



## EFL Open Educational College Students' Analysis of Social Semiotics in Kirkuk

فهم وتحليل السيميائية الاجتماعية لطلبة قسم اللغة الإنكليزية كلفة اجنبية في الكلية التربوية المفتوحة فرع كركوك

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### Abstract

Social semiotics play a crucial role in understanding the text; therefore; language is not just verbal in nature. There are various discourse analysis modalities. This study looks at social semiotics and how well EFL students are able to understand texts. For the best knowledge of the researcher, there is no study in this domain.

Key word: social semiotics, multimodal discourse analysis

### الخلاصة

تلعب السيميائية الاجتماعية دوراً حاسماً في فهم النص، لذلك اللغة تعتبر ليست مجرد لفظية بطبيعتها. ولهذا هناك العديد من طرائق تحليل الخطاب. تبحث هذه الدراسة في السيميائية الاجتماعية ومدى قدرة طلاب قسم اللغة الإنكليزية على فهم النصوص. ولأهمية هذا البحث وتميزه لا توجد دراسة مشابهة في هذا المجال.

### Introduction

Instead of focusing on language use, multimodal seeks to highlight the significance of semiotics, such as music, picture, and gesture. Also it emphasizes the process of meaning-making as the outcome of integrating different semiotic modes employed in discourses, the word "multi-semiotic" is used to characterize texts that were written utilizing more than one type of semiotic mode. Therefore, in communication contexts, multimodal consistently emphasizes the reality of mode meanings that are formed by the fusion of other meanings of various modes (Leeuwen, 2011a:549). This study aims at finding out the students' understanding of social semiotics, and their ability to analyze social semiotics. The study hypothesize no statistical difference between students' theoretical mean and the calculated mean of understanding social semiotic, while the limits of this study is a sample of students which has been selected randomly from Kirkuk University/English Department.

#### 1.Multimodal Communicative Acts

Images have been used to do things to, for, or with people: to persuade (advertisements), instruct (patterns for clothing making), explain (diagrams in textbooks), warn (image of a skull and crossbones on a door), and so on. Images have generally been examined as representations rather than as interactions. The types of multimodal communicative acts can be:

##### 1.1Genre and Discourse

Similar to a communicative act, the offers and demands are based on a variety of visual and environmental factors. Additionally, (Chaney, 1996:96) described genres as having three categories of common features (content, shape, and function). The topic of "discourse" is explored in social semiotics as opposed to "genre," which is the subject under which it is studied. According to Leeuwen (1992), it is undoubtedly true that non-linear texts, even those that are quite straightforward, give readers more reading flexibility, but this freedom is not absolute. For example, it does not include the semantic linkage between the pieces of information. Nevertheless, the connection between the words and the images in the box is explicative since the words refer to the images as a "in other words" or "in other semiotics link" or, alternatively, as a specification because the images offer more information.

## **1.2 Style and Discourse**

"Style" is the key to comprehending how people express their identities and beliefs. There are numerous types of style, including as:-

### **1.2.1 Lifestyles**

Lifestyle combines social and individual style. On the one hand, it is social and a group style, according to (Chaney, 1996:12), even if the groups it sustains are geographically dispersed, dispersed across the world's cities, and characterized by shared consumer behaviors (shared taste, patterns of leisure time activities, and attitudes toward important social issues), rather than by stable social positionings like class, gender, and age, or relatively stable activities like jobs. Given that outward manifestations are used as social cues for lifestyle, almost any combination of attitudes can be conveyed through attire, jewelry, home decor, and other outward manifestations.

### **1.2.2 Social style**

The concept of "social style" focuses on the social determination of style, the idea being that it expresses not only our individual personality and attitudes, but also our social position, or who we are in terms of stable categories like "class, gender, age, social relations, and what we do in terms of the socially regulated activities we engage in and the roles we play within them" (Brown & Gilman;1960). Social style is not psychologically or internally driven, nor does it depend on how we are feeling or how stable and consistent our character is. It is externally motivated and influenced by uncontrollable social forces. In the sociolinguistics and stylistics of the 1960s and 1970s, social style began to assume a greater significance. There is currently an increasing interest in additional language variants, such as those associated to socioeconomic class or differences in power and position, in addition to the usual focus in regional language varieties. Sociolect and register are two other words that are used to describe how the concept of style, which had previously been so closely linked to personal style, has evolved into the concept of language variation. (Crystal&Davy;1969) Bernstein (1972) and (Labov;1972a) assert that stylistic elements evolved into variety markers and sense of style into an "instinctive knowledge of linguistic appropriateness," awareness of social norms, and the ability to adhere to them. Due to its emphasis on the application of semiotic resources in social contexts, this viewpoint had an impact on social semiotics. As a result, Kress (1988:126) defined style as including both the arrangement of linguistic elements in text and the effects created in the intricate interaction of the text's writer, text, and consumer, in their particular social positionings., and Hodge & Kress (1988:82) saw style as a *meta sign, which refers to a marker of social allegiance (solidarity, group identity and ideology), and made accent the main symbol for style, as "the Australian accent, which they related not only to Australian speech, but also to Australian (male) hair styles"*.

### **1.2.3 Advertising style**

Strategies for advertising were evolved to reflect the ideals and identities of the consumer society as well as to sell goods and services. It was the first language variation identified as "corporate," and it was crucial to what Fairclough (1993) named the "marketization of discourse." The consumer society and advertising trends are both maturing at this time. It is quickly encroaching on other genres, such as magazine advertorials and the growing lifestyle sections of the print media, and transcending the boundaries of genuine commercials. (Chaney,1996:152)

### **1.2.4 Conversational style**

In order to add a sense of informality to the stylistic mix, conversational style is also drawn to multicultural style. Conversation is just two people speaking privately to each other. However, since the 1920s, elements of conversational style have been systematically and purposefully incorporated in public communication, where they can create the illusion of equality for forms of communication that are actually profoundly unequal, such as political communication and media communication, where viewers and listeners are unable to respond. Cardiff (1989) has shown how, in the late 1920s, the BBC quite deliberately created a conversational style for radio presenters, complete with completely staged pauses and mistakes, in order to appear more "natural" and to ease the new intrusion of public discourse into private living rooms.

## **2. Multimodal discourse**

Van Leeuwen (2005) points out that the combination of various semiotic modes, such as language and image in a communicative artifact or event, is referred to as multimodality. A more specific definition is that "Multiple semiotic elements, including language, gesture, clothes, architecture, proximity lighting, movement, gaze, camera angle, and others, interact in multimodal discourse." (O'Halloran, et al.; 2011). From the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis, Jewitt (2009) puts forward that multimodal approaches emphasize that

communication and representation are about more than just words and pay attention to the full range of communicational forms people use, including image, gesture, gaze, posture, and others, as well as the connections between them. Jewitt (2009) thinks that there are four interconnected theoretical assumptions underpin multimodality:

- The first is that language is a component of a multimodal ensemble, and communication and representation constantly rely on a variety of modes, each of which has the ability to contribute equally to meaning.
- The second is that it is believed that each mode in a multimodal ensemble realizes a unique communicative task. In order to realize social purposes, multimodality makes the assumption that all modes, like language, have been formed by their cultural, historical, and social usage.
- The third is that humans choose and arrange different modes to create meaning.
- The fourth is that, like speech, the meanings of signs constructed from multimodal semiotic resources are social.

Kress (2012) also holds the same view and thinks that a multimodality approach frames each mode as its own field or domain. Members of a social group in a certain time see them as one unified cultural resource for meaning-making.

### **3. Social Semiotics**

It is focused on meaning producers and meaning creation. It examines the means of communication and the mechanisms of dissemination that individuals create and employ to represent their worldview and sculpt their power dynamics with others. To explore the production and diffusion of discourse across the range of social and cultural contexts in which meaning is formed, it focuses on qualitative, fine-grained examination of records of meaning making, such as "artifacts," "texts," and "transcripts." Since the release of Michael Halliday's Language as Social Semiotic in 1978, other "versions" of social semiotics have been developed. (Gumperz;1999)

### **4. Population and Sample of the Study**

Best & Khan (2006:16), define population as any collection of individuals who share one or more characteristics. An often-used definition of a sample is a small portion of the population that is chosen at random for observation and analysis. To represent the population, a mix of male and female students are selected at random. The sample has been chosen randomly and it consists of thirty (30) students out of the entire population in the English Department / Open Educational College during the academic year (2025-2026). The number of the pilot study is (10) students (5 male, 5 female) as shown in Table (1.1)

**Table (1.1) The sample of EFL Students according to Stages Factor**

|                       | No. of the total pilot study | No. of the Male pilot study | No. of the Female pilot study | No. of study sample |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> stage | 4                            | 2                           | 2                             | 12                  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage | 3                            | 2                           | 2                             | 8                   |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> stage | 2                            | ---                         | 1                             | 6                   |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> stage | 1                            | 1                           | ----                          | 4                   |
| Total                 | 10                           | 5                           | 5                             | 30                  |

The t-test for two independent samples formula has been used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the level of performance for students' scores with regard to recognition and production Level. It has been found that the mean 18.03 and calculated t-value 0.038 at the recognition level while the mean at the production level 10.67 whereas the calculated t-value 0.039 at degree of freedom 58 and 0.05 level

of significance. The total result is that there is a significant difference between recognition and production level on behalf of recognition level as in table (1.2).

**Table (1.2) Comparison of Students' total Scores at Recognition and Production Level**

| Items | No. of students | Mean  | Std. Deviation | Calculated T. | Tabulated T. | D.F. |
|-------|-----------------|-------|----------------|---------------|--------------|------|
| Rec.  | 15              | 18.03 | 8.44           | 0.038         | 2.00         | 58   |
| Pro.  | 15              | 10.67 | 7.43           | 0.039         |              |      |
| Total | 30              | 27.77 | 12.97          | 0.36          |              |      |

## 5. Conclusion

This study shows that there is no statistical difference between students' theoretical mean and the calculated mean of understanding social semiotic. It also finds out that students understand social semiotics but their ability to analyze social semiotics are not at the best level so they need more practice to develop and improve their understanding.

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