



مجلة كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

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**A Semiotic Analysis of Political Cartoons on
Corona Virus in Almada Newspaper**

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المخلص:

تبحث الدراسة الحالية التحليل السيميائي للرسوم الكاريكاتيرية السياسية المتعلقة بفايروس كورونا التي رسمها الرسام الكاريكاتيري بسام فرج في صحيفة المدى العراقية وتهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى معرفة كيفية وصف دور الحكومة العراقية ودور الشعب العراقي في جائحة كورونا في الرسوم الكاريكاتيرية السياسية في الصحيفة انفة الذكر. ان أهمية هذه الدراسة تكمن في تسليط الضوء على دور الرسوم الكاريكاتيرية السياسية في ابراز بعض القضايا السياسية والاجتماعية المهمة المتعلقة بدور الحكومة العراقية ودور الشعب العراقي في جائحة كورونا في العراق وقد تم اختيار إحدى عشر رسماً كاريكاتيرياً سياسياً لهذه الدراسة وتم تحليل فقط تسعة نماذج طبقاً إلى نظرية بارت في السيميائيات ومن أجل اكتشاف الأفكار التي تضمنتها تلك الرسوم الكاريكاتيرية تم استخدام المنهج النوعي للتحليل في هذه الدراسة ولغرض التحليل فان الرسوم تلك قد قسمت إلى ثلاثة أقسام اعتماداً على تمثيل دور الحكومة العراقية ودور الشعب العراقي منفصلاً أو

مجتمعا . قد استنتجت الدراسة الحالية أن دور الحكومة العراقية قد وصف بشكل سلبي لأنها لم تسيطر على الجائحة لعدة أسباب مثل تركها لمنافذ العراق مفتوحة مع إيران بسبب خضوعها لها وإهمال الجائحة والسعي خلف السلطة وإهمال النهوض بالقطاع الصحي وانعدام المصداقية فيما يتعلق بحماية أرواح العراقيين من خلال فرض إجراءات السلامة بسبب الفساد والاهتمام بالحفاظ على السلطة أما دور الشعب العراقي فقد وصف على أنه سلبي وإيجابي فالجانب الإيجابي ركز على الوعي العام بإجراءات الوقاية والتأزر فيما ركز الجانب السلبي على بعض القضايا الاجتماعية في ظرف الجائحة مثل انعدام الوعي لدى بعض المواطنين العراقيين بشأن الإجراءات الوقائية والاعتداءات على الكوادر الصحية وبالإضافة إلى ذلك هنالك نوع من التحامل ضد المسؤولين الإسلاميين في الرسوم الكاريكاتيرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السيميائيات - الرسوم الكاريكاتيرية السياسية- فايروس كورونا- الجائحة- الحكومة العراقية- الشعب العراقي

Abstract

This study delves into a semiotic analysis of the Iraqi political cartoons on corona virus created by the cartoonist Bassam Faraj in the Iraqi newspaper 'Almada'. It aims at finding out how the political cartoons in the said newspaper depict the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles in the time of the corona pandemic. The significance of this study is to shed light on the role of the political cartoons in highlighting some important political and social issues related to the Iraqi government's role and the Iraqi people's role during the pandemic in Iraq. For this study, (11) political cartoons have been collected on the basis that they reflect the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles in the pandemic, and only nine samples are analyzed according to Barthes' approach of semiotics. Moreover, to discover the themes embedded in the cartoons selected, a qualitative approach has been used. Furthermore, for the sake of analysis, these cartoons are classified into three categories on the basis of representing the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles separately or together. This study concludes

that the Iraqi government's role is depicted as negative for it has not controlled the pandemic for many reasons like leaving the Iraq entry points with Iran open due to submission to it, neglecting the corona pandemic and chasing after power, neglecting promoting the health care sector and the lack of credibility concerning saving the Iraqis' lives through imposing the precautionary measures due to corruption and the interest in maintaining power. The Iraqi peoples' role during the pandemic is depicted as positive and negative. The positive aspect focuses on public awareness of the safety procedures and synergy whereas the negative aspect concentrates on some social issues in the time of the pandemic like the lack of awareness among some Iraqi citizens about corona precautions and assaults on health staff. In addition, the political cartoons selected include a sort of bias against the Islamic officials.

Key words: semiotics, political cartoons, corona virus, pandemic, Iraqi government, Iraqi people

1. Introduction

This study is concerned with a semiotic analysis of the Iraqi political cartoons on corona virus in the Iraqi newspaper, *Almada*. Corona virus disease is "an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus" (World Health Organization [WHO], n.d.). The corona pandemic has affected people's life in many aspects like economy, security and education. Given the importance of the impact of this global pandemic, newspapers in semiotic sections have produced and made semiotics on it (Abudonrin & Oloye, 2020, as cited in Sattar, Yasin, Saqlain & Arslan, 2020). This disastrous pandemic is addressed and represented in political cartoons in some Iraqi newspapers. The present

study aims at finding out how the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles in the covid-19 pandemic are depicted in the Iraqi political cartoons in Almada newspaper. The significance of this study is to shed light on the role of the political cartoons in highlighting some key political and social issues related to the corona pandemic in the Iraqi society. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1-How do the political cartoons on corona virus in Almada newspaper depict the Iraqi government's role in the time of the corona pandemic?

2-How do the political cartoons on corona virus in the aforementioned newspaper depict the Iraqi people's role during the covid-19 pandemic?

Since the present study deals with semiotics, the Iraqi political cartoons on covid-19 selected for this study are analyzed according to Barthes' approach of semiotics.

2.Literature Review

In this part of the study, previous related studies concerning the semiotic analysis of the Iraqi political cartoons are presented. Alghezzy (2017) has conducted a semiotic study on the image of the Iraqi politics in the Iraqi political cartoons. She aimed at discovering how the political cartoons reflect some main political events that touch the life of the Iraqi people. She has concluded that the cartoonists were successful in manipulating and determining the public feelings towards some important political matters like power abuse, government carelessness, procrastination and inaction in addition to corruption of all kinds. In addition, Rasheed and Alghezzy (2018) have tackled the Iraqi politicians corruption in the Iraqi political cartoons through criticizing, visualizing and exposing it from a cognitive semiotic perspective. The findings of this study showed that bridging

the gap between the visual signs in the political cartoons and the viewers' mind can make the viewers hold the hidden symbolic messages of the cartoons in a better way.

Yaseen (2019) has handled body language attributes in the Iraqi political cartoons on the Iraqi politicians' election campaign in 2018. She aimed at finding out the meaning of body language attributes like postures, gestures, clothing and facial expressions in the Iraqi political cartoons. She has arrived at the findings that each one of the previously mentioned attributes of body language has a different meaning. Postures were different from others in that the same posture in the political cartoons might have opposite meanings. Furthermore, Hashim (2021) has investigated a press image employed by news agencies. He chose one news-integrated image of an Iraqi young demonstrator carrying the Iraqi flag in Al-Tahrir square in Baghdad during the Iraq protests in 2019. Based on a semiotic analysis, he has concluded that this photo contributed to attracting the attention of international public opinion to the suffering of the Iraqi people under a corrupt political system which fails to improve services and provide job opportunities to the Iraqi people.

As discussed above, the previous studies handle different issues addressed in the Iraqi political cartoons and images but they have not tackled the Iraqi political cartoons on corona virus from a semiotic perspective, which is the focus of the present study.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Semiotics and Political Cartoons

Semiotics is defined as a field that studies "the life of signs within society" (Saussure, 1916, as cited in Sattar et al. , 2020). According to Chandler (2011, as cited in Imperial, 2020), a sign is perceived as whatever thing that can be interpreted as representing something beyond itself.

Semiotics was developed as an interdisciplinary field of study by the linguist Ferdinand De Saussure and the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Sebeok (2001) states that Saussure emphasized the concept of the two-sided sign which makes up of the signifier and the signified. The signifier is a form that refers to something, and the signified is a concept or image. The relationship between the two is arbitrary. Peirce (as cited in Imperial, 2020) in his theory of semiotics, explained that a sign consists of three components: sign, object and interpretant. The relationship between the three components is triadic. The most important point in this relationship is the focus on the importance of interpretation to signification. Semiotics can be applied to political cartoons, images, movies...etc. . Political cartoons are defined as "a powerful communication tool that combines artistic skills like sarcasm, irony, humor, and wit to raise questions against authority and draw public attention towards political happenings and social ills" (Jose, 2019, p. vi). Similarly, Templin (1999, as cited in Aazam, Baig, Azam & Azam, 2020) emphasizes the importance of humor and satire as tools employed by cartoonists in political cartoons and images to achieve explicit purposes through distortion and misrepresentation of reality. Lang et al. (as cited in Imperial, 2020) states that cartoon is a powerful tool of communication that can impinge on the public opinion and praise or criticize politicians. Furthermore, political cartoons are considered a medium of conveying ideologies. El Refaie (2009, as cited in Aazam et al. , 2020) explains that political cartoons plays an important role in swaying public opinion on politicians in addition to depicting and conveying certain ideologies silently.

To produce and analyze political cartoons, different techniques are used. They are as follows:

1- Metaphor

It is an internal cognitive technique which is used to express opinions about the world (Popa, 2013, as cited in Rasheed & Algezzy, 2020). Lackoff and Johnson (1980, as cited in Rasheed & Algezzy, 2020) add that metaphor has an important role not only in using words, but also in images.

2- Symbolism

To attract public attention to different issues and events, symbolism is used as a technique in which signs and objects are used to represent something beyond themselves (Fetsko, 2001,as cited in Imperial, 2020).

3- Exaggeration

To create effects on the viewers, cartoonists use the technique of exaggeration in which size, emotions in addition to shapes of objects and persons are exaggerated (Burack, as cited in Imperial, 2020).

4- Analogy

This technique is used in cartoons to evoke thought and emotion. In this technique, unlike things like complex issues or situations are compared to familiar ones to help viewers see them in a different light (Burack, 1994, as cited in Werner, 2004).

4- Irony

Muecke (1969, as cited in Al-Hindawi & Abdulazeez, 2015) states that irony is of two basic types: verbal irony and situational irony. Verbal irony is a linguistic phenomenon in which what is on the surface differs from what is implied by a speaker (Abrams ,1999, as cited in Al-Hindawi & Abdulazeez, 2015). According to Shelly (2001, p.776), situational irony is perceived by people as defying "the normal way in which situations fit with their repertoire of concepts, that this misfit is noteworthy in some way, that it evokes a particular kind of emotional response, and, perhaps, that it has a special, moral significance" (as cited in Al-Hindawi & Abdulazeez, 2015).

5- Captioning

To complement other parts of the cartoon in conveying a certain meaning, famous phrases, song lyrics, slogans...etc. are used as captions (Fetsko, 2001, as cited in Imperial, 2020).

6- Juxtaposition

This technique involves that two or more objects are placed together for the purpose of comparison to reveal the contrast between them (Young, 2001).

3.2. Barthes' Approach of Semiotics

Roland Barthes is one of the pioneers of semiotics. He studied the sign according to Saussure's view of the signifier and the signified. He (1978, as cited in Akande, 2002) explains that a sign is a form of denotation and connotation which is a culturally determined meaning. In 1972, Barthes (as cited in Akande, 2002) investigated the attitudes and the values implied in the messages conveyed to the public in France via sports events, advertisements ...etc. These messages are called myths. Myth can be defined as a message which is ideological and cultural. Pignell (2002, as cited in Imperial, 2020, p. 85) states that "we shall see myth is not an innocent language, but one that picks up existing signs and their connotations, and orders them purposefully to play a particular social role". According to Bouzida (2014, p.1003), Barthes believes that " a myth represents second order-meaning of the signified while connotation is the second- order of meaning of the signifier". Al-Momani , Badarneh and Migdadi (2017) mention that according to Barthes (1977), system of signification is divided into three parts: the linguistic message, the non-coded iconic message (denoted message) and the coded iconic message (connoted message). They are as follows:

The linguistic message

This type of message is found at two levels : denotation and connotation. Captions, film dialogues , titles ...etc. are examples of the linguistic messages which are used for illustration in images (Barthes, 1977, as cited in Al-Momani et al. , 2017).When occurring in images, the linguistic message has two functions: anchorage and relay. Concerning the anchorage function, the linguistic message helps to control our thoughts and limit the interpretations of the image. It directs the viewers to one interpretation. In the relay function, there is a complementary relationship in which meaning is added by texts and the intended meaning is conveyed by the linguistic message together with the image (Barthes, 1977, as cited in Al-Momani et at. , 2017).

The non - coded iconic message

It is a message that represents things , objects...etc. literally. It is independent of interpretations which are determined by ideology and culture (Bouzida, 2014).

The coded iconic message

The iconic message is one in which connotations and interpretations are drawn from the linguistic message and the denoted things or objects in the image (Al-Momani et al. , 2017). Barthes perceives connotation as " a reproduction of the message whether linguistic or visual, also it is a product of mental abilities responsible on reading between the lines" (Bouzida, 2014, p. 1005).

4. Methodology

4.1. Approach of the Study

This study is qualitative for the main concern is to make a semiotic analysis to interpret the political cartoons on corona virus in Almada newspaper to reveal how the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles in the time of the pandemic are depicted.

4.2. Data Collection

To collect the data, the researcher is required to browse Almada newspaper website (<https://almadapaper.net/>) to collect the political cartoons on corona virus created by the cartoonist Bassam Faraj in the period from February 25th, 2020 to January 1st, 2021. In this period, many political and social issues related to the corona pandemic in Iraq are addressed in the political cartoons selected. For this study, (11) political cartoons related to covid-19 are collected, and they are classified into three categories on the basis of representing the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles separately or together during the corona pandemic. The first category handles the negative aspect of the Iraqi government's role only, and the second category tackles the negative aspect of the Iraqi government's role and the positive aspect of the Iraqi people's role. The third category focuses on the negative aspect of the Iraqi people's role only. Further, the contextual background is also presented alongside every cartoon.

4.3. Data Selection Criteria

The criteria of selecting the data are as follows:

1 -Almada newspaper has been chosen for it includes political cartoons on corona virus that seem to have a good deal of coverage on different political and social issues related to the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles in the corona pandemic.

2 -The political cartoons related to covid-19 which have been chosen for this study include the most important political and social issues related to the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles in the pandemic. In addition, the previously mentioned cartoons seem to have not been tackled from a semiotic perspective.

4.4. Data Analysis

The Iraqi government consists of different political parties of different orientations. These parties are represented

in the government and the parliament from 2003 till now (Alhashimi, 2020). Hence, in the analysis of data, a reference to the government's role in any aspect related to the corona pandemic means a reference to the role of the governmental official belonging to any party in that aspect. In this study, (11) political cartoons are collected according to reflecting the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles in the covid-19 pandemic. Only nine samples are analyzed and for other political cartoons, (see the Appendix). The political cartoons on corona virus are classified into three categories for the sake of analysis. They are as follows:

1-Political cartoons on corona virus depicting the Iraqi government's role only in the corona pandemic.

The Iraqi government's role in the data selected involves criticizing its performance and practices in the time of the pandemic. This category of cartoons handles the negative aspect of the Iraqi government's role, criticizing its failure to control the corona pandemic due to the following:

- a. Leaving the Iraq entry points with Iran open due to submission to it.
- b. Struggle for power and negligence of the corona pandemic.
- c. Negligence of promoting the health care sector, especially in the corona pandemic due to corruption.
- d. The lack of credibility concerning saving the Iraqis' lives through imposing precautionary measures, and the main reasons behind this are maintaining power and corruption.

2-Political cartoons depicting the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles together in the corona pandemic.

The cartoons that handle the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles together in the corona pandemic are analyzed under this category. This involves criticizing the Iraqi government's role and praising the Iraqi people's role in the following aspects:

a. The government corruption and negligence of the pandemic, and the people's awareness and synergy in the corona pandemic.

b. The government failure to promote the medical services for the Iraqi people due to corruption, and public awareness of the safety measures in the covid-19 pandemic.

3- Political cartoons depicting the Iraqi people's role only in the corona pandemic.

The cartoons analyzed under this category concentrate on the negative aspect of the Iraqi people's role in the corona pandemic. They focus on the lack of awareness by some Iraqi citizens in the following aspects:

a. Negligence of corona precautions.

b. Attack against health personnel.

The data selected are analyzed according to Bathes' approach of semiotics, in addition, all the linguistic messages occurring in the aforementioned cartoons are translated by the researcher and transliterated according to Al-Saidi (2016, p. xviii).

4.5. Results and Discussions

In this study, the data representing the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles in the covid- 19 pandemic are categorized into three groups, as discussed below.

1-Political cartoons depicting the Iraqi government's role only in the pandemic

The Iraqi government's role is criticized in many aspects as shown below.

a. Submission to Iran as a reason behind not closing the land and air entry points with this country to prevent corona virus infection transmission.

When the corona pandemic first appeared in some neighboring countries like Iran, the Iraqi government did not take preventive measures concerning sealing off the Iraq borders and stopping flights with it to prevent corona infection transmission and save Iraqis' lives. The common interests, especially the economical ones, between the Islamic officials in the Iraqi government and Iran were behind this (Alubaidi, 2020). In the data selected, this idea is conveyed in only one cartoon, forming 9 % out of the total (11). Consider the following cartoon:



Figure 1: (Faraj, 2020).

The linguistic message

This cartoon involves only one label which is (kwrwnā 'īrānī) 'Iranian corona'.

The denoted message

There are many visual captions in this cartoon: red lines on the right and the left sides of the cartoon, a red prayer rug, a big corona virus ball rolling on a red carpet from aboard (Iran) into the Iraqi borders and a man who seems like he is performing salah for the big corona virus ball. This man is depicted as having a ring

in the left hand and a prayer bump on his forehead, wearing a black ankle-length garment and holding big beads by his hand. He also looks into the big corona virus ball with admiration.

The connoted message

This cartoon reflects the failure of the officials in the Iraqi government to relieve the effects of the corona pandemic. The red lines in this cartoon represent the land and air entry points of Iraq. The exaggerated size of the corona virus ball stands for the outbreak of corona virus. Rolling on the red carpet from Iran into the Iraq entry points refers to the danger of the pandemic coming from Iran to Iraq due to not preventing travel through the land and air entry points with it. This is supported by the label consisting of the lexical terms (kwrwnā 'īrānī) 'Iranian corona' which describes the source of corona virus infection transmission. In this cartoon, the cartoonist makes analogy when he portrays the big corona virus ball rolling on the red carpet as if it were a high official coming to Iraq from another country on an official visit for which an official ceremony is held. This implies that the Iraqi officials received the corona pandemic from Iran with open arms and ignoring protecting the Iraqis' lives. The man's physical appearance involving having a prayer mark on the forehead and holding big beads in the hand in addition to wearing a black ankle-length garment and a ring in the left hand represents the Islamic officials in the Iraqi government. The exaggerated size of beads implies that the Islamic officials pretend that they are genuine Islamists and they stick to Islam traditions. The man performing salah to the big Iranian corona virus ball, and his facial expression involving looking into it with admiration

indicates that the Islamic officials submission to Iran is the reason behind not closing the entry points with it, and this has caused corona infection transmission to Iraq.

b. Struggle for power and negligence of the corona pandemic.

After the resignation of the government due to 2019 large protests in Iraq, the Iraqi political reality witnessed a struggle for power among the different political forces. These forces disputed with each other on their electoral right, holding positions and achieving economical advantages. This left Iraq facing many crises (Cunningham & Salih, 2019). The dispute among the Iraqi political forces on the formation of the government continued till the corona pandemic hit Iraq, and this meaning is highlighted by the cartoon below. In the data selected, only two cartoons occur to convey this meaning, making up 18% out of the total (11). See the following cartoon:



Figure 2: (Faraj, 2020).

The linguistic message

The cartoon above involves only two linguistic messages which are the title ('rtifā' 'adad ḍaḥāyā kwrwnā) 'high numbers of corona virus victims' and the linguistic caption in the bubble ('asultah*) 'power'.

The denoted message

This cartoon denotes a cemetery of corona victims and a man with an open mouth who jumps over the graves of the victims. This man has a beard and a prayer mark on his forehead in addition to beads in his hand. He is also wearing a formal suit, and he points to something abstract which is 'power' as the linguistic caption explains.

The connoted message

In this cartoon, the symbolic message can be drawn from the analysis of the linguistic and the denoted message. This cartoon conveys the idea of the ruling political forces failure to prevent the spread of corona virus due to struggle for power and negligence of the corona pandemic. The man who has a beard and beads in his hand and who is wearing the formal suit refers to the Islamic political forces. The graves in the cartoon represent corona virus victims, and the title ('rtifā' 'adad ḍaḥāyā kwrwnā) 'high numbers of corona virus victims' supports this meaning. The man who points to ('asultah*) 'power' as it appears from the linguistic caption in the bubble and who jumps over the graves of the victims while his mouth is open represents that the Islamic political forces chase after power and attempt to hold positions in the government and ignore the pandemic. This cartoon criticizes the Islamic political forces for conflicting for their interests and disregarding taking measures to save the Iraqis' lives from the corona pandemic.

c. Negligence of promoting the health care sector, especially in the corona pandemic due to corruption.

The Iraqi health care sector witnessed a horrible decline for many reasons like the Iranian war, the American war on Iraq, the economical siege imposed on Iraq in the past, the American occupation of Iraq in 2003, the political instability and the administrative and financial corruption. As a result, this sector has suffered and continues to do so from problems that have led to a near collapse at all levels (Alanbori, 2020). In the data under study, only two cartoons conveying this meaning occur, forming 18% out of the total (11). Consider the following cartoon which focuses on this matter and conveys the suffering of the Iraqi people from the lack of health care, especially in the circumstances of the pandemic, and criticizing the government failure to develop hospitals:



Figure 3: (Faraj,2020).

The linguistic message

Three linguistic messages are identified: the linguistic title of the cartoon which reads as follows: (kwrwnā) 'corona'; the linguistic caption in the bubble which is a rhetorical question (madrī lash almas'wl yt'ālaj bmustashfayāt alkhārij wld alkhāybah* yit'ālajnū bmustashfayatnā) 'why does the official get

treated in hospitals abroad whereas our people get treated in our hospitals?'; the headline in the newspaper which is an ironic expression which reads as follows: (arri'āyah* aṣṣiḥiyah* fī khidmat almuwāṭn) ' health care is at the service of citizens'.

The denoted message

Visually, this cartoon involves a man who is wearing a sidara (Iraqi traditional hat) and an ankle-length garment, and he holds a newspaper in his hand , in addition, there is a woman wearing a cloak and a dress, and she is holding a cup of tea in her hand. Both of them are wearing masks and sitting on a carpet. They are also talking to each other. This cartoon also denotes a tray which contains a teapot, a sugar container and a cup of tea.

The connoted message

The cartoon above reflects the Iraqi officials' role in the corona pandemic through their failure to promote the health care sector. The man who is wearing the Iraqi clothing like sidara (Iraqi traditional hat) and an ankle-length garment and the woman who is wearing a dress and a cloak represent the Iraqi family. The woman holding the cup of tea, the man holding the newspaper in the hand, sitting on the carpet, talking to one another and the tray including the teapot, the sugar container and the cup of tea stands for the Iraqi family get-togethers in which worries about corona are expressed. This is supported by the linguistic messages in this cartoon like the title (kwrwnā) 'corona' and the headline in the newspaper which reads as follows: (arri'āyah* aṣṣiḥiyah* fī khidmat almuwāṭn) 'health care is at the service of citizens' which is an ironic expression criticizing the reality of health care in Iraq, especially in the

pandemic. The rhetorical question in the bubble (madrī lash almas'wl yt'ālj bmustashfayāt alkhārij wld alkhāybah* yit'āljnū bmustashfayatnā) 'why does the official get treated in hospitals abroad whereas our people get treated in our hospitals?' contributes much to the symbolic message of the lack of the medical services and ignoring developing the Iraqi hospitals. Faysal (2013) mentions that Arab linguists list many functions of the rhetorical question in Arabic, one of them is rebuke. The rhetorical question that the man asks in the bubble rebukes the Iraqi officials for their failure to promote the medical services for the Iraqi people. Also, in this cartoon, the man and the woman wearing masks implies that this is only way to save the Iraqis' lives from the corona pandemic. This cartoon highlights the Iraqi officials corruption which has led to the suffering of the Iraqi people from the deterioration of the medical services in Iraq.

d. The lack of credibility concerning saving the Iraqis' lives through imposing precautionary measures, and the main reasons behind this are maintaining power and corruption.

1- Maintaining power

The year 2019 witnessed protests against the political system in Iraq. These protests broke out as a result of corruption, apportionment and persecution, and the protesters shouted slogans of regaining the Iraqi people usurped rights, punishing the corrupt politicians and ending the quota system in running the country (Al-Rubaie, 2020). After the increase in numbers of corona cases in Iraq, the government imposed the safety procedures (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). The Iraqi officials saw the corona pandemic as an opportunity to end the protests. This idea is conveyed in only two cartoons in the data selected, forming 18% out of the total (11). The following is a good example:



Figure 4: (Faraj, 2020).

The linguistic message

There are three linguistic messages in this cartoon: the title which reads as follows: (kumāmāt syāsyah*) 'political masks', an incomplete slogan on the poster which is (nuṭālib) 'we demand' and a proverb in the bubble which is (ʿlwiqāyah* khayrun minal ʿilāj) 'prevention is better than cure'.

The denoted message

Visual captions in this cartoon include two men who are talking and looking each other in the eye and standing on a high place. They are wearing formal suits, and they have prayer marks on their foreheads. One of them has a beard and the other has not, and he is holding beads in his hand. In addition, there is a man wearing sidara (Iraqi traditional hat). He lifts a poster and looks upset, and his head reaches the place where the two men are standing. One of these two men closes this man's mouth with a mask.

The connoted message

The symbolic message of this cartoon highlights the government lack of credibility concerning imposing the

preventive measures, and the reason behind this is to maintain power. The title of this cartoon which reads as follows: (kumāmāt syāsyah*) 'political masks' indicates that the purpose of imposing the precautionary measures is political. Visually, the two men talking and looking each other in the eye indicates that their purpose is the same. Their physical appearance like wearing formal suits, having a beard, having a prayer mark, holding big beads in the hand represents the Islamic officials. The man without a beard and whose physical appearance indicates he is an Islamist refers to the Islamic officials of different orientations. The high place they are standing on represents the Islamic officials disconnection and separation from the Iraqi people and negligence of their needs. Connotatively, the man wearing sidara (Iraqi traditional hat) and lifting a poster with an incomplete slogan (nuṭālib) 'we demand' and whose build is exaggerated represents public outrage and the Iraqi protesters who rose up against the political system in 2019. The incomplete slogan indicates that the demands they put in their protests have not been achieved, and this is supported by the man's facial expression which tells that he is upset. The man's head reaching the place where the two men are standing symbolizes that the 2019 protests threatened the Islamic parties to a great extent and jeopardized their interests. In addition, the visual caption of the man closing the protester's mouth with a mask and the linguistic message which is the proverb in the bubble ('lwiqāyah* khayrun minal 'ilāj) 'prevention is better than cure' indicate that the Islamic officials deceive people when imposing the safety procedures and the real intention behind this is to end the protests and gag people's mouths and not to save the Iraqis' lives from the corona pandemic as they claim.

2- Corruption

Salem (2020) mentions that the Iraqi government failed to control the corona pandemic for it did not take measures concerning the Iraqis return from abroad, in addition, health officials did not manage the Iraq's entry points. In the data selected, only one cartoon conveying this idea occurs, forming 9% out of the total (11). See the following cartoon:



Figure 5: (Faraj, 2020).

The linguistic message

There two linguistic messages in this cartoon: the label on the door ('l'irāq) 'Iraq' and the Iraqi folk proverb in the bubble which is ('lbāb illi tijik minha rīḥ sidha wistrīḥ) 'if it can cause trouble, get rid of it altogether'. This proverb means that it is better for one to avoid anything that causes problems.

The denoted message

This cartoon denotes a desert divided into two parts. In one of these parts, there are red lines on which a door is put. Also, two men are standing by the door, one of them has a beard and a prayer mark on his forehead, in addition, he is wearing a formal suit. The other man also has a beard and a prayer mark on his forehead, and he is wearing a shirt and pants. This man is holding beads in one hand and pushing a

door with his two hands. On the other part of the desert, there are three corona balls which are portrayed as persons walking towards the other part of the desert.

The connoted message

The two men's physical appearance involving clothes, having beards and prayer marks on the foreheads in addition to beads in one of the two men's arm indicates that the two men are Islamic officials. The door placed on red lines on one part of the desert is a visual metaphor symbolizing Iraq's entry points, and this is supported by the label on the door ('l'irāq) 'Iraq'. The other part of the desert stands for other countries. Corona balls in this cartoon are metaphorically depicted as persons walking towards Iraq's entry points to refer to the pandemic coming to Iraq via arrivals from corona - affected countries. The parts of the desert beside the door, and which are left open represent the entry points which are not really closed. This indicates that the Islamic officials are not serious about closing the entry points to prevent the spread of corona virus. The Iraqi folk proverb in the bubble ('lbāb illi tijīk minha rīḥ sidha wistrīḥ) 'if it can cause trouble, get rid of it altogether' which means closing the borders safeguards against corona infection transmission in this cartoon indicates that the declaration of imposing the precautionary measures is for information purpose. The man's belly the size of which is exaggerated stands for fortune the Islamic officials gain unlawfully by virtue of having power which helps them to take over the entry points revenues. The cartoon above highlights the idea that the Islamic officials financial corruption is the reason behind the lack of credibility concerning managing the entry points to prevent corona infection transmission.

2- Political cartoons depicting the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles together in the corona pandemic

This category of cartoons sheds light on some political and social issues. The government performance in the pandemic is depicted as negative and criticized, and the Iraqi people's role is portrayed as positive and praised. The following are the aspects that reflect the government's and the people's roles in the pandemic.

a. The government corruption and negligence of the pandemic, and the Iraqi people's awareness and synergy in the corona pandemic.

b. The government failure to promote the medical services for the Iraqi people due to corruption, and public awareness of the safety measures in the covid-19 pandemic.

a. The government corruption and negligence of the pandemic, and the Iraqi people's awareness and synergy in the corona pandemic

Public awareness in the corona pandemic is reflected in the contributions of some voluntary groups like 'the white hands' in Thi-qar province to help relieve the effects of the pandemic on people. A one million mask campaign is one of these contributions which involves providing one million mask to the health care institutions, cleaners and needy people after the government failed to provide enough protection equipment to all the above- mentioned groups (Ala'mel, 2020). In the data under analysis, only one cartoon conveying this idea occurs, making up 9% out of the total (11). See the following cartoon:



Figure 6: (Faraj, 2020).

The linguistic message

Three linguistic messages are identified in this cartoon: the title which reads ('l'ayādī 'albīgh) 'white hands' and two labels which are (ḥamlat 'lmilywn kumāah*) 'a million masks campaign' and (ḥamlat 'lmilywn dūlār) 'a million dollars campaign' which is a metaphor with an ironic use.

The denoted message

This cartoon denotes a man who has a beard and a prayer bump on his forehead and he is wearing a formal suit, black mask hiding half of his face and black gloves, and he is holding big beads in his right hand. This cartoon also denotes another man who is having on a shirt, pants, a mask and medical gloves. Also, his sleeves are rolled up. These two men turn their backs to each other and are walking in different directions. Two arrows with verbal captions in different directions are also involved in this cartoon.

The connoted message

This cartoon concentrates on two ideas: the government corruption and pursuit of its interests and the

Iraqi people's awareness and synergy. connotatively, the man having on a shirt and pants stands for one of the voluntary groups whose name is referred to in the title of the cartoon ('l'ayādī 'albīgh) 'white hands'. His rolled-up sleeves represent this group hardworking and their helpful contribution to society in the circumstances of the covid-19 pandemic, and this is supported by the label in the arrow (ḥamlat 'lmilywn kumāah*) 'a million masks campaign'. Wearing medical gloves and a mask refers to public awareness of the safety measures in the pandemic. In this cartoon, juxtaposition occurs when the cartoonist placed together a man representing the voluntary group with another man representing an official in addition to two labels in arrows to compare between their roles in the pandemic. The man wearing a suit, having a beard and a prayer mark on his forehead and holding big beads in his right hand signifies the Islamic officials. This man is portrayed as wearing a half black mask and black gloves worn by thieves in the robbery to indicate that the Islamic officials are thieves. Hiding his face and his fingerprints connotes the attempt to cover up theft and shabby transactions made secretly. This is supported by the label in the arrow (ḥamlat 'lmilywn dūlār) 'a million dollars campaign' which is an ironic metaphorical expression criticizing the Islamic officials for their interest in theft and their negligence of the covid-19 pandemic. The arrows in different directions with their labels mentioned above and the way the two men turn their backs to each other and walk in different directions stand for a divergence of views and a difference in objectives and principles between the Islamic officials and the Iraqi people. The symbolic message in the cartoon above highlights the Iraqi people's awareness of preventive measures and their synergy in the corona pandemic in addition to highlighting the government corruption and negligence of it.

b. The government failure to promote medical services for the Iraqi people due to corruption, and public awareness of the safety measures in the covid-19 pandemic

When the covid-2019 pandemic hit Iraq, the government imposed a curfew to prevent it from getting worse. Some citizens complied with the curfew and stayed home to prevent the spread of corona virus (Ahmed, 2020). The cartoon below conveys two ideas: public awareness of the usefulness of the curfew, and the government failure to promote the medical services for the Iraqi people during the pandemic. In the data under study, only one cartoon focusing on the first idea occurs, forming 9% out of the total (11) , and only two cartoons concentrating on the second idea occur, making up 18% out of the total (11). The following is a good example :



Figure 7: (Faraj, 2020).

The linguistic message

Two linguistic messages are identified: the label ('lri'āyah* 'lsiḥyah*) 'health care' and the verbal caption in the bubble (khalīk bilbat) 'stay home.'

The denoted message

This cartoon denotes a house consisting of a sofa, a picture on the wall, an open curtain, a window, shoes beside the sofa and an open door. There is also a woman wearing an ankle-length garment with hijab. She is standing by the door, holding its handle and standing over a small mat. She seems like she is frightened and looking into someone inside her house. The cartoon also includes a scene outside the house which involves a building and many corona virus balls filling the street.

The connoted message

This cartoon highlights two ideas, one of them is related to the Iraqi officials' role and the other is related to the Iraqi people's role in the pandemic. In this cartoon, the house including the curtain, the window, the picture, the sofa, the shoes, the mat the woman is standing over and the door represents the Iraqi house. The woman wearing an ankle-length garment and hijab, standing at the door which is open a little and holding its handle, looking into someone in her house and the looks of fear in her eyes indicates that she is an Iraqi woman who feels worried about her family who are probable to be apt for corona infection in case they go out. This is supported visually by the exaggeration of color of corona virus balls filling the street which stand for the spread of corona virus and verbally by the label ('lri'āyah* 'lsiḥyah*) 'healthcare' which is used as an ironic expression criticizing the government failure to promote the medical services in Iraq, especially during the pandemic. The visual and verbal messages above complement each other in conveying the idea of the danger of the pandemic, accompanied by the lack of medical services which reflects the Iraqi officials' role in the pandemic. The verbal caption which is advice the woman gives to someone inside her

house (khalīk bilbat) 'stay home' reflects some Iraqi citizens' awareness of keeping home quarantine to save their lives and others' lives.

3- Political cartoons depicting the Iraqi people's role only in the corona pandemic

In this category of cartoons, social issues related to the negative aspect of some Iraqi citizens' role in the pandemic are focused on. It involves the following themes :

- a. Ignoring corona precautions
- b. Assaulting medical staff

a. Ignoring corona precautions

When the Iraqi Ministry of Health imposed the preventive measures in the time of the corona pandemic, many Iraqi citizens disregard corona virus safety. Markets, transports and public places were crowded by people without wearing masks (Al-Sudani, 2020). In addition, the security forces did not implement the preventive measures imposed by the Ministry of Health and this caused harm to health personnel (Alsuhail, 2020). The cartoon below highlights this idea and focuses on the lack of awareness among some Iraqi citizens about corona precautions. In data under study, only one cartoon conveying this idea occurs, forming 9% out of the total(11). See the following cartoon:



Figure 8: (Faraj, 2020).

The linguistic message

There are two linguistic messages in this cartoon: a question in the bubble (kwrwnā) 'corona case?' and an answer to this question in the bubble (lā bahdhilwnā) 'No, they are exhausting us' which is conversational implicature.

The denoted message

This cartoon denotes an ambulance in the street and a man wearing sidara (Iraqi traditional hat), a shirt, pants and a mask. He is standing beside the ambulance and raising his arm while he is talking to other two men. There are also three men in this cartoon, two of them are wearing health personnel clothes and masks. They are running and carrying a stretcher on which a man with a mask is lying down.

The connoted message

The cartoon above highlights the idea of the lack of awareness among some Iraqi citizens about the preventive measures in the corona pandemic. The man wearing a shirt, mask, sidara and pants stands for an Iraqi citizen who wonders about the pandemic situation in Iraq and this is supported by the question he asks in the bubble (kwrwnā) 'corona case?'. The two men having on masks and health

personnel clothes represent health staff and the ambulance refers to their efforts in transporting patients with corona to hospitals. The man with a mask on the stretcher signifies a patient with corona. Connotatively, running and carrying the patient on the stretcher represents that health personnel work hard to the point of exhaustion to care for patients, and this is supported by the answer given by one of the two health officers in the bubble (lā bahdhilwnā) 'No, they are exhausting us.'. This answer involves conversational implicature because it is not an explicit answer to the man's question; the health officer implies that corona virus infection numbers are rising due to disregard for corona precautions by some Iraqi citizens who are denoted by that patient on the stretcher, and this is getting exhausting for health staff. This answer contributes much to the symbolic message of the cartoon above.

b. Assaulting medical staff

Since corona cases appeared in Iraq, medical staff exerted their efforts to treat patients with corona, and this is not a risk-free job. Health personnel were subjected to a growing pattern of assaults by the relatives of the patients who died of corona virus in the hospitals because they blamed them for the death (Younis, 2020). This behavior reflects the negative aspect of some Iraqi citizens' role in the pandemic. In the data selected, only one cartoon focusing on this idea occurs, forming 9% out of the total (11). Consider the following cartoon:



Figure 9: (Faraj, 2020).

The linguistic message

In this cartoon, two linguistic messages are identified: the title which reads ('al'tidā' 'alā 'alkwādir 'aṣṣihyah*) 'assaults on medical staff' and the verbal caption which is an indirect speech act of directives of warning pragmatic function (diktwr ṣaḥīḥ 'al'mār bīd 'lāh bas 'sslāḥ bīdana) 'oh doctor, it is true that one's age is predestined by Allah but the gun is in our hands'.

The denoted message

The visual captions in this cartoon include a patient with corona virus on a hospital bed and a doctor who is wearing a lap-coat, a stethoscope and a mask, and he is holding the patient's hand in one hand and a needle in the other. There are also looks of fear in the doctor's eyes. In addition, there is a man wearing a headband, men's head cover and an ankle-length garment. He levels a gun against the doctor.

The connoted message

The cartoon above sheds light on an important social issue which is the lack of awareness among some Iraqi citizens about appreciating the care the health professionals provide for patients with covid-19 and attacking them due to

blaming them for patients death. The man on the hospital bed represents a patient with corona virus. The doctor having on a lap- coat, mask and stethoscope represents medical staff in the Iraqi hospitals, and holding the patient's hand in one hand and the needle in the other stands for all efforts the health professionals exert to treat patients having covid-19. The looks of terror in the doctor's eyes indicates that he is threatened. The other man in the cartoon who is portrayed as wearing the Iraqi traditional clothing like the ankle-length garment and a headband with men's head cover signifies a rural man. The way he is talking to the doctor and leveling a gun at him refers to the threats the patients' relatives make and assaults on medical staff in case the patients die. This is supported by the title which reads ('al' 'tidā' 'alā 'alkwādir 'aṣṣihyah*) 'assaults on medical staff' and the verbal caption in the bubble (diktwr ṣaḥīḥ 'al' mār bīd 'lāh bas 'sslāḥ bīdana) 'oh doctor, it is true that one's age is predestined by Allah, but the gun is in our hands'. The part of the caption which is (bas 'sslāḥ bīdana) 'the gun is in our hands' is an indirect speech act of directive of warning pragmatic function in which the man threatens to assault and kill the doctor in case the patient dies of corona virus.

5. Conclusion

From the analysis of data, the present study arrives at the following findings:

1- The Iraqi political cartoons related to covid-19 in Almada newspaper handle the issue of the corona pandemic through its relationship to the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles in it.

2- Analyzing data at the three levels of messages reveals the following:

a. At the linguistic level, the cartoonist used linguistic messages which limit the interpretations of the political cartoons in this study. Linguistic titles, captions, a slogan on

a poster and labels are used. To convey the ideas to the readers, some linguistic techniques are chosen like verbal irony, rhetorical question, metaphor and juxtaposition of labels. Verbal irony is used to criticize the health reality in Iraq and the Islamic officials corruption and their negligence of corona virus outbreak. Furthermore, a rhetorical question is employed to function as a rebuke of the government negligence of promoting health care for the Iraqi people, especially in the pandemic. Juxtaposition and metaphor with an ironic use are used to criticize the government performance and compare it to the Iraqi people's role in the covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, linguistic messages of the political cartoons also involve lexical terms, a proverb, conversational implicature and indirect speech act of warning pragmatic function. They all contribute a great deal to the symbolic messages of the cartoons, clarify the cartoonist's opinion and help direct the readers' attention to some political issues and social ills, especially in the circumstances of the pandemic.

b. At the denotative level, physical representations like clothes, facial expressions, physical appearance, exaggeration of built, color and size, juxtaposition, analogy, irony, symbolism and visual metaphor are employed to create the symbolic message. All the political cartoons selected for this study are satirical, criticizing the negative effects of the Iraqi government's and the Iraqi people's roles in the corona pandemic. In some cartoons, the cartoonist used sidara (Iraqi traditional hat) as a symbol representing the Iraqi cultural heritage to enhance the Iraqi identity.

c. At the connotative level, the symbolic messages of the political cartoons on covid-19 shed light on some important political and social issues. These cartoons are categorized into three groups according to representing the Iraqi

government's role and the Iraqi people's role separately or together during the pandemic. They are as follows:

1- The category depicting the Iraqi government's role only in the pandemic

The symbolic messages of this category of cartoons are critical of the government's role, namely, the Islamic officials' role in the following:

- a. Submission to Iran as a reason behind not closing the land and air entry points with this country to prevent corona virus infection transmission.
- b. Struggle for power and negligence of the corona pandemic.
- c. Negligence of promoting the health care sector, especially in the corona pandemic due to corruption.
- d. The lack of credibility concerning imposing the precautionary measures to save the Iraqi people's lives because of maintaining power and corruption.

2- The category of political cartoons depicting the Iraqi government's role and the Iraqi people's role together, and which focuses on the negative aspect of the former's role and the positive aspect of the latter's role involves the following themes:

- a. The government corruption and negligence of the pandemic, and the Iraqi people's awareness and synergy in the corona pandemic.
- b. The government failure to promote the medical services for the Iraqi people due to corruption, and public awareness of the safety measures in the covid-19 pandemic.

3- The category of political cartoons depicting the Iraqi people's role only, and which concentrates on the negative aspect reveals the following:

- a. Ignoring corona precautions.
- b. Attacking medical staff in the Iraqi hospitals.

3- From analyzing data, it has been shown that the cartoonist has a sort of bias against the Islamic officials for they are the only ones, among other officials belonging to different parties represented in the Iraqi government, who are criticized for their performance in many aspects related to the pandemic. This is clear from the portrayal of the officials' physical appearance which refers to the Islamic officials in all the political cartoons handling their role in the covid-19 pandemic.

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Appendix

No.	Political cartoons on corona virus	Reference	Role and Theme
1-		(Faraj, 2020).	<p>(The Iraqi government's role in the corona pandemic).</p> <p>The Iraqi government struggle for power and negligence of the corona pandemic.</p>
2-		(Faraj, 2020).	<p>(The Iraqi government's role in the corona pandemic).</p> <p>The lack of credibility concerning saving the Iraqis' lives through imposing precautionary measures, and maintaining power is the main purpose.</p>