouflaged i.e. masked discourses in such texts furnished the grounds for interrelating visual rhetoric and MCDA in the current study to explore how the visual semiotic choices reflect the political candidates' hidden messages and what rhetorical effect they have on the viewer.

### 3. ANALYTICAL BODYWORK

In examining the nature of visual rhetoric, scholars draw on a number of theories to figure out how visual artifacts can serve various communicative and persuasive purposes. Broadly, Foss (2008, p311) and Gries (2020, p. 381) report two perspectives: the deductive and the inductive. In the deductive perspective, scholars proceed deductively relying on the previous theories on verbal rhetoric developed to deal with verbal discourse. Falling under the traditional approach, verbal rhetorical theories have been influential in spelling out the way already available categories help identify rhetorical patterns in visual texts or constructs. For instance, Farrell (2006) and Jorgenson-Earp (2006) have applied rhetorical devices such as metonymy, metaphor, and synecdoche to study, respectively, museum exhibitions and historical images. A second approach which is more innovative is the inductively proceeded investigation of the features of visual texts to generate a rhetorical theory that takes the unique features of visual texts into account. The work of

David Blakesley (2008) on film rhetoric is a vivid example whereby four approaches to film rhetoric are advanced based on the distinctive features of films namely "language, ideology, interpretation, and identification" (Foss, 2008, p. 312). In addition, this research paradigm has called heavily on the French school of semiotics and the social semiotic theory. Being deeply rooted in Halliday's social semiotic theory and his systemic functional linguistics, it comes as no surprise that Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual grammar (1996; 2006) is a highly relevant contribution in this respect insofar as visual rhetorical scholars, following W.J. Mitchell, admit that visual rhetoric is a hybrid i.e. mixed-media phenomenon wherein visual and textual modes interact in a vast array of image texts (Olsen, 2014).

The current study amalgamates both the traditional and the innovative approaches given that visual rhetoric is a resourceful, multifaceted phenomenon which is accomplished via the employment of diverse discursive and non-discursive rhetorical strategies which cannot be adequately addressed by one single approach. Accordingly, in view of the foregoing theoretical assumptions, a broad -based, multidimensional, but coherent, body work or model can be outlined drawing on MCDA to examine the visual rhetorical strategies in EPs. Precisely, the study is anchored in visual grammar from the innovative perspective, and classical rhetoric i.e. Aristotle's trio of ethos, pathos, and logos from the traditional stance. In addition, where relevant, some categories (individualization, nomination and functionalization, and categorization) from Van Leeuwen's *Social Actor Theory* (2008), and Van Leeuwen and Wodak's (1999) *Recontextualisation of the Social Practice* (substitution and evaluation) which are, according to Mayr (2016), subliminal frameworks for an MCDA approach to visual artefacts, will be submerged into the analytical framework in order to enrich the analysis. In this respect, it is worthwhile to note that taking into account a number of theoretical frameworks and approaches results in a study that forces scrupulous attention onto the intricacies of EPs. The analytical categories which are relevant to the data analysis will be explained below.

#### Visual Grammar and Classical Rhetoric

At the very basic level, the current study is grounded in Kress and van Leeuwen's model of visual grammar (1996; 2001; 2006), invariably called 'visual semiotics', inspired by Halliday's social semiotic theory (1978) and his systemic functional grammar (1985). At times, some modifications are also incorporated based on Van Leeuwen's (2008) visual representation of social actors. With regards to the MCDA approach adopted in the current study, which sees visual semiotic resources

as a tool for social practice or construction which have inevitably a rhetorical effect, Mayr (2016) expostulates that visual grammar is a foundational component of MCDA despite the fact that its primary concern was to give an explicit account of visual communication in the first place rather than producing critical work in the early stages of multimodality's development.

In this respect, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 13-14) expound that the grammar of visual design does not have only 'theoretical' but also 'descriptive and practical aims and they intend to construct a descriptive frame that can be employed as an apparatus for the study of visuals. This apparatus will have both 'analytical and 'critical' objectives in addition to its practical utility. Conversely, they recommend that "Analysing visual communication is, or should be an important part of the critical disciplines...We see an image of whatever kind as entirely within the articulation of ideological positions" (ibid, p. 14). In line with this, Catalano and Waugh (2020, p.52) report that Kress and Van Leeuwen's famous book entitled *Reading Images* (1996) had theoretical goals in addition to practical ones, and as a result, it brought about an analytical framework that could be applied for ideological analysis since they considered all images as pertaining to the realm of ideology. These authors viewed their work as a "contribution to a broadened critical discourse analysis" (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996, p. 13).

The grammar of visual design, as noted above, was primarily developed to analyze images in the same systematic and explicit way that linguistics offers to analyze language. It can be counted as a variation of Halliday's systemic functional grammar wherein he proposed that a text simultaneously exhibits three levels of meaning known as metafunctions: The ideational, interpersonal, and textual function. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2006) accredit that visual designs execute these three metafunctions and co-opt Halliday's ideas into their theoretical framework of visual semiotic analysis. The metafunctions have been remodeled as the *representational, interactive and compositional* meaning or dimension, respectively. Moreover, in accord with what Foss (2008, p. 311) outlines as a "deductive application of the rhetorical to the visual" which is concerned with deductively applying a rhetorical perspective that employs visual artifacts to encapsulate, articulate, or explore visual rhetorical constructs derived from the study of discourse-based rhetorical constructs and theories, the metafunctions can broadly be aligned along

with concepts in *classical rhetoric* namely *ethos, pathos, and logos* (See 1,2, and 3 below), respectively to form part of an analytical framework to account for visual rhetoric in EPs. Such a framework provides a significant addition to the existing literature on EPs, and is, in particular, welcomed for expanding the scope of visual rhetorical analysis and integrating both the traditional discourse-based rhetorical theories and the more innovative perspectives on visual rhetoric.

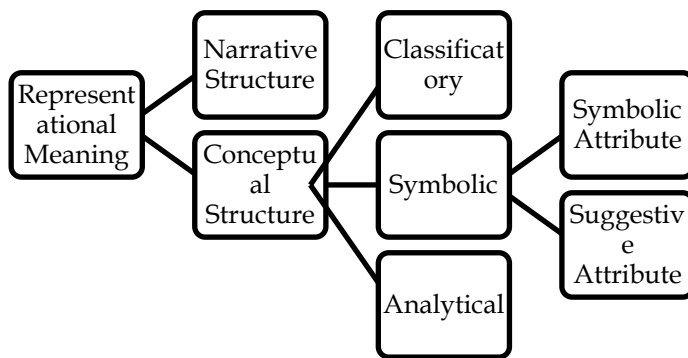
To begin with visual grammar, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996; 2006), as noted above, an image manifests three dimensions or levels of meaning:

### 1. The Representational Meaning: Visual Ethos

The representational meaning is communicated by the abstract or concrete participants depicted in images (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2011). According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p 59) there exist two kinds of patterns: *narrative* (this will not be discussed as it is not realised in the analysis of the data for the current study) and *conceptual* processes. Images that do not incorporate vectors or actions are called *conceptual*. Lacking interaction between the elements in a picture or image, conceptual images "visually define, analyse or classify people, places and things" (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2011, p. 3 of 30). In other words, they do not depict the participant as engaging in any action, contrariwise as being something, signifying something, belonging to some category, or having particular features or elements that exemplify a 'static concept' as opposed to representing any action.

Conceptual processes are further subclassified into *classificatory, analytic and symbolic processes*. Being relevant to the data analysis, attention will be focused on symbolic processes which are in turn subcategorized into *symbolic attribute and suggestive*. Symbolic processes are basically concerned with what a participant represents or is. Human participants in symbolic attributive processes are typically depicted posing for the viewer, as opposed to performing an action. They sit or stand there for no reason other than to exhibit themselves to the viewer.

By contrast, symbolic suggestive processes which are usually realised by an object, associating the depicted participant in the image with certain symbolic meaning or identity (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006, p. 105-6). The structure of the representational meaning is summarized in figure1.



**Fig 1. The Structure of the Representational Meaning (Adapted from Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006)**

Conversely, from a rhetorical perspective, this study argues that the representational meaning resonates with the 'ethos' in the classical rhetorical theory as both are concerned with establishing identity and self-image, as will be evident in the data analysis. The term 'visual pathos' is coined to capture this interconnectedness, drawing on Gallez and Reynders (2015) who postulate that the construction of ethos is not limited to discursive characteristics but can encompass para verbal and non-verbal elements such as physical appearance, body language and gestures. Thus, modern accounts of rhetoric aim to accurately define what ethos is composed of, how it is shaped in discourse, and what linguistic and non-linguistic resources are available for its administration. In effect, based on the multiple visual representational strategies, visual ethos characterizes the level of 'institutional integration', 'credibility', 'reputation', and the depicted participant's authority as will be evident in the data analysis below.

## 2. The Interactive Meaning: Visual Pathos

In addition to establishing the identity or the ethos of the represented participant, an image designates an imaginary relationship between the represented participant(s) and the audience. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) hold that "the interactive meanings are visually encoded in ways that rest on competencies shared by the producers and viewers...[they] derive from the visual articulation of social meaning in face-to-face interaction, the spatial positions allocated to different kinds of social actors in interaction" (p.120-121). Images can establish specific relationships between the viewer and the universe depicted in the image. Consequently, they interact with the viewer and propose how the viewer should respond to the people, or things being represented (Van Leeuwen and Kress 2006, p. 118; Van Leeuwen 2008, pp.137-139). These authors focus on three factors that are crucial to understanding the meaning of

images and how the individuals depicted in images relate to the viewer:

### a. Social Distance

Images can cause people or entities get closer or further away from the viewer. Distance communicates interpersonal relationships and indicates intimacy in the sense that people maintain their distance from strangers and remain close to their closest friends and family members (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2011; Ledin and Machin 2018). In turn, being essentially symbolic, distance demonstrates various kinds of social relationships between the represented subject(s) and the viewership. This is typically construed through 'the size of the frame'. In images, there is always a choice between close-ups, medium shot and long shot. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 124) recapitulate different kinds of shots: Close-ups imply an intimate/personal relationship; medium shots imply a social relationship; and long shots imply an impersonal relationship.

### b. Social Relation

The second dimension of interactive metafunction presumes the social relation between the represented social or political actor and the viewer, which is established through the *angle*, perspective, or point of view from which a given participant is seen. Angle is characterized as 'vertical' if the person is viewed from above, and 'horizontal', if the person is viewed from the front, the side, or somewhere in between. According to Van Leeuwen (2008, p. 139), these perspectives or angles communicate two aspects of the social relationship between the viewer and the individuals depicted in the photograph: "power and involvement." The vertical angle, as Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 129-130) assert, represents related power differences, whilst the horizontal angle represents symbolic involvement or detachment. For instance, a frontal angle enhances identification and engagement with the participant being represented.

### c. Social interaction

There is a further way to designate the relationship between the participant(s) in a visual text and the viewership: *gaze*. There is a fundamental distinction between photographs in which the portrayed participant look straight into the viewer's eyes and those in which this is not the case. When participants in an image look straight at the viewer, their eye lines form vectors that connect them to the viewer; subsequently contact is generated, though only on an abstract level. This visual configuration performs two interconnected functions. Firstly, it produces a visual form of direct address. It explicitly



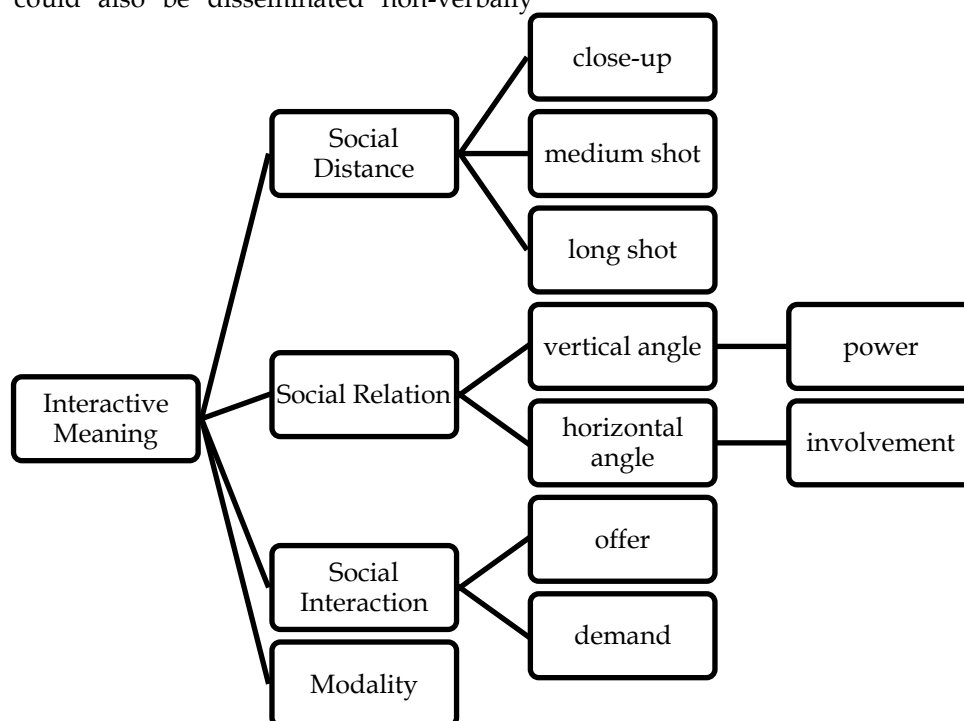
acknowledges the audience by addressing them as "visual you." It comprises an "image act" secondly. The producer employs the image to influence, and manipulate the viewer with the image in some way (Van Leeuwen, 2005; Van Leeuwen 2008; Ledin & Machin, 2018). Following Halliday (1985), Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p.118) call this type of image a 'demand gaze' whereby the participant's gaze demands something from the viewer, requiring the viewer to enter into some sort of imagined relationship with him or her. The precise nature of the relationship is also denoted by other means, such as gestures or the facial expressions of the individuals depicted. For instance, a smile requires the viewer to enter into a relationship of social affinity.

However, if such a 'visual you' is absent, then the image is 'an offer,' which as Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, p. 124) explain, offers the represented participants to the viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation, and specimens in a display case. Van Leeuwen (2008, pp. 140-141) contends that the image in this instance compels us to view the depicted individuals as "voyeurs" rather than interactants, as if they were unaware of the viewer's presence (Details will be ignored here as no sample in the data instantiates offer gaze).

Drawing on Halliday (1985), another crucial dimension of the interactive metafunction is the concept of *modality* which refers to the veracity, credibility, or degree of certainty of an image or of the whole construct. Kress and Hodge (1979), in *Language as Ideology*, directed attention to the point that modality could also be disseminated non-verbally

(qtd. in Machin 2007, p.48). Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) detailed a number of techniques for reducing modality and avoiding or altering reality. Three important cues here involve color saturation with highly saturated colors reducing modality, abstraction and contextualization through the type of the background an image or a photograph has. All these aspects make the representation of social actors become high or low in modality. Modality aims to construct reality or forge it with a view to produce effect in the viewer (See Fig2.).

Overall, the interactive metafunction can be matched with 'pathos' in the classical rhetorical theory as it attempts to influence and provoke the emotions of the viewer through establishing or hypothesizing a strong interpersonal relationship with the viewer as political candidates try to show a close social relation, minimize social distance, and advance a sense of social affinity, as will be evident in the analysis. Moreover, relying on highly saturated colors and over exposition, and abstraction, reality is forged in order to impress the viewer. In this connection, the term 'visual pathos' is introduced. Visual or non-verbal pathos pertains to the influence a visual text will have on the audience's beliefs, attitudes, and values. It seeks to place viewers "in the proper frame of mind". It is not only concerned with influencing an audience's emotions; it can have far more overarching influence and can change to actual behavior such as votes, insurrection, or discrimination, as Fernandes and Oswald (2022, p. 3 of 21) explicate.



**Fig. 2 The Structure of the Interactive Meaning (Adapted from Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006; Van Leeuwen 2008)**

### 3. The Compositional Meaning: Visual Logos

Compositional meaning correlates an image's representational and interactive meanings. This is implemented by means of three intertwined systems (See figure 3):

#### A. Information Value

The arrangement of elements in a visual composition determines the composition's informational value. The point is that the function of an element depends on whether it is placed on the right or left, in the center or on the margin, or at the top or bottom of the visual construct. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 186), the left-right placement results in a 'given-new' structure. That is 'given' denotes that something is presented as something the viewer already knows and is therefore presented as commonsensical. Furthermore, they maintain that for something to be considered new, it must be presented as something that the viewer does not yet know or concur with, thereby requiring his attention. It should be stressed that this order is reversed in languages or in writing systems that start from the right (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2005, p. 198).

Regarding top and bottom, if an element is placed at the top, it is presented as 'ideal' in Kress and Van

Leeuwen's (2005) terms, which means that it is presented as idealized or generalized and therefore the most prominent part, demonstrating what 'could be'; whilst what is placed at the bottom is 'real' and represents more informative and practical information, demonstrating 'what it is'.

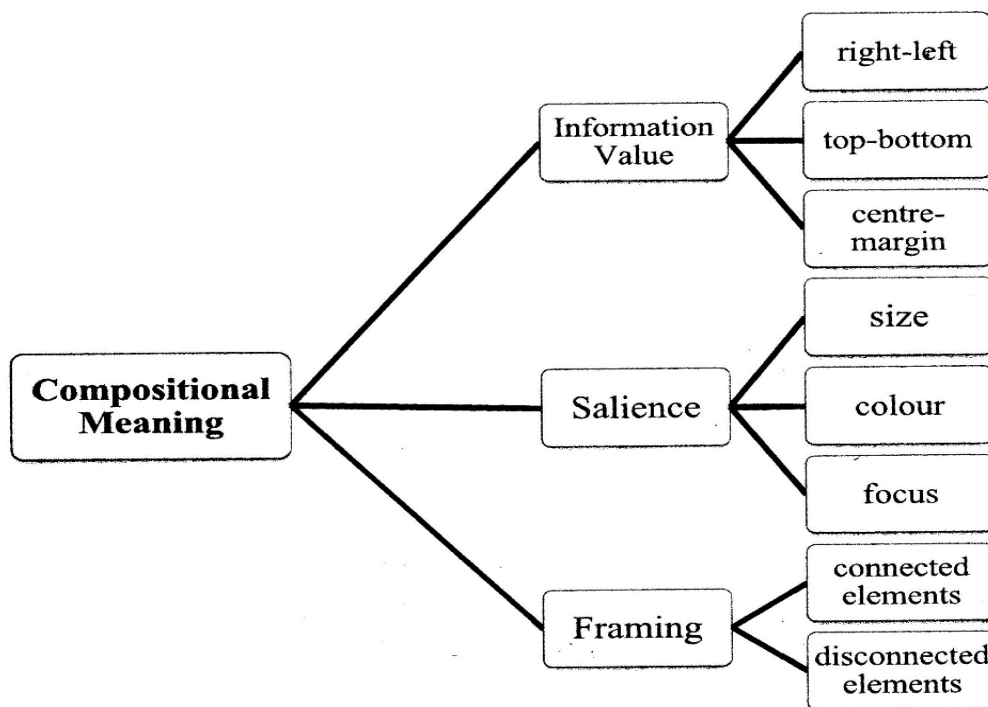
As for centrality, if a visual text places one element in the center and other elements around it, the central element is the Center and the other elements are the Margins. The center is depicted as the source of information to which the margins are subservient.

#### B. Saliency

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), saliency suggests that some elements can be made more eye-catching than others. This is accomplished thanks to size, hue, tone, and concentration. Here the focus will be on size and color which determine the mode of the image and the poster in general.

#### C. Framing

This pertains to the presence or absence of frame factors such as dividing lines and frame lines. It connects or separates the visual composition's elements based on whether each element has a distinct identity or whether they are portrayed as belonging together. Figure 3 sums up the structure of the compositional meaning.



### Fig.3 The Structure of Compositional Meaning (Adapted from Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006)

Although the correlation is sometimes slender, this dimension of a visual constructs' meaning could be equated with logos to form the construct's 'visual logos' in so far as it is concerned with the overall organization of the visual composition and yields its final shape as to how the various elements skillfully made hang together in an effective way. In this regard, Gries (2020, p. 384) postulates that visual rhetoric, though often contested (Fleming, 1996), seeks to work out how arguments are created in different genres and socio-political settings via 'strategic design'. Though admitting that propositions are conveyed differently in visual and verbal modes, Groark (2009) expounds that they are not fundamentally distinct, despite the fact that visuals are rather ambivalent and often unilateral. Visual logos can be defined in terms of the visual text's content, which, to be rhetorically effective, must be discernible and intelligible.

#### Social Actor Theory

Social actor theory comprises a number of socio-semantic representational categories introduced by Van Leeuwen (1996; 2008) to linguistically or visually characterize and classify individuals also known as social actors, and the ideological impacts that these classifications might have. The following three categories are taken:

##### 1. Individualization

In any visual artefact, a social actor i.e., a participant may be individualized through representing him/her alone as an individual or as being generalized as a group member of a particular type; thus s/he is foregrounded as the social actor in focus or as a group in focus.

2. **Categorization:** is concerned with identifying the social actors with specific categorizations through textual categories like political affiliation.
3. **Nomination and Functionalization:** The social actors may be depicted using their personal names or functionalized with regards to what they do rather than who they are.

Being representational strategies, these categories are embedded into the representational dimension of meaning and visual ethos, demonstrating the idea that depicted actors are usually individualized, categorized, nominated, or functionalized in order to legitimize or naturalize certain subtle ideologies underlying the representation of political candidates in EPs which in effect have a rhetorical impact.

#### Recontextualization of the Social Practice

Another component of the multimodal critical approach adopted in this paper to explore the visual rhetorical cues in EPs is Van Leeuwen and Wodack's (1999) model of 'recontextualization of the social practice'. According to van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999, p.99), discourses constitute a type of knowledge regarding what occurs in a particular social practice, as well as concepts regarding why it is the way it is, which they call discursive scripts. Recontextualization (Bernstein, 1996) is a very useful concept for analyzing the discursive processes or scripts involved in representing social practices. The essence of recontextualization is the transformation of social practices into discourses about social practices. Ideology operates precisely through this relocation of discourses. Discursive and also non-discursive practices also reveal which members of a social practice are involved and what values they hold. In this regard, Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) argue that what is crucial is how actual, concrete participants, processes, and contexts are ideologically decontextualized or transformed, typically by a number of techniques: *substitution, evaluation, deletion and addition*. The first two techniques will be explicated below inasmuch as they will be realized in the data.

##### 1. Substitution

The elements of a social practice and its social actors, as they are represented, can be substituted for something else. For instance, social actors can be represented by their appearance, behavior, and emotions as opposed to their concrete actions. The specific 'micro-actions' that make up their actions can be abstracted in order to substitute their complexity and specificity. Abstraction always entails a loss of specificity in the depicted activities (Mayr 2016, p.267)

##### 2. Evaluation

Recontextualisation invariably entails evaluation of the social practice that is being covered. In each recontextualization, events and individuals are portrayed in accordance with the presenters' objectives, values, and priorities. This can lead to the linguistic and visual legitimization or delegitimization of certain social actors based on more nuanced evaluations of their appearance and behavior and also their political slogans.

It is worthwhile to note that these two categories are not restricted to occur under a specific component of

the visual rhetorical model adopted in this study; they operate at different levels of visual ethos, pathos and logos. In this vein they are submerged into the analysis where deemed relevant.

Together these frameworks allow for a multimodal critical analysis that will critically investigate the visual patterns in elections posters that function to make them rhetorically powerful.

It should be noted that the political slogans or any kind of text, known as 'captions' in multimodal studies' terms, are considered 'visual' building on what Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) behold that in a sense the written mode is counted as visual insofar as it designates a visual representation of verbal discourse. In harmony with this, Helmers and Hill (2008, p. 3) demonstrate that rhetoric encircles a sense of visuality at the textual level inasmuch as printed verbal rhetoric is represented visually. Ergo, being a visual artefact, being experienced visually, and given that the various semiotic modalities are pieced together to reflect the candidates, the analysis of the captions is interrelated with the visual representation of the candidates depending on their association to the different levels and components of the analytical bodywork.

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section the analytical framework sketched above will be applied to four election posters in Kurdistan Region for the 2021 Iraqi parliamentary elections highlighting the visual rhetorical strategies from an MCDA perspective.

##### 4.1 Election Poster 1 (EP1): Sarkawt Shamsadeen



Fig. 4 EP1: Sarkawt Shamsadeen

##### 4.1.1 Representational Meaning: Visual Ethos

With regards to the representational meaning, EP1 (See figure 4) represents a 'conceptual' image as it only includes one participant, namely the candidate Sarkawt Shamsadeen's photograph who is 'individualized' and 'foregrounded' as the most important component of the poster. In other words, it includes a static image showing the candidate as not involving in any action but rather as manifesting a particular identity through particular physical characteristics: he appears in very formal clothes wearing a suit and a tie suggesting that he is of a high status and is physically appealing.

In addition, the smile on his face connotes simplicity and optimism. His arms crossed gesture can be associated with firm attitudes, defensiveness, and perseverance, as demonstrated by Moore (2020) who holds that individuals who cross their arms prior to a task seek to concentrate and project an image of power and control.

The image is 'symbolic attribute' (Kress and Leeuwen 2006), signifying the attributes of the candidate presented in a still image. These physical features help create a positive picture and hence have a crucial visual rhetorical counterinfluence that establishes his visual ethos i.e. his credibility for the target position. Highlighting the history of the candidate (since he was a parliament member in the previous round) in the caption: "bardawameen"(We will continue) is what is called by Amossy (2001, qtd. in Fernande and Oswald, 2022), 'priori ethos' of the candidate enhancing his credibility. Moreover the caption instantiates substitution category whereby details have been replaced by generalizations: the slogan does not exactly specify any past or future micro actions; it remains a general, abstract statement aiming to add to the candidate's integrity and visual ethos. What is more, the candidate is glorifying himself in the slogan by employing the first person plural pronoun (-een) instead of the first person singular pronoun (-m), reinforcing his identity as powerful leader.

##### 4.1.2 Interactive Meaning: Visual Pathos

A. **Social Distance:** Being a close-up shot, the image displays a strong, intimate social relation with the viewer. It shows only the face, the shoulders, and the candidate's arms crossed and hence backgrounds the social distance between the two, seeking to construct an equitable power relation with the electorate. Furthermore, the candidate is making eye-contact with the viewer; this symbolizes power on the one hand, and social affinity on the other. It also proposes

that he is one of us- group. Moreover, the candidate is nominated as opposed to functionalized, suggesting simplicity and publicity and consequently reducing the social distance between the candidate and the electorate.

- B. **Social Relation:** In terms of social relation, the image is in-between the vertical and the frontal horizontal angles which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 89), stage two facets of the social relationship depicted between the candidate and the viewer: 'power and involvement'. In this vein, in the MDA literature, the vertical angle is associated with the power the candidate has and the horizontal angle is symbolic; it proliferates the viewer's involvement with the candidate in the poster.
- C. **Social Interaction:** comprises the gaze system which is realized by either 'demand' or 'offer' gaze. In EP1, the image is a 'demand' one with the candidate looking at the camera, or more specifically at the viewer urging and asking him to vote in his favor.
- D. **Modality:** the modality in EP1 is low as the poster includes highly saturated colors: bright purple, white, dark grey, light grey, green and blue as well. The use of the color purple associates the candidate with the royalty and suggests that he is of royal status, a diplomat, a leader ([https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/visual\\_rhetoric/color\\_theory\\_presentation.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/visual_rhetoric/color_theory_presentation.html)). Moreover the candidate's face and the left part of the poster which includes the candidate's code are overexposed to bring him to the focus of attention; Here, the subcategory of *substitution* from the recontextualization of the social practice is at play in that reality is substituted by abstraction in the sense that the highly saturated colors do not reflect reality; the background of the image is abstract i.e. it does not signify a real image shot at the site of work or office; it is a studio shot edited programmatically to connote optimism and excitement and urge the viewer to vote for the candidate and be part of this optimism and excitement. Thus, the image is far from being documentary; it remains symbolic which aims to grab the viewer's attention. According to Fairclough (2003), abstraction is an indication of ideology work being done. Altogether, these visual features make the poster dramatic rather than real.

These subcategories work in concert to visually construct a strong interpersonal relation with the

viewer, and therefore inaugurate the 'visual pathos' which aims to strike the interest and provoke the emotions of the viewer to consider the candidate as having a strong social relation with him and that the candidate is part of the immediate community around him. Moreover, the modality of EP1 abstracts and backgrounds reality which is substituted by optimism and excitement to paralyze the viewer's critical faculty and evoke his emotions in favor of the political actor represented in the poster.

#### 4.1.3 Compositional Meaning: Visual Logos

This involves a number of interconnected systems:

- A. **Information Value:** Having a given-new structure from the right to the left, the candidate's photo is placed on the right side as given information suggesting his popularity among people, whereas his code is emboldened and positioned on the left marking it as the new and vital information, and making him the target candidate to be voted for. The candidate's photo occupies a large space; it occupies a central position in the poster: from top to bottom of the poster, and exceeding the center of the poster, highlighting the candidate as the most striking element of the poster.
- B. **Salience:** The candidate's photograph is the most salient element in the poster. His name is the second salient element his name, and the third salient element is his code number. His affiliation, his region and the emblem are the least salient elements. Accordingly, attention is focused on the candidate's photo, his name and his code. To this end, these poster parts are highly saturated and overexposed to strike the attention of the viewer.
- C. **Framing:** Within the larger frame of the poster, the candidate's code, his circle, his affiliation, and the slogan have been framed each of which catalyze the candidate in a particular way. The candidate's code and his affiliation form a vector with the photo. The candidate is the major argument in the poster and the other parts are support points to explain shorthand and eye-catching support points as they have been framed using lines and colors. The color of the candidate's tie harmonizes with the purple part of the poster, and the candidate's suit with dark background to make the poster cohesive.

Altogether, EP1 has a particular organization which chooses to stress certain aspects of the information included, making the elements hang together as a multimodal/visual text. Such an

organization is a powerful ideological as well as rhetorical tool that requires the viewer to pay attention to certain elements in the poster. In this vein, the compositional metafunction forms the posters 'visual logos' which functions to arrange information in an effective way in order to act rhetorically on the viewer.

#### 4.2 Election Poster 2 (EP2): Khidhir Ali Sadiq



Fig. 5 EP2: Khidhir Ali Sadiq (Khidhir Mantk)

##### 4.2.1 Representational meaning: Visual Ethos

The still image in EP2 instantiates a 'conceptual structure' inasmuch as the candidate is looking straight at the viewer and is not involved in any actions (See figure 5). Thus, he is asking the viewer to perform some action: to vote for him. The poster is rife with positive self-affirmation, persistent optimism, and unquestioning faith in success. This type of discourse can be captivating and contagious i.e. infectious, but it can also obfuscate or mute other realities that are not so rosy. The candidate appears in the Kurdish uniform to communicate and intensify a sense of nationality, reflecting the norm that Kurdish people wear their cultural uniform on national occasions to reinforce their integrity, enthusiasm, and a strong sense of devotion and patriotism. Thus, this will provide the candidate with a national identity, establishing his ethos as a patriotic and nationalist political actor. The Kurdish flag, being a suggestive attribute, further enhances this sense of nationalism and the national identity associated with the candidate as well as his party. It arouses in the viewer the sense of patriotism, invulnerability, and loyalty. Being a national emblem, the flag is synecdochical in that it implies defending one's country, nation and properties.

According to Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 20-21), these notions are ideological tools which have been

exploited by the powerful parties to provoke the electorate and suggest to vote for the candidate if they are real patriots. In line with this, Edwards et al. (qtd. in Hill and Helmers 2008, p. 4), call attention to the view "that national symbols [such as flags] employed as a visual shorthand to represent shared ideals and to launch an immediate appeal to the audiences sense of a national community".

Similar to EP1, the crossed arms suggest self-confidence, rigidity, power and control all of which contribute to the construction of his 'visual ethos' that enhance his appropriateness to hold the position in question. In addition, the pose of the candidate is also important: his photograph occupies much of the space in the poster which again signifies his power, high status and positive self-affirmation.

Objects, Machin and Mayer (2012, p.51) aver, proclaim ideas and values; in this regard, the wristwatch points to the candidate's maturity, independence, high status and his looking for the future. The light on his face is associated with optimism, and welfare. The candidate is categorized as an ideal, trustworthy, national political actor, boosting his visual quintessence (ethos).

Additionally, individualization and foregrounding assign prominence to the candidate as the sole actor in the poster; functionalization (parezar Khidhir Mantk: Lawyer Khidhir Mantik) is employed to enhance his credibility; simultaneously, nomination using a nick name adds popularity to him all of which contribute to setting up the candidate's ethos.

##### 4.2.2 Interactive Meaning: Visual Pathos

**A. Social Distance:** In images, as in real situations, distance denotes social relations. The medium shot of the political actor in EP2, symbolizes a social relation with the viewer as the photograph is cut off from somewhere under the waist. Thus the head, the shoulders, the hands, and the waist are included in the photograph. The candidate is establishing eye contact with, and hence engaging with, the viewer.

**B. Social Relation:** the candidate in EP2 exhibits 'vertical angle i.e. he is seen from above connoting power over the viewer. Being a way to social (re)construction and also social domination, this kind of visual discourse reproduces and legitimates the authority and the high status of his party which will also descend to him. In this respect, Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 258) expound that it is crucial to note that power can be more than simply dominance from above; it can also be co-produced when individuals feel or are persuaded to believe that dominance is legitimated in some way. This dynamism in power relations will inevitably lead to the believe that the candidate as well as his party has the power to lead

the nation. Conversely, the poster holds that he is the right choice. This confirms that the visual semiotic choices are strategic and bury particular ideologies in EPs that model a rhetorical repercussion.

**C. Social Interaction:** The photograph represents a 'demand gaze' as he directly and seriously looks at the viewer demanding him to elect him. As noted above, this emphasizes the social interaction or connection between him and the viewer; it also designates power relations. The dynamic power relation created via the semiotic choices, in this case eye-contact, produces the hegemonic view that the candidate has the power and authority which aims to manipulate people's thinking in his direction so as to believe that he deserves the position and has the power to govern the country. These have a striking rhetorical effect to indirectly convince the electorate to elect him.

**D. Modality:** The strong bright light on Khidhir Mantik's face and the abstract background reduce the truth value of the poster and symbolize the optimism that the candidate wants to pass to the viewer. It also suggests that the candidate is looking for the bright future; moreover, it adds drama to the poster. Thus, the viewer is invited to join the optimistic scene depicted in the poster and to take action in order to become part of this optimism. Thus, the setting is abstract; instantiating substitution in that real setting is replaced by abstract features with a view to keep the candidate in the focus of attention on the one hand, and on the other it makes the scene or the setting a symbolic rather than real. These masked semiotic choices function as visual rhetorical strategies to give a favorable account of the candidate and arouse the viewer, forming the visual paths of the poster.

#### 4.2.3 Compositional meaning: Visual Logos

**A. Information Value:** The poster is read from top to bottom as the name of the party and the candidate's head appear at the top of the poster. Along with the candidate's photo, there exist the candidate's location, his circle, and his code number. The Kurdish flag appears beneath the photograph. At the bottom which is the part that is usually occupied by ideal factual information, the candidate's name, his nickname, and his job have been provided.

**B. Salience:** due to its size, the candidate's photo is the most salient element in the poster; he is foregrounded as the most important element. The background is abstract and overexposed, including two colors white which implies peace, purity, and yellow which denotes the PDK party flag. This is an indicator that the poster tries to communicate values and ideas about the candidate rather than document facts about him.

**C. Framing:** In EP 3, the party's logo, the candidate's code and his name are framed as important highlights about the candidate. Yet, the different elements hang together to form a unified visual construct which work in unison with information value and salience to create the visual logos of the poster in pursuit to convince the voters to vote for the represented candidate.

#### 4.3 Election Poster 3 (EP3): Gaylan Qadir



Fig. 6 Election Poster 3: Gaylan Qadir

##### 4.3.1. The Representational Meaning: Visual Ethos

EP3, as shown in Fig. 6, incorporates a static image which designates a 'conceptual structure', for the candidate is standing still and is not performing any actions. The candidate represents a 'symbolic attribute'. Akin to the candidates in EP1 and EP2, he is wearing smart, formal clothes, appearing serious and apt to hold the responsibility. His hand gesture which is a common gesture made by politicians and leaders connotes confidence, respect solidarity (<https://www.scienceofpeople.com/hand-gestures/>). His glasses indicate enlightenment, intelligence, and insight ([https://westsidetoastmasters.com/resources/book\\_of\\_body\\_language/chap4.html](https://westsidetoastmasters.com/resources/book_of_body_language/chap4.html)). In this regard, Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 51) espouse that when analyzing visual semiotic choices, particular attention should be devoted to the meaning of the objects, clothing, hand and facial gestures. Though implicit, these visual semiotic choices of physical features and attributes signal values which yield a positive picture of the candidate and present him as an asset for the post and hence have necessarily rhetorical impact. This provides an abstraction of the candidate to a set

of physical traits. Further, the candidate is individualized and foregrounded as the only political actor in focus; he is nominated using his personal name adding simplicity as well as popularity and reducing social distance. These physically oriented visual depictions establish the candidate's visual ethos, representing him via his appearance rather than any real actions. In a similar vein, the political slogans which operate rhetorically at different dimensions of meaning designate a high degree of abstraction in that they do not involve any micro-actions that the candidate commits himself to. Thus, the general statement of the coalition "ba yakawa baheztrin"[Together, we are stronger] remains an epithet of the coalition i.e. an abstraction of what the coalition is going to do for people; yet this abstraction is aimed to add to the credibility of the coalition and its candidates associating them with an abstract power or strength that they claim to have. Similarly, the candidate's slogan "lerawa la keshakantan agadarm bikanawa"[ Let me know (inform me) about your problems] remains an over-general statement devoid of any specifications (substitution category), but suggests that the candidate is concerned about people's problems, reflecting him as a trustworthy, credible political actor, and supporting the visual ethos established in the visual mode.

#### 4.3.2. Interactive Meaning: Visual Pathos

**A. Social Distance:** The medium shot of the candidate displays the candidate's engagement with the viewer, reduces the power space between them, creates an equitable power relation with the viewership, and thus create a high degree of solidarity between them, and furnishes credit i.e. the grounds to the candidate's appeal to the electorate's emotions.

**B. Social Relation:** As noted above, here 'angle' plays an important part. The image in EP3 is shot at an eye-level which, as in real life, signifies an equal, close social relation between the candidate and the viewer. With regard to the 'horizontal angle', the image is seen partly from the front and partly from the side which suggests involvement with the viewer and implies that the candidate is one of us.

**C. Social Interaction:** The photograph is, to a certain degree, characterized by an 'offer' gaze. The candidate is partially looking at the viewer to acknowledge their presence and establish social affinity and at the same time requires some kind of response, namely to vote. Meanwhile, his relatively gaze away or looking off frame invites the viewer to imagine what he is thinking about and to align his thoughts and feelings. More specifically, he invites them to join him in responding to and pondering about their problems: a visual representation which is quite compatible with

the verbal message that he is making: "Let me know about your problems and concerns". According to Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 72) , 'looking off frame' posits a common way of representing politicians positively as someone involved in processes of deep thinking and having a vision about the future, building trust and also faith in a bright future. It should be noted that the slogan makes an appeal to the emotions of the electorate as it suggests that the candidate is concerned about people's problems given that the region is a crisis-ridden one and people are seeking a solution. Here, the substitution category from the Recontextualisation of the Social Practice is evident insofar as the political slogan demonstrates leaving out details and the message remains unspecified as well as obscure.

**D. Modality:** As usual, modality in EP3 is low due to the overexposed light on the candidate's face, the bright colors, and the abstract white background that mark the poster as a 'symbolic' one rather than 'real' and add drama to it. In terms of the recontextualization of the social practice, the real setting is substituted by an abstract one, reducing the truth value of the poster.

These masked visual discourses designate hidden resolute visual rhetorical devices to arouse the emotions of the electorate to align himself with the candidate and join his programmatic political agenda through voting for him. Thus they function as, and add to the poster's visual pathos.

#### 4.3.3 Compositional Meaning: Visual Logos

**A. Information Value:** The poster is read from top to bottom. It starts from the political slogan (Together, we are stronger) of the coalition parties: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Change Movement (GM); the two colors reflect the color code of these parties. Then, the photograph of the candidate appears on the right accompanied by the logo of the coalition and also a political slogan by the candidate himself. The photograph, occupying the right position which is the position of given information, builds up the publicity of the candidate. In addition, the candidate is associated with the caption 'Lerawa la keshakantan agardarm bikanawa' (Let me know about your problems) which denotes the candidate's concern about the citizens' problems. Although it remains a general statement devoid of specifications (substitution category), the slogan is employed strategically to dominate the viewer's opinion regarding the candidate, and as a support point that the candidate will fulfil the aspiration of people. Over and above that, the coalition slogan "Together, we are stronger" substantiates 'evaluation' category making an evaluation that the Kurdish parties and



subsequently the Kurds are stronger together: a fact which provides a rationale for voting for the coalition candidates. The candidate's name, his circle number and his code are placed at the bottom, marking them as the factual information about the candidate, whereas the political slogans and the political emblem are the ideal information being placed at the top and the left side of the poster. Moreover, due to its size, the candidate's photograph has been allocated a particular emphasis.

**B. Salience:** The candidate's photo is the most salient element as it is the biggest in size. Thus the candidate is foregrounded i.e. focused visually to draw the attention of the viewer. The saturated colors, and the bright light on the right side of the poster, where the photo is placed, add prominence to the candidate.

**C. Framing:** The only framing incorporated is the candidate's name, his code and his circle enclosed within a green rectangular, designating his political affiliation.

The semiotic choices opted for in EP3 under the compositional metafunction combine the representational and the interactive dimensions of the poster, serve to hang the visual portrayal together and give the poster a logical form pertaining to the visual logos which has primarily a rhetorical end.

#### 4.4 Election Poster 4 (EP4): Tariq Khursheed Salih



Fig. 7 Election Poster 4: Tariq Khurshid Salih

##### 4.4.1 Representational Meaning: Visual Ethos

The static image in EP4, as shown in Fig. 7, belongs to the 'conceptual' type of processes. It is subcategorized as 'symbolic attribute' as it highlights the way the candidate is represented. Thus, EP4 comprises a still image of the candidate making a hand gesture with his thumb. The candidate is

extending his thumb up as a sign of approval and agreement. Thumb gesturing is used by powerful leaders, and hence signals the power of the candidate (<https://www.scienceofpeople.com/hand-gestures/>). Simultaneously, the candidate is requesting the viewer to carry out action: to vote for him. This address is also rendered verbally in the caption 'dangt amanta ba firoy nada lem biprsa w dang bida' (Your vote is an amanah; do not waste it; ask me and vote). In addition, as was the case in the previous posters, the substitution category is at play reducing the candidate to a set of physically appealing traits which imbue him a particular identity constructing his visual ethos: he is represented as graceful, optimistic, and self-confident; he is wearing very formal clothes, making him credible for the post. No functionalization is provided; the candidate has been nominated using his surname.

It is important to note that, unlike the previous posters, the candidate is not individualized, and the background is abstracted in a different way. Behind Tariq, one can notice Erbil citadel (a suggestive attribute) and the city center park (another suggestive attribute) where a crowd of people are silhouetted from a very far shot both of which connote certain messages: Erbil citadel is a potent national symbol that has been the hallmark of power, bravery, resilience and victory throughout the Kurdish history. These values are transmitted to the candidate through positioning the citadel in the background of the poster. The location is also ideology bearing; it represents a central and crowded place in Erbil market place where people from different layers of the society gather; it represents the community in a way or another. This implies that the candidate has sprung from the community and quite aware of their concerns as well as demands, which is also reflected in the slogan "towards real change and a bright future" which again presents a high degree of abstraction (substitution category) in that it does not specify any actions, but adds to the credibility of the candidate. Meanwhile, the people in the background represent the community who trust him and support him via their votes. This connotes that although he is categorized as neutral and not supported by any political parties, the whole community will back him and will be a castle for him and will not let him down given that castles are consociated with heavy support and protection in the Kurdish culture.

These visual semiotic choices are strategic and help establish the candidate's visual ethos via positive representation; hence they function as visual rhetorical resources.

##### 4.4.2 Interactive Meaning: Visual Pathos

**A. Social Distance:** The close up shot suggests social proximity between the candidate and the electorate. The ideology underpinning close-up shots to represent the candidates in EPs is that the designer aims to create a strong sense of intimacy, to construct an equitable power relation between the two, and to impress as well as get the attention of the viewer.

**B. Social Relation:** Regarding the angle, the image is taken in frontal horizontal angle displaying a close social relation with the viewer. It suggests solidarity rather than power. In addition, it construes the meaning potential that the candidate is one of us-group i.e. a member of the community who holds an equal as well as close relation with all the others.

**C. Social Interaction:** the demand gaze promotes an aura of strong involvement with the viewer and invites him to engage with the candidate's ideas and thought, and eventually take the action of voting for the candidate presented in the poster. This has been reflected in his slogan ( *Dangt amanta ba firoy mada lem biprsa w dang bida* [Your vote is an amanah, ask me, and vote]) as well: the candidate makes an evaluation of the action of voting and conceptualizes it as an 'amanah'; then he asks the viewer to vote forming a vector between the candidate's arm, the tick and the caption '*dang bida*' [Vote]; the three co-occur with the tick uniting the candidates hand gesture and the caption. Moreover, the political motto that is given at the top of the poster, '*Baraw gorankary rastaqina w dahatuyaky asuda*' (Towards a real change and a prosperous future", is employed to appeal to the emotions of the viewer in addition to its function of establishing the candidate's credibility, given that the region is crisis-ridden, and that people are seeking a better future. Thus, deploying the substitution category, the political catchphrase makes overgeneralizations about change and the future without any specifications, leaving the change and the bright future that he is provoking vague, and consequently aiming at triggering the emotions of the viewer.

These various semiotic choices help construct the visual appeal to the emotions of the viewers and aim to get the desired effect i.e. voting for the represented candidate.

**D. Modality:** Akin to the afore-analyzed posters, modality in EP4 is low due the bright intense light on certain poster parts particularly the candidate's face, his clothes and the bright high sky in the background which amounts to hope and optimism. Thus, the visual elements are manipulated in a way that adds

drama to the poster. The background is abstract but in a different way. It includes powerful or potent cultural symbols to imbue the candidate with specific values and identities. As noted above, the castles have been an ideogram of power and resilience and the central park represents the community and that the candidate is a member of this community and is well aware of their concerns and needs.

In effect, all the categories under the interactive meaning in EP4 seek to conjure up or stimulate the emotions of the viewership building and adding up to the candidate's visual pathos.

#### 4.4.3 Compositional Meaning: Visual Logos

**A. Information Value:** EP4 is read from left to right with the candidate's photograph positioned on the left side of the poster, making it as the most ideal piece of information to catch the eye of the viewer. The candidate's code number (24) and the tick which suggest voting for him occupy the position for the real factual information conveyed by the poster (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). The same applies to the caption that asks for the electorate's vote; whereas the broader political motto occurs at the top which is the position of general ideal information.

**B. Salience:** in view of size, the candidate's photo is foregrounded as the most salient; hence, it is the most striking element. The bright light on his suit and, face and hair make the candidate even more conspicuous. The less salient elements are the tick on the candidate's photo which suggests voting for him, and his code number, whose prominence is further boosted by the bold face and the highly saturated red color (Ledin and Machin, 2020).

**C. Framing:** The elements hang together to form a unified whole which aims to produce a visual rhetorical effect on the viewer. The only framing observed involves the caption "*dangt amanta ba firoy mada lem biprsa w dang bida*" and part of the tick which are given a different background and distinguished from the rest of the poster elements through an orange line, highlighting these two elements as very crucial parts of the overall message that the poster attempts to convey: vote for this candidate.

Related is the idea that the political catch phrase makes an evaluation (evaluation category) of the electorate's votes as an 'amanah' which is something sacred in the Islamic culture; once something is an 'amanah', it should be taken seriously. It can be held

that the slogan appeals to the logic of the viewer and also legitimates voting for the candidate in question.

It should be noted that the elements are organized effectively and form the visual logos of the poster with each element having a particular information value, giving salience to particular elements, and drawing particular framing lines.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

In response to the central research question, the analysis in this study has both underscored and revealed different visual rhetorical resources which are strategically as well as programmatically manipulated in EPs to appeal to the electorate and to produce effect in them at different levels of meaning making. Thus, at the representational level, visual ethos is substantiated through the candidates' physical features manifesting their identity and credibility: they appear in very formal clothes connoting high status and high level of formality; Their facial and hand gestures suggest simplicity, optimism and firm attitudes, power and perseverance; various potent national symbols such as flags (EP2) and castles (EP4), cultural uniforms (EP2) and objects such as wrist watches (EP3) and glasses (EP3) are incorporated in EPs to imbue the candidates with certain abstract notions and values such as nationalism, patriotism, resilience, power, intelligence, and; the candidates are typically foregrounded through individualization to grab the attention of viewers, categorized as neutral (EP1 and EP4) or as affiliating with certain political parties (EP2 and EP3) through the party emblem or the party's color code, nominated through their personal names (EP1, EP3, and Ep4) to imply simplicity, and sometimes functionalized (EP 4) to foster their trustworthiness via their expertise; yet in the case of EP2, a nickname is provided to attenuate the formality and add to the candidate's publicity. These positive as well as ideal representations which are deeply rooted in the semiotic choices about the candidates constitute the appeal to the candidates' ethics and ultimately aim to prompt the electorate to take action in their benefits. These provide answers to the secondary research questions (1), (3), and part of the secondary question (2); simultaneously, they render a clear verification of hypotheses (1), (2), and part of hypothesis (3).

With regards to the interactive dimension which adheres to the visual pathos, a number of subcategories are relevant: *social distance*, *social relation*, *social interaction*, and *modality* which can be

aligned with visual pathos as rhetorical elements insofar as EPs mostly construct an intimate social relationship between the political actor and viewers, and manifest a high degree of abstraction in order to impress viewership. In this vein, visual pathos is corroborated via the relatively close-up (EP1 and EP2) and medium (EP2 and Ep3) shots that background the social distance between the candidates and the viewer as well as display intimate social relation between them. Moreover, the horizontal angle (EP1, EP3, and EP4) proliferates the viewer's involvement with the candidates, whilst the vertical angle (EP2) suggests the power of the candidate reproducing and legitimating the power of the candidate's party which could also descend to the candidate. Drawing on the gaze system, the candidates (EP1, EP2, and EP4) make eye contact (demand gaze), constructing an imaginary relation with the viewer, addressing them with a 'visual you', and demanding them to take action i.e. to vote in the favor of a given candidate. An exception occurs in EP3 whereby the political actor's gaze is something in between the 'demand' and 'offer' gaze as he is represented as mentally engaging with the political slogan that he holds about people's problems, creating a vision for, building trust, and faith in the bright future. These visual cues and depictions inevitably function as visual rhetorical strategies to trigger the emotions of the electorate (visual pathos), responding to the central research question posed, to the secondary research questions (1), (3), and a fragment of the secondary research question (2), and at the same time validating hypotheses (1), (2), and part of hypothesis (3).

As for modality which rests on color saturation, abstraction and contextualization of the background, it provides EPs with a high degree of abstraction via constructing an ideal image of the political actor in order to emotionally provoke the voters. The highly saturated colors and the bright light on the candidates' face and other poster parts reduce the truth value of the posters. More importantly the abstract background in the posters (EP1, EP2, EP3, and EP 4) shape them far from being documentary but rather symbolic aiming at disseminating ideological discourses, and construct certain realities about the candidates wherein abstraction replaces actual places and settings. These results authenticate hypotheses (1) and (2), and answer the secondary research questions (1) and (3).

As for the visual logos which resonates with the compositional metafunction, the posters put under scrutiny demonstrate right/left (EP1), left/ right (EP4), top/bottom (EP2 and Ep3) information value

patterns with no margin/center patterns. The candidates appear in real (EP1 and EP3) and ideal (EP2 and EP4) information positions and are made the most prominent elements in the posters to catch the eye of the viewer. Being semiotic resources boosting salience, color hue and lightening are also relevant in this respect, which are manipulated as marking the candidates as the strongest point of argument in the poster. Certain poster elements are framed as important highlights about the candidates; thus they achieve prominence. These highlights comprise the candidate's name (EP2, EP3), affiliation (EP1, EP2), his circle (EP1 and Ep3), his code number (EP1, EP2, EP3, EP4), his catchphrase (EP1, EP4), political party emblems (EP2, EP3). All the elements hang together to form a unified political message which aims to produce a visual rhetorical effect on the viewer mainly through depicting the candidates and anything related to them in a positive manner (hypotheses 1, 2, and part of 3) and consequently make the posters rhetorically effective as well as powerful (the central research question, secondary research question 1, part of 2, and 3). Overall, the semiotic choices opted for under the compositional metafunction combine both the representational and the interactive dimensions of the poster, serve to hang the visual portrayal together, and give the poster a logical form pertaining to the visual logos which has primarily a visual rhetorical end. The logical organization which chooses to stress certain elements in the posters is a powerful ideological as well as rhetorical tool that requires the electorate to pay attention to the highlighted elements in the posters, attesting hypotheses 1, 2 and part of 3.

In addition, it should be noted that the political slogans which have been considered as being part of the visual rhetorical analysis (drawing on Van Leeuwen and Kress 2006), and interconnected with the visual representation of the candidates in the current study, operate rhetorically at different dimensions of meaning adding up to, and reinforcing the rhetorical power of the posters. This pertains well to the secondary research questions (2) and (3), and at the same time verifies the hypotheses (1) and (3). More precisely, the slogans which are typically characterized by substitution (EP1, EP3, and EP4) and evaluation (EP3 and EP4) play a role in generating visual ethos (EP1), pathos (EP3 and EP4, and logos (EP4). Being visual resources as they are visual representations of the candidate's verbal messages, and as they are essentially experienced through the eye due the visual essence of EPs, the slogans function as visual rhetorical strategies exploited in EPs, providing a response to the central research question,

the secondary research questions; and also verifying the research hypotheses.

In effect, the study has verified the hypotheses and answered the central and secondary research questions.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Various visual rhetorical strategies are employed in EPs.
2. The various visual semiotic choices employed in EPs have overarching visual rhetorical influence insofar as they construct, trigger, and legitimize particular realities about candidates which serve as rhetorical cues to exert influence on the electorate.
3. EPs are by no means neutral; rather they are essentially ideological and synergistic in the sense that they aim to shape a favourable as well as a genuine representation of candidates to achieve specific ends, namely to alter the disposition of the electorate and to persuade them to vote for them.
4. EPs rhetorically operate at different levels of meaning making namely the representational, interactive, and the compositional which in turn generate the candidates' visual ethos, pathos, and logos. At the representational level, visual ethos establishes the candidate's authority and credibility; visual pathos is at play at the interactive level to prompt the emotions of viewer; and compositional level which combines the previous two levels is concerned with the visual logos, making a logical appeal.
5. The ethical, emotional, and logical appeals imbue and consociate the candidates with unique identities, positive values, and themes, catalyzing the rhetorical essence of EPs.
6. The visual modality is low in EPs due to the highly saturated colours, overexposed light on certain EP parts, notably on the candidates' faces, and the abstract background all of which add drama to the EPs, and ultimately have a rhetorical impact as they function to impress the viewer.

7. Power relations are produced or reproduced according to the interests of the candidates. To appeal to the emotions or the logic of the viewer, they remain constructed rather than reflected.
8. The rhetorical effect of the captions i.e. slogans are multifarious i.e. they can be identified with different dimensions of meaning and thus may pertain to visual ethos, adding to the credibility of the candidates; visual pathos, prompting the emotions of the electorate; and visual logos legitimizing the candidate in question. Broadly, they are characterized by substitution and evaluation whereby overgeneralizations replace specific and concrete actions and attitudes making the statements vague and semantically empty, but flowery and seek to associate the candidates with particular values and attitudes, holding the promise to trigger ethical, emotional and logical appeals.

## REFERENCES

- Andrews, R. (2014). *A Theory of Contemporary Rhetoric*. New York: Routledge.
- Andrus, J. (2013). 'Rhetorical Discourse Analysis' in C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. New York: Blackwell. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1017.pub2>. (Accessed: January 5 2021).
- Bateman, J. and Schimdt, K.H. (2012). *Multimodal Film Analysis: How Films Mean*. New York: Routledge.
- Belgremi, S. and Rabab'ah, G. (2021). 'A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of English Posters in Violence Awareness Campaigns against Women'. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. Vol 11, no. 2, pp. 191-201. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1102.12>. (Accessed: March 10 2022).
- Benderbal, A. H. (2018). A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Election Posters in Algeria: Case Study: Electioneering Campaign of 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2017. An MA Thesis. University of Mostaganem: Algeria.
- Blair, J. A. (2008). 'The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments'. In C. A. Hill and M. Helmers (Eds.), *Defining Visual Rhetoric*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: London, pp. 41-61.
- Blakesley, D. (2008). Defining Film Rhetoric: The Case of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. In C. A. Hill and M. Helmers (Eds.), *Defining Visual Rhetoric*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: London, pp. 111-34.
- Bloor, M. and Bloor, T. (2007). *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis*. New York: Routledge.
- Catalano, T. and Waugh, L. (2020). *Critical Discourse Analysis Critical Discourse Studies and Beyond*. Gewerbestrasse: Springer.
- Cheng, Y. W. (2014). A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Relationship between Pi and Richard the Tiger in the Movie *Life of Pi*. *International Journal of Language and Literature*. Vol 2 (4), pp. 1-11. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.16540/ijll.v2n4a11>. (Accessed: 24 January 2022).
- Chapelle, C. A. (Ed) (2013). *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. New York: Blackwell.
- Connolly, J. and Phillips, I. (2002). 'Semiotics and the Theoretical Foundations of Multimedia'. Available at <https://www.semantic scholar.org>. (Accessed: 13 August, 2022).
- Devereux, E. (2007) *Media Studies: Key Issues and Key Debates*. London: Sage.
- Eisenhart, C. and Johnstone, B. (2008). 'Discourse Analysis and Rhetorical Studies'. In, C. Eisenhart and B. Johnstone (Eds.), *Rhetoric in Detail: Discourse Analyses of Rhetorical Talk and Text*. The Netherlands: John Benjamins, pp. 4-21.
- Fairclough, N. and Wodak, R. (1997). 'Critical Discourse Analysis'. In T.A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction*. London: Sage, pp.258-85.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fairclough, I. and Fairclough, N. (2013). *Political Discourse Analysis: A Method for Advanced Students*. London: Routledge.
- Farell, J. M. (2006) This Horrible Spectacle: Visual and Verbal Sketches of the Famine in Skibbereen. In L. J. Preli (Ed.), *Rhetorics of Display*. Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, pp. 66-90.
- Fernandes, D. O., and Oswald, S. (2022) On the Rhetorical Effectiveness of Implicit Meaning – A Pragmatic Approach. *Languages* 8: 6. Available at <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages8010006>. (Accessed: 5 April, 2023).

- Finnegan, C. A. (2008). 'Doing Rhetorical History of the Visual: The Photograph and the Archive'. In C. A. Hill and M. Helmers (Eds.), *Defining Visual Rhetoric*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: London, pp. 195- 214.
- Fleming, D. (1996). Can Pictures be Arguments? *Argument and Advocacy*, 33 (1), pp. 11-22.
- Foss, S.K. (2008) 'Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric: Towards a Transformation of Rhetorical Theory'. In C. A. Hill and M. Helmers (Eds.), *Defining Visual Rhetoric*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: London, pp. 303-3013.
- Gallez, E., and Reynders, A. (2015). 'Court Interpreting and Classical rhetoric: Ethos in Interpreter-mediated Monological Discourse'. *Interpreting* 17 (3), pp 64-90.
- Gifu, D. (2014). Political Rhetoric in Elections. In Vlăduțescu, S., Voinea, D. V., and Opran, E. R. (Eds.) *Neutrosophy, Paradoxism and Communication*. Craiova: Sithech.
- Goggin, M. D. (2008) 'Visual Rhetoric in Pens of Steel and Inks of Silk: Challenging the Great Visual/Verbal Divide' in Hill, C. and Helmers, M. (Eds.), *Defining Visual Rhetoric*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 87-111.
- Gries, L. (2020). Advances in Visual Rhetorical Analysis. In L. Pauwels, and D. Mannay, (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods*. Sage: UK, pp.381-396.
- Groark, L. (2009). Five Theses on Toulmin and Visual Argument. In F. H. Van Emmeren and B. Garssen (Eds.), *Pondering on Problems of Argumentation: Twenty Essays on Theoretical Issues*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp.220-39.
- Halliday, M. K. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotics: The Social interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- Halliday, M. K. (1985) *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.
- Helmers, M. and Hill, C. A. (2008). Introduction. In C. A. Hill and M. Helmers (Eds.), *Defining Visual Rhetoric*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: London, pp. 1-23.
- Jewitt, C. (2009). 'Introduction to multimodality'. In C. Jewitt (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*. London: Routledge, pp. 14-27.
- Jewitt, C. and Kress, G. (2003). *Multimodal literacy*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Jewitt, C. and Oyama, R. (2011). 'Visual Meaning: A social Semiotic Approach'. In T. Van Leeuwen and C. Jewitt (Eds.), *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*. London: Sage, pp.90-116.
- Jonstone, B. (2008). *Discourse analysis* (2nd edition). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Jorgenson-Erap, C.R. (2006) Satisfaction of Metaphorical Expectation through Visual Display: The Titanic Exhibition. In L. J. Prelli (Ed.), *Rhetorics of Display*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, pp. 41-65.
- Kareem, M. A. and Qadir, E. M. (2023). The Representation of Women in English and Kurdish Magazine Cover Pages: A Critical Multimodal Perspective. *Garmian University Journal*. Vol 10 (5), pp. 993-1014.
- Kress, G. (2005) 'Design and Transformation: New Theories of Meaning'. In Cope and Kalantis (Eds), *Multiliteracies*. London: Routledge, pp. 153-161.
- Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kress, G. and Bezemer, J. (2023). Multimodal Discourse Analysis. In M. Hanford and P.J. Gee (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Routledge, pp. 35-54. Available at [http://www.google.iq/books/edition/The\\_Routledge\\_Handbook\\_of\\_Discourse\\_Analysis/CHu2EAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=the+routledge+handbook+of+discourse+analysis&printsec=frontcover](http://www.google.iq/books/edition/The_Routledge_Handbook_of_Discourse_Analysis/CHu2EAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=the+routledge+handbook+of+discourse+analysis&printsec=frontcover). (Accessed 15 June 2022).
- Kress, G. and Van Leeuwen (1996). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kress, G. and Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold.
- Kress, G. and Van Leeuwen, T. (2005). Front Pages: The Critical Analysis of Newspaper Layout. In A. Bell and P. Garret (Eds.), *Approaches to Media Discourse*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 187-219.
- Kress, G. and Van Leeuwen (2006). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.

- Ledin, P. Machin, D. (2020) *Introduction to Multimodal Analysis*. London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Machin, D. (2013). What is Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis? *Critical Discourse Studies*, 10:4, 347355, DOI: [10.1080/17405904.2013.813770](https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2013.813770). Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17405904.2013.813770?scroll=top&needAccess=true&role=tab>. (Accessed 10 February 2022).
- Machin, D. and Mayr, A. (2012) *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Maiorani, A. and Christie, C. (2014). Introduction. In A. Maiorani and C. Christie (Eds.), *Multimodal Epistemologies*. London/New York: Routledge, pp. 1-12.
- Martinez-Lirola, M. *A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of a Sample of Posters Used in the 2016 and 2020 Election Campaigns in Ireland*. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369324383\\_A\\_Multimodal\\_Critical\\_Discourse\\_Analysis\\_of\\_a\\_Sample\\_of\\_Posters\\_Used\\_in\\_the\\_2016\\_and\\_2020\\_Election\\_Campaigns\\_in\\_Ireland#fullTextFileContent](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369324383_A_Multimodal_Critical_Discourse_Analysis_of_a_Sample_of_Posters_Used_in_the_2016_and_2020_Election_Campaigns_in_Ireland#fullTextFileContent) (Accessed: 17 August 2023).
- Mayr, A. (2016). 'Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis'. In H. N. Klug and H. Stöckl (Eds.), *Hundbunch Sprache im Multimodalen Kontext*. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 261-276.
- Mayr, A. and Machin, D. (2013) *The Language of Crime and Deviance*. London/New York: Sage.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. (1994). *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. (1995). 'Interdisciplinarity and Visual Culture'. *Art Bulletin*. Vol 70, no. 4, pp 540-544.
- Moore, A. (2020). Decoding Body Language: What Do Crossed Arms Actually Mean? Available at <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/what-do-crossed-arms-mean>. (Accessed: 2 March 2023).
- O'Halloran, K.L. (2004) *Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Systemic Functional Perspectives*. London: Continuum.
- O'Halloran, K.L. (2011) 'Multimodal Discourse Analysis'. In K. Hyland and B. Paltridge (Eds.), *The Continuum Companion to Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum, pp. 120-136.
- Olson, C. (2014). *Constitutive Visions: Indignity and Commonplaces of National Identity in Republican Ecuador*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Popova, M. (2012). Presidential Campaign Posters: 200 Years of Election Art. A brief Visual History of Political Propaganda Design. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/deref/http%3A%2F%2Fwww.brainpickings.org%2Findex.php%2F2012%2F06%2F04%2Fpresidential-campaign-posters%2F\\_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InB1YmVpY2F0aW9uRGV0YWVwIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmVpY2F0aW9uRGV0YWVwIn19](https://www.researchgate.net/deref/http%3A%2F%2Fwww.brainpickings.org%2Findex.php%2F2012%2F06%2F04%2Fpresidential-campaign-posters%2F_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InB1YmVpY2F0aW9uRGV0YWVwIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmVpY2F0aW9uRGV0YWVwIn19). (Accessed 12 June 2023).
- Reisigl, M. (2008). 'Analyzing Political Rhetoric'. In R. Wodak and M. Karzyżanows (Eds.), *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*. London: Macmillan, pp. 96-120.
- Richardson, J. E. (2007) *Analyzing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Seidman, Steven A. 'Studying Election Campaign Posters and Propaganda: What can we Learn?' *International Journal of Instructional Media*, vol. 35, no. 4, fall 2008, pp. 413+. Available at [Gale Academic OneFile](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A273359031/AONE?u=gogglescholar&sid=bookmarkAONE&xid=9469b22f), link.gale.com/apps/doc/A273359031/AONE?u=gogglescholar&sid=bookmarkAONE&xid=9469b22f. (Accessed 2 October 2023).
- Sherwani, K. A. and Omer, M (2020) 'Internationalisation of Discourse: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of University Websites in Iraqi Kurdistan Region'. *Journal of Xidian University*. Vol 14 (4), pp. 203-214. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340437822\\_Internationalization\\_Discourse\\_A\\_Multimodal\\_Analysis\\_of\\_University\\_Websites\\_in\\_Iraqi\\_Kurdistan\\_Region#fullTextFileC](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340437822_Internationalization_Discourse_A_Multimodal_Analysis_of_University_Websites_in_Iraqi_Kurdistan_Region#fullTextFileC). (Accessed 15 June 2022).
- Strachen, J. C. and Kendal, K. E. (2008). Political Candidates' Conventional Films: Finding the Perfect Image\_ An Overview of Political Image Making. In C. A. Hill and M. Helmers (Eds.), *Defining Visual Rhetoric*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: London. pp.135-54.
- Tardy, C. M. (2011) 'Genre Analysis'. In K. Hyland and B. Paltridge (Eds.) *The Continuum Companion to Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum, pp. 54-68.
- Taher, E. A. T. (2019). Female Invisibility/ Representation in Saudi Arabia: A Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the 2013 IKEA Catalogue and Press

Discourses on Saudi Arabia. A PhD Dissertation. New Castle University: UK.

Tracy, K. (2003). 'Discourse analysis in communication'. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *Handbook of discourse analysis*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp.725-49).

Van Dijk, T. A. (1985). *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (4 vols.). London: Academic Press.

Van Dijk, T.A. (1998). *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage.

Van Leeuwen. T and Wodak, R. (1999) Legitimizing Immigration Control. A Discourse-Historical Analysis. In *Discourse and Society* 1 (1), pp. 83–118.

Van Leeuwen (2005). *Introducing Social Semiotics*. London and New York: Routledge.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Leeuwen, T. and Jewitt, C. (Eds) (2011). *The Handbook of Visual Analysis*. London: Sage.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2013) Critical Analysis of Multimodal Discourse. In C. A. Chapelle (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. London and New York: Blackwell, pp. 1416-1425.

Wodak, R. (2011) 'Critical Discourse Analysis'. In K. Hyland and B. Paltridge (Eds.), *The Continuum Companion to Discourse Analysis*. London: continuum, pp38-53.

Zhao, S., Djinov, E., Björkqvall, A. & Boeriis, M. (Eds.) (2017). *Advancing Multimodal and Critical Discourse Studies: Interdisciplinary Research Inspired by Theo Van Leeuwen's Social Semiotics*. London/New York: Routledge.