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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Thinking through Critical Metaphor: A Semiotic-Cognitive Study of Political Caricatures

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ABSTRACT

Political caricature serves as a powerful weapon that help caricaturists to reach their opinion to the public. They are used to criticize the political situations and highlight implicit discourse ideologies in a simple way. The current study explores critical metaphor in constructing ideological meaning in political caricatures from a semiotic-cognitive viewpoint. Although political caricatures have been widely studied, limited attention has been given to the interaction between visual signs and cognitive metaphor in shaping ideological interpretation. The findings show that these metaphors (verbal or visual) are not considered as stylistic tools but as ideological tools. Also, caricatures rely on critical metaphor to reflect ideological meanings. The implications of this study emphasize significance of incorporating semiotic and cognitive approaches to expose the ideological meanings in political caricatures. It establishes a foundation for further research on multimodal discourse.

Keywords: Caricature, Cognitive, Ideology, Metaphor, Political, Semiotics

The problem of the study

Despite the increasing interest in metaphor in political discourse, little research has examined how critical metaphors operate in political caricatures as multimodal forms that combine visual and verbal elements. Consequently, there remains a gap in understanding how these metaphors construct ideological meanings and influence public perception.

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Research questions

To achieve the objectives of the study, the following research questions are addressed:

1. How do political caricaturists use critical metaphors to convey ideologies and subtly shape public opinion?
2. How do critical metaphors reflect the ideological perspectives embedded in political caricatures?

The significance of the study

The signification of this study is that it connects linguistics, semiotics, and political communication. It concentrates on how critical metaphors in political caricatures influence public opinion and express political ideas.

The aims of the study

This study aims to analyze the use of critical metaphors in political caricatures and to explore how these metaphors convey ideological meanings and subtly influence public opinion. It also seeks to examine the ways in which critical metaphors reflect and construct ideological perspectives within political caricatures. Furthermore, the study aims to contribute to the field of Critical Metaphor Analysis by applying this analytical approach to political caricatures as a multimodal genre that has often been overlooked in political discourse studies.

Research methodology

The study employs two analytical tools: [Charteris-Black's](#) Critical Metaphor Analysis (2004) and [Kress and van Leeuwen's](#) Visual Grammar (2021). Semiotic investigation and cognitive metaphor are the instruments used in this study.

The study uses qualitative and quantitative approaches (mixed methods) in analyzing the data. The participants in this study are not individuals but a sample of selected political caricatures. The sample consists of five political caricatures published on Twitter between 2015 and 2025, and they address different themes such as war, technology, inflation, and humanitarian crises.

Introduction

Caricatures basically express a specific idea or theme that can be understood by layman, no matter of their social or cultural background, due to their simplicity. Its style is simple, relying on exaggerating or distorting certain features of the characters. Caricatures often aim to criticize or satirize real people (namely, political or social figures) or current events. [Perkins \(1975\)](#) defined the caricature as a symbolic illustration that intentionally deviates from actual realism by emphasizing the distinctive qualities of its subject. The concept of political caricature has a long history as it first appeared in Italy, France and in USA. In recent years, the mass media has developed, making it easier for caricaturists in specific to communicate and express their opinions and reflect how they see the reality by their own eyes especially in times of wars, crises, humanitarian disasters and political instability.

Dugalich (2018) stated that the contemporary political caricatures focus on various topics such as seeing the political leader as a hero, economic reforms, corruption, and health care policy. She also noted that one of the features of the political caricatures is the combination or interaction of verbal, visual and paralinguistic elements within it. The political caricatures use images and texts to reach political ideas to people. These metaphors make the complicated topics easier to understand; however, at the same time, they can carry implied ideological messages that can influence people without their awareness. The issue is that the same caricature can be understood differently by different people because the interpretation depends on the culture and social context. The study analyzes five political caricatures collected from publicly available posts on Twitter to investigate the role of critical metaphors in conveying ideological meanings. The research illustrates that these caricatures are powerful instruments used by cartoonists to uncover hidden messages in a very explicit and visual way. The research selects certain political caricatures to analyze in unbiased way. It highlights how visual metaphors convey political messages. Many studies about the critical metaphor but these studies focus only on the linguistic perspective and did not apply on political caricatures as a multimodal visual discourse. In addition, there is a deficiency in the researches that combine between the semiotic analysis and cognitive dimension to understand how visual metaphor working in political caricatures and their impact on the audience.

Literature review

Semiotics

The study of signs and how they convey meaning is called semiotics. Anything can be signs for example words, images or even objects represent something else. It focuses on how the different forms of representations like language, images, or objects create meanings (Curtin, 2009). The term semiotics comes first from Greek and was used in English before (1676) by Henry Stubbe (1632–1676). The term was spelt as *semeiotics* in a very precise sense to refer to the medical science that it is related to the interpretation of signs (Niu, 2020). Semiotics cannot be considered as just a model or philosophical perspective; it is an independent science that can be handled from multiple philosophical perspective. semiotics shows how the relationship between the sign and the ‘something else’ results from what our society has taught us.

Farhan and Hassan (2025, p.11) state that the contemporary semiotics has two theoretical approaches. The first one is established by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and the second one is by American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914).

Cognitive semiotics

Cognitive Semiotics is an approach that examines meaning making process by integrating methods and insights from semiotics, cognitive science, linguistics and many other fields. Many scholars from different branches of knowledge were very interested in the cognitive semiotics. Basically, the focal point of cognitive science is that the mind is like a computer and its main function to process the information while the meaning is secondary function. According to Ibileye (2021) scholars like Thomas C. Daddesio, Juan Magariños de Morentin, and Per Aage Brandt argued that the cognitive semiotics shows the meaning explicitly unlike the traditional semiotics it combines all disciplines by using different conceptual and experimental methods.

Multimodal discourse

When people communicate with each other they use different modes of communication to make meaning. The multimodality “refers to the multiplicity of semiotic resources within a particular artifact or event. It insists on combination and integration in semiosis, rather than on modes working in isolation” (Gibbons, 2012, p. 5 as cited in Jamil, 2022). So, the multimodality, as it is illustrated by Al-Saedi (2025, p. 326), does not depend on just language, it includes other forms of communications, these forms are image, gesture, gaze, and posture. He also explains that the verbal element of caricatures can help to understand the meanings behind the caricatures. Forceville and Eggertsson (2009) put forward a comprehensive explanation of multimodal metaphor i.e. “a metaphor that is constructed by the joint participation of more than two modalities” (Wang, 2022, p. 543). Forceville (2009) extended the list of modes to include written and spoken signs, sounds, music tastes, smells, touch and pictorial signs. Alahmadi (2022, p. 621) stated that all modes of communication like spoken and written language, pictures whether still or moving can be referred as mode as shown in Fig. 1.

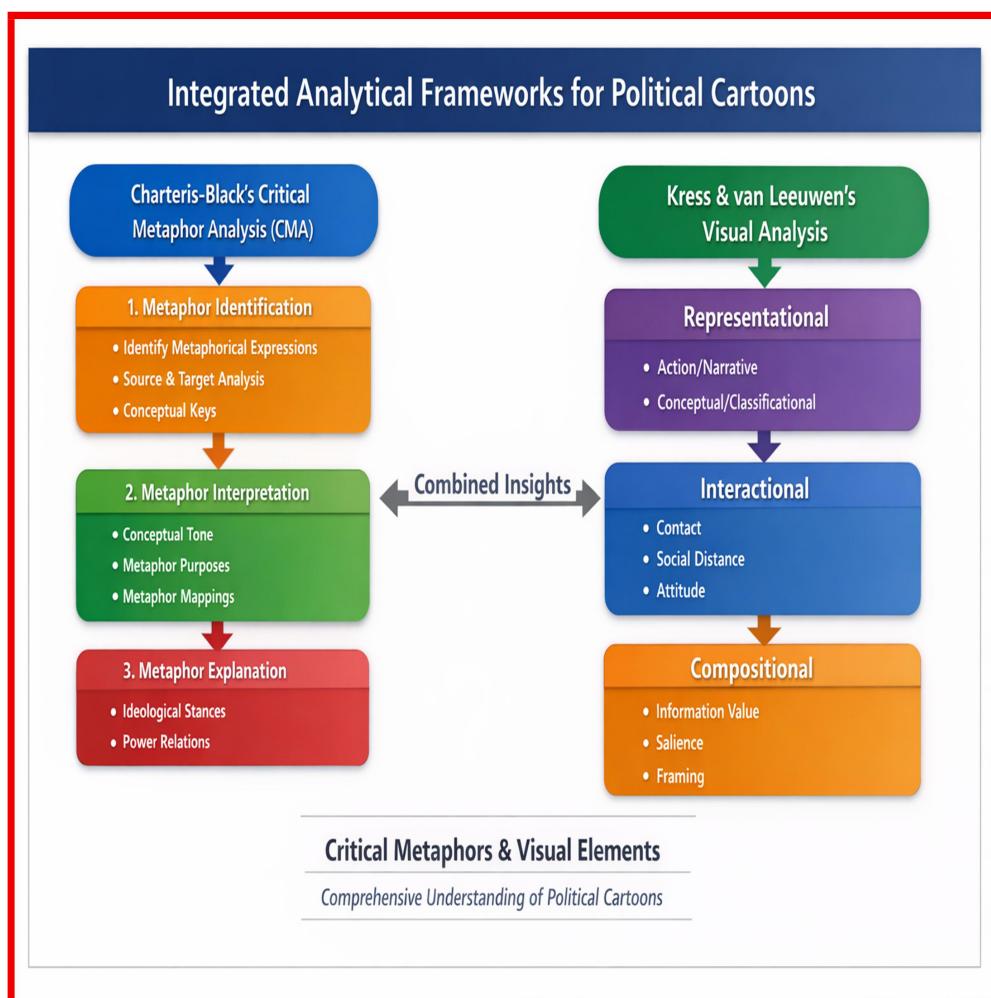


Fig. 1. The adopted model.

Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) examine in their book *“The Grammar of Visual Design”* the ways in which texts, photographs, images, and other semiotic modes work together to convey a range of meanings. They suggest that the principles of linguistic analysis can be applied to visual communication. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) have been considered as foundational in multimodal studies. They employ a contextual method that places emphasis on the role of ideology in visual design. This approach involves analyzing key concepts in visual design through the lens of textual analysis (Fattah & Hussein, 2025).

1. Caricature no. 1: Wars



<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/GINwSqaXMAAWc4U?format=jpg&name=medium>

1- Charteris-Black's Model (2004)

This caricature is drawn by A.F. Branco which was published on twitter at 2025. In this caricature, the words in this line, "I'M RUNNING LOW ON SOLDIERS, I NEED SOME OF YOURS", have ideological meanings (Human beings are treated as fuel for war and stripped of their humanity). The source domain is the concept of stock or supply-demand system. Caricature target domain is the lack or shortage of soldiers and military support for Ukraine. These domains forming together combine to form conceptual metaphors such as *soldiers are merchandise*.

The interpretation of metaphor done through interpreting conceptual metaphor tones, purposes and mapping. Zelenskyy speaks with a mixture of sarcasm, seriousness with bittersweet ironical message. It takes a dire tone as he is reporting the truth about needing more soldiers, but speaks as though it is "business". Mapping connects wars and lack of soldiers with shortages on stock. The metaphor is based on the concept of the military as a resource that can be asked for or moved.

Ideologically, this metaphor conveys a position of complete dependence on the super-power and portrays the United States as the provider of military resources while Ukraine appears as the weak state in need of support.

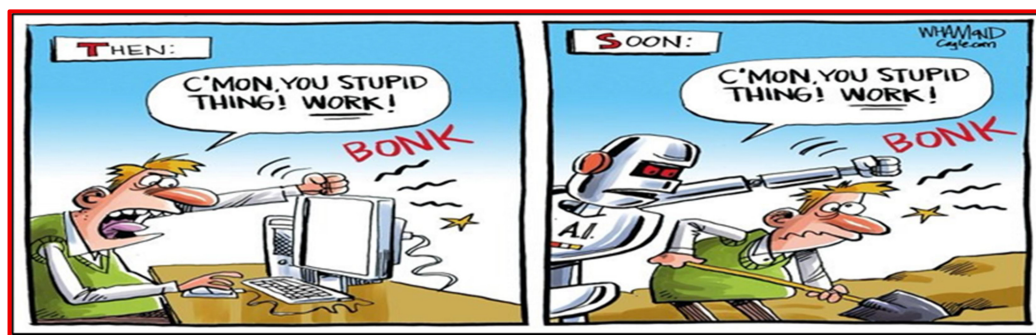
2- Multimodal Discourse Theory by Kress and van Leeuwen (2021)

Representational meaning in this caricature is divided into (action) narrative process and conceptual process. Zelenskyy is actor the one who works meat grinder in narrative process. The so-called minced meat soldiers regarded goal (transactional). This narrative process consists of reactional process Zelenskyy is the reactor, looks at Trump (phenomenon) and Trump gazes or reacts towards the machine (phenomenon). The classificational process showing that all the participants are presidents while the symbolic process reveals that the grinder is the war itself and a destroyer of a human life.

The interactive meaning is created through contact, social distance, and attitude (point of view). The participants are not making eye contact with the viewer. Zelensky's gaze creates the image of offer. The image is a medium- close shot style in the caricature. Because they are two presidents, they appear from a great (or social) distance which creates relation of respect with the viewer. From horizontal angle, the viewer engages in this political event not just spectator, and from the vertical eye -level angle, the viewer and the participants have equal relationship.

The compositional meaning information value, salience, and framing are clearly realized in this caricature. Zelensky in the left (given information) and the grinder in the middle of caricature, they become the most informational value. In contrast, Trump rests on the edge of the caricature (new information) and has less central role. The meat grinder is the most salient visual feature of the caricature as it represents a large-sized object, and human bodies are described graphically in it. With Zelensky controlling the process, he too is highly salient. There are no framing lines that separate Zelensky and meat grinder showing responsibility and accountability for the war. In contrast, we see that Trump is away of the action, this indicates that Trump is not completely within the continuous action.

2. Caricature no. 2: Technology



<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/GAMiZ8uWYAA4kJO?format=jpg&name=large>

1- Charteris-Black's Model (2004)

This caricature is drawn by Dave Whamond which was published on twitter at 2023. The metaphorical expressions, *C'mon you stupid thing! Work!* with words *THEN*, *SOON*, show an ideology of control and performance. The source domain of left side is a stupid person and the target domain is the artificial intelligent, this is reversely seen in the right side of the caricature where human is the target, seen as stupid thing which is the source. This reflects the idea that the machine is a servant.

Hitting the computer, yelling at it, *C'mon, you stupid thing! Work!* the humor comes from the violence towards a mindless inanimate thing. This shows that humans are masters and machine are servants, deserve to abuse when they disobey. In the right side of the caricature the situation is reversed. The AI is repeating the same violent action with the human and the same utterance. In both sections, the primary function is warning. The left side cautions man to not abuse a machine when it breaks, while the right part of the figure represents the caution arising out of complete reliance on the machine.

In both parts, the speaker has the power to speak to an important entity using insult expression of "stupid thing". The left part, human addresses and beats the non-human object, showing unbalanced power relation. The right part shows the same utterance used by different speaker and to different addressee, which means the agency is shifting. Ideologically, the text not only criticize the action of hitting the machine but also the way

of talking, when a person says *you stupid thing*, they use language to insult and control the other which is only worthless, valueless tool.

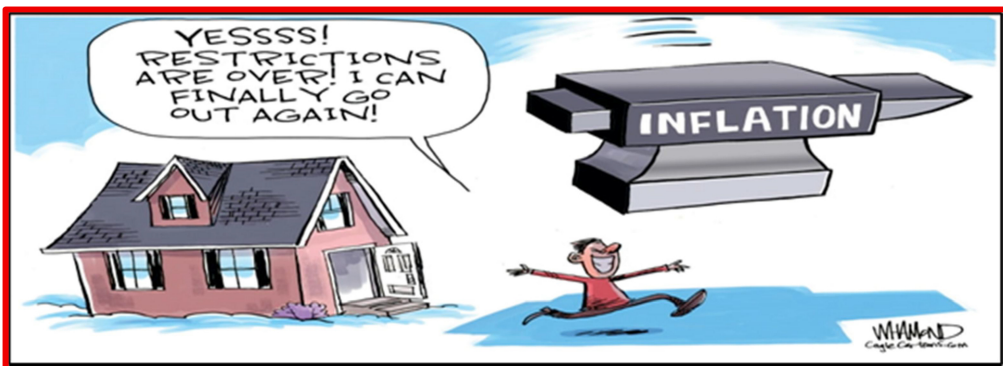
2- Multimodal Discourse Theory by Kress and van Leeuwen (2021)

First in the left of the caricature, the actor is the human and the computer is the goal. The vector emanates from his arm to the computer creating a transactional process. Since the man reacts at the computer (phenomenon) the process here is the reactional. The right-side computer (AI) is actor, and human is the goal. The action (vector) emerges from the computer to human. The computer gazes at the human (phenomenon) constructing reactional process. In conceptual representation, the human and AI represent the ideas about the relationship between the participants. The man represents humanity as a whole while the AI represents technology.

The interactive meaning there is no eye contact between the participants and viewer, creating offer image. Both parts show a medium shot that establishes a moderate social distance between the participants and the viewer. Attitude in this caricature uses frontal horizontal angle, engaging the viewer in the event. The participants portrayed at the eye-level with means the equal with viewers.

In the compositional meaning, the human and the computer are placed in left of the caricature representing (given) in both parts, and at the same time they are new in the right of the caricature, making them most salient elements. The framing lines disconnects between the two different time (past and future), indicating a temporal transition and an ideological comparison between the two situations.

3. Caricature no. 3: Inflation



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1- Charteris-Black's Model (2004)

This caricature is drawn by Dave Whamond which was published on twitter at 2022. The metaphorical expressions are *Yes! Restrictions are over! I can finally go out again!* and the word INFLATION prove that the freedom finally is back, but economic crisis remains and personal liberty does not mean financial stability. The source domain is the constraints such as prison; the target domain is the end of these constraints 'freedom'. The word INFLATION, its source domain refers to something that is very physical, that can break objects and its target domain is the abstract economic concept, something which cannot be seen and usually interpreted by numbers. The relation between them creates conceptual metaphor *financial restrictions forever*.

The interpretation of the conceptual metaphor indicates that the restrictions are lifted as a new sense of freedom and to return to normal life but it appears in some way as

new resident evil. Although the man expresses his temporary joy, the inflation arrives as something more threatening than the restrictions themselves. The negative, warning and critical tones are very clear. The purpose of the verbal element makes the idea of economic sanctions easier for the audience to understand and convince them that these restrictions are gone. The source–target mapping correlates with prison mean being confined.

Governments and the economic policies hide behind the words that are accountable for inflation. The persuasive function reveals what lies behind the verbal text which confines humans to the bare minimum, alluding that there are even more limitations in its way. The word INFLATION which dropped as a heavy anvil on the average man is indicative of this. Ideologically, it reveals the fake hope of the return to “normal life”, providing a critique for the optimism that is behind this sentence.

2- Multimodal Discourse Theory by Kress and van Leeuwen (2021)

This caricature represents a narrative action process. The actor is man (running out his house) from which the vector is originated. In this process, there is no destination to which the action is directed, so it is non-transitional process. The man is looking ahead, he is not focusing on specific thing, showing non-transitional process. The symbolic representation constructs the situation as a state of crisis rather than a temporary event.

An offer image is created since the man does not make eye contact with the viewer. The entire body of the man in the caricature uses the long-shot technique to illustrate the social distance. The caricature is drawn from horizontal frontal angle in the viewer is invited to engage in event, also it presents an idea that the viewer is on the same level with the man and neither one is better or worse than the other.

The position of each element in this caricature gives specific information. The house is placed in the left regarded as given information while the man represents new information. The salient elements are the house and the anvil. The features of the anvil like the large size and the dark color and its raised position with man's movements attract the attention of the viewer. There are no framing lines which means the man and the anvil are connected, making the inflation as a part of everyday life.

4. Caricature no. 4: US government shutting down



<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DwG4TtIV4AISLHl?format=jpg&name=medium>

1- Charteris-Black's Model (2004)

This caricature is drawn by Chris ROY Taylor and which posted on twitter 2018. The status of liberty with the sign that says “US Government Shutdown”, two guys standing and saying things like, *Gee, and I thought begging was bad in Melbourne!* these expressions show

the government failure and economic embarrassment. Begging, or poverty, is meant to be the source domain and the USA Government Shutdown is the target domain. Begging represents weakness, reliance on others, and loss of dignity. The government shutdown represents political and financial crisis. *Government shutdown is begging* works as the conceptual metaphor through the integration between the source and target domains.

This creates a contrast between the magnitude of the Statue of Liberty and the humiliation associated with begging. The purpose is to undermine the US government political and financial deficit also lessening the glory of political government. The metaphor used to arouse the feeling of embarrassment in the recipient. The source domain, which is begging, is mapped to the target domain which is the government shutdown. This caricature does not grab all the characteristics of begging, but the relevant characteristic that is weakness, reliance which are appropriate to the circumstance.

The ideology behind placing the status begging from the men, depicts as a weak person depends on others. It converses the relationship between the citizens and the state. Governments, supposedly, should be powerful and controlled but they appear in a weakness condition.

2- Multimodal Discourse Theory by Kress and van Leeuwen (2021)

This representation is narrative process, the action of begging. The actor is the status, while the goal is the money in plate. The hand movement of the status towards the two men represents vector. It is a transaction-oriented action process. The reacting process is also visible because the reactors are the two men. Two men shall not gaze in the same way. One glances up at the status (phenomenon), and other looks at his wallet (phenomenon) and pulls out the cash.

It means there is no eye contact between the status, participants, and viewer so it presenting offer image not a demand image. The bodies of all participants appear completely because it is medium -long shot, so there is social distance. Frontal horizontal angle depicting the status and the participants the viewer is invited to take part in this situation. In relation to the vertical angle, the participants were presented at equal level, so none of them or the viewer were in higher position than the other.

The status on the left symbolizing the given information. To the right, the presence of the two men representing new and shocking information. The cash in the plate is placed in center of the caricature. The status is salient, enormous, and painted in gray color (basically, it is green but because the caricaturist wants to show how the state stopped doing its jobs, and absence of hope he painted it gray) All the participants appeared near each other; there is no frames or separation among them, they are grouped in one scene to confirm that the unity of the political and social event.

5. Caricature no. 5: Human rights



<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/COKbKwmWcAAHHcm?format=jpg&name=small>

1- Charteris-Black's Model (2004)

This caricature is drawn by Chris ROY Taylor which was published on twitter at 2018. the expression *You are so lucky Aylan!* These words not only directly describe the reality of war but also embody moral and ideological stances. They are not taken literally but more metaphorically. The phrase *lucky Aylan!* stands as the source domain (Aylan was a two-year-old Syrian boy of Kurdish ethnic background whose image made global headlines after he drowned on 2 September 2015 in the Mediterranean Sea). The target domain is the unfair media recognition.

To interpret the conceptual metaphor *media attention is luck*, luck in this sense refers to the fame that he gained. The caricaturist portrays Aylan to emphasize that there are also other victims who were not as fortuitous to receive media coverage that he receives as a victim of the war. Another dead child speaks in tragic, ironic and very sad tone that no one care about them. While lucky is basically associated with life, and success but here it comes with death used by a dead child. The purpose of “*You are so lucky*”, *Aylan*’ is to denounce media bias as Aylan has become international icon because of the media attention to his death but there are nameless, faceless and unpitied dead. The mapping of the concept of luck in the source domain to the unfair media recognition in the target domain is done via the word lucky.

The caricature criticizes media bias and selective sympathy. It exposes ideologically created victims that stay in the public eye and victims that disappear from it. Aylan is a victim who received fame internationally, the other children are victims who did not achieve anything on who they are and what they are, and they do not have a chance to tell their story. They have chosen a side, the media chooses whom to focus on, the sympathy is selective and political not humanitarian.

2- Multimodal Discourse Theory by Kress and van Leeuwen (2021)

The process is the narrative representation, because children (specifically the dead girl) standing and speaking. In this process the actor is the children themselves and the goal Aylan, creating transactional process. The vector is the hand of the dead girl extending towards Aylan. All the children direct their gaze towards Aylan which is the phenomenon. (Reactional transactional process. All the dead children with Aylan belong to the same category, they are killed at the same war, and at the same country, the ones that affected by the war are only the children (classificational, symbolic conceptual representation).

The fact that participants of the caricature do not look to the viewer (they look to each other) creates an offer image. The participants in a medium to long shot, they are no close or far and appear almost completely. Frontal horizontal angle, the whole picture where viewer confronts the characters. the vertical angle (eye-level) implies equality between the viewer and children.

Aylan placed in left part of the caricature as an existing fact and the other children in the right part to indicate that there are many children that no one knows about them, this is introduced as new information. Aylan with his colorful cloths and the many children with wings are the most salient elements. The children (with Aylan) are gathered in one scene to show that there is no difference between them and all of them are victims.

Results

In this section, the researcher presents the findings of the examination of the five political caricatures relying on two approaches to analyze them. [Table 1](#) presents the

Table 1. Occurrence and percentage of visual elements.

Category	Occurrence	percentage
Representation	20	33.3%
Interactional	15	25%
Compositional	25	41.7%
Total	60	100%

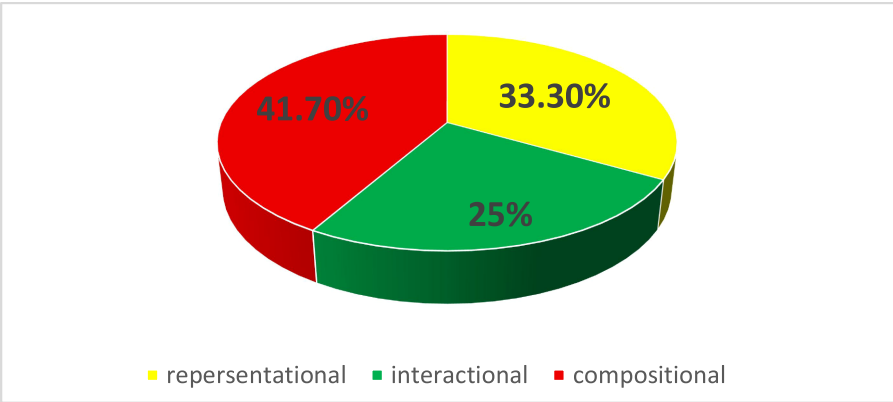


Fig. 2. Percentages of occurrences of visual elements.

findings indicate that caricaturists rely heavily on visual mechanisms to form meaning. Quantitatively, the distribution of visual metafunctions shows that compositional meaning represents the highest proportion (41.7%), followed by representational meaning (33.3%), while interactional meaning accounts for (25%) of the total occurrences across the five caricatures. This statistical distribution approves that the arrangement of visual elements, salience, and information value play a dominant role in shaping the political message, as shown in Fig. 2.

In all five caricatures, critical metaphors have been identified, confirming the importance of metaphor in political discourse. These metaphors are constructed to attract the audience’s attention and enhance the political message in a clear and immediate way. The visual representations are particularly dominant in the selected caricatures, as reflected in the quantitative findings where representational processes constitute 33.3% of the overall analysis. Political actions such as grinding, hitting, running, and begging are visually emphasized to intensify the ideological message. Meanwhile, interactional elements (25%) contribute to engaging the viewer through gaze, social distance, and perspective, although they are less dominant than compositional structures. Overall, the findings demonstrate that visual composition and symbolic arrangement function as the primary tools through which political criticism is conveyed.

Discussion

As shown in Table 1 the findings clarify that the political caricatures are broadly contingent on the critical metaphor to convey ideological meaning in very simple and at the same time in convincing way. The dominance of metaphors, that are associated with war, indicate that the caricaturists often depict the political reality through conflict-based frameworks which increase the emotional interaction and strengthen extreme viewpoints.

Table 2. Qualitative semiotic–cognitive analysis.

Caricature No.	Metaphorical Expression	Conceptual Metaphor (CMA)	Ideological Function	Representational Meaning	Interactional Meaning	Compositional Meaning	Integrated Semiotic–Cognitive Effect
1 (War)	“I’m running low on soldiers”	SOLDIERS ARE MERCHANDISE	Human commodification & political dependence	Narrative action (grinding soldiers)	Offer image, eye-level	Grinder central & highly salient	War framed as mechanical consumption of humans
2 (Technology)	“You stupid thing! Work!”	MACHINE IS HUMAN / HUMAN IS MACHINE	Power shift between human & AI	Transactional action (hitting)	Frontal, equal angle	Framed dual structure (past/future)	Reversal of agency visualizes technological domination
3 (Inflation)	“Restrictions are over!” + INFLATION	ECONOMIC CRISIS IS PHYSICAL ATTACK	Illusion of freedom; economic oppression	Non-transactional action (running)	Long shot, offer	Anvil dominant & threatening	Economic danger materialized as physical threat
4 (Shut-down)	Statue begging	GOVERNMENT IS A BEGGAR	Political weakness & humiliation	Transactional begging process	Medium-long, equal level	Statue (given) vs men (new)	Role inversion destabilizes state authority
5 (Human Rights)	“You are so lucky, Aylan!”	MEDIA ATTENTION IS LUCK	Media bias & selective sympathy	Reactional process (children gazing)	Eye-level, offer image	Aylan salient through color contrast	Emotional irony exposes ideological media framing

Table 3. Quantitative distribution of analytical categories.

Caricature Theme	Representational (Freq.)	Interactional (Freq.)	Compositional (Freq.)	Total Visual Elements	Conceptual Metaphor Identified	Ideological Category
War	4	3	5	12	SOLDIERS ARE MERCHANDISE	Power & Dependence
Technology	4	3	5	12	MACHINE IS HUMAN / HUMAN IS MACHINE	Technological Control
Inflation	4	3	5	12	ECONOMIC CRISIS IS PHYSICAL ATTACK	Economic Critique
Government Shutdown	4	3	5	12	GOVERNMENT IS BEGGAR	Political Weakness
Human Rights	4	3	5	12	MEDIA ATTENTION IS LUCK	Media Bias
Total	20	15	25	60	5 Metaphors	5 Ideological Frames

This supports the assumption that metaphor in political caricature not work only as a stylistic tool but as a cognitive and ideological tool. The persuasive and evaluative role of the metaphor in this political caricature are matched with the principles of critical metaphor. Specific metaphors were not neutral, but reflect specific ideological stances through the

events and the political actors. From visual grammar perspective, the spread of narrative representation and high visual clarity explain the importance of visual structure to direct the explanation. The integration of visual acts, symbolic things and the composition show that the meaning in political caricatures is formed through the interaction of cognitive operations. The findings answer the first question in which the political caricaturists rely primarily on critical metaphor as a cognitive tool to transfer the political stances in indirect way. So, the metaphor does not work as a linguistic or visual decorative, but as a reflection of political reality. The caricaturists' main job is to influence in public opinion without the bias being clear to the audience. They seek for emotional impact from the readers. In respect the second question, the analysis shows that these metaphors are not neutral but they reveal that there is implied ideology behind the caricatures. When the caricaturist uses image of war for example, this shows the situation becomes very dangerous. Further researches can expand the data, or researches about how the audience from different cultures can perceive or interpret the visual metaphors as presented in [Table 3](#).

Conclusion

This study asserts that the political caricature is considered a visual multimodal discourse which has high ability to influence ideologically, in which the critical visual metaphor is used as a mechanism to reframe the political issue and to direct the audience's perception. the meaning in the political caricature is built through the semio- cognitive interaction of the caricature, the metaphor and the cultural context. The importance of this study stands out in its practical contribution to enhance critical awareness among the audience, empowering them to dismantle the implied messages, and the ideological bias in political visual discourse. The study in addition presents analytical framework that can be used in further research about the visual political discourse in different contexts or platforms with emphasizing on expanding the data and study on how the audience interact with visual metaphors.

Conflict of interest

The authors assert that there is no conflict of interest concerning the publication of this research. The study was conducted independently without any personal relationships that could have influenced the results or interpretation of the findings.

Author contribution

Sarah Tariq Hashim Conducted all aspects of the research, including conceptualization, methodology, data collection and analysis, and writing the manuscript.

Mahmood Atiya Farhan supervised the research process, provided academic guidance, and reviewed the final manuscript. Both authors approved the final version of the manuscript.

Data availability statement

The data used in this study consist of political caricatures collected from publicly available online sources (Twitter). The caricatures analyzed in this research are accessible through the links provided in the article.

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التفكير عبر الاستعارة النقدية: دراسة سيميائية-معرفية للكاريكاتير السياسي

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الخلاصة

تُعدّ الكاريكاتيرات السياسية وسيلةً فعّالةً لتعبير رسّاميهيها عن مواقفهم وإيصالها إلى الجمهور، إذ تُستخدم لانتقاد الأوضاع السياسية وكشف الأيديولوجيات الضمنية في الخطاب بأسلوب مبسّط. تستكشف هذه الدراسة الاستعارة النقدية ودورها في بناء المعنى الأيديولوجي في الكاريكاتيرات السياسية من منظور سيميائي-إدراكي. وعلى الرغم من كثرة الدراسات في هذا المجال، فإن التفاعل بين العلامات البصرية والاستعارة الإدراكية في تشكيل التفسير الأيديولوجي لم يحظَ باهتمام كافٍ. تسعى الدراسة للإجابة عن سؤالين رئيسيين: كيف يُوظّف رسّامو الكاريكاتير الاستعارات النقدية لنقل الأيديولوجيات وتوجيه الرأي العام بصورة غير مباشرة؟ وكيف تعكس هذه الاستعارات الأيديولوجيا الكامنة في الكاريكاتيرات السياسية؟ وتهدف إلى تحليل الكيفية التي تُسهم بها الاستعارات في إنتاج رسائل أيديولوجية محددة والترويج لها، مع الإسهام في تطوير حقل تحليل الاستعارة النقدية عبر تطبيقه على خطاب متعدد الوسائط. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج المختلط (النوعي-الكمي) لتحليل خمس كاريكاتيرات سياسية استناداً إلى نموذج تحليل الاستعارة النقدية (2004) ونموذج القواعد البصرية (2021). وأظهرت النتائج أن الاستعارات اللفظية والبصرية تؤدي وظيفة أيديولوجية وإدراكية، إذ تسهم في تشكيل المعنى السياسي وتوجيه إدراك المتلقي، مما يؤكد أهمية الدمج بين المقاربتين السيميائية والإدراكية في تحليل الخطاب المتعدد الوسائط.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كاريكاتير، معرفي، أيديولوجيا، استعارة، سياسي، سيميائيات.