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Language behind Selected Processions in Nineveh Spring Festival: A Socio-Semiotic Approach

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Abstract

Language is a system of transferring ideas, experiences, and culture. It is an exchange of information by linguistic and non-linguistic messages. Nineveh Spring Festival (2023) involves language and other social expressive modalities. They are carried out through the mobile processions. Each procession represents a logo for a specific directorate in Nineveh. The focus directed towards how these processions represent social aspects. The aim is to analyze the multimodal discourse of the processions and provides the interpretations of the linguistic terms, the statues, the figures, and the pictures which are carried out. The investigation examines these social practices as resources to construct meanings and communicate information with reference to their social context. Multimodality and social semiotics have been made by many foreign linguists. They focus on how people in a society always communicate and pass on information through the co-employment of semiotic resources. This research uses Halliday's three semantic metafunctions (textual, interpersonal, and ideational). The investigation provides the concepts of these verbal and non-verbal messages and the reasons behind their uses. A clarification, the purpose, and the connotations of these variety of measures as well as the multiple modes on the processions with their relationship to Nineveh culture are given as such.

اللغة في مواكب مختارة من مهرجان الربيع في نينوى: منهج سيميائي اجتماعي

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جامعة الموصل، كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية، قسم اللغة الإنكليزية، الموصل، العراق.

المستخلص

اللغة هي نظام لنقل الأفكار والخبرات والثقافة وتبادل المعلومات من خلال الرسائل اللغوية وغير اللغوية. يتضمن مهرجان ربيع نينوى (2023) لغة بالإضافة إلى مجموعة من العلامات الاجتماعية التي تم جمعها في مواكب المهرجان المتنقلة. يمثل كل موكب شعاراً لمديرية معينة. يتجه التركيز في البحث نحو كيفية تمثيل هذه المواكب للجوانب الاجتماعية. يهدف البحث إلى تحليل الخطاب المتعدد الوسائط للمواكب وتقديم تفسيرات للمصطلحات اللغوية والتماثيل والأشكال والصور التي حملت على المواكب. تم تحليل هذه الممارسات الاجتماعية كموارد لبناء المعاني وتوصيل المعلومات مع الإشارة إلى سياقها الاجتماعي. وقد استخدم منهج متعدد الوسائط والعلامات الاجتماعية من قبل العديد من اللغويين الأجانب ومن خلاله ركزوا على كيفية تواصل الناس في المجتمع دائماً ونقل المعلومات من خلال الاستخدام المشترك للموارد السيميائية. يستخدم هذا البحث الوظائف الدلالية الثلاثة لهاليداي (الفكرية والشخصية والنصية). يقدم البحث كذلك مفاهيم هذه الرسائل اللفظية وغير اللفظية وأسباب استخدامها، كما يوضح الغرض منها ودلالاتها، بالإضافة إلى الأساليب المتعددة المستخدمة في المواكب وعلاقتها بثقافة محافظة نينوى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سيميائية، مهرجان، لغة، فكرية، موكب.

1. Introduction

The present study attempts to investigate symbols, figures, and shapes with linguistic items used in the design of selected processions in Nineveh Spring Festival (2023). The aim is to examine the contents of the processions and find the messages that are being conveyed by them. It is conducted to draw attention to the range of forms and breadth of research in which multimodal expressions have been recognized. The festival is an annual event that is organized materially, culturally, socially and historically. Most of Nineveh directorates participate in it and provide processions with intentional ideas, expressing intertextual meanings. The designs are made depending on aspects related to the culture, the history, and the civilization of Nineveh. Certain discursive themes are privileged in reflecting its culture. Hence, meaning is made with particular semiotic resources. The festival provides social norms and conventions that inform its use in context. Different processions are moved in front of public and live broadcast via television and social media providing messages.

Socio-semiotic study is an instance of ‘multimodality’. It is a theoretical and methodological diverse field and context-dependent. It is established to bear and enrich linguistic accounts of social life (Lyons, 2016). Meaning can be constructed multimodally through the use of semiotic resources, specifically language with visual means, such as figures or shapes. Kinds of used multimodal resources are included within the decoration of the mobile processions under investigation. According to Bateman (2012) socio-semiotic approach is concerned with these multimodal means in a variety of contexts. It deals with multiple modes that reflect meanings such as writing, images, shapes and others with their intermodal relationship. The combination, selection, and configuration of these examples of different modes are socially shaped and create cultural significances to a specific society. Hence, each procession is organized to construct and to convey aspects of the civilization in Nineveh.

Depending on Halliday's systemic functional theory (1978), Kress (2009) indicates that there are three criteria have to be fulfilled to be recognized as modes. First, the ability to provide ideational function in which the representation of events, states, or actions can be interpreted. The second is an interpersonal function which is embodied in the participants who have social

relations in a given communicative act. The last criterion is a textual function which is represented by both of the above. It needs to be clarified as coherent.

2. Socio-Semiotic: Theoretical Visions

Socio-semiotic approach is adopted by linguists in discourse. They recognize that the exchange of ideas is constructed by using a number of planes including verbal, non-verbal and visual communication. They are realized through semiotic resources and language is being only one of them to create meaning. Its purpose is to analyze body position and the ideas of multimodal flow of interaction (Jewitt, 2009).

Sociosemiotics is a sign study. It deals with specific and strategic ways of designing social formations. Its correspondences with pragmatics in which the intended meaning is focused on. It relies on Barthesian semiology drawing on the work of Halliday (Cobley & Randviir, 2009). Halliday's socio-semiotic theory of language stresses the unity of the text represented by language, context whether it is linguistic or non-linguistic, and social structure. In this theory language is seen as a unique system of signs with a social function. It is capable of expressing the meanings which all other sign systems can be made by the producer(s) of the message (Halliday, 1978).

According to Halliday, Language and society are unified concepts and need to be investigated as a whole. Hence, language, the means by which people interact, should be considered as a social semiotic in a social context. Hodge and Kress (1988) focus on the uses of semiotic systems in social practice. They assume that social semiotic is a dynamic process. This process is represented by the effects of production and reproduction, reception, and circulation of meaning in all forms, used by all kinds of communication. Hence, meaning is not determined by inflexible structures, or predefined cultural codes but by multiple modes. This social phenomenon, such as the festival under investigation, in its sources, functions, contexts and effects provides social meanings constructed through the full range of semiotic forms, semiotic texts and semiotic practices. They link the language and communication as semiotic through the production and the reception of meanings. Each producer of a message reflected through a procession in the festival relies on its recipients for it to function as intended meanings. This requires recipients to have a knowledge of a set of messages on

another level, messages that provide specific information about Nineveh civilization.

3. Nineveh and Spring Festival

Nineveh is the spirit of places in which cultures and nationalities are diverse. It is represented by the antiquities of Assyria, Nimrud, Hatra, and ancient Mosul . It has many religious monuments, including mosques, monasteries, and churches (Habitat, 2016). Nineveh is liberated by ISIS gangs (groups of darkness) in 2014. They targeted buildings and people alike. Nineveh, as a brilliance, history, and great civilization, has witnessed a movement in reconstruction. It has the perfect will and firm determination to restore its cultural identity at many pivotal junctures and times in the governorate's history. The local government, its institutions, and its people have their role in restoring the civilization, and reviving what has been lost. Throughout the Spring Festival, Nineveh redefines its contemporary identity, after the sacrificial future which has planned by its enemies. In the radiance of spring, we have a permanent appointment with a new major artistic, cultural, and touristic demonstration. Throughout the linguistic and non-linguistic messages carried on the processions, the festival brings to mind the cultural role of Nineveh and the memory of its civilization. A large number of mobile processions reflect artistic events depicting love and goodness. In each procession there are varieties of social expressive modalities including linguistic terms and figures. There are systematic structures of unfurled beauty on the celebration platform. Different messages are reflected throughout the mirror of the Spring Festival (Al-Dabbagh, 2023).

4. Methodology

The study employs a qualitative descriptive research design, utilizing a dataset of selected processions participated in Nineveh Spring Festival 2023.

4.1. Research Design and Data Collection

In order to do socio-semiotic research, a systematic description of modes and their semiotic resources as well as a wide range of different types of data can be applicable. Video recording is a method of collection and handling the data. Observations are required for each type of these data. The observation of Nineveh Spring Festival (2023) gives access to a large amount of details which

can be analyzed. The video recording to each procession can be viewed repeatedly to interpret the contents and the purpose behind the use of each of them. The following processions are selected depending on the language written on them and the style of their typical semiotic resources:

1. Mosul University Procession
2. Tourism Authority Procession
3. Nineveh Agricultural Procession

A picture of each procession is provided with mention to their content concerning the linguistic items, the figures, the shapes and the colors. Two sections are given to separate between verbal and non-verbal modes.

4.2. Model of the Analysis

Multimodality social semiotic approach is a comprehensive analytical framework based on Halliday's three Metafunctions (1978): textual, interpersonal, and ideational functions. This research depends on socio-semiotic theory of language which focuses on meaning-making by varieties of social expressions and linguistic items. It sets out to investigate how modes of communication is used in response to social and cultural demands. Multimodal investigation of interpretation and interaction depends on the environments of each procession. Pragmatic concepts are used in the analysis to provide full understanding of the implicit and explicit meanings. They are denotation, which gives the literal meaning, and connotation which gives intended meaning to each lump used in the processions (Yule, 1996).

4.3. Data Analysis

The selected processions are investigated. The varieties of their verbal and non-verbal expressions are designed to provide specific messages. A picture of each procession is given with deep look to the parts that constitute meanings. Two sections are drawn to view every sign concerning linguistic items, figures, and shapes. Denotation and connotation of them are viewed practically. Using *Oxford Dictionary*, a denotation can be mentioned for each of the verbal expression under investigation. The analyzes of the procession as a whole is conducted throughout the Halliday's three metafunctions: textual, interpersonal, and ideational functions.

4.3.1. Mosul University Procession

The University of Mosul dates back to the year 1967. It seeks to achieve the goals of the higher education in Iraq, which are represented by preparing scientifically qualified national cadres and supporting the scientific research movement and community service. It teaches its students how to keep their university in safe. During the ISIS occupation (2014), a significant damage is caused to the university's infrastructure. The verbal and non-verbal messages used on the procession reflect the efforts of its cadres and students to reconstruct the university. The following discussion represents the structure analysis of the procession concerning verbal and non-verbal expressions used in it.



4.3.1.1. Textual Analysis

4.3.1.1.1. Verbal Expressions

In the front of the procession there is a shape of a book. It is opened and a verse of poetry is viewed. It carries the title (Mosul is the Phoenix). The following is the text of the verses with its translation:

قومي من النوم يا حدياء غاسلة

في دجلة بعد نوم وجهك الترابا

الموصليون ما هانوا ولا وهنوا

بصبرهم في الدواهي اذهلوا النوبا
قومي من النوم يا عنقاء وانتقضي
على رمادك قولي كن يكن لها
والله لن يهتدي نور لأعيننا
حتى نعيد لك الأمس الذي نهبا

The Translation of the Verses:

Get up from sleep, you Hadbaa' washing
In the Tigris, after your face has slept in dust
The Mosulyoon neither destabilized nor weakened
by their patience, in the troubles astonishing the world
Arise from sleep, you phoenix, and rise
upon your ashes, and say, Be, it will be a flame
we swear there will be no light for our eyes
until we return to you the history that has been plundered

the Analysis of the Verses

- Denotational meaning: the poet ask the city of Mosul (hadbaa') to wake up and wash its face by the water of Tigris after the dust that covers its face. He describes people in Mosul (the Mosulyoon) as a powerful and didn't be weak in any time. They are staying in power although the troubles they have faced, amazing people around the world. The poet asks Mosul to wake up and come to life as phoenix which returns to life after its death. It should wake up from its ruins and it have to say (be) to the ruins, then they will be blaze. The poet tell Mosul that there is a darkness in the eyes of the Mosulyoon until they can give back the civilization of Nineveh that has been destroyed.

- Connotational meaning: The verses are written on the opened book which has been put in front of the procession of the University of Mosul. The implicated meaning of this verse is that although the destruction of Nineveh (its city is Mosul) after the liberation of it by ISIS gangs in 2014, people share its reconstruction. The city is described as a phoenix which implies that Mosul has

been returned to life after its death. The death that is caused by ISIS gangs. The poet swears that he will still in a darkness until Mosul returns to its life, its culture, and its civilization. The presence of the opened book at the front of the procession with the above written verses indicate that the essential goal of the university is to teach its students the importance of the reconstruction of the university in particular and Mosul in general.

4.3.1.1.2. Textual Analysis of Non-verbal Expressions

The following table views non-verbal expressions used in the procession of the University of Mosul

Table (1): Non-verbal expressions in University of Mosul procession.

Non-verbal items	Denotation	Connotation
Opened Book with written verses of poetry under the title (Mosul is the phoenix)	The book is a printed work bound within covers.	The book represents education which is the university's primary goal. The poetry indicates the importance of teaching students how Mosul will not die after the devastation inflicted on it by ISIS gangs, but will rise and live like a phoenix that rises from its ashes to resume its life again.
The shape of phoenix.	A mythical bird of great beauty. It is a legendary immortal bird. It regenerates or born again cyclically.	The university revives its life again after death. It has been risen from ashes.
Mosul University logo as a necklace in the throat of the phoenix.	The logo denotes the public identification of the university.	The presence of the logo of the university in the throat of the phoenix is evidence of the analogy between this legendary bird and the university.
The shape of the central library beside the shape of the grand hall	Two important buildings of the university.	Mosul University is represented by the reconstruction of two important buildings that were completely destroyed after ISIS gangs. They are now returning to life again since the phoenix is carrying them by its legs while it is returning to life.
Stones	Building material	The stones symbolize the level of the destruction that the university has reached as a result of the ISIS occupation after 2014.
Hand holding a pen	Part of human carries thin object used for writing.	Pen symbolizes education, the freedom of thought, and succeed. The hand stands for the responsibility of each person in Mosul to write what have been to Mosul after 2014.

4.3.1.2. Interpersonal Function

The message is directed from the University of Mosul as a sender. to the receivers. The receivers are the attendance of the festival and media followers.

4.3.1.3. Ideational Function

The procession has been established on the basis of the rise of the University of Mosul after the destruction caused by ISIS gangs. It is represented by the symbol of the phoenix. Hence, the university stands from the rubble and ashes of its destroyed buildings as a result of the liberation after 2014. The Central University Library and the University Theater are considered ones of the largest and most important university buildings. They play a major role in attracting intellectuals, students, and researchers of science and art. They have been completely burned after the occupation. The verses connote the role of people in the city and how they share the responsibility of its reconstruction. The stones cover the roof of the procession. They are placed under the reconstructed buildings. It indicates the degree of the devastation of the university. The shape of the phoenix represents the prosperity of the university and its return to life. The hand which is holding the pen is a sign of the responsibility of every individual in the university to write what has happen and how it has been returned again.

4.3.2. Tourism Authority Procession

The tourism sector is one of the most important basic resources supporting the national economy. It works on comprehensive and sustainable development. It encourages the role of tourism investment. It organizes the work of the tourism companies to make the tourism sector more capable of developing itself and making it attract tourists, providing opportunities for the unemployed and adding new financial revenues to the state and to the society. The following discussion represents the analysis of the structure of the procession concerning verbal and non-verbal expressions used in the procession.



4.3.2.1. Textual Analysis of Verbal Expressions

The following phrase is written at the front of the procession:

السياحة ربيع الموصل الثالث

Translation: Tourism is the third spring in Mosul

- Denotational meaning: It is a nominal phrase means that the social phenomenon which entails the movement of tourists in Mosul is considered as a third spring in this city. It is known that Nineveh and its center Mosul have two springs one comes after winter season and the second comes after summer. Hence, Nineveh is a touristic city which denotes the third spring embodied in tourism sector. The phrase means that tourists in Mosul will enjoy warm atmosphere, in the time flowers begin to bloom and plants begin to grow. Rain falls facilitating the growth of plants.

- Connotational meaning: the phrase connotes the goal of the Tourism authority. It seeks to make tourism the third spring in Mosul. This goal is written in the front side of the procession in Nineveh Spring Festival conveying a message to all attendance that tourism in Mosul is highly developed and becomes a destination for tourists.

4.3.2.1. Textual Analysis of Non-verbal Expressions

The following table views non-verbal expressions used in the procession of the Tourism Authority. It is inspired by several historical and archaeological symbols from different parts and stages of the country.

Table (2) Non-verbal expressions in Tourism Authority Procession.

Non-verbal items	Denotation	Connotation
The ziggurat	An ancient Mesopotamian temple tower.	Mosul is a historical city and has archaeological components to be touristic destination.
Lion of Babylon	A monument for the Goddess Ishtar.	Iraq is a historical nation and has archaeological components to be touristic destination.
historic city of Hatra	The sacred place stands for the temple of the sun god Shamash.	Mosul is a historical city and has archaeological components to be touristic destination.
Logo	A graphic mark promote public identification and recognition.	The identification of the authority and the belonging of the procession to it.
chamomile flowers	white plant with yellow color used to make healthy drink.	represent the eternal spring of the city of Mosul. They are sacred to the Assyrians civilization to indicate the fertility and growth of Nineveh Governorate which is the capital of the most ancient civilizations.
Flag of Iraq	A piece of cloth	Symbol of Iraq nation

4.3.2.2. Interpersonal Function of Tourism Authority Procession

The message is directed from the Tourism Authority as a sender. It is conveyed to the attendance of the festival and the media followers as receivers.

4.3.2.3. Ideational Function of Tourism Authority Procession

The above social semiotic parts and the multimodal structure of the procession provides a message to be told about Nineveh. The front part of the procession tells that tourism is considered as a third spring in this governorate. It has all components to be a place of interest. It is inspired by several historical and archaeological symbols from different parts and stages of the country. The

ziggurat, deeply rooted in Iraqi history, forms the base of the procession, with the Lion of Babylon on top. In the background of the procession is the historic city of Hatra. In addition, there is the Spring Festival logo on the side of the procession. At the top is the logo of the Tourism Authority, the sponsor of tourism in Iraq. The procession is surrounded by chamomile flowers, which represent the eternal spring of the city of Mosul, and at the top stands the flag of the great Iraq.

4.3.3. Nineveh Agricultural Directorate Procession

The Nineveh Agriculture Directorate was established in 1958 as the Agrarian Reform Directorate in Nineveh Governorate. Nineveh Governorate is one of the important agricultural governorates and it is one of the detrimental governorates located on irrigated areas. it is called the bread basket of Iraq. Through the participation of the directorate in the festival, a procession is designed with verbal and non-verbal expressions to convey specific messages. The following discussion represents the analysis of the structure of the procession concerning verbal and non-verbal expressions used in the procession.

4.3.3.1. Textual Analysis of Verbal Expressions

The following phrases are written at the front and the two sides of the procession.



الزراعة مستقبل الوطن ودرع الحضارات

Translation: Agriculture is the future of the nation and the shield of civilization.

Denotational meaning: the sentence structure and the selection of the words shed light to the crucial role of agriculture. By using a combination of clear syntax, a strong message is conveyed effectively about the importance of agriculture in protecting civilization and country development.

Connotational meaning: the utterance is raised by Nineveh Agricultural Directorate in the Spring Festival to say that agriculture in Nineveh is a symbol of the region's identity. It is closely connected to Nineveh civilization and its history. The utterance ensures food security for people in the city in specific and in the country in general. Hence, agriculture is essential for the stability of society and it promotes economic development.

زراعتنا هي أمننا الغذائي وتبدأ من أم الربيعين.

Translation: Our Agriculture is our nutritional security and it starts from Umm Alrabeayn.

- Denotational meaning: the importance of agriculture is also emphasizes in this sentence. The use of the possessive pronoun "our" denotes inclusivity as the speaker conveys the sense of its affiliation to the country. Hence, the community appreciates the values of the agriculture and the security of nutrition. The phrase "Umm Alrabeayn" refers to Nineveh. This naming is come from the fact that the city has two springs one comes after winter season and the second comes after summer. So, Nineveh is the heartland and the center of agriculture in Iraq.

- Connotational meaning: the utterance implies that Nineveh is a source of positive change in Iraq. A connection between agriculture and cultural heritage is conveyed. A sense of people's respect in Nineveh to agriculture and its importance is provided. A shared responsibility in developing food production in the city is indicated throughout the selected words. Hence, the directorate wants to say that it is proud to have a city like "Umm Alrabeayn" in Iraq as a starting point for economic and cultural development and prosperity.

Textual Analysis of Non-verbal Expressions

The following table views non-verbal expressions used in the procession of Nineveh Agricultural Directorate.

Table (3): Non-verbal Expressions in Nineveh Agricultural Directorate Procession.

Non-verbal items	Denotation	Connotation
Tractor	a vehicle that is designed for agricultural tasks.	a symbol of hard labor and physical strain which lead to the progress. it represents farming heritage and agriculture roots.
cob of corn	the central part of an ear of corn.	it symbolizes the land and the environment in Nineveh as it is a stable food in many cultures.
ear of wheat and barley	specific part of the plant that contains the grains or seeds.	implies the fertility, abundance, and the cycle of life in Nineveh.
a cow	a four-legged animal with a distinctive body shape and horns. It is widely used in food production and agriculture.	symbolizes nourishment, abundance, prosperity, and fertility and implies the rural life in Nineveh.
rural woman	a female individual from a rural area living in a countryside.	She is associated with the hard work, multiple responsibility and challenging circumstances.
bee-keeping	managing bee colonies for producing honey	the existence of the significant amount of knowledge, skills, and responsibility for the producer of honey in Nineveh.

4.3.3.2. Interpersonal Function of Nineveh Agricultural Directorate Procession

The message is directed from the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate as a sender to the attendance of the festival and the media followers as receivers.

4.3.3.3. Ideational Function of Nineveh Agricultural Directorate Procession

Nineveh Agricultural Directorate Procession has consisted of a tractor and a vehicle, which suggests the agricultural sector in Nineveh Governorate and the large agricultural area that characterizes the governorate. The procession has included, at the front, a model of a cob of corn and an ear of wheat and barley, which are distinguished by their cultivation in Nineveh Governorate. The two sides of the tractor are interspersed with the logos of the directorate and

agricultural departments operating in the governorate. In the cart there is a statue of a cow and a rural woman milking the cow. It is an evidence of the importance of livestock that the governorate possesses, as it has the largest number of livestock in Iraq.

The procession has been given focus to bee-keeping, as it characterizes the governorate, and is represented by a person wearing a bee-keeper's clothing and the apiary's tires. The procession has also included a rural woman distributing bread, considering that Nineveh Governorate is the bread basket of Iraq. The end of the cart is marked with vegetables produced in the governorate. They have been represented by the Iraqi flag. At the end of the vehicle in the upper part, it contains sprinklers which have been organized in a technical manner for the purpose of highlighting the role of the Ministry of Agriculture in the transition to supplementary irrigation that is regulated for water use.

5. Conclusions

The study has investigated the linguistic and non-linguistic expressions used in selected processions in Nineveh Spring Festival 2023. Different processions are moved in front of public and live broadcast via television and social media providing messages. The festival provides social norms and conventions that inform its use in context. The analysis of the different symbols, figures, and shapes with linguistic items in the design of each procession reflect multimodality. These modes are combined to convey sociocultural messages. Halliday's three semantic metafunctions (textual, interpersonal, and ideational) reflect that the festival is organized to express culture, social norms and historical sites in Nineveh. The selected processions provide intentional ideas, expressing intertextual meanings. Hence, the designs are made depending on aspects related to the culture, the history, and the civilization of the governorate. Therefore, the discursive themes are privileged in reflecting the culture of Nineveh. Consequently, meaning is made with particular semiotic resources. The examination of the social practices carried on the selected processions with reference to their social context reveals the constructed meanings.

Throughout the multimode expressions in the procession of the University of Mosul, a message says that the university will not die in spite of the destruction made by ISIS gangs in 2014. The expressions illustrate the university's long standing goal of teaching students how to keep it in safe. Tourism Authority Procession provides the nature of Nineveh and how it has three spring seasons as tourism is the third one. This message comes from the

fact that Nineveh possesses tourism components including archaeological, environmental, therapeutic, religious and other components. As for the Nineveh Agricultural Procession, its message implies the fertile land that Nineveh Governorate possesses and how it is considered as the breadbasket of Iraq.

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