

Social and Political Cartoons from the Iraqi Academics' Perspective: A Sociopragmatic Study

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Abstract:

This study investigates the Iraqi academics' perspective towards social and political cartoons. It is based on 92 participants who work in different workplaces and live in different Iraqi regions, during the period of the data collection, to guarantee as much authentic and varied information as possible. The researcher designed a double-layered questionnaire consisting of 8 closed-ended questions (layer 1) and 4 open-ended questions (layer 2) to quantitatively and qualitatively examine the level of effectiveness of these c on the participants' social and political attitudes. In addition, the researcher adopted Radden and Dirven's (2007) taxonomy of modality to inspect the most frequent modal auxiliaries the respondents utilized in their answers to the open-ended questions so as to contextually interpret the meaning of these modals verbs. The collected data were intended to answer the research questions. The results of the study showed that social and political cartoons were limitedly able to affect the participants' social attitudes due to their social values and legacy. However, these cartoons were notably found successful to affect their political attitudes. The results also indicated that although social and political cartoons were a successful device to depict and convey reality, they were unable to address the Iraqi people's challenges with practical solutions. These latter findings explained why the participants very frequently utilized modals of potentiality, assessment, and willingness rather than those of assertion in their replies to the open-ended questions

Keywords: Social and political cartoons, Academics' social attitudes, Academics' political attitudes, Modality

الرسومات الاجتماعية والسياسية الساخرة من المنظور الأكاديمي

العراقي: دراسة اجتماعية تداولية

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المخلص:-

تبحث هذه الدراسة وجهة نظر الأكاديميين العراقيين تجاه الرسوم الكاريكاتورية الاجتماعية والسياسية الساخرة. وقد اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على ٩٢ مشاركاً يعملون في أماكن عمل مختلفة ويعيشون في مناطق عراقية متباينة اثناء فترة جمع البيانات، لضمان أكبر قدر ممكن من المعلومات الموثوقة والمتنوعة. قام الباحث بتصميم استبيان يتكون من ٨ أسئلة مغلقة و٤ أسئلة مفتوحة لفحص مستوى فاعلية هذه الرسوم من الناحية الكمية والنوعية على المواقف الاجتماعية والسياسية للمشاركين. فضلاً عن ذلك، اعتمد الباحث تصنيف رادن ودرفن (2007) للأفعال الالوجيهية (Modal Auxiliaries) التي استخدمها المشاركون في إجاباتهم وذلك لوصف سياق هذه الأفعال تداولياً. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة بأن الرسوم الكاريكاتورية الاجتماعية والسياسية الساخرة كانت محدودة التأثير في تغيير السلوك الفردي الاجتماعي للمشاركين بسبب القيم والارث الاجتماعي والثقافة السائدة التي ينتمي اليها المشاركون، لكنها مع ذلك نجحت وبشكل ملموس في التأثير على مواقفهم السياسية. أشارت النتائج أيضاً إلى أنه على الرغم من ان هذه الرسوم الكاريكاتورية الساخرة كانت وسيلة ناجحة لتصوير ونقل الواقع، فإنها لم تكن قادرة على مواجهة تحديات الشعب العراقي بحلول عملية ناجحة. ومن الجدير بالذكر، ان هذه النتائج الأخيرة توضح سبب كثرة تكرار استخدام المشاركين للأفعال الالوجيهية ذات الطابع الاحتمالي والتقييمي لأداء اجتماعي او سياسي معين بدلاً من استخدام أفعال تعبر عن القوة والقدرة على احداث تغييرات اجتماعية وسياسية في بنية المجتمع العراقي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرسومات الاجتماعية والسياسية الساخرة، اتجاهات الأكاديميين الاجتماعية، اتجاهات الأكاديميين السياسية، الأفعال الالوجيهية

1. Introduction

The definition of attitude is one that has often been examined in psychological and social sciences; however, there is no consensus conviction under which description and measurement are incorporated. On the one hand, psychologically, Scheffler (1992) defines attitudes as emotional and mental agents that characterize the individual's experience and predisposition state of mind necessitated by a sensitive expression to oneself. On the other, socially, Dockery and Bedeian (1989) view the very concept as a behavioural pattern which is predisposed to a specific conditioned response or particular adjustment towards a social stimulus. They further add that the measurement of social attitude can only be perceived through the action that individuals take during their daily interaction.

Political attitude, broadly speaking, is the individual's opinion and value that are held about a political event or issue. Wang (2007) states that a political attitude is a way through which people can think about political benefits. It is the conviction mechanism that decides an action based on the behaviour of a political party or political figure. In the same vein, Wang (2007) ascertains that political attitude is the collective perception of the public that contributes to determining the public opinion. Wang (2007) also ascertains that political attitudes are, generally, affected by multi-factors like religion, economic state, race, education, etc. in which the mass media play a significant role in shaping and/or reshaping the individual's political attitude.

Social and political cartoons (henceforth SPCs) are influential communicative means of conveying commentary on various social issues and political events. They are combinations of metaphor and satire, harnessed to display rather complicated problems or harms through humorous and emotional illustrations. The widespread use of social media, newspapers, and magazines (electronic and print) has provided a rich environment for the SPCs to spread very rapidly among millions. For these drawings to sound successful, they need to be grasped

and understood by the audience. Notable enough is that SPCs reflect the cartoonist's opinion and judgment which are depicted in visuals, and often exaggerate the surrounding circumstances. However, they should mirror facts and shed light on issues shared by the majority of people so as to be absorbed and transmitted promptly.

Backer (2004) views SPCs as drawings that parody public figures, particularly wealthy famous people who have the authority and are legitimized to determine the future of the country. He further adds that although a comic piece of drawing might appear simple and innocent, it still hides facts and agendas. Backer (2004) also stresses that SPCs are the amalgamation of two elements: the cartoons and the allusion. He views the former as the figure who creates the context i.e. the social or political character who represents the message in a given drawing and views the latter as the representation of the context or the social matter that citizens are aware of and can easily recognize it when the cartoon is presented to them.

Knieper (2007) describes SPCs as an imaginative depiction of a public figure, mostly social or political, which are portrayed in a sarcastic language to capture the attention of the public toward a specific situation or issue trying to address certain social and/or political circumstances. He prompts the essential role that SPCs play in the social and political scenes since they primarily demonstrate topics related to the issues under investigation. To be grasped, Knieper (2007) adds that SPCs require readers and viewers to have fundamental information about the theme(s) that they denote.

Sterling (2009) finds SPCs as a juxtaposition of artistic skills and satire to question the dominating authority, and to promote social deterioration and political corruption to the public. This production seeks to delimit and determine particular salient encounters that people live with. In the same vein, Sani, Abdullah, Ali, and Abdullah (2014:74) define SPCs as: A form of media message that harnesses linguistic and non-linguistic devices used not only as a vital instrument of information dissemination reflecting social practices and happenings but also as a principal means

of public access by which the public participants in the societal wider spectrum of debate about a particular event or social phenomenon

2. Aims of the Study

This study aims to investigate the degree of effectiveness of SPCs on the academics' perspective towards the current social and political issues in Iraq. It further aims to unveil if SPCs are successful communicative devices to reveal and address the Iraqi social and political challenges like national security, financial issues, healthcare, education, etc. These areas have limitedly been examined so far that it motivates the researcher to come out with findings that should be a novice in this field.

3. Statement of the Problem

Minimum research has been found to explore how these SPCs possibly influence the attitudes of the Iraqi academics towards the critical issues in the country. Hence, this research paper attempts to bridge this gap, particularly it is unknown if and to what extent SPCs affect the academics' social and political attitudes through the language employed in these drawings or the ideas depicted in form of images.

4. Scope of the Study

The study involves 92 Iraqi academics who work in different workplaces from different regions in the country at the time of the data collection, ranging from April 2019 to June 2019. The overall objective of the study is to identify the respondents' social and political attitudes towards SPCs. It was conducted in May 2019 during the pandemic lockdown of Coronavirus which, in turn, was a challenge for the researcher in collecting the data of the study. It is based on two foundations: a questionnaire designed by the researcher, and Radden and Dirven's (2007) taxonomy of modality. The questionnaire consists of two layers: the first one includes 8 close-ended clauses to examine the participants' social attitudes towards SPCs; whereas the second one incorporates 4 open-ended questions to pragmatically interpret the participants' responses in which the recurrence of the modal auxiliaries utilized by them is the central means to reach this end (see appendices A and B). With regard to the research model, it is developed by Radden and Dirven

(2007). They classify modals auxiliaries into epistemic modality (to express the speaker's evidence-based assessment) and root modality (to express the speaker's assumption, desire, and propensity).

5. Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent are social and political cartoons effective on the academics' social and political attitude towards the current critical issues in Iraq?
2. To what extent are social and political cartoons a successful communicative device to reveal and address the Iraqi social and political deficiencies?

6. Significance of the Study

Based on the reviewed and other related studies that similarly dealt with the language of SPCs (see section 7), this research paper is found an unsearched area to initialize the academics' attitudinal experiences, grounded on a double-layer questionnaire designed by the researcher, in the related field. Therefore, the current study tries to bridge this gap to help understand how the participating academics perceive the language of the SPCs epitomized in captions or depicted in images. The study also opens the door for other studies to expand the potential results in which they may identify additional scope similar or different from the current ones. It is worth mentioning that it measures the participants' responses to the closed-ended questions (layer 1) in the questionnaire (see appendix) to reach the social parameters of the responses. Furthermore, the study analyses the contextual frequency of recurrences of modal auxiliaries utilized by the participants in the open-ended questions, (layer 2) in the questionnaire (see appendix) to meet its pragmatic interpretation.

7. Review of Related Studies

There has been recently a wide range of studies that target the significance of SPCs in terms of function, nature, and efficacy on the audiences. These studies considered the communicative social and political messages as two substantive topics that can be explicitly and/or

implicitly tailored to these cartoons. This section is dedicated to exploring recent studies that examined the degree of effectiveness of SPCs on the public opinion and the recipients' attitudes. The section also reviews research that analysed SPCs pragmatically, semiotically, and sociopragmatically. Finally, it reviews research that dealt with the linguistic and nonlinguistic features of SPCs in the light of social and political discourse analyses.

Connors (2005) investigated the American 2004 presidential campaign depicted in the SPCs. He found that the genre used in the portraits could positively or negatively influence the public opinion towards the objects sketched in SPCs. In a similar context, Baumgartner (2008) conducted a study to find to what extent 18-24 young Americans were influenced by the animated SPCs that were published in the American newspapers prior to the presidential elections. He indicated that the subjects of his study were eligible to increase their sociopolitical awareness regarding the critical events in the country. In addition, he found that SPCs could encourage or discourage voters to participate in the elections. Similarly, Shaikh (2016) examined a number of SPCs published in Pakistani newspapers. The result of his study indicated that they, as a subtle communicative tool, could impact people's minds and change their attitudes on the individual level, and could affect the public opinion on the general level. Closely related is a study piloted by Chen, Robert, and Roland (2017). They examined the impact of SPCs on the audience, focusing on the mapping of their attitudes in which the perception of SPCs was the main player. The study revealed that those drawings were strong influential tools for building up people's attitudes towards noteworthy social and political events.

On the pragmatic level, Al-Hindawee and Abdulazeez (2015) investigated how irony in SPCs could be pragmatically communicated. They analysed 10 of Obama's political cartoons released before the 2012 American presidential elections. They found that these cartoons were communicative in nature; hence, they could picture the intended meaning clearer than those with captions. The study also disclosed that

despite the pictographic irony illustration to the bitter reality of the social and political issues in America, it was standstill milder than the verbal expressions tagged to the cartoons under investigation. In the same vein, Oluremi and Ajepe (2016) exploited 15 selected SPCs published in the best sale Nigerian newspapers, precisely from Nov 2014 to Feb 2015; a period which was prior to the Nigerian general elections. The researchers majorly focused on the pragmatic interpretation of the intentionally selected cartoons. The study found that the pragmatic implementation was a great assessor in interpreting the beliefs of the Nigerian context that were concealed in the involved SPCs. Closely related is a study conducted by Yanti and Fitri (2018) who examined irony in Donald Trump's political cartoons. The researchers pragmatically analysed the functions, forms, and types of irony in their selected data. The study found that the divergent functions of irony were successful to reflect the social and political conflicts between America and other countries regarding religion and race. The study also divulged that SPCs could be used to effectively entertain readers/viewers with the resemblances of social issues and political figures, given that they were within the framework of politeness.

To enhance the understanding of the general layout of SPCs, semiotic analysis is worthwhile to achieve this purpose. Akande (2012) scrutinized the SPCs published in three different magazines from 1993 to 1996; a period during which Nigeria was recognized as the first democratic country in the third world. The study considered the semiotic representations in SPCs strongly contributed to increasing the readers' ability to realize the Nigerian critical social and political challenges. The study also developed a model that might help understand the linguistic implementations employed in SPCs. Pham (2013) examined the visual symbols of the European Union (EU) exemplified in SPCs published from 2004 to 2012. The analysis was based on theories of semiotics, sociosemiotics, and metaphor. The researcher found that SPCs mirrored the fragmented social and political climates of the EU allies. Moreover, the researcher found that the audience, being able to interpret the

symbols of the SPCs, were subject to force the allies to reorder the sociopolitical and socioeconomic issues in Europe. In the same vein, Al-Momani, Muhammad, and Fathi (2017) provided a semiotic analysis of Jordanian SPCs published from 2007 to 2013. The researchers sought to depict the sociopolitical contexts after the Arab Spring in 2011. They reported that humour in SPCs transmitted powerful messages that revealed the interaction between the various features of SPCs and their sociopolitical, ideological, and economic implications. The study found that the perception of the visual signs in SPCs provided the audience with insights into definite neglected issues in the Arab World; an attempt to help the audience re-shed light on their suffering and oppression.

The drastic shifts in the worldwide societal perspectives and politics align with a major rise in the production of SPCs. Akande (2002) and El Refaie (2009) indicated that by satire and irony, SPCs could design and illuminate a certain viewpoint by exposing the readers to the social abuse and wrong implementations of power practiced by some social and political figures. This led to generating a specific genre that distinguishes SPCs from other types of art.

Jimoh (2010) tested 30 published SPCs on the military incursion into Nigerian politics between 1983-1999. He based his analysis on the role played by SPCs in Nigeria's democracy. The analysis found that although editorial cartoons played an important role in representing significant social and political problems, they didn't provide concrete solutions to the above disputes. Contrary to Jimoh (2010), Sani, et al (2014) examined the sociopolitical representation in SPCs; considering the events in Malaysia. The study revealed that the genre of SPCs significantly contributed to provide solutions to the complications in the country. In other words, through the amalgamation of words and images, SPCs could amuse and inform the public with the current events. They could also be used as a means of cultural and institutional practice by the depiction of social crimes and discrimination. In the same vein, Al-ghezzy (2017) conducted a study which was based on two theoretical foundations: Semiotics and Sociopolitics. As far as the latter is

concerned, the researcher analysed the genre of the captions tagged to the selected cartoons which resembled some Iraqi politicians and the financial corruption in Iraq. The findings of the study indicated that SPCs played a vital role not only in amusing the readers; however, they could fortify the social layout and weaken the political sphere.

8. Theoretical Background

The present paper works on two interrelated levels: the social level and the pragmatic level. The first one is measured by a questionnaire, detailed in sections 9.3 and 9.4, while the second one is based on Radden and Dirven's (2007) taxonomy of modality which primarily stands on probability, necessity, and un/certainty. They classify modality into two main types: epistemic modality and root modality. The former is further classified into two subtypes: necessity modality and possibility modality, while the latter is sub-classified into three subtypes of modality: deontic modality (containing obligation and permission modality), intrinsic modality (encompassing intrinsic necessity and intrinsic possibility), and disposition modality (expressing ability) as demonstrated in figure 1 below:

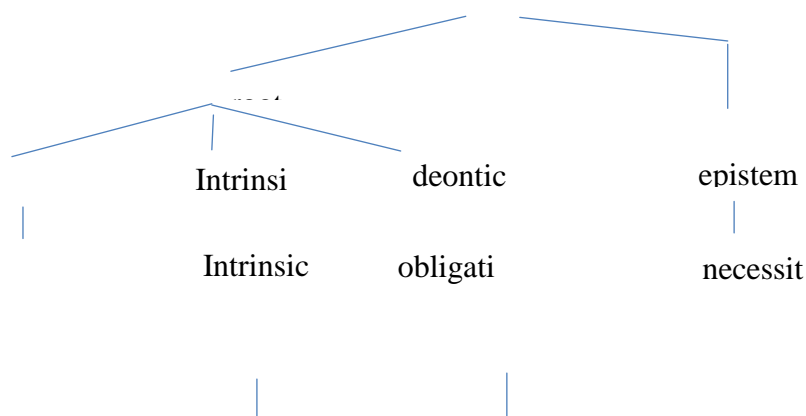


Figure 1: Radden and Dirven (2007:246) taxonomy of modality

Radden and Dirven (2007:234) view epistemic modality as being “concerned with the speaker’s assessment of the potentiality of a state of affairs”. It is directly related to the speaker’s attitudes and evaluation of issues endorsed by the speaker’s reasoning and world knowledge. Epistemic modality is also concerned with the speaker’s confidence in a

particular concern. This confidence can be strong or weak. The former is grounded and determined by the tangible evidence and the sufficient knowledge that the speaker has; whereas the latter is grounded on the probable evidence derived from the potential reality that the speaker believes in.

In a related context, epistemic necessity, on one hand, is the subjective inference of a given notion in which the context decides the interpretation of a given proposal; although, it is “led by inference and means that there is so much evidence for a state of affairs that is assessed as coming very close to factual reality” (Radden and Dirven (2007:250). Epistemic possibility, on the other hand, is concerned with the speaker’s evaluation of a related topic of an argument in the realms of a potential reality. It further includes considering evidence and counter evidence as not preventing the speaker from drawing his/her conclusion concerning a specific proposal or claim.

Root modality replicates the speaker’s assumptions, following factors that affect the scenario resembled in an utterance. Radden and Dirven (2007) suggest three subtypes of root modality: deontic modality, intrinsic modality, and disposition modality. Deontic modality is that linguistic modality which demonstrates the way how the world is formed in harmony with the speaker’s social values and norms, expectations, and desire. Furthermore, a deontic statement does not follow any social or personal standard. This indicates that deontic modality is about social contact or interaction in which it addresses the speaker’s direction to a specific action to be performed. This is why this type of modality “comprises the notion of obligation and permission i.e. speech acts in which the speaker involves her authority or a general rule to have another person (or herself) to carry out an act” (Radden and Dirven 2007:236).

Radden and Dirven (2007:233) state that “intrinsic modality is concerned with potentialities arising from intrinsic qualities of a thing or circumstances”. Intrinsic modality refers to the assessment and evaluation of individually determined circumstances and events,

regardless of whether these issues are permitted and/or approved or not. However, intrinsic necessity corresponds to the necessity arisen from general rules and social norms; thus, the compelling force of intrinsic necessity is felt to be more acceptable to the interlocutor(s) being subject to the norms than to an individual's authority. As far as the intrinsic possibility is concerned, it expresses the speaker's assessment of a specific condition and depicts the potential outcomes predicted from the speaker's subjective decision. It is also a reference to a probability that is made possible by the speaker's external sources of evidence. Radden and Dirven (2007:256) consider the intrinsic possibility to be extended to a particular situation in which "the external source is specified, but more commonly it is used to characterize general situations, in which the external source is left unspecified but is, nevertheless, conceptually present".

In the same context, Radden and Dirven (2007:233) view disposition modality as "concerned with a thing's or person's intrinsic potential of being actualized in particular abilities". This means that disposition modality is correlated with the speaker's intrinsic ability to do something and to the intrinsic possibility to have that thing done.

This model is found best to assess the researcher in tracking the pragmatics of the modal auxiliaries released in the second layer of the questionnaire, constituting one of the basic panels of the research objectives. Although this model is cognitively loaded, it also covers the social aspects of human communication. Radden and Dirven (2007: XI) stress that the grammar of any given language is not merely a list of rules; however, it is a cognitive achievement as well:

It is the solution that generations of speakers of a speech community have found to structure their thoughts with the intention to communicate them to other people. As human products, the words and grammatical structures of a language reflect the physical, psychological and social experiences of its human creators.

9. Research Methodology

This section is dedicated to presenting the methodology of the current study. Thus, detailed information regarding the research design, participants, instruments, and procedures, are provided in the following subsections:

9.1 Research Design

The premise design of this paper is both quantitative and qualitative as it provides an enhanced understanding of data obtained from a questionnaire combined from 8 close-ended questions and 4 open-ended questions. Robins, Ware, Doreis, Willing, Chung, and Lewis (2008) revealed that a mixed method design provides a premium understanding of the obtained results compared to research work based on only a single approach. More specifically, the collected data from the first part of the questionnaire will be analysed by simple tabulated mathematics to transfer the digits into data; illustrating the participants' social and political attitudinal experiences that help the researcher measure the societal part of this work through visualized based data. In addition, the data collected from the second part of the questionnaire will be quantitatively described to define the pragmatic interpretation of the participants' responses towards SPCs.

9.2. Participants

The number of participants involved in this study was 92 (males and females). Only academics were chosen to be eligible for this work so as to limit the scope of the study, and give a room to other researchers for future investigations. They work in different workplaces (governmental and private sectors) and are of different scientific majors but all have social and institutional contributions to the Iraqi community (university professors, lawyers, bankers, and others). Their age was between 36 to 68 at the time of the data collection. All of them are Iraqis but from different provinces (Basrah, Maysan, Dhi-Qar, Kut, Najaf, Babylon, and Baghdad), to guarantee a wider range of regional and attitudinal divergences.

9.3. Instrument

For practical collection, the researcher designed a self-administered double layered questionnaire consisted of 12 items and questions (8 close-ended questions (layer 1) with 3 options for the respondents to tick next to each given clause, and to answer the 4 open-ended questions electronically (layer 2) (see appendix A-B). In addition, the participants were free to state their attitudes while answering the package of questions provided with the questionnaire under discussion; relying on their social and political experience and attitude. All the clauses, options, and questions were set in English and Arabic (on an electronic separate sheet) to make sure the participants could successfully respond to the targeted points.

9.4. Procedures

This work is mainly based on a questionnaire designed by the researcher. It consists of two electronic versions generated via Google Forms: Arabic version and English version (see appendices A and B). This variation in the form helps the participants to technically grasp the gist of the clauses since not all the respondents are professional in English. However, the Arabic responses were first translated into English by the researcher, then sent to two expert panel members for proofreading and revision in the Department of Translation, College of Arts, to ensure the accuracy of the translated version.

The generated link was sent to 167 academics inside Iraq. Only 94 responses were reached due to many reasons, among which were the poor internet connection, particularly during the quarantine period resulted from the widespread of COVID-19; the incapability and unawareness of some of the potential respondents in dealing with the e-version of the questionnaire; and it might be to the interest of the participants to go through this experiment or not. The utilization of Google Forms facilitated the data to be collected accurately and easily, shortened the time for the data collection, and reduced the effort of data input. Additionally, this procedure assessed the mathematical process applied in this paper with ready-made measured percentages and

calculated digits almost without human interference, resulting in a more accurate output.

After the collection of the data obtained from the respondents, the researcher entered them into tables. So, the random and sporadic data were organized for simplicity and straightforwardness. Tables were found profitable for the reader to line up with the findings, and they helped the researcher to have a solid argument for the findings of the data that will be discussed afterward.

10. Data Analysis

Table 1 below summarizes the participants' responses to the 8 items found in the questionnaire. The table also shows the options given to help generate the survey, collect the data, then show the results, including the percentage for each:

Table 1: The participants' responses to the close-ended items

	Items	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	As an academic, my social attitude is affected by social cartoons	29	31.52%	16	17.39%	47	51.08%
2	Social cartoons have a wide influence on the individual behaviour in the Iraqi community	23	25%	9	9.78%	60	65.21%
3	As an academic, my political attitude is affected by political cartoons	64	69.56%	7	7.60%	21	22.82%
4	Political cartoons have wide influence on the individual's political decision	58	63.04%	19	20.65%	15	16.30%
5	Social and political cartoons are a successful communicative device to address the public affairs	74	80.43%	5	5.43%	13	14.13%
6	Social and political cartoons are acceptable to the general public, including the academic community	83	90.21%	1	1.08%	8	8.69%
7	Social and political cartoons are a successful communicative device to reveal the Iraqi social and political deficiencies	59	64.13%	13	14.13%	20	21.73%
8	Social and political cartoons are a successful communicative device to address the Iraqi social and political deficiencies	16	17.39%	9	9.78%	67	72.82%

The first item in table 1 reveals that only 29 respondents (31.52%) found their attitudes eligible to change by the influence of social cartoons.

Sixteen of them, endorsing 17.39%, were neutral, while the majority of the academics (47 ones, forming 51.08%) believed that it was hard for social cartoons to maximally affect their social attitudes. In a similar context, social cartoons were found unable to recognizably affect the individual's behaviour in the Iraqi community as indicated by the results obtained from item 2 in the table. In other words, only 23 participants (25%) were with the idea proposed in the item; 9 of them (recording 9.78%) were neutral; and the majority of the respondents (60 ones, forming 65.21%) were against the proposal under analysis.

The next item in the table (item 3) displays that 64 participants (69.56%), who endorse the overwhelming majority of the records, thought their political attitudes were subject to changes by political cartoons. Only 7 of them (7,60%) were neither with this notion nor were they against it, while the rest (21 academics, making up 22.82%) found that their political stance could not be affected by political cartoons. In the same vein, the records in item 4 indicate that 58 participants (63.04%) were in line with the assumption that political cartoons could influence their individual political decision. Nineteen of them, forming 20.65%, did not accept neither did they refuse the notion, while only 15 respondents (16.30%) rejected this proposal.

Item 5 in the table records that the majority of the participants (74 ones, forming 80.43 %) believed that SPCs are a successful communicative tool to convey reality, and the social and political issues to the general public. Five of them, making up 5.43%, were neutral, while the rest of the respondents (13 ones, recording 14.13%) rejected the success of SPCs as a significant device to reach the assumed proposition.

Item 6 in table 1 shows that the largest number of the academics (83 ones, making up 90.21%) agreed with the notion that SPCs were commonly accepted by the public, regardless of their social spectrum or the political position they might hold. Only one respondent (1.08%) was not for or against this measure, whilst the remainder of the respondents (8 ones, forming 8.69 %) rejected this idea.

The findings of item 7 in the table indicate that the largest number of the participants i.e. 59 academics, recording 64.13%, found SPCs as a significant device to divulge the Iraqi social and political challenges. Thirteen of them (14.13%) did not hold any stance, while the left few respondents (20 ones, forming 21.73%) thought that SPCs were unable to denote the aforementioned deficiencies.

As far as the results obtained from item 8 table 1 are concerned, few number of respondents (16 ones, making up 17.39%) believed that SPCs had significant prints to address the Iraqi social and political challenges. Nine respondents (9.78%) did not react to this assumption, while the largest number of them (67 participants, recording 72.82%) indicated that although SPCs were a successful communicative device, they still had no remarkable role to address the Iraqi complications.

Table 2 demonstrates the distribution and frequency of occurrence (illustrated in percentages) of the modality utilized by the participants. The table includes all the types and subtypes of modality proposed by Radden and Dirven (2007) to later help figure out the pragmatic interpretation of the open-ended questions incorporated in the questionnaire (see appendix).

Table (2): The distribution and frequency of occurrence of modal auxiliaries

Epistemic modality		Total	%	Root modality						total	%	Total	
		160	34.04%							310	65.95%	470	
<u>Necessity</u>		<u>Possibility</u>		<u>Deontic modality</u>			<u>Intrinsic modality</u>		<u>Disposition modality</u>				
Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%		
82	17.44%	78	16.59%	112			23.82%		118		25.10%	80	17.02%
<u>Obligation</u>		<u>Permission</u>		<u>Necessity</u>		<u>Possibility</u>		<u>Ability</u>					
Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%				
82	17.44%	30	6.38%	36	7.65%	82	17.44%	80	17.02%				

Table 2 shows that the total number of modal auxiliaries used by the participants was 470 when responding to the open-ended questions referred to earlier. Three hundred and ten went for root modality that

forms 65.95%, while 160 ones (34.04%) went for Epistemic modality; indicating a distinct prevalence of the former to the latter. The total number gained by root modality is distributed among its subtypes according to the order of the highest score and percentage as follows:

1. One hundred and eighteen (25.10%) went for *intrinsic modality*. Notably, *intrinsic possibility* gained 82 modal auxiliaries (17.44%), while *intrinsic necessity* gained 36 ones (7.65%); indicating a higher score of the former than the latter.
2. One hundred and twelve (23.82%) went for *deontic modality*. The table also displays that *deontic obligation* recorded 82 modal auxiliaries (17.44%), while *deontic permission* gained only 30 that forms 6.38% which indicates the superiority of the former to the latter.
2. Eighty modal auxiliaries (17.02%) went for *disposition modality*; representing the least number of root modality used by the respondents.

Table 2 also displays the distribution of epistemic modality and its subtypes which is detailed below according to their order of recurrence and percentage:

1. Eighty two modal auxiliaries (17.44%) went for *epistemic necessity* to represent the dominance of this type of modality than the second one.
2. Seventy eight ones (16.59%) went for *epistemic possibility* to indicate a lower recurrence of this type of modality than the first one.

11. Results and Discussions

The researcher initiated a double layered questionnaire to provide accurate and valid measurement to objectively realize the degree of the effectiveness of SPCs on the participants' social and political attitudes. In addition, this work is targeted to find whether these cartoons are a successful communicative device to reveal and address the social and political issues in Iraq.

The results shown in table 1 (item 1-4) indicate that the participating academics' social and political attitudes are affected by the implied ideas proposed in the SPCs they regularly view. However, the degree of social and political influence between the two variables is varied. Sixty four

(69.56%) out of 92 respondents found that their political attitudes were eligible to be influenced by political cartoons, while 47 (51.08%) of them thought that their social attitudes were less likely to be affected. These findings emphasize that the participants' social norms and values are more stable than the political stance they may hold, explaining why they disagreed with the assumption that social cartoons had the potential to have a substantial effect on Iraqi individual's social conduct and behavior. It is important to note that they almost tend to follow a set of traditions that attribute their social models. Therefore, they are obliged not to give these up, otherwise, they may be rejected by the group to whom they belong to since their early growth. However, 58 academics (63.04 %) considered political cartoons to have a stronger influence on the Iraqi individual's political decisions.

To further exemplify the above results, the following are some examples extracted from the responses released in the second part of the questionnaire (see appendix):

Extract 1:

“I do not think social cartoons can solve or make any clear change in the Iraqi social perspective due to the social class and racial inheritance..... I think the social cartoons cannot give fruitful results in making social changes to individuals in the Iraqi society”.

The phrases “I do not think” and “I think socialresults” express the respondent's attitude towards the claims raised in item 1-2 table 1; supporting his/her opinion with the modal auxiliary “can” which, contextually, expresses inability in the above example. Likewise, the participant proceeded to reinforce his/her argument when using “due to”, indicating an epistemic modality with strong assertion to justify why the captioned satire or metaphor in the social cartoons is unable to make a significant change in people's social behavior due to the social inherited legacy and social values. It is worth noting that these social representations are deeply rooted within the Iraqi personality and shared by most of the members of the society. So, it is not easy for social

cartoons, despite the ethical and optimistic messages they may carry, to make substantial changes in the short run.

Extract 2:

“In my viewpoint, political cartoons should be perceived promptly to help change the political viewpoint against a certain decision or a political personality”.

The phrase “should..... help change...” in example 2 denotes that political cartoons have a strong potential to change the individual’s perspective (item 3-4, table 1) to a specific political decision or political figure as indicated by the modal auxiliary “should”. This latter modal auxiliary expresses obligation that works under the umbrella of root modality-deontic obligation rather than both subgroups of epistemic modality (necessity and possibility) as the one shown in Example 1. Unlike the academics’ social attitude, the fluctuation and confusion in the making of the political decisions as well as the weak state administration led to weakening the confidence between the citizens and the governing authority. All these reasons offer room for the political cartoons to succeed in embodying such events ironically through careful literary language or images to represent the bitter reality which are factors that influence the political perspective of the viewer to change.

The above findings address the first research question “*To what extent are social and political cartoons effective on the academics’ social and political attitudes towards the current critical issues in Iraq?*”; as it was found that these cartoons are effective on both variables yet differently. In other words, the influence of SPCs on the individual’s political stance is more prominent than their effect on the individual’s social behaviors.

As for the second research question “*To what extent are social and political cartoons a successful communicative device to reveal and address the Iraqi social and political deficiencies?*”, it consists of three assumptions: if SPCs are a successful communicative device; if SPCs are able to reveal the social and political critical issue in the country; and if SPCs are able to address the social and political deficiencies. The results obtained from item 5 in table 1 positively reach the first assumption

raised above, in that the overwhelming majority of the respondents (74 ones, forming 80.43%) found SPCs a successful communicative device. This finding is also evidence-based by the results gained from item 6-table 1 whereas 83 academics (90.21%) subscribed to the idea that SPCs are highly acceptable to the general public and not restricted to a specific class or spectrum. This assumption is also demonstrated by the following example:

Extract 3:

“I think social and political cartoons, in the long run especially after the internet revolution, could directly participate in educating a large number of followers and could criticize a lot of inappropriate social habits periodically”.

The underlined phrase “could.....followers” describes the widespread of SPCs particularly after the internet revolution which has made it possible for these cartoons to penetrate millions of followers worldwide including Iraq. Importantly, the modal auxiliary “could” is inferred as having the power to do something that, in turn, demonstrates an example of disposition ability. It also explains the speaker’s intrinsic potentiality for SPCs to be a successful communicative device that provokes deficiencies in a given region. In the same vein, the modal auxiliary “could”, in the second underlined phrase “criticize.....periodically”, is devised by the speaker for SPCs to promote people’s social awareness against habits that are rejected in the Iraqi community.

Item 7 in the table meets the second part of the research question previously mentioned. Fifty-nine participants (64.13%) sustained the notion that SPCs have the ability to portrait and represent people’s social and political suffering. Similarly, the resulted output resembled in the open-ended questions referred to earlier (see appendix) is demonstrated in the following example:

Extract 4:

“..... but they may have an active role in raising awareness to convey the picture and event more than they are tools for intellectual change....”

The underlined phrase “but they may have an” supports the results referred to above. Notably, the very phrase encompasses another representation of modality illustrated by “may” (epistemic possibility). Contextually, “may” is used here to register the possibility for SPCs to increase people’s awareness through demonstrating the important issues in society that retrospectively mitigate the weight of people’s suffering and oppression. However, the very modal is applied to restrict the reach of these cartoons making remarkable intellectual changes.

The results gained from item 6 and item 7 table 1 meet the third part of the second research question, in that the overwhelming majority of the participants (67 respondents, forming 72.82%) support the notion that SPCs have limited ability to settle the problems in questions. The below extract, among many, sustains the finding as follows:

Extract 5:

It cannot solve a major political or social problem, but it may draw the attention of the community to the current issues that are harder to be settled through cartoons.

The phrase “It cannot solve....” reinforces the results mentioned above. The modal auxiliary “cannot” negatively reflects the speaker’s evaluation (epistemic possibility) in the inability of the cartoons in question to provide effective and substantial solutions to the major social and political problems. In addition, the objective interpretation of the same modal auxiliary displays the respondent’s strong assertion through the use of the verb to be “are” that indicates a fact, according to the speaker’s perspective, which replicates the insufficient capability of SPCs to settle the social and political deficiencies. As to the interpretation of the second modal auxiliary “may”, it also denotes epistemic possibility but with a weak assertion. In other words, the speaker believes in the potential possibility of SPCs that they may offer through representing reality in form of portraits or be indulged in the captions tailored to them without providing a strong assertion to his/her assumption.

The distribution and frequency of occurrence of modal auxiliaries utilized by the participants of the current study are illustrated in table 2 above. It shows clearly that the most frequent modals applied were root modality. Within the group of root modality, intrinsic modals were dominant over the other two subgroups of deontic and disposition modalities. As Radden and Dirven (2007) mentioned, root modality is grounded on the probable evidence derived from the potential reality that the speaker believes in; therefore, the study participants' use of root modals were attributed to their potentiality of a given situation about the role SPCs may play on changing and addressing the social and political problems. This is obvious through the open-ended responses, in that most of which contained modals of possibility, necessity, obligation, and permission. The high frequency of intrinsic modality (shared by intrinsic possibility and intrinsic necessity successively, illustrated in example 6 and 7 below) reveals that most of the participants found it possible to subjectively assess, suggest, and evaluate what and how SPCs can function without offering committal and objective remedy to what the public suffers from. More specifically, out of 310 responses, 118 ones (25.10%) went to intrinsic modality within which 82 responses (17.44%) demonstrated intrinsic possibility, occupying the highest score in the list, and 36 ones (7.65%) illustrated intrinsic necessity, taking the second position in root modality-intrinsic modality. The following examples are to illustrate the recurrence of modal auxiliaries in accordance with their scores as displayed in table 2:

Extract 6:

Social and political cartoons could be influential in addressing the social and political problem by offering the required level of freedom to the public without the influence of the dominant political parties

The use of the modal auxiliary “could” denotes intrinsic possibility which reflects the speaker’s subjective evaluation and assessment, in which SPCs are felt to be able to reveal as well as remedy the previously mentioned problems in the above example. Moreover, this type of

modality is used to refer to the participant's external sources (by offering the required level of freedom to the public without the influence of the dominant political parties) that may take place in a particular situation (could be influential in addressing the social and political problem). Furthermore, the latter phrase shows that the respondent links this kind of potentiality to his/her hope of limiting the role of the political parties and giving enough freedom to the public regarding their rights and responsibilities to maximize the role of SPCs.

Extract 7:

“I do not think that social and political cartoons will vanish one day but the cartoonists have to abandon political subordination, the influence of the ruler, and that his resources should be more credible to enter the world and be more aware of the immediate and critical events of the region”

The underlined phrase “have to..... resources” signifies a strong root modality-intrinsic necessity resembled by the modal auxiliary “have to”, declaring the speaker's performative act for SPCs to carry out particular actions (to abandon political subordination, the influence of the ruler, and that his resources should be more credible). Moreover, the very modal refers to a necessity arising from the participant's conclusions towards SPCs, but this type of necessity is milder and more subjective than the one used with epistemic modality. Moreover, the compelling force of “have to” is weaker than that of deontic obligation as well. All these recommendations suggested by the respondent would lead the SPCs to be more acceptable and more valuable to the recipients.

Table 2 also shows that deontic modality occupies the second dominating subgroup of modality. One hundred and twelve responses, forming 23.82%, is the number of modal auxiliaries that demonstrates this type of modality shared by deontic obligation (82 modals, forming 17.44%), and deontic permission (30 modals, recording 6.38%) which both exemplified in example 8 and 9. It indicates that SPCs tend to be an objective tool that aims to address various social and political problems depending on the truthfulness of news and constructive opinions that can

affect the social and political public opinion. The following extract resembles the speaker's directive and instructional attitude towards SPCs:

Extract 8:

“Social and political cartoons are undoubtedly useful for the resolution of a variety of social, political, and economic problems. However, it is very important to stress that the responsibility in this regard must be enforced practically and to have rational solutions to these challenges not only to be satisfied with their indirect representatives”

The phrases “mustpractically” “and have tosolutions” express the participant's mandate mode for SPCs to call for practical acts aside from representing and revealing the social, political, and economical challenges that people encounter in their daily interactions. Importantly, the use of “must” and “have to” in the above example denote acts of obligation, which falls within the context of deontic obligation, that are alluded in a sense of direction i.e. the respondent is addressing cartoonists to perform potential demanded acts that are represented in the first two underlined phrases. Notably, the modal auxiliary “must” evokes a stronger obligation than “have to” in this example and the one used in example 7. It is worthy to note that the verb to be “be” metonymically corresponds to the act of not being satisfied with the indirect representation; however, cartoonists should refocus their direction to be more practical in finding rational solutions to the challenges referred to earlier so as to be more convenient and credible to the readers.

Extract 9:

“I believe cartoons need intellectual and political maturity, then they may influence the public opinion”

The phrase “need intellectual and political maturity” reflects the speaker's view towards SPCs as not having the ability to affect people's minds. It also expresses the participant's directive attitude for SPCs to develop and be more mature in order to reach this goal. In the same context, the subjective modal auxiliary “may” expresses a weak

expectation and less potential for SPCs to influence the recipients' social and/or political attitudes; modeling a deontic permission. In this respect, the readers are the permission-givers since they are in a position to evaluate and judge what they receive from the media, while SPCs are the permission carriers since they are compelled to send a particular message to the readers.

Table 2 shows that 80 responses (17.02%) were found in the second part of the questionnaire to express disposition modality. These responses express peoples' intrinsic ability to make the SPCs an effective and influential device to address the social problems they are suffering from as represented in the following extract:

Extract 10:

I think people can make use of the problems which the cartoons depict through considering these problems more seriously and working towards applying the solutions these cartoons may offer; however, what is happening is the opposite, because people need more awareness of how to interpret these cartoons ... most viewers are unable to decode the discourse tailored to cartoons, ..."

Contextually, the phrase "I think people can ..." denotes the intrinsic ability of people to potentially benefit from the SPCs in solving their problems. It also reflects the speaker's willingness and propensity for viewers to take advantage of the significance of the implied messages as indicated by the phrase "can make use..."; which, in turn, is pragmatically subsumed under the umbrella of root modality. However, the speaker suspects this desire to process as he/she believes that the majority of people do not possess sufficient awareness to decode and analyse the included codes as indicated by the phrase "because people need more awareness...".

Table 2 displays that epistemic modality occupies the last position compared to other types of modality. One hundred sixty modal auxiliaries shared by epistemic necessity (82 modals, making up 17.44%) and epistemic possibility (78 modals, forming 16.59%)

consecutively. The following examples (11-12) illustrate the contextual interpretation to the modals under investigation:

Extract 11:

“The language and visual depiction in the cartoons is almost so confusing that the recipient is sometimes not able to interpret them. Thus, I think plain language must be used to help ensure that most of the recipients grasp the meaning”

The participant in the above example believes that the language and the visual depiction of people or objects portrayed in SPCs are not easy to understand by the majority of the recipients. The modal auxiliary “must” resembles a subjective act of necessity and obligation (epistemic necessity) laid by the respondent who is addressing the cartoonists to simplify the language used in the captions. This type of modality expresses a momentum reality observed by the speaker (s) to encourage or discourage an action to be carried out. This means that once the language of the SPCs becomes easier, the act of necessity becomes unnecessary.

Extract 12:

“Social and political cartoons may go beyond the realistic representation of the truth to solve social or political problems, and they may lead to igniting and stirring up people's feelings against the ruler's indecency or corruption”

The participant in example 12 assumes that SPCs have the potential not only to represent reality but to address people’s social and political challenges as well as having the prospect to agitate them to revolt against the ruling regime. Notably, the modal auxiliary “may” is used twice but functioned similarly as epistemic possibility. In other words, the modal is contextually inferred as a means that enables the speaker to assume a state of affairs thought to be possible but is not evidence-based. To put it differently, the participant in the above example believes that SPCs have the possibility to perform actions beyond what is normally expected; expressing a subjective potential reality derived from the speaker’s

conclusions without providing any concrete evidence on how SPCs would possibly work to approach what he/she assumes.

To sum up, both SPCs were realized as influencing the participants' attitudes; however, the degree of effectiveness was varied in that their social attitudes were less affected than their political ones due to the social legacy and values. Moreover, these cartoons were recognized as a successful communicative device which could fruitfully reveal and depict people's suffering but could not afford minimal solutions to their challenges. The utilization of the modal auxiliaries was notably frequent in the participants' responses to the 4 open-ended questions. The use of root modality overwhelmed epistemic modality which was homogeneous with probability and possibility. This reflected the respondents' inability to offer addressable solutions to people's problems and was highly inclined to include modal auxiliaries of potentiality rather than those of assertion in their responses.

12. Conclusions

This paper investigated the degree of effectiveness of SPCs on 92 academics' social and political attitudes. It also exploited how these cartoons, as a communicative vehicle, were potentially able to reveal and address the Iraqi sufferings and subjugations. The researcher initiated a double-layered questionnaire, consisting of 8 close-ended questions (layer 1) and 4 open-ended questions (layer 2), to measure the degree of effectiveness of SPCs on the participants' social perspectives. Likewise, the researcher adopted Radden and Dirven's (2007) taxonomy of modality to examine the pragmatic interpretation of the modal auxiliaries used by the participants in the second part of the questionnaire.

The findings of the study showed that SPCs were effective on the participants' social and political attitudes; however, the former was found less being influenced than the latter due to the social values and legacy, which answered the first research question mentioned earlier. Moreover, the results showed that SPCs were a successful communicative device, and very commonly followed by the public regardless of their social class or academic belonging. The study also

revealed that SPCs were eligible to reveal and represent the major Iraqi people's challenges; however, they were minimally able to address them, which answered the aforementioned second research question.

The responses released in the second part of the questionnaire indicated that the participants were inclined to utilize root modality, particularly intrinsic necessity (potentiality) rather than other types of modality in their responses. The predominance of this type of modality explained why the participants could, through employing these modal auxiliaries in their responses, offer evaluation and assessment rather than being able to practically contribute to solving the Iraqi social and political complications.

Researchers are recommended to conduct a study that involves a different social segment from the one used in the current work. It can cover, as well, a larger number of participants to potentially reach more comprehensive results. It is also advised to make a study centred on interviews with cartoonists to deductively identify the features of language they use while depicting their ideas in images. Future research can also be achieved with the participation of a comparable study sample but through different tools or gender-based models that will help explain the responses of both sexes to SPCs.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 (A) Questionnaire: English version

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScZasrDagkTDvZzspujDgPcGrQZkECqBo7IIYQv5mUosF0SsA/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1>

Appendix 1 (B) Questionnaire: Arabic Version

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1O4TfIDrqaUe11MVXYod5a2Uk2ail4LZMdez b9oew8Qg/edit?usp=drivesdk>