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A PRAGMA-RHETORICAL STUDY OF PERSUASION IN AMERICAN AND IRAQI BILLBOARDS

Abstract: *The present study investigates the pragmatic and rhetorical aspects of the advertising message in an attempt to explore how persuasion takes place. It aims at identifying and analysing the persuasive appeals, rhetorical devices, and speech acts the advertisers use in the headlines of some American and Iraqi billboard advertisements. For this purpose, an eclectic model has been adopted which consists of Searle's (1969) speech acts theory, Lucas's (2009) persuasive appeals, McQuarrie and Mick's (1996) rhetorical devices, and Cook's (2001) advertising context. The findings of the study showed that American and Iraqi billboards share a lot in common. To begin with, advertisers relied mainly upon the tropes of ellipsis and hyperbole in writing advertisements. Moreover, pathos appeal was employed as the basic tool to achieve persuasive impact upon the potential customers. Also, directives, representatives, and commissives were the main acts through which persuasion was realised. Interestingly, advertising context had been found indispensable by contributing a great deal not only to making the advertising message clear, but also to providing the necessary means for attaining the persuasive appeals.*

Key words: Persuasion, pragma-rhetorical, advertising, speech acts, billboard advertisements, persuasive appeals, rhetorical devices.

Language: English

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Introduction

Advertising is simply one type of communication in which there is a sender, receiver, and a message. Such a message is found implicit in the advertising instrument whether it is a TV commercial, a print advertisement or else. As a matter of fact, an advertisement is usually designed to have an influence upon the behaviour and/or thoughts of the target audience. It follows that advertising is by no means a random process. It is, by contrast, a purposeful act, since persuading potential buyers is its major goal. Indeed, such a characteristic is well manifested in advertising language, for it differs considerably from that used in everyday communication. In fact, what distinguishes advertising text lies in the way it is

formulated to make it more persuasive and attention-seeking than that of ordinary conversations.

Consequently, achieving persuasion, in turn, requires adopting particular strategies and utilising certain devices such as those used for appealing to human emotions or rationality. What is more, advertisers can deliver their advertisements through a variety of mass media like radio, newspapers, outdoor displays, and television, to list but a few (Janoschka 15,18). Interestingly, none of these is complete in itself. That is, each has its own merits and demerits and that is why clients prefer not to rely upon a single medium in advertising their commodities.

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In recent years, billboards¹, as one type of outdoor advertising, have witnessed a rapid development and have flourished in cities and towns in particular, as the medium suitable for commodities that fall within the public interest (Sahaf 478). Linguistically speaking, billboard advertisement is a unique category, especially when it comes to headline² structure, because it has to be cleverly written in order to achieve readability, understanding, and memorability of the advertisement, all within certain limits of time and space. Persuasion in billboard medium has been addressed from different perspectives, that is, rhetorically and stylistically. However, few studies have investigated the pragmatic and rhetorical aspects of billboards and by means of a contrastive study between American and Iraqi advertisements. Thus, the present study attempts to bridge this knowledge gap in the literature by answering the following questions:

- What are the rhetorical devices and persuasive appeals which are used most in American and Iraqi advertisements?
- Do American and Iraqi advertisements share common rhetorical devices and persuasive appeals?
- What kinds of speech acts are deliberately employed by advertisers for persuasion?
- What role does the advertising context play in billboard advertisements?

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Persuasion and Rhetoric

It can be said that persuasion owes much of its current state to the Greek philosopher Aristotle. In fact, it was always seen related to rhetoric as being its main aim and purpose. In his definition of rhetoric, Aristotle (Herrick 69) views persuasion as the expected outcome of adopting the rhetorical means of language. For him, persuasion includes two types of proofs: artistic and inartistic. In the case of artistic proof, it represents the way the persuasive discourse is organised, the process of choosing evidence and delivery style, as well as language choices. Conversely, inartistic proof consists of those things that are out of the speaker's control like the time given to the speaker, the occasion, and the physical appearance of the speaker (Larson 20). In his book *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Mey 864). He added that it is not enough for a speaker to know what to say; it is necessary to know how to say it as well. He also stressed the

importance of language distinctiveness which, according to him, can be produced by means of rhetorical devices like metaphors. As such, it goes without saying that rhetoric proposes persuasion, for it concerns itself with how to say things. More specifically, rhetoric accounts for the stylistic choices by which persuading an audience can be brought about.

2.2.2 Rhetorical Devices

According to McQuarrie and Mick, a proposition can be stated in multiple forms one of which is the utilization of figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, pun, and the like (3). For Abrams, figurative language is “a conspicuous departure from what users of a language apprehended as the standard meaning of words, or else the standard order of words” (96). The chief aim of such a deviation is to bring about a unique meaning or effect. Nonetheless, figures of speech are sometimes thought of as poetic in the first place, though they are an essential component in all types of discourse. Correspondingly, Aristotle highlighted the importance of rhetorical devices rejecting perceiving them as a mere decorative tool. He believed that metaphor, for example, is the source of “charm and distinction” to speech as well as giving it “clearness and liveliness” (Corbett, 425).

Figures of speech were first classified in the work of the classical rhetoricians, more specifically, that of the prominent Roman figure Quintillion. In his book *Institutes of Oratory*, Quintillion divided rhetorical devices into two basic classes: schemes and tropes (Abrams, 96). It refers to the “deviation from the ordinary patterns or arrangement of words” (Corbett, 427) as in alliteration and rhyme. Whereas a *trope* is “a deviation from the ordinary and principal signification of a word” (Corbett, 427). Years later, McQuarrie and Mick categorized tropes into two basic groups: substitution and destabilization. Substitution tropes are based on selecting an expression the content of which needs making some correction on the part of the recipient to understand the meaning intended. In other words, they require a switch in the order of words to catch the implication of the utterance. Examples of this category are: ellipsis, hyperbole, and rhetorical question (432-3). To illustrate, ellipsis is understood once the recipient fills in a gap in the utterance and thus makes it complete as in:

- I didn't mean to break it, but I did. (‘broke it’ is elided)

While tropes of destabilization, as the name suggests, designate a group of words that are

¹ A billboard (also called a hoarding in the UK and many other parts of the world) is a large [outdoor advertising](#) structure, typically found in high-traffic areas such as alongside busy roads.

² A headline carries the essence of the advertising message by summarizing the body copy. It usually appears at the top or bottom of an advertisement. For illustration, see appendix A

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unsettled. That is to say, the process of destabilization makes use of certain expressions and hence provides the recipient with a varying number of interpretations. This feature is the outcome of the indeterminate quality of this set of tropes which includes: metaphor, pun, irony, and paradox. For instance:

-Your brain doesn't work .(The brain is compared to a machine)

In the example above, the meaning meant is arrived at by providing the missing piece of information, and thereby the puzzle is solved (McQuarrie and Mick, 433).

2.2.3 Persuasive Appeals

It was Aristotle who first presented what is known as proofs taking them as the means through which the primary goal of rhetoric can be achieved, that is, persuasion. Persuasive appeals are of three types: *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. According to Aristotle, *logos* is used to refer to the availability of proofs whether in words, arguments, or the logic of speech. It is regarded as a closely related domain to logic, for it is based on reasoning or inference making (Herrick 79). Since logical appeals are aimed at the thinking side of the audience, authors depend on evidence and reasoning as the main tools through which persuasion is achieved. Evidence may be in the form of quotations, statistics, or testimony which can be used to support a particular point of view. Additionally, reasoning can be the outcome of various sources such as analogy, principle, or cause and effect relation (Lucas 362-7).

In the case of *ethos*, it generally refers to the credibility of the speaker making the argument. That is to say, there is a big chance to believe what someone else says if s/he has good ethics. This means that *ethos* appeal uses the speaker's own trust worthiness or credibility in order to make a case and thus gain the approval needed (Ramage et al. 111). In line with this, Lucas states that credibility embraces two more components: competence and character. Competence includes sincerity, expertise and knowledge of the speaker, while character refers to the way the audience considers the reputation, trustworthiness, and physical appearance of the speaker (353).

The third appeal, that is of *pathos*, is closely related to emotions. It is usually directed towards the feelings or emotions of people in order to make them feel proud, afraid, angry, shameful, and so forth (370). In this respect, Aristotle describes *pathos* as "putting the audience in the right frame of mind" (Herrick 79-80). According to Ramage et al, creating *pathos* appeal requires applying certain strategies like concrete language, specific examples, illustrations, narratives, and metaphors (113).

2.2.4 Speech Acts Theory

Austin, in his influential book *How to Do Things with Words*, claims that to say something is actually

to do something as in warning, promising, stating, ordering, and so on. On this basis, speech acts theory is a way of analysing the communicative intentions of the speaker's utterances (13). Accordingly, Austin distinguishes between constatives and performatives. For him, constatives are statements or assertions used for describing things or events and which can be only true or false. For instance, the utterance 'It is snowing' is governed by the truth conditions of its production (Allott, 37). By contrast, performatives are propositions that one employs for doing things or performing certain acts, and therefore cannot be true or false as the following example shows:

-I now pronounce you man and wife.

Such utterance is regarded as a performative since the speaker does the act of joining two people in the relation of marriage (Horn and Ward, 54). However, Austin discarded this constative-performative distinction altogether arguing that all kinds of utterances are performatives in that they constitute a form of action rather than being solely a description of the world (Levinson, 235-6). Following Austin, there are two types of performatives: explicit and implicit (primary). Explicit performatives are "performative utterances which contain a performative verb that makes explicit what kind of act is being performed" (Huang, 95-6). On the contrary, implicit performatives lack such indication mark. Consider the following examples:

-I will come back tomorrow. (implicit)

-I *promise* to come back tomorrow. (explicit)

Huang adds that there are many cases in which the implicit performative lacks a performative verb. To illustrate, the illocutionary act of the utterance in the example below is 'insult' though the explicit performative is that of assertion (98):

-You are a stupid cow.

A speech act, as stated by Austin, can be classified into three main acts or levels. For a start, there is the locutionary act, which refers to the group of words arranged in accordance to a particular grammar. That is, it represents what is said in specific situation. In this sense, this act is thought of as the basic act and the starting point of performing any of the speech acts. The second act is the illocutionary act. It represents the function behind uttering the words. Put it another way, it carries the speaker's intended meaning. The last act in this triad is the perlocutionary act which shows the effect the utterance has on the hearer. It aims at convincing the hearer of the truthfulness of some statement or causing the hearer to feel the urge to perform an action. To elucidate more, consider the following:

-Close the door.

In the above example, the process of producing the utterance represents the locutionary act, while the function of this utterance as an order to the hearer to do something for the benefit of the speaker is its illocutionary act. And finally, the desired effect to be

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fulfilled by the utterance, namely, that the hearer actually goes and shut the door represents the perlocutionary act (Cutting, 16). In an attempt to systemise and strengthen Austin's taxonomy of speech acts, Searle presents a new typology which consists of five categories as follows:

a. Representatives: Representatives are expressions employed as a means of stating what the speaker believes to be the case. This category covers a number of micro acts such as claiming, describing, asserting, etc., as in:

-The earth is flat
(Cutting, 17)

b. Declaratives: This category includes acts through which the speaker changes the world by uttering them. For example:

-I sentence you to five years.

It is important to mention here that such acts require the speaker to have some institutional power if the act to be accomplished appropriately (Yule, 53).

c. Directives: They are used by the speaker for the purpose of getting the hearer to do something such as requests, commands, suggestions, invitations, and so forth.

-Give this letter to Jane.

d. Commissives: This category of acts is used by the speakers to commit themselves to some further action, as in promises, refusals, threats, vows, and the like:

-I swear to God I am teaching you a lesson.
(Cutting, 17).

e. Expressives: They are the acts employed to account for the speaker's feelings. In this sense, an expressive act shows the psychological state of the speaker which can be pain, like, dislike, sorrow, and so on. For example:

-I am terribly sorry.
(Yule, 54).

The question remains here is that whether the structure the speaker uses must ever confirm with its illocutionary force at all times or not. The answer for such a question is definitely 'no'. For example, when saying 'I have an exam tomorrow', in fact, this is not necessarily a statement about the speaker's plans or obligations; instead, it might be a request to turn off the TV or keeping quiet. In this regard, Searle noticed two possibilities for a speech act, namely, direct and indirect act. A direct speech act is used when a speaker intends to communicate the literal meaning of what is said. What this actually suggests is the formation of a direct relationship between the form and the function. This view holds that a declarative should be realised by a statement, an interrogative through a question, and an imperative via the use of a command or a request. See the example below:

-Did you drink the milk?

The utterance above is a direct act, for it has the structure of an interrogative and it functions as a question. Nonetheless, there are times when the function-form equation is breached as the following example shows:

-You are standing in front of the TV.

Though the structure of the utterance above is that of a declarative, it functions as a command to move away of the TV and hence an indirect act (Cutting, 19-20).

Regardless of the remarkable contributions of Searle's work, still some weaknesses can be detected. For instance, Verschueren sheds light on niches in Searle's classification of speech acts claiming that "the categories are by no means mutually exclusive" (24). To illustrate, problems arise when, for example, the utterance 'if you did it again, I am gonna kill you' can be both a directive and a commissive as well.

As an act, persuasion is an effort on the part of an addresser in order to change the opinion, attitude, or belief of an addressee. However, there is no conformity between persuasion and illocutionary speech acts. This is due to the fact that persuasion is identified within the perlocutionary act of the speaker's utterance. For example, the speech act in Coca Cola advertisement below is of persuasion, yet it has no explicit performative verb:

-Taste like a million dollar.

? I hereby persuade you that it tastes like....³
(Austin, 104).

This shows that perlocutionary intentions need not be intended to be recognised. In other words, their fulfillment lies not in their recognition but in the production of some further effect (Bach and Harnish 81). It can be said that persuasion is mainly a directive speech act since directives are generally employed by their speakers to direct the hearer to do some sort of action which in the case of advertising is buying (Jucker and Taavitsainen 13). By way of illustration, consider the example below for KitKat chocolate advertisement:

-Take a break, have a KitKat.

However, directives are by no means the only acts that can be used to achieve persuasion. Other types of speech acts such as representatives, commissives, and expressives are widely used in the process of persuasion (Taufik et al. 2007). Take the billboard advertisement for Chicago Crime Commission against drugs as an example:

-Just because they're prescribed, doesn't mean they're safe. (representative)

2.2.5 Pragma-Rhetorical Perspective

The term 'pragma-rhetorical' simply describes the use of pragmatic as well as rhetorical devices and strategies in analysing certain stretches of speech. The

³ (?) This mark is used to indicate an odd sentence

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present study will be following Larrazabal and Korta's (2002) concept of pragma-rhetorical in which pragmatic and rhetorical devices and strategies are identified and analysed separately. It differs from that of Dascal's⁴ (2003) as his is limited to figures of speech and persuasive appeals treating them as being pragma-rhetorical devices all at once. Accordingly, the pragmatic side of the current study includes identifying types of speech acts, while the rhetorical part has the persuasive appeals and the rhetorical devices as its main concern in an attempt to present a comprehensive framework of persuasion in billboard advertising language.

2.2 Previous Studies

Few studies had been conducted with regard to Persuasion in billboard advertising. To begin with, smartphones billboard advertisements of a number of cellphone companies were analysed by Angriani et al. (2017) to find out which of the rhetorical appeals were employed most by advertisers. The tool adopted for analysis was based on Ramage et al's. (2010) rhetorical appeals. The results revealed that logos is the basic appeal used to get the potential customer persuaded. This is because advertising cellphones is related to technology and needs to be proven scientifically. Another study is done by Maalej (2015) in which he investigated the utilisation of stylistic features in advertising discourse as a means of persuasion. For that purpose, sixty-five billboards in Tunis City had been analysed in terms of certain stylistic strategies, namely, phonological, syntactic, and code mixing. In addition, the pragmatic function, that is, their persuasive impact upon the potential buyers had been investigated as well. The results showed that persuasion was achieved depending on a wide range of strategies, namely phonological, syntactic, and code-mixing strategies.

It seems that though persuasion in billboards was addressed from different angles, yet its pragmatic and rhetorical aspects have not been given much attention. For this reason, this study has come to fill in the gap by bringing to light the pragma-rhetorical roadmap the advertisers follow to attain persuasion hoping that the findings to be beneficial to advertisers by providing them with the basic tools needed to produce more persuasive advertisements. It is also probable to be of great value for rhetoricians, pragmatists, and psycholinguists since they all share an interest in how to influence others.

⁴ Rhetoric makes use of rhetorical devices which are primarily Pragmatic-Based as they result from flouting certain conversational maxims. At the same time, Aristotle appeals involve inferences as much as figures of speech do. That is, pathos appeal can be detected when irony is employed, since it indicates anger. Thus, we infer that someone is upset when he/she says one thing to mean the opposite. Similarly, irony is figured out as a result of flouting Grice's maxim

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

The data of the present study consists of fifty billboard advertisements (poster panel⁵ and bulletin type⁶). Twenty-five advertisements are Arabic (mainly in Iraqi dialect), while the other twenty-five are English (basically American). These advertisements fall into the most common type of advertisements, namely the commercial consumer type which is usually concerned with positively affecting consumers' attitude towards a particular commodity of some company or business in order to make a purchase. The data collected is a heterogeneous collection of advertisements, that is, it represents various kinds of products and services such as cars, banking services, colleges, foods and drinks, and the like. Moreover, the part that will be analysed is typically the headline alone, for it carries the central theme of the advertising message (Janoschka 22). Besides, billboard advertisements, largely, have only the headline as their advertising text. The American billboard advertisements used in this study are collected from the work of some advertising companies and agencies: *Clear Channel, Regency, Lamar, Az Billboard, Ashby, Via, Adams, and Ace*, while the Iraqi billboard advertisements are mainly collected by taking photos for a number of billboards in Najaf city streets using the cell phone camera. The Iraqi advertisements have been translated into English for the sake of analysis and they are provided in appendix D.

3.2 Model of analysis

It is necessary to mention here that the current study provided both qualitative and quantitative analysis of its data. On the one hand, the qualitative part seeks to introduce in-depth description of the data by drawing upon an eclectic model to discover the pragma-rhetorical aspects of persuasion in billboards headlines. The quantitative part, on the other hand, was dedicated to discuss the statistical results of the study. The model adopted for analysing the data qualitatively involves four models. First, Searle's (1969) model of speech acts. Searle's classification of speech acts, namely, representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives were employed to identify the kinds of acts used for persuasion. Secondly, Lucas's (2009) model was adopted for analysing the persuasive appeals in the selected data. These include Aristotle's classical appeals of logos, ethos, and pathos.

of quality which says: 'do not say what you believe to be false' (605-618).

⁵ A poster panel consists of a paper pasted to boards to be placed alongside highways.

⁶ Bulletins are more like posters, yet they are much larger. They are actually painted directly onto the board.

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The third model is that of Mick and McQuarrie (1996) which was chosen for analysing the rhetorical devices the copywriters⁷ employ in advertisements. Their model embraces two main categories of figures of speech that are widely used in advertisements, that is, schemes and tropes. The tropes are, in turn, divided into two types: destabilization and substitution tropes. In the present study, only certain tropes had been investigated which were: metaphor, pun, hyperbole, ellipsis, rhetorical question, and metonymy. The decision of selecting those six only was based on the information found in advertising strategies and copy structure of billboard advertisements as well as on the results of some research papers conducted in this area of language, that is, figures of speech. Whereas

schemes were excluded altogether because of their insignificant role in advertising since it is limited to that of providing advertisement memorability (Moriarty et al. 271).

The fourth model was Cook's (2001) model of advertising context without which advertisements analysis would not be complete. Context cannot be dismissed altogether because it does add or change the meaning of an advertisement. That is to say, it is an indispensable part to fully understand the communicated message. In Cook's view, an advertising context consists of eight basic elements: substance, music and pictures, paralanguage, situation, co-text, intertext, participants, and function (Cook 3)

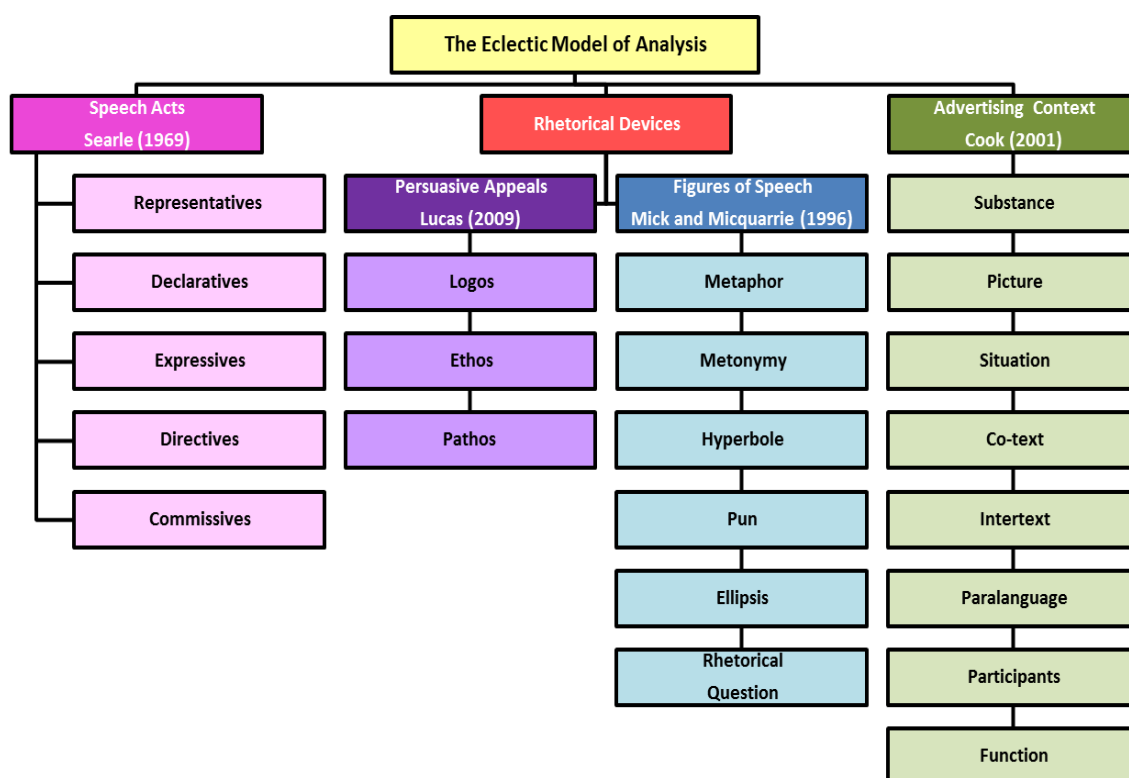


Figure 1. The Eclectic Model of Analysis

4. Results and discussion

This section introduces the results and discussion of the data in accordance with the four models employed. It also provides a statistical analysis of the findings.

4.1 Speech Acts

Representatives, directives, and commissives were the most frequent speech acts in American billboards at 52%, 48%, 36%, respectively. To begin with, representatives were used as a means through

which assertions or descriptions about the advertised product were given. For instance, in headline 1, the cold-brewed coffee that CC's house serves is described as *surprisingly smooth* suggesting non grainy drink. Similarly, there was a heavy reliance on directives which were presented as an advice, a request, or an invitation and thus creating a welcoming or friendly atmosphere. To illustrate, headline 22 is introduced via a direct directive in which the advertising message represents a request from Peapod Delivery Company telling its customers to spare themselves the long ride of picking up the groceries

⁷ Someone whose job is to write the words of advertisements.

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and leave it to Peapod instead. With regard to commissives, two things were noticed: first, they were never performed directly; and secondly, they were found combined with other speech acts, namely representatives and directives. For example, headline 16, is both a representative and commissive at once. It

is a representative, for the headline gives a description of the results a woman gets after using Matrix hair products, while as a commissive, it represents an implied promise to customers of silky hair. By contrast, other speech acts, that is, declaratives and expressives had not been used at all.

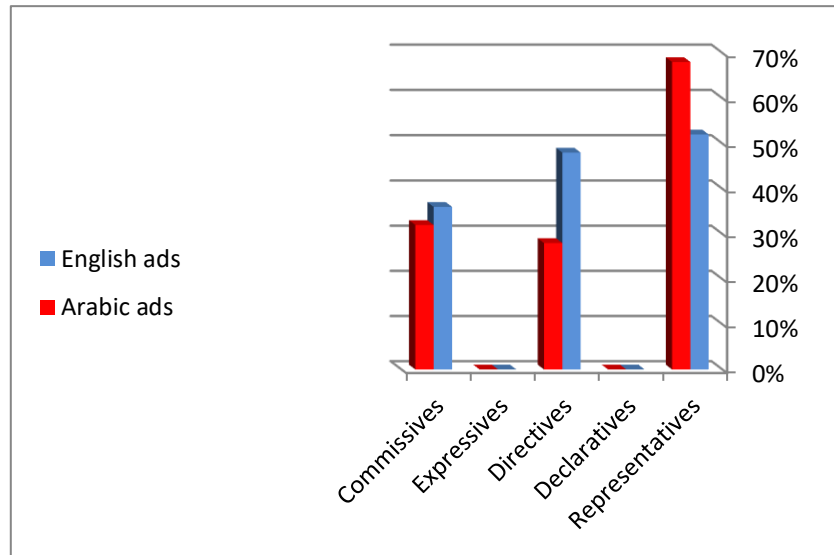


Figure 2. Percentages of Occurrence of Speech Acts in American and Iraqi Advertisements

In the same way, Iraqi headlines revealed similar results as it is shown in figure 2. That is to say, representatives had the highest frequency which comprised 68% of the data (headline 6,7), whereas directives were the second most frequent speech act 32% (headline 11,20). This shows that Arab copywriters preferred representatives more because they may want to avoid imposition. With respect to commissives, their percentage of use was 32% of all the utilized speech acts (headline 4). In the case of declaratives and expressives, like their American counterparts, no instances of them had been noticed, too.

It can be argued that such high occurrence of representatives is attributed to the fact that advertisers typically followed the common method of selling which simply requires introducing the audience with the necessary information about the advertised commodity and then leave them to decide. In the case of directives, the high percentage indicates that the advertisers were pursuing to achieve the general goal behind advertising which is encouraging the target audience to take the action of purchase. Advertisers also employed commissives occasionally because a promise works as a kind of guarantee and thus creates trust between the audience and the manufacturers which eventually affects their buying decisions. Regarding declaratives and expressives categories, they were excluded for reasons concerning

effectiveness, meaning that advertisers found certain acts as more persuasive than others.

4.2 Persuasive Appeals

Pathos was the main appeal that the advertisers relied upon for persuasion and which comprised 88% of the data. It was produced using either words, visuals, or both as in headline 12 in which the word 'fresh' along with the picture of the steaming cup of coffee and macaroon biscuits next to it formed pathos by appealing to human senses of taste and smell. By contrast, ethos was rarely used 12% appearing in headline 3, 5, and 23. In 3 and 5, ethos was realised through celebrity endorsement, whereas 23 the long experience and good reputation of the insurance company was what formed ethos by mentioning the date at which the company first started its business. Shockingly, logos had not been used at all. Similarly, Iraqi advertisements displayed a heavy reliance upon pathos appeal which comprised 100% of the data, unlike the other two appeals, that is, ethos and logos which had been discarded altogether.

From the previous discussion, one cannot but notice that pathos was the appeal that advertisers used most to influence the potential buyers. Actually, this can be justified in two ways. To begin with, most of advertising strategies are largely Pathos-Based. To illustrate, association principle strategy works by attaching certain positive feelings with the commodity in an attempt to make it desirable. In the same way,

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 PIF (India) = 1.940
 IBI (India) = 4.260
 OAJI (USA) = 0.350

humour and children strategies both make use of human emotions as a shortcut into persuading them to buy the advertised product. The other reason for overusing pathos might be built upon the fact that humans are more affected by emotions and feelings than reason (Thompson 10).

In this vein, through the process of analysing persuasive appeals, it was found that there are certain emotions or appeals that were mostly used by the advertisers to demonstrate pathos. These particularly include: happiness, comfort, security, price, high

quality, human senses, and health. Moreover, it was noticed that the Iraqi advertisers used the Iraqi local dialect rather than the classical Arabic in writing some of their advertisements as a way to create casual impact as one can notice in the words شربيت (drink) and قوطية (can). Consequently, such informal atmosphere can have an overwhelming effect upon the customers' buying decisions, for the local dialect gives the advertising message the power to connect to them emotionally.

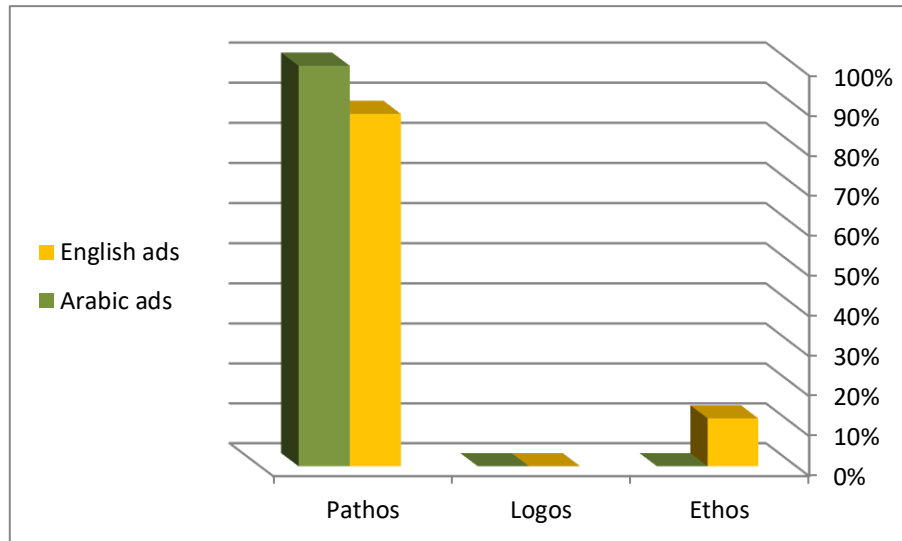


Figure 3. Percentages of Occurrence of Persuasive Appeals in American and Iraqi Advertisements

As appertaining to logos, the exclusion of this appeal might be ascribed to consideration to keep the advertising text short, for bringing about logos requires using more words and thus much space which is not possible in billboard medium. Such finding contrasts with that of Angriani's (2017) in which logos was the basic appeal used to get the potential customer persuaded since advertising cellphones is related to technology and needs to be proven scientifically. In case of ethos, it can be said that the paucity of this appeal in Iraqi advertisements might be related to the advertisers' belief that the audience has little trust in authorities. Nevertheless, persuasive appeals, in general, were not achieved via words per se. On the contrary, they were also reached at through advertisement picture(s), background colour, and even typeface.

4.3 Rhetorical Devices

From figure 4, it seems that in American advertisements the tropes of hyperbole and ellipsis

had high averages of use 28% and 32%, respectively. Hyperbole device was used to achieve different goals among them increasing advertisement impact upon consumers and hence makes the advertised commodity more desirable as in headline 13 in which the taste of the coffee beverage was overstated by associating it with happiness as being its source. Likewise, ellipsis was employed abundantly as in headline 10 and 23. Interestingly, the part elided was mainly the initial part, for example, before undergoing ellipsis, headline 10 might read (*we are introducing.....*). Figure 4 also shows that metaphor was the least used of all other rhetorical devices 12% (headline 2, 13). In 2, the new car of Ford Mustang was compared to a wild horse to indirectly refer to the car strength and speed. Oddly, pun, metonymy, and rhetorical question scored no occurrences in the analysed data.

Impact Factor:

| | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| ISRA (India) = 4.971 | SIS (USA) = 0.912 | ICV (Poland) = 6.630 |
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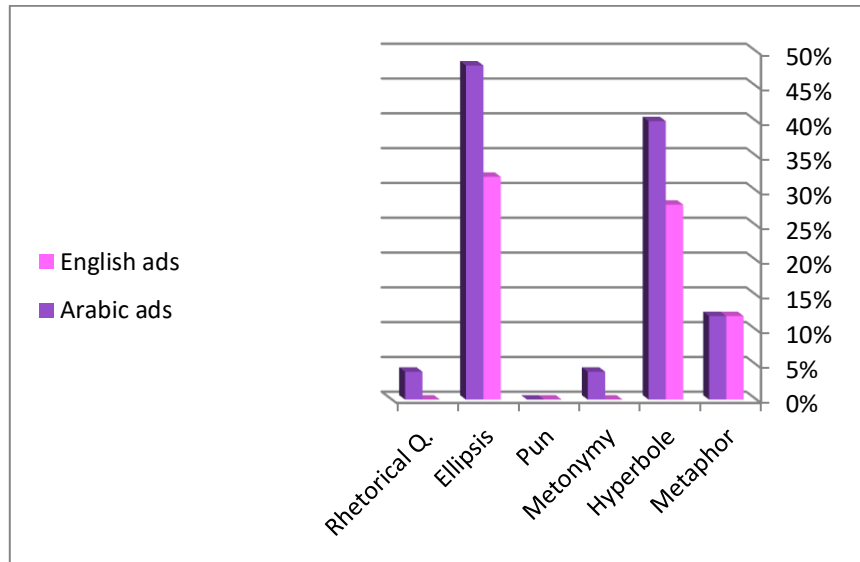


Figure 4. Percentages of Occurrence of Tropes in American and Iraqi Advertisements

Like the American data, Iraqi headlines achieved the highest frequencies of hyperbole and ellipsis 40% and 48%, respectively (headline 5,16). Conversely, the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, and rhetorical question had the lowest frequencies, that is, 12%, 4%, and 4% in the same order (20, 17,13). Unexpectedly, the rhetorical device of pun had not been used at all.

It can be said that advertisers used hyperbole abundantly for the sake of attracting the reader's attention which is an important goal to have in mind when writing advertisements in general and billboards in particular (Cruse 80). In this respect, Claridge remarks that using overstatement is one way of making something look valuable and hence desired by people. She adds that hyperbole is one source of ambiguity behind which the speaker hides in an attempt to evade being precise and accurate regarding a certain thing or subject which is in this case - the commodity being advertised (217, 209).

Concerning ellipsis, again, the restrictions imposed by the copy structure of billboard medium, namely of space and time, played a major role in limiting the advertising text to just few words and that explains the wide use of such a trope (Lawrence et al. 12). In Cruse's view, ellipsis is used basically for purposes related to the economy of expression (54). As a matter of fact, keeping the headline short will, in turn, fulfill further advertising goals, that is, making the advertising text easily understood and memorable. He also points out that omitting certain parts is made primarily for a stylistic end. Put another way, ellipsis gives an advertisement a conversational style which reinforces the effectiveness of the advertising message. Additionally, being brief is a clever tactic to arouse the reader's curiosity to continue reading to

know more about the product. Interestingly, it can be noticed that the advertisers designed most of the advertisements in a way similar to that of a puzzle. That is, the short headline represented only the trigger or the first piece that motivates the readers to look for the other pieces in the rest of the advertising text or picture to get it solved.

Commenting on the low percentage and the exclusion of the other tropes, the copywriters avoided using them due to the indirect characteristic they have in common. In other words, all the four devices, that is, metaphor, metonymy, pun, and rhetorical question were used as an indirect way of referring or talking about a particular thing. In effect, this forms an obstacle in the way of achieving immediate understanding which goes against billboard advertising goals. This is because, generally, passersby and drivers give only a couple of seconds of their attention to billboards and thus they better be as simple and clear as possible to be immediately grasped.

4.4 Advertising Context

Broadly speaking, pictures were used heavily in American advertisements consisting mainly of the advertised commodity or something related to it except for billboard 8 in which no picture was used in order to keep the focus on the advertising message. In doing so, the art directors sought to give the potential buyers or customers an idea about what is being promoted⁸. The colours of the advertisement background were all bright and vibrant; they were mostly blue (the sky) or white, and at other times related to those of the products (billboard 7). Additionally, in some of the advertisements the

⁸ See appendix E for billboards examples

Impact Factor:

| | | | | | |
|------------------|---------|----------------|---------|--------------|---------|
| ISRA (India) | = 4.971 | SIS (USA) | = 0.912 | ICV (Poland) | = 6.630 |
| ISI (Dubai, UAE) | = 0.829 | PIHIQ (Russia) | = 0.126 | PIF (India) | = 1.940 |
| GIF (Australia) | = 0.564 | ESJI (KZ) | = 8.997 | IBI (India) | = 4.260 |
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background formed part of the advertisement picture which was typically of natural landscape. Such simple background was intended to assure readability of the advertising text and avoid distracting the audience's attention. All in all, an advertisement picture and a background were almost always designed in such a way to make them eye catching (Lawrence et al. 12). Besides, they provided the basic material for pathos by appealing mainly to human senses as well as the feelings of happiness and joy (Jaiswal and Veerkumar 23). Also, pictures did contribute to ethos through celebrity endorsement as in billboard 5 in which the famous actor George Clooney appears as a kind of recommendation.

Concerning typeface and letter size, it was noticed that the majority of advertisement headlines were written in simple typeface using all caps letters and of larger size than that of the other advertisement elements. In fact, this had the purpose of attracting the audience's attention and making the headline easily readable (Ramage et al.166). However, there were times in which a combination of fonts, sizes and colours were used for the sake of emphasising some information about the product or the service (billboard 7). Furthermore, the art directors drew upon the logo colours as their guide in selecting the typeface colour in order to relate the claim made in the headline to its source, that is, the manufacturers or the business owners whose commodity was being promoted and hence making the advertisement more persuasive (billboard 7). The last component to be mentioned here is the co-text. In order to keep the advertisement layout non-distracting, the copywriters mainly relied upon the brand name and product name⁹ as the co-text for most of the advertisements under study, unlike subheads and slogans¹⁰ which had been used only occasionally.

Broadly, Iraqi billboard advertisements had a lot in common with their American counterparts concerning the advertising context with some minor differences only. For a start, the art directors used the picture of the commodity itself or something closely associated with it to advertise it (billboard 12). However, unlike advertisements in English, there appeared to be a dearth in using pictures relying instead on the advertisement background alone (billboard 21). Consequently, this might have a bad impact upon the efficiency of an advertisement, for a crucial component was dropped altogether which could participate significantly in setting persuasive appeals as well as keeping the advertising text attention grabbing.

Concerning the advertisement background, the same applies to Iraqi advertisements since the art directors based their choice of colours on those of logo

and product (billboard 5). Nevertheless, some of the colours used were, to a large extent, dull or pale as compared with the colours of the American background. As a result, this could cause the advertisements to lose their power of catching the attention of the passersby and drivers. It might also affect the clarity of the advertising text and hence makes an advertisement difficult to read (billboard 11).

The colours that Iraqi advertisements chose for writing the advertising message were all catchy, using Kufic typeface of the same letter size and since it is not in the common use (handwriting or printing books, etc.), it works perfectly as an attention-grabbing means (billboard 15). As concerning the co-text, it was primarily the brand name and at other times no co-text was used as in billboard 5. Still, one can come across other instances of co-text like those of slogan, subhead, and product name.

Interestingly, it was found that the pictorial element was set skillfully to the extent that there seemed no need for the headline. That is, the advertisement picture together with its background represented a graphic translation or visual embodiment of the headline. At other times, it supported or completed what had been already stated in the headline. This is actually quite reasonable since a billboard advertisement, after all, is a Visual-Based medium (Moriarty et al., 273). For this reason, the art directors acted smart by taking into consideration the limited time and space of this advertising type by letting the picture speak for itself making it really worth a thousand words.

5. Conclusion

This paper had the aim of exploring the persuasion process in American and Iraqi billboards utilising a pragma-rhetorical approach. Correspondingly, an eclectic model was employed which included: Searle's (1969) speech acts theory, Lucas's (2009) persuasive appeals, McQuarrie and Mick's (1996) rhetorical devices, and Cook's (2001) context of advertising. The findings revealed that only three types of speech acts were found in the data, namely, representatives, directives, and commissives. The first two acts achieved the highest frequency of occurrence in both American and Iraqi billboard advertisements. However, representatives scored higher percentage than that of the directives (52%) for American; and (68%) for Iraqi advertisements. This is attributable to the fact that the advertisers did prefer using representatives because it is the usual old-fashioned way through which the potential customers are introduced with the necessary information about the advertised product.

⁹ For example, L'Oréal is the brand name of a cosmetics company, whereas ELVIVE shampoo and INFALLIBLE foundation are products names of the same company of L'Oréal.

¹⁰ See appendix A for illustration

Impact Factor:

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| ISI (Dubai, UAE) | = 0.829 | ПИИИ (Russia) | = 0.126 | PIF (India) | = 1.940 |
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| JIF | = 1.500 | SJIF (Morocco) | = 5.667 | OAJI (USA) | = 0.350 |

Regarding the rhetorical devices, not all of the six tropes were used. In fact, both American and Iraqi copywriters made little use of tropes by excessively using two of them only, namely, hyperbole and ellipsis. Surprisingly, ellipsis came first in both American and Iraqi advertisements making the percentage (32%) and (48%), respectively. By drawing heavily upon such a device, the copywriters were considering the words limit imposed by the advertising space and the short time of exposure characteristic of a billboard medium. Besides, ellipsis creates casual impact which leads to building intimacy with the reader. The trope of hyperbole ranked second with a percentage of (28%) and (40%), respectively. The reason behind the wide use of overstatement was to grab the audience's attention and make the advertised product look desirable. Other tropes achieved low scores which could be taken as an attempt on the part of the copywriters to keep the advertising message direct and clear.

As far as the persuasive appeals is concerned, pathos appeal was number one choice of the advertisers making the highest percentage of use which reached (88%) in American advertisements and (100%) in Iraqi. Their decision of using pathos than the other appeals was based mainly on the fact that appealing to emotions and feelings is the window from which the advertisers can get into the people's minds more effectively than employing ethos or logos appeals. Interestingly, the means by which pathos

appeal was realised came not from the advertising text only, but from its graphical part as well. Indeed, despite the role the text of the headline played in creating an emotional appeal, yet the advertisements pictures were a far richer source. They mainly contained children, smiling people or characters, food and drinks.

Speaking of the advertising context, it can be argued that the advertisement picture and/or background were the real heroes in the story of persuasion. To sum up here, besides their significant contributions to constructing pathos and ethos appeals, they cleared things up since they either explained or completed what had been already expressed via words. At other times, they mirrored the advertisement headline to the extent that no words were needed. What is more, they did a great job in keeping an advertisement understood, memorable, and eye catching. It is noteworthy that pictures and colours found in American advertisements were catchier than those used in Iraqi advertisements.

In the light of what was mentioned previously, American and Iraqi billboard advertisements appeared to have many similarities regarding the use of persuasive appeals, speech acts, and rhetorical devices. Such great similarities indicate that both American and Iraqi advertisers were following the general and universal rules set for billboards advertising.

Appendix A. The Copy Structure of Print Ads



| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Impact Factor: | ISRA (India) = 4.971 | SIS (USA) = 0.912 | ICV (Poland) = 6.630 |
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Appendix B. Table of Arabic Romanization System

| Arabic Consonant | Symbol | Arabic Consonant | Symbol | Arabic Consonant | Symbol |
|------------------|--------|------------------|--------|------------------|---------------------|
| أ | ā-a | ز | z | ق | q |
| ب | b | س | s | ك | k |
| ت | t | ش | sh | ل | l |
| ث | th | ص | ṣ | م | m |
| ج | j | ض | ḍ | ن | n |
| ح | ḥ | ط | ṭ | هـ | h |
| خ | kh | ظ | ẓ | و | w |
| د | d | ع | ‘ | ي | y |
| ذ | dh | غ | gh | ء | ’ Final - medial |
| ر | r | ف | f | ة | h-t |

| Arabic Vowel | Symbol | Arabic Vowel | Symbol | Arabic Vowel | Symbol |
|--------------|--------|--------------|--------|--------------|--------|
| اَ | a | أَ | ā | إِ | ī |
| أُ | u | أُ | á | أُو | aw |
| إِ | i | أُو | ū | أِي | ay |

Adopted from *the ALA-LC Romanization tables* available from
<https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/roman.html>.

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
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Appendix C. Headlines of American Ads

1. Surprisingly smooth
2. A wild horse needs room to roam
3. Hydrate naturally
4. Enjoy summer
5. George Clooney's choice
6. Please don't eat the billboard
7. Unlimited data in the middle of anywhere
8. Better business lending
9. We're here to help
10. Introducing the all new CLA
11. Don't stay with an airline that turns you off
12. Start your day fresh
13. Happiness tastes like this
14. Vote 4 comfort
15. Spend less
16. Sleek look
17. Easy parking I am the app for that
18. Give your sandwich the royal treatment
19. Explore your potential, pursue your passion
20. We turn prices upside down
21. Get noticed
22. Next time, skip the drive we deliver
23. Insurance service since 1907
24. Outdoor furniture, designed for summer
25. Hook me up

Appendix D. Transliteration and Translations of Iraqi Headlines

1. ذوق اللحظة Taste the moment (*dhuq al-lahzah*)
2. اوكيا اختيارك الأمثل Aukia is your best choice (*Okyā...ikhtyārūka al-amthal*)
3. سلفتنا تعدل الحال Our loan betters your financial situation (*silfatnah t'dil al-ḥāl*)

| | | | |
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4. اوبر...أمن لك OBR....it is safer for you (*Obir...a'manlak*)
5. اكبر كمية طاقة بالعراق The largest amount of energy in Iraq (*akbar kamīyat ṭāqah bil-'irāq*)
6. تركيبة جديدة لنجاحات كبيرة A new formula for huge successes (*tarkībah jadīdah li-najāḥāt kabīrah*)
7. فخامة النوافذ العصرية The magnificence of the modern windows (*fakhāmat al-nawāfīdh al-'aṣrīyah*)
8. لا تنازل عن الجودة Never giving up on quality (*lā tanāzul 'an al-jawdah*)
9. كن اقرب الى احبائك Be closer to your loved ones (*kun aqrab ilá aḥibā'ik*)
10. الريادة في صنع الأجيال We are the pioneers in education industry (*al-rīyādah fī ṣun' al-ajyāl*)
11. احجز دارك ب4 مليون و قسط 350 الف Reserve a house with a down payment of 4 million plus an installment of 350 thousand (*iḥjiz dārak bi 4 malyūn wa qṣṭ 350 alf*)
12. نكوع...شربت اهلنا Niguu....the Iraqi traditional juice (*Nghū'....sharbat ahalnā*)
13. سويت الفحص الشامل يم مختبرات النخبة؟ Have you had the full health checkup at Al Nukhba labs? (*sawīt al-faḥṣ al-shāmīl yam mukhtabarāt al-nakhbah*)
14. نحن الأصل We are number one in air conditioning business (*naḥnu al-aṣīl*)
15. سيارة العائلة المثالية The perfect family car (*sayarat al-'ā'ilah al-mithālīyah*)
16. الطعم المفضل لديهم The favorite flavor for them (*al-ṭ'm al-mufaḍal ladaithum*)
17. قوطية الأسود الجديدة The new can of the lions made special for the lions of Mesopotamia lovers (*quṭīyat al-usūd al-jadīdah li-'ushāq usūd al-rāfīdaīn*)
18. شكل جديد طازج أكيد A new packaging..definitely fresh (*shakal jadīd ṭāzaj akīd*)
19. أصباغ لأشهر المعالم وأجمل البيوت Paints for the most famous features and the most beautiful houses (*aṣbāgh li'ashhar al-ma'ālim wa ajmal al-bīūt*)
20. كن في المستقبل Join the future (*kun fi al-mustaqbal*)
21. كن مختلف بأعلانك Let your ad be different (*kun mukhtalif bi-i'lānik*)
22. كي...لحياة اسهل Qi...for an easier life (*kī....liḥayāt ashal*)
23. استمتع بأقامة فريدة بأفضل سعر Enjoy a unique stay at the best price (*istamti' bi-iqāmah farīdah bi-afḍal s'r*)
24. خفضنا الأسعار لتستمتع بالانترنت We cut prices so you can enjoy the internet (*khafaḍnā al-as'ār li-tastamti' bi-al-antarnat*)
25. تكلم الانكليزية مع سامي Speak better English with Sami (*takalam al-ingīlīzīyah ma'a Samī*)

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
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Appendix D. Examples of American and Iraqi Billboards



Billboard 8



Billboard 7



Billboard 12



Billboard 21

Impact Factor:

| | | | | | |
|------------------|---------|----------------|---------|--------------|---------|
| ISRA (India) | = 4.971 | SIS (USA) | = 0.912 | ICV (Poland) | = 6.630 |
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Billboard 5



Billboard 11



Billboard 15

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