

Article

A Social Semiotic Study of Words Used by Iraqi People's-25 October, 2020- Demonstrations

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Abstract: The current study is a social semiotic study in which it indicates the relationships between language and social structure' so that it gives the Iraqi people their identity. It investigates the language used by demonstrators and Iraqi people on October 25, 2020. The language used are among "الببيض القمصان", "ذبول" or "ذبول", "منديسين", "أحد جبل", "تلك سوبرتك", "الجوكر عصابت" (Jokers), "جوكرية" and "السود القمصان". The researcher explores the meaning of the aforementioned terminologies and analyzes them using Barthes semiotic model of sign and interpretation. The words are interpreted in terms of denotation, connotation, and myth. Ultimately, it concludes that these lexicons give the Iraqi people their culture. These lexicons are entries that can be added to the Iraqi Colloquial Dialect Dictionary.

Keywords: Connotation, Denotation, Iraqi People's-25 October, Myth, 2020- Demonstrations, Ronald Barthes' semiotic theory

1. Introduction

Highlighting the evolutions of semiotic theories, it is significant to take the movement that flourishes during the 1950s and 1960s. The major figures of this movement include Ferdinand de Saussure, Ronald Barthes, Peirce, and others. Saussure and Barthes are the pioneers in tackling the historical study of semiotics. Semiotics is the study of signs and it is applied to the most aspects of everyday life such as cinema, theatre, architecture, painting, politics, history and religion. All of these endeavors include a variety of signs that convey different messages. These signs may be a linguistic element such as phoneme, word, sentence, etc., or sound, image, film, etc. Lyons (2009), in his book Semantics with semiotics in regard, defines a sign as anything that communicates a meaning that is not the sign itself to the interpreter of the sign. The focus study will tackle the word as one of these signs.

According to de Saussure's (1916) analysis, the linguistic sign is a composition between a signifier (concept) as a mental entity and signified (sound-image), saying that they are dynamically and reciprocally related in the mind: "If one hears the name 'table', he shall think of a table; if he thinks of a table, he shall articulate the name if required"

In contrast to the Saussurean model, Chandler (2007), in his book The basics, clarifies that Charles Sanders Peirce breaks down the sign into three inter-related parts: a sign which is a signifier such as a written word. The object which is signified for instance the word fire is signified by the smoke. The interpretant is best known by Peirce as signification which is the combination of both sign and object.

Citation: Safoyeva Sadokat Nasillovayevna. The Power of Discourse: Understanding Discursive Markers in Communication. International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics 2025, 4(1), 43-47.

Received: 19th Oct 2024

Revised: 18th Nov 2024

Accepted: 25th Dec 2024

Published: 6th Jan 2025



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Ronald Barthes' semiotic theory breaks down the process of reading signs and focuses on their interpretations by different cultures and societies. So, according to Barthes, a sign has both a signifier which is a figurative form as things being perceived and signified which is the meaning that is being interpreted. He analyzes ideological as either Denotative sign system or Connotative sign system. Barthes' analysis to the sign has social functions and also pragmatic effects as it deals with culture and society and the relation of signs to interpreters, because semiotics embraces semantics with other fields of linguistics as what Morris (1938) mentions. The current study of this paper will take Barthes' semiotic theory and his analysis as a Model analysis to the study of this paper.

Halliday and Hasan (1989) in their book *Language, context, and text: aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective* defines semiotics as the study of sign systems-in other words, as the study of meaning its most general sense. They go on to say that there are many modes of meaning in any culture so that they define "culture" as a set of semiotic systems, a set of systems of meaning, all of which interrelate, (p.4).

In terms of social semiotic study, the term social means two things simultaneously:

1. Social semiotics is synonymous with culture and definitely, as Halliday (1989) refers to "...when I say 'social-semiotic' in the first instance, I am simply referring to the definition of a social system or culture, as a system of meanings."
2. The word "social" indicates the relationships between language and social structure, considering the social structures as one aspect of the social system, (Halliday& Hasan, 1989, p.4).

Hence, this paper will investigate how the words that are used by Iraqis have their role in constituting the culture and give Iraq society its identity. All of these issues will be taken into regard.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts, therefore, the model of analysis that is employed by Roland Barthes (2005) in his analysis of sign. The object discussion will be identified by focusing on the verbal signs such as words that are used in Iraqi demonstrations, collecting them and then analyzing them in terms of denotations and connotations level, moreover identifies the myth.

The researcher tries to investigate also that the current study deals with social phenomena in which it has a role in shaping the Iraqi culture and society as what Haliday and Hasan in their book *aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective* mentioned, (1989, p.4)

The researcher collects the words that are used by Iraqi people in the social media and daily life especially in the time of demonstration in which these words become common for the society. Then the researcher looks for analyzing them via three levels. The first level is the denotative level by giving them their dictionary meaning. The second level is the connotative level by showing what these word are connote for Iraqi society and in the demonstration in specific (the emotional and cultural meanings). The third level is the myth by showing the myth that is constructed to these words as a result to their denotative and connotative meanings.

In this paper, the researcher will apply the Barthesian Model. "Barthesian Model" is developed by referring to Saussure's theory of Signified and signifier the semiotic theory to be a theory of grammar and its connotation meaning. Akmal (2008) develops the term

signified or significant onto *expression* (E) and the term signifier or signifié onto *content* (C). Then, Barthes argues that there must be a relation between E and C or certain relation then a sign will be formed. In fact, Barthes takes the notions of denotation, connotation and metasemiotics from Hjemsleves. So that, later on Barthes also alters Hjemsleves' term of metasemiotics onto metalanguage.

To interpret a sign there will be two levels. The primer level is denotation and the secondary level which is connotation. The latter is developed onto metalanguage.

The following figure reveals the Barthesian model in which after observing the denotative meaning of the sign the connotative meaning will play a major role in creating the myth in which the cultural and emotional experiences of the connotation level the people will have an insight towards this notion and uses it by different cultures and in different contexts so that it will be a myth:

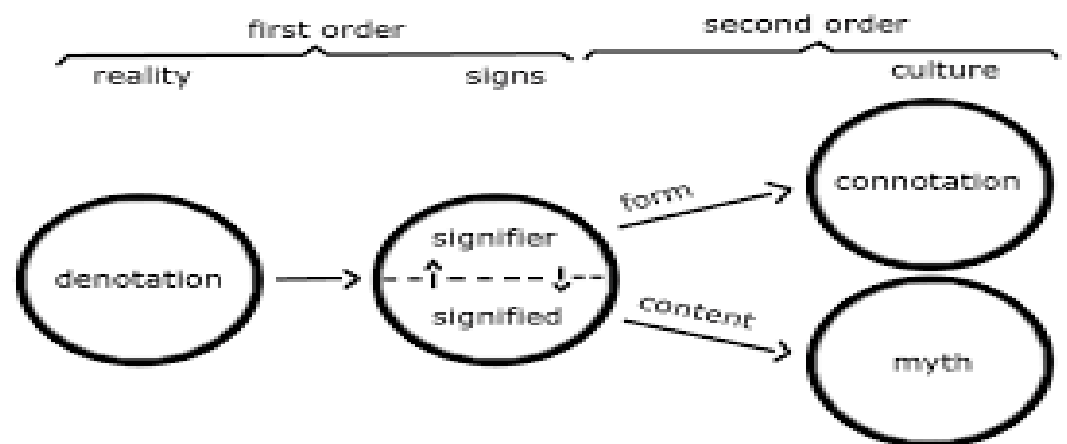


Figure (1) Barthesian Model of interpreting the signs (the three levels: denotation, connotation and myth).

The Value of the Study

The current study has long been of interest to semioticians, the researchers who seek this kind of study and it is also significant for Iraqis who care about using new words to be later one as myths and shaping their culture.

Limits

This paper limits itself in a social semiotic study only and not semiotics in its general realm and also limits the use of signs in using the words to be the dominant signs in shaping Iraqis culture and society. Moreover, tackling the interpretations of signs meanings, it uses Barthes' model rather than Saussure's, Peirce's analysis of semiotic meanings of the signs.

1. Barthes' Semiotic Theory

Semiotic analysis may be considered a subset of content analysis; it studies how signs and symbols generate meaning (Rose, 2001). This study focuses on signifying systems as languages, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situation. Ronald Barthes interprets signs by taking the cultural and social perspectives in regard.

According to Barthes (2005), each object has a meaning which transcends its use (Kükürt, 2016, p.2172). That means the words that Iraqi people use in the demonstrations have meaning and that meaning is either denotative or connotative meaning. As it has been mentioned above, a sign may be a word, sentence, etc.

Barthes divides a sign onto two levels. The first level is the "denotative" level where sign is used to create personality or form to the word and the second level is "connotative" level, which reveals the hidden meaning of the words, texts, images. Barthes is successor of Saussure's theory in which he interested in the fact that the same sentence may convey different meanings to different people on different situation, but Saussure interested in how complex of sentence formation and how the forms of determining the meaning of a sentence (Chandler, 2007).

Denotation, Connotation, and Myth

Denotation Level

Barthes refers to denotation as a signified level that explains the relationship between signifier and signified in reality (Chandler, 2007). Cobley defines denotations as the term in which words are the names of phenomena in the world, and language is stable so that relations of word to object are fixed (the pure meaning). For instance, the word "green" names a specific area of the colour spectrum (Cobley, 2001, P.178).

Denotation is the dictionary meanings of any word that is it is misused it will mean something else. Likewise, the denotations are the explicit meanings of the word and it is not related to emotional or cultural meaning and it is not used in any context in opposite to the connotation.

Connotation Level

Barthes also refers to the notion of connotation level as a signified level in which to operate meaning that is not explicit, indirect, and uncertain (Chandler, 2007). Moreover, Connotations are the meaning of the words that are associated with the individuals' emotions and imaginations. It is the realm of cultural meanings.

Connotation is defined as a putative 'second-order meaning', often a 'cultural ' one, it completes the denotative level of interpretations. For instance, an apple is called 'green' because of its color when it is unripe. The same name is used to a person when he or she is unripe or immature (Cobley, 2001, 174).

Myth

Barthes develops another aspect of signified, that us "myth" that marks a society. It is the level that comes after forming the system of sign-signifier-signified, and then the sign will be a new sign. So, when this new sign has connotation meaning and improved to denotation meaning, the meaning of denotation will be a myth (Chandler, 2007, p.143).

The term myth is defined by Martin and Ringham in their book *Dictionary of Semiotics* (2000, p.89-90) as a symbolic narrative that often involves gods or heroes and offering an explanation of some facts or natural phenomena. In myth, one can observe a different kind of logic in which it represents human experience and allows for an accepted interpretation in which the society agrees about.

Talking about myth in nowadays' culture, the term myth has picked a wider significance in which it is applied to the mass media when talking about bourgeois myths. In this regard, ideas or products are understood and supported to reinforce a particular view of the world and its values. Ultimately, the term myth is also evolved to indicate a figment of imagination or popular belief in the specific society without foundation (Martin and Ringham, 2000, p.89-90).

3. Barthes as a Model of Analysis

The word "جوكرية" or "عصابات الجوكر"

The Denotative meaning of the word "Jokers" or "جوكرية"

The denotative meaning of the word refers to the process of referring to the word "Jokers" or "جوكرية" to its dictionary meaning. Thus, the meaning of Joker as a word means a person who is fond of joking. In some movies in the cinema, he appears as a devilish figure that does so many riots in his town and practices murder. What it helps that the Joker's face demonically twisted and far from his own.

The Connotative meaning of the word "Jokers" or "جوكرية"

According to Barthes, the connotation level of interpretation in which the meaning of the word is not explicit, indirect, and uncertain resulting from the context in which it applied. That is, the word "Jokers" or what Iraqi called "جوكرية" connotes deception, betrayal, murder, evil, hatred and so forth and that depends on the individuals' experiences and the context through which this term is used by a specific society. This word may have positive or negative connotative meanings according to the context, culture and people's emotions (the society).

Joker "جوكرية" as a Myth

Tackling the Barthes' Myth, Joker is a cinematic figure that appears in American movie, he is an evil, unstable and psychologically sick person practicing murder and criminality until it came to killing a mother and all those around him even in the city he lives violently. He does so many riots among the folks such as burning money he stole from the bank. People drain the popular ideas and the real meaning of this figure and repackaged them to create what Barthes calls myth.

In Iraq and during the administration in specific, Iraqi Press and so many channels claim that those people who do such devilish deeds are Jokers as they call them in Iraqi accent JOKERIA "جوكرية" by adding "يه" the syllable that gives Iraqi accent the identity, or "عصابات الجوكر"; JOKEREAN GANGS. So they repackage this term to refer to those who exploit the enthusiasm of the youth towards more violence, burning and clashing with the security forces. They want to bring down the country as a whole and enter it into a cycle of chaos under the pretext of demonstrations, and they are an electronic media gang that follows a clear and stated axis of its goals and this gang is the tool of the enemies as it is described by the cleric (Religious reference) in Najaf when it warned of enemies and their tools who seek to spread sabotage and chaos. They changed their personal image account for each account or page of their pages in social media accounts with a sinister, evil image of Joker. Now, tackling the Barthesian myth the interaction that is occurred between the denotative interpretation of the word "جوكرية" and the connotative meaning in which the emotional meaning and the cultural meaning will cause the myth to be observed.

The word "سوبر تك تك"

The Denotative Meaning of the Word "سوبر تك تك" (Super-tuk-tuk)

The term is denoted as a simple vehicle with an engine and three wheels, often used as a taxi in some parts of the world. This is what Barthes refers to as the dictionary meaning of the word or the 'denotative level' of meaning.

The Connotative Meaning of the Word "سوبر تك تك"

The connotative meaning of the word "سوبر تك تك" varies from one person to other according to the context through which it is used by a specific society. It may have a positive or negative meaning, that's why; it is emotionally or culturally associated. The word "سوبر تك تك" connotes superpower, loyalty, patriotism, philanthropy, love, Jihad for the sake of God, sacrifice and so forth. This is positive emotion for the connotation of this word. Also, it has a negative emotion like a nuisance before the occurrence of the revolution. Also, it has negative connotative meaning for those who like doing riots in the demonstrations.

The Word "سوبر تك تك" or (Super tuk-tuk) as a Myth

This term refers to an auto-rickshaw, a common sight in many parts of Asia, it has been gone traditionally by many different names, but in recent years the Thai word for it was tuk-tuk, has spread.

So, tuk-tuk or as what is named by Iraqi people "تك تك" comes From Thai ตุ๊กตุ๊ก (dtúkdúk), onomatopoeia associated with the sound of its two-stroke engine. Iraqis add to it the prefix "super". The prefix "super" is occurred originally in loanwords from Latin, with a basic meaning "above" and "beyond". That's why Iraqis call it "سوبر تك تك" or super tuk-tuk. Iraqis do so due to the legendary figure that appeared in the movie "Superman". This character is widely used and articulated by people around the world because this character is popularized by the superhero archetype and defined its conventions. This character appears as a man who saves people's lives from dangers, arrives at the right time, and can be found wherever people are in need of his bits of help and has no obstacles. The same things the tuk-tuk drivers do in Iraq demonstrations so that the tuk-tuk becomes one of the most important features of demonstrations and has become the easiest way to transport the wounded demonstrators to the hospitals to save their lives. It is also called "تك تك الثورة" (the tuk-tuk of the revolution), "بطل الثورة" (the hero of the revolution). As what Halliday and Hasan refer to, the word "سوبر تك تك" gives the Iraqis society and their culture the identity. So the social-semiotic phenomena can be observed here.

The Word "جبل أهد"

The Denotative Meaning of the word "جبل أهد" or Mount Uhud

The meaning of the Arabic word "جبل أهد" for Iraqis denotes to the Turkish restaurant that is overlooking the demonstrations square on one hand, whose high elevation allows views of the entire bridge and the green zone (the seat of the Iraqi government) on the other side. The building of this restaurant consists of the 14-storey dates back to the eighties of the last century, then indicated the construction of an Indian company and opened in 1983. A large garage occupied its lower floors, and the other floors were filled with shops to form a large shopping center. The denotative level of the word interpretation gives the dictionary meaning in which it is explicit in contrast to the connotative level that is coined by Barthes.

The Connotative Meaning of the Word "جبل أهد" or Mount Uhud

As it is mentioned above that the connotative level of interpretation or meaning is associated with the emotion and culture in which it depends on individuals' experiences through which this meaning is used in specific context. So, in Iraqi demonstrations, the word "جبل أهد" is associated to the individuals' emotions and their culture in which it connotes more for Iraqi society. It connotes unity after the sectarianism that is spread among the Iraqi people because of the saboteurs. Also it connotes solidarity, revolution, Jihad for the sake of Allah and the homeland, power, and so forth.

The Word "جبل أحد" as a Myth

There are two opinions that explain the reason behind given this name for this mountain. The first opinion is that because this mountain is located in Isolated Island surrounded by valleys and plains. The second opinion is that its name is related to a man whose name was 'Uhud' (the first traditional inhabitants of the city) who moved to the mountain and lived there. As a result of the battle that is taking place there between Muslims and Quraysh in which the prophet Mohammed was the leader for Muslims in it. The Battle of Uhud is the second major battle for Muslims; they take the mountain of Uhud as an earthen berm that protects them from any sudden attack from the Quraysh army. So, it is controlled by Muslims. The name of this mountain becomes just a legend for all of humanity in the world, especially the Iraqis.

In the demonstrations of Iraq, the meaning of Mount Uhud or "جبل أحد" is repackaged by the demonstrators in which they take from the Turkish restaurant as a place for staying and continuing in demonstrating. They give the name of Mount Uhud for this restaurant because it is controlled by them just like Muslims. They also take it as a berm to protect them from the tear gas bombs and any other riots.

Hence, Barthes' myth is revealed here in which the name or the meaning of the word "جبل أحد" was just like a myth for the people who lived in the time of the prophet Mohammed and till now. The same thing happens to the Turkish restaurant that is located in the middle of Baghdad (the capital of Iraq) that becomes as an icon for the Iraqi revolution and that it gives the name of "جبل أحد" (Mount Uhud). This sign (the word) provides Iraqi culture and society enhancement and identity in which Halliday and Hasan refers to this kind of study as a social-semiotic study.

The Word "مندسين"

The Denotative Meaning of the Word "مندسين"

The explicit meaning of the word "مندسين" as it is used in a specific context and specific society such as Iraqis' demonstrations it comes to denote to a person who is disguised and usually doing riots and kills the demonstrators and attacks the security forces.

The Connotation Meaning of the Word "مندسين"

When it comes to connotative meaning then the emotional and cultural meaning will be taken in regard. What this word might mean or connote to the Iraqis demonstrators is that, betrayal, power, dominance, revolution, hatred, enemy and so forth.

The Word "مندسين" as a Myth

In a poll on the social networking site «Facebook», about the most frequently used words in the recent period, especially with the outbreak of the Arab revolution, the word 'infiltrated persons' or "مندسين" is sided on the throne of the terminology of the stage. The word is not new to the dictionary of the Arabic language, but it is ceased to exist during periods of security repression until the repressive regimes decided to flick them and return them to circulation to confront the arenas of demonstrations and justify the direct killings they practiced. This is actually what Barthes called a myth in which it becomes popular among Iraqis especially in the arenas of demonstrations. The mentioned word has its role in shaping Iraq culture and social identity taking in regard to what Halliday and Hasan (1989) have referred to.

The Word "ذيل" or "ذبول"

The Denotative Meaning of the Word "ذيل"

You may be astonished by the meaning of this word in Iraqi demonstrations because normally it means an important part of some creature's body such as pets, predators, as well as birds and fish in which it is usually located in the creature's back or near the end of the creature's body for several benefits. In Iraq, it denotes to the person who is more loyal to his lord than to his homeland.

The Connotative Meaning of the Word "ذيل" or "ذبول"

The connotative meaning of the word "ذيل" as what Barthes refers that connotative meaning is the emotional and cultural meaning of the sign that is differed from one society to another and from one context to another. For Iraqi people, it connotes betraying the country, espionage on behalf of the enemy and so forth.

The Word "ذيل" or "ذبول" as a Myth

Iraqis use this term to refer to a person who is more loyal to his lord rather than his homeland. According to some press records, the term "ذيل" (tail) or (tails) "ذبول" has spread in Iraq because of its meaning and it is a cover for the side to which it works or the tail or "ذيل" is connected to, or it may be a balance axis in the region where the tail or "ذيل" works.

The word is echoed by the demonstrators in the demonstration arenas when they demanded an end to the external influence on Iraq, and according to the civil activist, Saad Al-Ezzi, "The word tails is the most accurate word that refers to the followers of any other country.

Obviously, this word gives the Iraqi culture and society its identity in which it has a role in shaping the culture and social systems that is what Halliday and Hasan (1989) have been referred to in tackling the study of social-semiotic study.

The Word "القمصان البيض"

The Denotative Meaning of "القمصان البيض"

The explicit meaning of the word 'white shirts' or "القمصان البيض" is that it denotes Iraqi students who wear white shirts as a uniform.

The Connotative Meaning of the Word "القمصان البيض"

Examining what Iraqi people feel toward this word will shed the light to the Barthesian connotative level of meaning in which this type of meaning gives the indirect and implicit meaning that is cultural and emotional meaning in specific society and context such as the demonstrations of Iraq. The word 'white shirts' connotes peace, purity, life and so forth.

The Word "القمصان البيض" as a Myth

As a result of both denotation and connotation meanings of this word, the interaction of both levels will create a myth as to what Barthes accounts for. That is to say, Iraqi students come out in the demonstrations arenas wearing their white shirts to inform the responsible parties that they are peaceful and never causing any riots, they want to take back their stolen rights. The revolution that they come out with is called 'the revolution of the white shirts' that's why the term 'white shirt' or "القمصان البيض" become popular and commonly used by Iraqi people to refer to the peace.

Definitely, as it has been observed that the sign or this word enhances the identity of Iraqi culture and the society that is indeed what is called social semiotic study.

The Word "القمصان السود"

The Denotative Meaning of the Word "القمصان السود"

As what Barthes refers to in his denotative level of interpretations to the signs, the denotative meaning or interpretation of the word 'black shirts' or "القمصان السود" comes to mean something different from what has already presented with the "white shirts" or "القمصان البيض" in the Iraqi revolution or demonstrations. It denotes to the black shirts that are worn by the demonstrators and the students, denoting to the world that they have lost innocent members in the demonstrations so that they wear black shirts to refer to their sadness.

The Connotative Meaning of the Word "القمصان السود"

According to Barthesian connotative level, the implicit meaning of the word "القمصان السود" that is definitely associated to the people emotions, their culture, and their society. It may come to connote mourning, sadness, pain, sacrifice, and so forth.

The Word "القمصان السود" as a Myth

As what social media pages have launched hashtags by the demonstrators and the citizens such as #Revolution-of-the-Black-shirts or "#ثورة-القمصان-السود", the word "black shirts" or "القمصان السود" comes to mean something far different from being in peace.

After bloody nights, a number of demonstrators fell as a result of live fire and tear gas, killing many innocent and injured demonstrators as well in the October demonstrations. The next day, after every bloody night, the university students who wear black shirts "القمصان السود" march out to mourning for all martyrs who have victimized for the homeland.

Tackling Barthes' myth this idea is popularized in Iraqi society under the context in which the demonstrations take place. Then, this word is used by so many persons in the society. It becomes something common. The interaction that occurs between the denotative meaning of interpreting this word and what connotes according to the cultural and emotional meanings of the individuals cause a myth to be observed.

Conclusion

The Iraqis people create new lexicons so that they enter their colloquial language dictionaries. These entries will be attributed to the language of the citizens. Over time, the Arabic Language \ Iraqi one will adopt these words due to its interlocutors' language creation. The lexicons, shown here, are originated from different languages and cultures taking into consideration Barthes' collocation, connotation and myth for language formation.

The cultural context plays a significant role in language formation or lexicons creations. As it shown and analyzed above, Barthes defined the connotation level of interpretation as one in which the word's meaning is ambiguous, indirect, and dependent on the context in which it was used. That is, depending on the experiences of the individual and the context in which a particular community uses the noun "Jokers," or what the Iraqis call "جوكرية," can mean deceit, treachery, murder, wickedness, hatred, and so on. Depending on the situation, the culture, and the feelings of the people (the society), this word may have connotations that are favorable or negative.

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