

## **A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of 2018 Iraqi Parliamentary Electoral Posters**

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### **Abstract**

The paper is a multimodal discourse analysis of Iraqi Parliamentary electoral posters in May 2018. It aims at finding out the ways and tools the political entities participating in those elections use in designing their posters and presenting themselves and their programs to the voters. The analysis involves 17 posters and uses a framework of analysis that suits the nature and purpose of the paper. These 17 posters represent entities and politicians with different political and social backgrounds. The results of the analysis reveal that some political entities represented by electoral posters have names, logos and slogans especially used for the 2018 elections while others either have ones already used in the previous elections or stick to their original ones which they use elsewhere. In most posters, there is a tendency to use the name of the country or a related word; some posters use words that may appeal to the voters through hinting at an alternative to the religious parties which have failed in ruling the country in the previous period, or words that promise change and reformation.

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### **Keywords**

Multimodal discourse analysis, Iraqi Parliamentary elections, electoral posters, logos, slogans

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## **Introduction**

In the time of elections, political parties and groups launch campaigns which take different forms and use different channels of communication with the voters. They exert great efforts to win as many votes as possible and consequently a good number of seats in the parliament, which ensures exercising power in the legislative and executive institutions. One of the ways parties choose to address the public is through electoral posters which appear on the social media or in the streets and on the large buildings in cities, towns and villages. Electoral posters are considered a very concise way of delivering the policy, philosophy, ideology and even a hint at the program of the political parties and groups. They contain the name, logo, slogan, sometimes the image of the leader of the party or the politician who runs for the election. The arrangements of these components differ from one party to another and there is also a difference in terms of colours and graphology employed. The present paper analyzes selected electoral posters from the campaigns of different political entities which participated in the 2018 parliamentary elections. The reason behind choosing these elections is that they were held after the country had passed a very critical period represented by ISIS occupation of large areas of the country and the effect that event had on the security, social, political aspects of people's lives. It tries to answer three questions:

1. To what extent do electoral posters represent the period during which the elections were being held?
2. How do political parties and entities use the different components in their electoral posters to present themselves to the public?
3. Are there any underlying patterns according to which the elements of the posters were selected and arranged?

The paper seeks answers to these three questions by carrying out a multimodal discourse analysis of the layout and information conveyance in the posters in question.

## **1. Propaganda**

Political campaign during elections can be considered a type of propaganda. Jacque (1965) defines propaganda as 'the expression of opinions or actions carried out deliberately by individuals or groups with a view to influence the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends through psychological manipulations'(cited in Aduradola & Ojukwu 2013,107). Political candidates try their best to make themselves appealing to potential voters in a campaign and influence their choices by manipulating colors, fonts, and graphical elements in their electoral posters (Rafaeli, Sagy and Rozin 2008; Janiszewski and Meyvis 2001, cited in Ditsch 2012,6). Smith (2023) remarks that propagandists have certain goals for which they purposefully choose facts, arguments and symbols and introduce them in what they think the most effective ways. For a maximum effect, they may hide or deform facts or even lie, and they may try to concentrate people's attention on their own propaganda, and draw it away from everything else (Smith,2023).

## **2. Political Discourse**

According to van Dijk (1997,20) a political discourse is confined to those instances of discourse produced by politicians in institutional settings, such as governments, parliaments or political parties. Following van Dijk, Wilson (2001,398) also defines political discourse in terms of actors, i.e., politicians, and contexts, i.e., political institutions as well as the achievement of political goals. Similarly, Fairclough and Fairclough (2012,17-18) follow Dijk's

characterization of political discourse as being produced by political actors-individuals (politicians, citizens), political institutions and organizations- and involved in political processes and events as well as occurring in a certain context. This excludes the discourse of politicians or any other 'political actors' outside political contexts. They also adopt van Dijk's (1997) definition of political discourse analysis (PDA) as an essentially critical enterprise. PDA is then understood as the analysis of political discourse from a critical perspective. Chilton and Schaffner (2002:9) postulate, as an important principle to be followed in PDA, the close link between language and culture by saying, 'language is closely bound up in practice with culture, and that culture is in turn closely bound up with the practice of politics in a particular society.' Wilson (2015:776) views political discourse *analysis* (italics mine) as language centered which 'will both inform, and be informed by other relevant fields and theories as they intersect with and help explain the social and political concerns of actors, institutions, and politics.'

### **3. Iraqi Political Situation**

The Iraqi political system represents varying trends of multi-religious, ethnic, liberal, racial, etc. backgrounds. This variety reflects the nature and demography of the Iraqi community. The fall of the Iraqi regime after the 2003 American invasion is considered a turning point in the history of Iraq as it involved critical changes from the autocratic system ruled by one person/party to a multi-democratic federal parliamentary system. Although many inadequacies and shortcomings have been observed in the electoral systems adopted from 2004 onward, the ballot box remains a significant political step for the peaceful transfer of the power. Intense competition among the political candidates has led to rapid development in the campaigning propaganda and multi-electoral patterns of presenting their ideas to the targeted groups. Various tools of persuasion were accordingly used by politicians in every electoral constituency—whether for the local or legislative government elections - to win the constituents' votes. Language - in the form of writing or speaking- sounds to be the main tool utilized thoroughly by all candidates to persuade the voters by choosing vocabulary that goes with people's day-to-day issues and needs. Campaign posters are another effective tool for attracting the voters' attention as they can include interactive stimuli, such as particular colours, professionally designed template, text, imagery, etc. The overall setting-up of these elements in each poster - together with the political body's electoral unique list and the candidate's sequence within the list - is to share the candidate's message with a specific group and influence their decision-making progress. Due to the importance of expressing, communicating and receiving the electoral message, this study is conducted to compare and explain the linguistic and semiotic aspects of the Iraqi campaigning propaganda patterns that took place in the 2018 elections.

What makes 2018 parliamentary elections important and their related campaigns, namely the electoral posters, interesting and worthy of study is the fact that a few years before 2018 Iraqis had severe war with ISIS which occupied a number of Iraqi governorates in 2014. This war which ended in the liberation of the occupied territories had consequences on the political scene and greatly determined the map of the coalitions and alliances to run for the 2018 elections. Thus, the large sectarian and ethnic political parties and entities were split before those elections, giving rise to a number of smaller competitive parties within the same sect and ethnicity. For example, a new entity, *Al-Nasr Coalition*, was formed by politicians who had originally been members in *Dawlat Al-Qānūn Coalition* but they left it in favour of having their own entity. Another new entity, *Al-Fath Alliance*, included entities and politicians who had originally been members of a large entity representing Shiite sect. *Al-Sadr Movement* had an alliance called *Saairun* with communist politicians and civil entities and individuals who were extremely different in ideology and background. As for Sunni politicians, they also left some old entities and formed new ones, e.g., *Al-Qarār Al-'Irāqī Alliance* was formed anew by

politicians who had originally been members in *Al-Wataniyah Coalition*. Another reason for the importance of 2018 elections is the retreat of the Kurdish role in the political map after the failure of Kurdistan independence referendum which the Central Government strongly opposed. That failure caused Kurdistan leadership to lose control of some disputable territories and made some gap between the two major parties in Kurdistan region, *Patriotic Union of Kurdistan* and *Democratic Party of Kurdistan*. Moreover, most Iraqi people had been already fed up with very high corruption rates which were reflected in the noticeable deterioration of basic services and infrastructures.

## **4. Multimodal Discourse Analysis**

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) is an approach in which language (spoken or written) is only one means alongside others available for representation and conveying meaning (Kress 2012,37). The other means include images, layout, typography, movement, ...etc. (Van Leeuwen 2005,62). All these diverse visual aspects are referred to as modes of information presentation (Bateman 2008, 2). Combining these modes within a single artifact produces an object of study called the multimodal document. In such documents, ‘a variety of visually-based modes are deployed simultaneously in order to fulfill an orchestrated collection of interwoven communicative goals’ (Bateman 2008, 2). MDA has examined print genres and digital ones such as web pages, film and television programs. It considers the design of multimodal texts and the contribution of semiotic tools such as colour, framing, focus and positioning of elements to the meaning making in these texts (Paltridge 2012,170). Multimodal discourse analysts see discourse as comprising multiple modes which often work collectively. In a face-to-face conversation, for example, people do not use only spoken language for communication. They also communicate through their gestures, gaze, facial expressions, posture, dress, how close or far away they stand or sit from each other, and many other things. Similarly, ‘written texts’ rarely consist only of words, especially nowadays. They often include pictures, charts or graphs. Even the font that is used and the way paragraphs are arranged on a page or screen can convey meaning (Jones 2012,36). What we mean by mode in the context of MDA is a system for making meaning. Hence, we can speak, for example, of the modes of speech, writing, gesture, color, dress, and so on. Any system of signs that are used in a consistent and systematic way to make meaning can be considered a mode (Jones 2012,36).

## **5. Methodology**

### **5.1 Data Collection**

The number of political parties and entities running for the elections were 87, 23 coalitions, 45 parties and 19 individual politicians. The data to be analyzed in the paper include 17 electoral posters used by Iraqi political parties, coalition and alliances in their campaign for the general parliamentary elections in May 2018. The posters are collected from the Facebook pages of those political entities and their members. They are chosen in such a way as to represent various political, social and regional backgrounds. Most of the chosen 17 posters represent classical political entities that had been dominating the scene since the first elections in January 2005. These entities have regional, social, ethnic and sectarian backgrounds and they try to hide these backgrounds under national names and slogans. The rest of the posters represent politicians and small political entities that choose to challenge the dominance and popularity of the so-called classical entities. There are also the Minority Parties, mostly Christian, which hope to find a foothold in the political life with their very small number of supporters. Thus, the

choice of the posters to be analyzed is based on socio-political grounds as the represented parties and entities have different political orientations and social backgrounds.

## **5.2 Framework of Analysis**

Drawing on Bateman (2008), the posters are analyzed in terms of the following features: *content structure* which relates to the content-related structure of the information to be communicated; *rhetorical structure* which is the rhetorical relationships between content elements: i.e., how the content is ‘argued’, divided into main material and supporting material, and structured rhetorically; *linguistic structure* which covers the linguistic details of any verbal elements that are used to realize the layout elements of the page/document; and *layout structure* which represents the nature, appearance and position of communicative elements on the page. The analysis also cites some sources such as Hunderson and Cote (1998), Mainah (2018), Aduradola and Ojukwu (2013), Abū Al-S’ūd (2015), Itten (1970 & 1973) and Al-Tā’ī (2020) in discussing the significance of colours, logos, slogans and graphology.

## **5.3 Analysis of the Posters**

### **5.3.1 Al-Nasr (Victory) Coalition**

This coalition is led by the 2014-2018 prime minister, *Haider Al-Ebadi*. It contains the logo, slogan, the image of the leader and the number of the coalition in the elections. The name of the coalition *Al-Nasr* and the logo are placed on the right top corner of the poster. Just below, the sentence *Iraq yataqadam* (Iraq advances) is written in large white font to stress the new stage of Iraq after defeating ISIS, which is the progress in all fields of life. The background is blue with different shades. Blue signifies faith and power (Itten1973,96) and so its use in the poster may indicate that there is faith in the power of the coalition to make Iraq advance. In terms of rhetorical structure, the name of the coalition is the main material. The name *Al-Nasr* (meaning victory in English) alludes to the victory over ISIS which Iraq achieved during the term of Prime Minister *Haider al-Ebadi* who was also Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The supporting material is the logo, the image and the slogan as well as the number of the coalition.

Figure (1) Al-Nasr (Victory) Coalition<sup>27</sup>

The logo is a big Arabic letter (ن) (equivalent to English (N)) with the Iraq map as its dot. This letter is similar to a ship holding Iraq, represented by the flag, and saving it from the dangers it has experienced. The linguistic structure of the poster consists of two phrases, a noun phrase naming the coalition as *Al-Nasr Coalition* where the second word *Al-Nasr* is made more prominent and a verbal phrase, *Iraq Yataqadam*, beginning with a noun and following it with a verb.

### 5.3.2 Al-Wataniyah (Patriotism) Coalition

This coalition includes parties and politicians from different Iraqi sects and ethnicities and hence the name *Al-Wataniyah* (Patriotism). The logo, name, slogan and coalition and candidate numbers are placed on the left-hand side of the poster. The image of the leader is placed on the right-hand side of the poster. The logo is formed of Iraq flag (homeland) which takes the shape of crescent surrounding a palm tree (a national wealth) and the name of the coalition. As for the background, it is light blue with silhouettes of some landmarks representing different parts of the country which, by virtue of appearing in the background, seem to support the coalition. The name, leader, slogan and number of the coalition, are all written in prominent font as they represent the most important elements in the poster and are intended to attract the viewer's attention.

<sup>27</sup> Please note that all the images we use in the article were collected from Facebook pages and Google search engine where they were uploaded for the purpose of campaigning for the elections and they are still there available for public use. Second, we have reviewed the factors for fair use of copyrighted material which are set forward by some academic institutions, as illustrated in the links below, and have found our use of the images complies with the four factors which are purpose, nature, amount and effect on the market. Our purpose is non-profitable research, the nature of the images are factual and not creative. As for the amount we use only one copy of each image and our use has not in any way affected the marketing of the images as they are not for sale. Cf. Fair Use (psu.edu) <https://copyright.columbia.edu/content/dam/copyright/Precedent%20Docs/fairusechecklist.pdf>

Figure (2) Al-Wataniyah (Patriotism) Coalition



The information in the poster falls into two parts, the image and name of the leader on the right, the logo, slogan and coalition number on the left. Regarding the rhetorical structure, the name of the coalition, *Al-Wataniyah* (Patriotism), is the main material which is supported by the other information. As for the linguistic structure, there are five linguistic structures in the poster: the name of the coalition which is written twice, once alone and another one with the word *coalition*; a noun phrase *dawlah qawiya* which translates *a strong state* and suggests the aim of the coalition to create a strong state; the word which translates *sequence*; and finally, the name of the coalition leader headed by the word *doctor* which indicates his educational background. The colour light blue implies spreading power and faith (Itten,1973:96). Orange in the *strong state* symbolizes active energy (Itten1973,97) while white in the name of the coalition and the leader suggests comfort, serenity and acceptance.

### 5.3.3 Dawlat Al-Qānūn (Law State ) Coalition

This coalition consists of politicians and parties from various regions and backgrounds throughout the country. The image of the leader occupies the centre of the poster. The logo and the name of the coalition occupy the left –hand side of the poster, The coalition name, number and slogan are written in red font on green background to attain the focus of the viewer. The most salient are the Iraqi flag and the candidate sequence number. The slogan translates as *together for a strong Iraq and welfare* which is what the coalition seems to promise the people of. The background is divided into two parts, the upper part is the clear sky which implies the higher status of the coalition leader. The lower part is the Iraqi flag which appears to hug the number *1*, the sequence of the leader in the coalition and indicates that the destiny of the country is linked to this man. The colour of the bottom of the poster is a mixture of green and yellowish green which symbolizes hope and joy (Itten1973,97). As for the rhetorical structure, the main material is the name of the coalition and the supporting material consists of the other information, i.e., logo, image and the coalition number. In terms of linguistic structure, there are two noun phrases which represent the name of the coalition and a sentence which introduces the slogan. The name *Dawlat Al-Qānūn* suggests that the coalition aims to establish a state in which only law prevails.

Figure (3) Dawlat Al-Qānūn



The logo consists of scales which stand for law and eco the name which appears between the scales and in a semi-circle formed of two curved ears. Under the scales, the name of the coalition is also written but in a larger red font. As for the slogan *ma'an* which means *together* is here intended for corporation, openness and with the supporters to achieve the meaning of the slogan in *strong Iraq and welfare*.

### 5.3.4 Saairun ( Marchers ) Alliance

This alliance consists of two major political entities, *Al-Sadr Movement* and the *Iraqi Communist Party* as well as some individual politicians. The name is written in Arabic and transliterated in English. The Arabic word *Saairun* means *marchers* with an aim which is *Islāh* meaning *reformation*. Both the alliance's name and the logo along with the slogan are placed in the middle of the poster a short way from the top. The word *reformation* appears on the left-hand side of the poster. The name and the slogan are written in large black font to catch the viewer's attention. The separation between the words *marchers* and *reformation* implies the difficult path the alliance have to go through to achieve their aim, which is also indicated by the bump-like lines under the liberation statue. The logo is a pointed arch with the word *reformation* inside and the liberation statue just below. The use of the statue is for the significance it has as a representative of the liberation square where the supporters of *Al-Sadr Movement* would always demonstrate asking for reforms. Also, there is a focus on a certain part of the statue which appears in the background as silhouettes many times. It illustrates the wish and determination to break the ties to achieve reformation, represented by a political prisoner breaking the bars.



Figure(4) Saairun (Marchers ) Alliance



The colour of the background is greenish blue which combines hope and faith (Itten1973,96) in change. As for the rhetorical structure, the name and the number of the Alliance is the main material and the logo is the supporting material. In terms of linguistic structure, the name of the alliance is written in Arabic and English in the form of a noun phrase which is completed by the prepositional phrase *for reformation* which appears in the logo. The whole sentence translates as *marchers for reformation*.

### 5.3.5 Al-Fath (Conquest) Alliance

*Al-Fath Alliance* is a group of parties with military wings, most of which fought ISIS under the name of *Popular Mobilization*. They decided to run for 2018 parliamentary elections hoping to make use of their gained popularity and reputation among Iraqis especially the Shiite Community. The slogan, the name of the coalition and the logo are placed in the centre of the poster. The image of *Hadī Al-‘Āmirī*, Badr Organization Chief, is on the right-hand side of the poster, The word *Iraq* in the slogan *inahū zaman Al-Iraq* (translated as It is the time of Iraq) is made prominent by being written in a large orange font. The background is mostly dark green with a small part in dark yellow. The dark green stands for hope of a fruitful future (Itten1973,96). Yellow implies knowledge (Itten1973,93) and that is why it makes the background of the leader’s image. The logo consists of a lion image and the name of the Alliance under it, which suggests strength. As for the rhetorical structure, the main material appears to be the slogan with the leader image, the name and the logo are the supporting material. In terms of the linguistic structure, the sentence *inahū zaman Al-Iraq* begins with a phrase *inahū* known in Arabic as a magnifier and prepares the reader for something very important which is the presence of Iraq in the international community as a strong country.

Figure (5) Al-Fath (Conquest) Alliance



There is also a noun phrase *Al-Fath Alliance* translated as *Conquest Alliance* and alludes to the role of the military wings in the victory over ISIS. The name has religious connotations due to its use in Holy Quran “Verily, We have given you (O Muhammad) a manifest conquest”, which the alliance use for its strong effect on people.

### 5.3.6 National Al-Hikmah (Wisdom) Movement

The movement was formed in 2017 almost a year before the 2018 elections. It came out as a result of the split in the *Supreme Islamic Council* leadership, with the Head *Ammar Al-Hakim* leaving the party in favour of a new party which he calls *National Al-Hikmah Movement*.

Figure (6) National Al-Hikmah (Wisdom) Movement



All the components of the poster are placed in the centre. However, the slogan is the most salient being written in large yellow bold font. The movement number is also salient. The Iraqi flag appears in the slogan as part of a letter (as an asterisk). The logo is the name of the movement written in a special way just above the complete name. As for the rhetorical structure, the main material is the name of the movement and the slogan, the logo and the number are the supporting material. In terms of linguistic structure, the slogan is a sentence in Iraqi vernacular *ihnā qadha* meaning *We are up to it* (meaning We are up to the task of leading the country) for the effect it may have on the receiver. The choice of yellow implies knowledge and reason (Itten1973,93). The other linguistic element is the name of the movement translated

in English as *National Wisdom Movement*. The choice of *Al-Hikmah* is for the connotations it has, e.g., *reverence, calmness, patience* and for its relatedness to the family name of the leader. The choice of the colour dark blue in the background suits well the name as it implies faith (Itten 1973, 96) and calmness (Ștefănescu-Goangă 1912 cited in Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002,353-354).

### 5.3.7 Irādah Movement

The name of the movement *Irādah* occupies the top of the poster and is the most salient as it is written in a distinctive shape. The image of the leader, positioned in the left-hand side of the poster, also has salience for its big size and the green dress she wears, which, as it was already mentioned, suggests hope. The choice of the colour violet for the background is purposeful because it implies piety and dedication (Itten1973,97). As for the rhetorical structure, the name of the movement, which can also serve as a logo, along with the slogan appear to be the main material with the other components including the image, the name and the number as the supporting material. In terms of linguistic structure, the poster has one sentence, a phrase which translates *list number*, and words such *Irādah, sequence* and the name of the leader, *Dr Hanan Al-Fatlawi*. *Irādah* means *free will* and also implies determination to act.

Figure (7) Irādah Movement



Through the sentence which translates *Because you are with me, we will succeed* the leader tells the voters you are the source of my strength and determination and hence the source of my free will.

### 5.3.8 Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

The poster contains the logo of the party which is a big white circle on which the name of the party, the year of establishment as well as some principles of the party are written. Inside this big circle there is a small green circle with a hand holding a rose whose leaves are two ears, one is green and the other yellow. In addition to the logo there are the name and the number of the union.

Figure (8) Patriotic Union of Kurdistan



The colour of the background is green with a strip coming from top to bottom with green, yellow and white colours. The green colour in the background seems to echo the background of the logo. Green gives hope and fruitfulness as it was mentioned above. The union number and name are made prominent by being written in large font and centred in the poster because these what count when it comes to the choice of the voters. The logo occupies the left-hand side of the poster and it contains as much information about the party as possible. Moreover, the rose in the logo is also prominent as it is a symbol of love. As for the rhetorical structure, the main material is the name and number of the union with the other elements of the poster representing the supporting material. The linguistic structure of the poster is represented by the sentence which contains the name of the union along with the elections they run for *The List of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan for Parliamentary Elections*. Other instances of language structures can be identified in the logo where the name of the party is written in English and Kurdish along with some principles of the party, e.g., *Peace, Democracy, Human rights, self Determination* which are also written in these languages.

### 5.3.9 Democratic Party of Kurdistan

The poster consists of the logo and number of the party. The logo takes the form of a big circle having a small one inside. The circumference of the big circle is red. The red colour stands for the blood of the martyrs of Kurdistan and the continuous struggle of Kurds for freedom and dignity. Between the two circles, the name of the party is written in Kurdish and in Latin Kurdish. The circumference of the small circle consists of a green arch and two ears. Green symbolizes the beauty of nature in the Province of Kurdistan in addition to its generic meanings of hope and fruitfulness already mentioned. The two ears stand for agriculture and abundance of the land. Inside the small circle there is a sun with 46 rays indicating the year of establishment. The sun stands for life and energy for people.

Figure (9) Democratic Party of Kurdistan



In the heart of the sun sits an eagle with a raised head. The eagle symbolizes freedom, nobility, honour, patience and endurance. Below the eagle on a strip, the initial letters of the name of the party are written. Below the strip is the year of establishment. The background is white which symbolizes purity, peace, freedom and cooperation. Generally, the colours of the logo are the colours of Kurdistan flag. There is no particular slogan or logo for the election because the party did not ally with any other party and so no need for another logo. The absence of slogan may be ascribed to the fact that the party is well known for its policy and principles among its supporters.

### 5.3.10 Other Kurdish Lists

In addition to the two major parties in the Kurdistan region, two other parties ran for the 2018 election in an attempt to compete for the voters' choices. These are *Al-Taghīr* (Change) (fig. 10) and *Al-Jīl Al-Jadīd* (*New Generation*) Movement (fig.11). Both were trying to weaken the predominance of the two major parties over the Kurdistan Province. This can be inferred from their names which are suggestive of an intention to change the political situation and replace the old parties. Their logos are similar in that both use light as a symbol of hope, *Al-Taghīr* uses a candle and *Al-Jīl Al-Jadīd* Movement uses a lamp. Orange in the posters below indicates active energy (Itten1973,97) as well as pride and self-respect (Itten1970,89).

Figure (10) Al-Taghīr (Change)



Figure (11) Al-Jil Al-Jadīd (New Generation) Movement



### 5.3.11 Al-Qarār Al-'Irāqī (Iraqi Decision) Alliance

This alliance is mostly Sunni. The poster contains the name, logo, alliance number, candidate, sequence number, name and image of the leader and a slogan. The background is blue. The logo is an eagle head with the colours of the Iraqi flag. The eagle is a symbol of honour, glory, pride and strength used to convey the message that the alliance is strong enough to protect Iraqi decision. Red is used for alliance and leader sequence numbers to attract attention through salience. The name of the alliance is at the top of the poster and this gives it prominence. The logo is also at the top and accordingly has prominence. Moreover, the image of the leader is on the left-hand side of the poster. The name is written in large white font on a blue background and this makes it prominent. The list number and the candidate sequence number are written in large red font. The name of the candidate is written in large white font on a black background. The slogan translates *Your decision is a change*. It implies that the change is the responsibility of the voters. In terms of rhetorical structure, the main material is the name of the coalition and all the other pieces of information are the supporting material.

Figure (12) Al-Qarār Al-'Irāqī Alliance



As for the linguistic structure, the choice of the name *Al-Qarār Al-'Irāqī Alliance* hints at the influence of the neighbouring countries on the Iraqi decision through some parties and so the coalition undertakes the responsibility to make it purely Iraqi. Other linguistic elements include alliance number, sequence number, and the slogan. The positioning of the flag under the slogan is appropriate in terms of harmony with its meaning and with the colours with which the name

of the alliance and the slogan are written, which are the flag colours. This is to suggest that the state prestige is made prominent through the flag and its colours such as white with which the name of the alliance and the slogan are written; black with which the words *list* and *sequence* are written as well as forming the background for the leader's name; and red which backgrounds the boxes for the alliance and leader sequence numbers.

### 5.3.12 Civilized Lists

Some alliances and parties chose to run for the elections under the name of civilization. Their posters are distinguished for their logos and slogans as well as for the colours used in the background and in the images. This can be clearly seen in the figures (13) and (14) below. Figure (13) represents the poster of *Tamadun (Civilized) Alliance* which contains the logo and the alliance number. The background is white and the logo consists of an open book with a dove's head and an Iraqi flag as the wings of the dove. This implies that Iraq should be a peaceful and an educated country to develop and advance. The blue colour is used together with white especially in writing. The components of the poster are all placed in the centre and thus appear to be prominent. The most prominent is the Iraqi flag with its prominent colours especially red and black and the intention here is to make the national identity the most important one.

Figure (13) Tamadun (Civilized) Alliance



Another civil list is of *Al-Hizb Al-Madanī (the civilized party)*. The background is burgundy. What characterizes the poster is the logo *Madanī (civilized)* which abbreviates the name and the philosophy of the party. It occupies a third of the poster space written in white in the middle of burgundy background which covers the whole poster as a magnifying colour with the aim of attracting the attention of the viewer. This abbreviation is intentional and significant revealing the philosophy and the purpose of the party behind this design which is to make prominent the image of the civilized entities as the best alternative in the next stage after the failure of the political Islam, they believe, in administering the state. The use of the white colour in the slogan implies integrity and peace on the part of the members of the party which they claim to have. Linguistically, the word *madanī* has a high semantic energy meaning *I'm civilized* and it is elliptical to create exaggeration and absoluteness. Regarding the slogan which translates *With our hands we build a state*, it is a metonymy of ability and strength in administration. The use of plural form (hands) here is an expression of solidarity, the collective spirit and independence in administration.

Figure (14) Al-Hizb Al-Madani (The Civilized (civil) Party)



### 5.3.13 Minority Parties' Posters

What is common in the posters representing the Christian parties and candidates is the inclusion of *the two rivers* in their names in a clear reference to the civilization of water as well as to the Christians being the original inhabitants of the land.

Figure (15) National Baith Nahrain Union





Figure (16) Al-Rāfidain List



The colours used in these posters are white, light blue, dark blue and violet which give an indication of purity, peace, calmness, piety. In one of the posters (fig. 17), the candidate prefixes his name with the word *captain* because he used to be a famous international footballer in an attempt to address the feelings of the people who like football very much and remember his presence and performance in their national team.

Figure (17) 'Abnā' al-Nahrain (the sons of the two rivers) List



## 6. Results and Discussion

### 6.1 Content Structure

All selected posters in the study seem to have the same content structure which is represented by the name of the party or political entity, the slogan, the logo. and in a few posters, an image of the party or entity leader. The components are arranged differently on the posters; if there is an image of the leader, it occupies one side while the other components are placed on the opposite side as in *Al-Nasr Alliance*(fig.1), *Al-Qarār Al-'Irāqī Alliance*(fig.12), *Al-Wataniyah Alliance* (fig.2) and *Al-Fath Alliance* (fig. 5) with the first two having the image on the left-hand side and the last two on the right-hand side. On posters without an image of the leader, the components appear to be concentrated in the centre as in *Al-Hikmah Movement* (fig.6), *Tamadun Alliance* (13), *Al-Hizb Al-Madanī* (14) and *Al-Taghūr* (fig.10).

## 6.2 Linguistic and Rhetorical Structure

### 6.2.1 Names

Some parties and political entities use names they have already used in the previous elections, e.g., *Dawlat Al-Qānūn*, *Al-Wataniyah Coalition*, *Patriotic Union of Kurdistan* (fig.8)...etc., others use names especially formed for the 2018 election and this is justified by having coalitions or alliances with other political entities and individual politicians, e.g., *Saairoon (Marchers) Alliance*, *Al-Fath (Conquest) Alliance*, *Al-Qarār Al-‘Irāqī Alliance* ...etc. The names chosen have different connotations and are thought to have an effect on the voters. Those such as *Dawlat Al-Qānūn* and *Al-Wataniyah Coalition* are still popular among the Iraqi people due to the charisma of their leaders and their political orientations; others are used to reflect the incidents that occurred between 2014 and 2018 especially the war against ISIS like *Al-Nasr Coalition* and *Al-Fath Alliance*. Some names suggest the determination of certain political entities to compete and even replace others that have not been successful in serving the people such as *AL-Taghūr* and *Al-Jīl Al-Jadīd* in Kurdistan Region and *Irādah Movement*, *Tamadun Alliance* and *Al-Hizb Al-Madanī* in Baghdad. Other names have various connotations like *Saairun for Reformation* which suggests an attempt to fight corruption; *Al-Ḥikmah Movement* which indicates a need to deal with the things wisely after several years of misfire and current worries of security and civil living deterioration; *Al-Qarār Al-‘Irāqī Alliance* which hints at ensuring the independence of Iraqi decision away from the intervention and dictation of the neighbouring and western countries.

### 6.2.2 Logos and Slogans

According to Hunderson and Cote (1998,14) the word logo ‘can refer to a variety of graphic or typeface elements.’ In the context of this research, it is used to mean the graphic design that a political entity uses to identify itself or convey its ideology. Semiotics views logos ‘as part of the sign system a company uses to communicate itself to the internal and external audiences’ (Zakia & Nadin 1987 cited in Hunderson and Cote 1998,14). For easier comprehension of a logo, three requirements should be met. These include the context in which the logo is used, the purpose of the communication as well as the referential and graphical features (Mainah 2018). Logos in the analyzed posters vary considerably, some are the parties’ original logos, as in the posters of *Democratic Party of Kurdistan*(fig.9), *Al-Ḥikmah Movement* (fig.6), *Baith Nahrain National Union* (15) ...etc, others are used especially in the election campaign, e.g., the logos of *Al-Nasr* (fig.1), *Al-Fath* (fig.5), *Tamadun Alliance* (fig.13) ...etc. Those used for the elections have connotations such as strength as in *Al-Fath Alliance’s* poster which uses the image of a lion, *Al-Qarār Al-‘Irāqī Alliance’s* which uses the image of an eagle; or victory of the whole country as it is the case in *Al-Nasr Coalition’s* poster where the first letter of Arabic word *Nasr* (meaning victory) is used with the Iraqi flag inside; or liberty as in *Saairun Alliance’s* poster(fig.4) which uses the famous liberty monument in Al-Tahrir Square in Baghdad. There are logos that indicate the philosophy of the political party or entity as that of *Tamadun Alliance* which consists of a book, dove and the Iraqi flag with a white background, which indicate knowledge, peace and patriotism. As for the slogan, ‘it is a simple catchy phrase that encapsulates the aim of the political candidate. It is a key phrase connected to a political party or candidate for a position’ (Aduradola & Ojukwu 2013,107). Importantly, political slogan is aimed to connect voter’s concerns and the current political environment in a succinct and precise form (Aduradola & Ojukwu 2013,107). For effectiveness, the slogan should be simple and straight to the point to appeal to the voters’ demands, wants, or desires. The characteristics of slogan make its repetition easy via the use of alliteration, pun, and rhyme (Gouliamos 2013 cited in Mainah 2018). The slogans in the analyzed posters represent varieties

of ideologies and philosophies that correspond to the country's condition from the fall of Saddam's regime to the time of elections. Two of the oldest entities, i.e., *Al-Wataniyah Coalition* (fig.2) and *Dawlat Al-Qānūn Coalition* (fig.3) use the word *strong* with *Iraq* and *state* respectively to convey their aims to the voters. Two other groups *Al-Nasr* and *Al-Fath* who are known for their vital roles in the war against ISIS use praising sentences of the country in allusion to Iraq's good condition after defeating ISIS and getting rid of its threat, which are equivalent to *Iraq advances* and *It is the time of Iraq* respectively. One of the civilized lists, *Al-Hizb Al-Madani*, uses a sentence that translates *With our hands, we build a state* with the implication that the state has not been built yet. *Saairun Alliance* have a slogan that is equivalent to *for reformation*, which is a complement of the name *Saairun*, announcing the aim of the Alliance. Another Alliance, *Al-Qarār Al-'Irāqī Alliance*, have a slogan which invokes the voters to change through their decision *Your decision is a change*. One political entity, *Al-Hikmah Movement*, uses a non-standard sentence which translates *We are up to it*. Two political entities choose to address the voters through the slogan, in *Irādah's* poster we find the slogan *because you are with me, we'll succeed*, in *Dawlat Al-Qānūn Coalition* we find the word *together* and in *Al-Qarār Al-'Irāqī Alliance* we find the slogan *Your decision is a change*.

### 6.2.3 Graphology and Colours

Graphology and colours are also used and manipulated for the sake of influencing the voter's decision. Graphology refers to the type and size as well as the colour of the font. Colours are significant since they spread over all the parts of the posters. They are used in designing the logo, in writing the slogan, the name of the candidate or the party and also in forming the background of the poster or making divisions between its parts. Colours have relevance and significance in politics. White indicates peace, tranquility and rejection of war (Abū Al-S'ūd, 2015). We can observe some political parties and groups use white greatly in their posters such as the *Al-Hizb Al-Madani* which writes its name in white on the burgundy colour, *Al-Hikmah Movement* which writes its slogan in white, *Al-Taghūr* which has a white candle, *'Abnā' Al-Rāfidain* which uses white over a large space of its poster. Other posters which also use white include *Al-Nasr's* where the slogan is written in white, *Irādah* where the name and the slogan are written in white, and others. The use of white seems to be for the sake of clarity, prominence and brightness ('Umar, 1997,41). Another colour which is common in most of the posters is blue with its different waves and shades. It is found in the posters of *Al-Hikmah Movement*, *Al-Wataniyah Coalition*, *Al-Nasr Coalition*, *Al-Taghūr Party*, due to its meaning of power and faith (Itten1973,96). *Saairun Alliance* use greenish blue, maybe as a symbol for the water of the two rivers, Tigris and Euphrates (Al-Tā'ī, 2020). Political entities may also use it in their posters as a symbol of purity because it represents the colour of the sky and the sea. Its connection with the sky and the sea may also make it a symbol of supremacy and depth. Due to the various significances of blue Iraqi political parties and entities take it a symbolic colour of their policies and aims. With regard to graphology, posters use various graphological features with the aim of attracting the attention and highlighting the information to be conveyed to voters. The shape, type and colour of written matter are the tools of manipulation. The majority of the political entities choose to highlight the name such as *Irādah Movement* which uses a somewhat distinctive way of the writing the name, *Saairun Alliance* which uses big black Arabic bold fonts to write the name and the slogan, *Al-Jīl Al-Jadīd* and *Al-Taghūr* also make their names prominent by using big orange bold fonts, and *Al-Qarār Al-'Irāqī* which writes the name in big white font...etc. Some political entities make the slogans more prominent than any other written information, e.g., *Al-Nasr Coalition* uses a very big white font, *Al-Fath* uses big white and orange fonts, *Al-Hikmah Movement* which uses a big-size yellow font with the Iraqi flag forming part of the first letter of the second word, *Dawlat Al-Qānūn Coalition* which writes

*Ma'an* meaning together which is part of the slogan in a distinctive way, *Al-Hizb Al-Madani* which uses a very big white font in writing the slogan and a lighter and smaller font in writing the name on a burgundy background.

### **6.3 Results of the 2018 Elections**

The elections were held on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2018 with a participation percentage of 44.55, and with 87 political parties and entities competing for 329 parliamentary seats. The number of eligible voters were 24.349.357. The winners in terms of parliamentary seats were: *Saairun Alliance* 54 seats, *Al-Fath Alliance* 47, *Al-Nasr Coalition* 42, *Dawlat Al-Qānūn* 26, Democratic Party of Kurdistan 25, *Al-Wataniyah Coalition* 21, *Al-Hikma Movement* 19, *National Union of Kurdistan* 18, *Al-Qarār Al-'Irāqī Coalition* 16, *Al-Hal Group* 14 *Al-Taghaūr Movement* 5. The rest of the seats were won by small parties and local groups 33 seats in addition to 9 seats for Cota (Ontime News,2021).

### **Conclusion**

In elections, parties and political groups try their best to appear appealing to voters and win as many votes as possible. To achieve this, they use different ways and strategies in their campaigns including interviews, debates and electoral posters. The present paper has examined a number of electoral posters from the Iraqi parliamentary elections in May 2018. These electoral posters were part of the campaigns of parties and coalitions which differed in their sizes, backgrounds and ideologies. The posters appeared in the streets and on the social media. They were designed in such a way as to attract people's attention and influence their decisions in the elections. Each poster represents a political entity which presents itself to the public through the use of a name, a logo, a slogan as well as certain visual features such as colours and fonts. Some of the names were chosen for the first time and reflected some recent events which the country had witnessed *Al-Nasr*, *Al-Fath*, *Al-Hikma*, *Saairun*, which answers the first question about the extent to which the posters represent the period during which the elections were being held. Others names had already been used in the previous elections and used again for the strong connotations they had, e.g., *Dawlat Al-Qānūn Coalition*, *Al-Wataniyah*. Some posters carry the names of parties *Kurdistan Patriotic Party*, *Kurdistan Democratic Party*. There are posters which use names representing a tendency in politics different from those related to sects and ethnicities e.g., *Tamadun Alliance* and *Al-Hizb Al-Madani*. As for logos and slogans there is a great variety. The logos mostly echo the names of the political entity and the slogans are all centred on the important ideas like *strong state*, *decent living*, *building* 'and so on. Graphology, colours and layout are also carefully considered as they have some visual effect on the viewer. Bright and light colours are used but for different purposes. Different types of fonts are used, each with a certain aim. Based on the analysis, the most common components political entities use to present themselves to potential voters are the names, slogans and logos and to a lesser extent images and graphology. This answers the second question of the paper about which modes are the most expressive of the political entities' background, ideology and programs. The components of the posters are arranged in a special way to achieve the required effect on the viewer. The analysis of the posters has shown that there are underlying patterns according to which the elements of the posters are selected and arranged and this provides the answer to the third question raised in the paper.

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