# Visual Literacy: A Critical Discourse Analysis Framework

**Nadia Hameed Hassoon**

*Department of Media/ College of Arts/University of Babylon -Iraq*

art.nadiah.hameed@uobabylon.edu.iq

## Abstract

The influence of media on our lives, which can be massive, must be understood to guide our future. Scholars have demonstrated that media can create division among people. Media literacy can help learners achieve awareness, studying how media is produced, circulated and consumed. Media literacy, semiotic and non-semiotic, is necessary in post conflict Iraqi EFL classroom to manipulate the impact of media on our lives. This study is limited to visual communication, which is completely neglected in Iraqi EFL classroom. It highlights the importance of visual media awareness in classroom, introducing EFL teachers with a framework of critical visual analysis. This framework depends on the linguistic analysis of media semiotic discourse within its contexts. Consequently, it attracts the attention of teachers to the importance of visual media discourse into Iraqi EFL classroom in an attempt to cope with the development in education in western universities. Visual media literacy can help create aware citizens.

**Key words**: Theoretical awareness, critical analysis, formal discourse

## الوعيُ النظريُ: طريقة فيُ التحليل النقديُ للخطابِ الصوريُ

**ناديه حميد حسون**

*قسم الاعلام/كلية الآداب/جامعة بابل-العراق*

## المستخلص

إن تأثير الإعلام على حياتنا كبير وقد يكون سلبيا. وأثبت الباحثون أن الإعلام ممكن أن يخلق التفرقة بين أبناء الشعب الواحد. لذلك يجب معرفة تأثير الإعلام على حياتنا بمعرفة كيفية إنتاجها وتوزيعها واستهلاكها من قبلنا. إن هذا الوعي كفيل بأن يخلق جيلا واعيا قادرا على مقاومة تأثير الإعلام خاصة في البلدان التي تعرضت للحروب. تدعو هذه الدراسة الي ضرورة الاهتمام بالإعلام وتدريسه في الصف لما للإعلام من تأثير على تغيير مشاعر وسلوك المستهلك. تقتصر الدراسة على الوعي اللغوي الصوري فقط. وتقدم الدراسة طريقة نقدية لتحليل الخطابة الصوري في الصف وخاصة في تدريس مادة اللغة الإنكليزية بوصفها محاولة للمساهمة في خلق جيل واعي. هذه الطريقة تشرح بالتفصيل آملين أن تطبق في الصف في العراق من مدرسي اللغة الإنكليزية على كافة مستويات التعليم وذلك لمواكبة التطور التربوي في مناهج اللغة الانكليزية.

**الكلمات الدالة:** الوعي النظري، التحليل النقدي، الخطاب الصوري

## 1. Introduction

There is a growing tendency towards the employment of education as a social post-conflict recovery tool to create aware generations, who can cope with (violent/ political) events that took place within their own society [1]. 'Education is valued by many as a means of social mobility' [2:197]. Education can be an effective tool help in shaping 'future citizens', who can respect cultural and ethnic diversity, as long as national identity is discursively shaped. That is, guiding individual values, attitudes and behaviours towards national unity and peacebuilding can promote peace and social cohesion.

[3] asserts that Iraq as part of the Arab region was obscured by many government and private television channels as technology increased the number of satellite stations, introducing a great number of satellite channels and media content, which vary in the way they deal with the situation in Iraq. This change in news communication alter the process of news production [4] into a political and economic one, serves the interests of institutions, the politicians and the governments that own, influence or control these media outlets, and their audiences [5].Furthermore, moving to online, media characteristics, such as multimedia, interactivity and researchability, add to its impact on the audience and necessitate media literacy [6].

After the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the new revolution in technology, learners have become more interested in media and technology than thinking, socialising and reading. 'Our students have lost the practice of and taste for reading' [7: 62].Uncritical learners can be victims of biased media discourse. Unconscious consumption of media discourse can change them into active agents, who can act against the common good of their society [8]. Media consumption and its impact on the learners concerns educators [9].

Language is characterised by flexibility that can be used to change our social life by some institutions and channels of communication through the reproduction of representations of certain social issues [10]. The meaning of ideas can be changed by the choices of language [11:1].To put it differently, media discourse shapes all our socio-cultural realities including the ideological, political, and economic through different possibilities of language choice. Language can represent our identities [12]. [13] media can influence the representation of any reality.

Drawing on [14] 'Knowledge is power', it is necessary to adopt media literacy into Iraqi EFL classroom in the aftermath of war, to save the learners. Media awareness in the classroom can help educators build aware citizens, who can participate in building their society, developing self-protection. Media discourse includes non-semiotic linguistic and semiotic (visual and audio) resources.

'Visual literacy' or 'visual education'[15] is a critical discourse analysis of a visual item to answer the questions: what's the visual message, who makes or edits it and why, and how does the viewer respond to it? Deviation from the normal style of a certain genre of discourse is functional. That is, to visualize an element of composition in a certain way, using a certain technique, is to communicate a certain discourse that may be unconsciously consumed by the viewers.

As visual media texts are open for more interpretations, the researcher suggests using critical visual discourse analysis, following [16] within the ideological square (van

199

Dijk,…) for the investigation of visual data into Iraqi EFL classroom. It is an objective method that draws on the critical linguistic analysis of discourse within its historical, political, social and cultural contexts in order to have an objective interpretation of the communicated discourse. [17]claims that this approach is the appropriate academic tool to achieve awareness of the process of communicating visual discourse.

## 2. Media literacy

Media literacy 'is a set of competencies that enable us to interpret media texts and institutions, to make media of our own, and to recognize and engage with the social and political influence of media in everyday life' [18:1]. Media literacy refers to 'a variety of multimodal texts that may include visual, audio, and print text elements'.

'Media literacy' or 'media education' was first introduced by educators in Canada in the early 1980s, as a reaction to the influence of the mass media on their social life. Media literacy introduced into school curricula in a formal way for the first time in many countries around the world like Canada, the UK, Australia, to equip young people with the technical skills and competencies needed to compete in a globally competitive, highly mediated world [19], [20]. It started to develop and expand in the 1990s [9]. Educators start teaching movies critically in classrooms, to help learners understand where they are in the world and why. By relating school to the learners' everyday lives, reflecting social and cultural values, students could understand how the discourse of media shapes their prospects for social and political change.

The importance of media and its being an indispensable part of our lives is undeniable. Social consumption of visual media is translated into personal reaction [21]. Media can change the audience into active agents towards certain issues in life [5]. The way we communicate is completely changed. The changes in communication technology and media use in Iraq after 2003 has enabled some forms of cultural expressions that were unimaginable before the invasion. Media education can mitigate the influence of media on our minds and feeling and rectify the way we consume media and respond to. [18] believe that 'consumers of media were not simply brainwashed, but rather participated in far more complex interpretations and mediations with the media in their lives'. Studying media gave birth to this advanced perspective in media education, including both the potential negative impact of media on people and how to change it into a neutral influence if not positive. Media education is a complicated approach that enact against the dominant power relationships and ideology (i.e., hegemony), as only one phase of media. By inculcating awareness, the impact of media can be mitigated or resisted. Media literacy aims to enlighten learners to participate critically in media context, having 'a moral agenda'. This is the responsibility of media educators [21].

The school as one of the main institutions in our society, is responsible for empowering the learners with media literacy to create literate and aware citizens who can survive in a world of powerful images with hidden ideology and biased discourse. [8] states that media impact should change the educational priorities. Accordingly, critical discourse awareness (semiotic and non-semiotic) must be integrated in the approach of teaching language and communication into Iraqi EFL classroom. In the 'semiotic

200

economies and societies' [22] of today, Media education is indispensable skill for Iraqi citizens. They must be tolerant, indifferent, and conscious, coping with what is happening around them to protect their future [17], [23].

## 3. Learning and Media

Learning in relation to contemporary media cultures, educators need to adapt to new types of learners, who are addict to a digital culture. Learners today are completely different from learners before 2003 and they need a different learning and teaching system. Most EFL learners are consumers of at least some media texts. These texts are intended for certain subjects serving certain interests [24]. In response, educators need media education to cope with the new media generation, whose engagement in the process of learning is not an easy task. I think this is one of the main reasons, educators at different levels of education are suffering from discontinuity. That is, traditional teaching practises cannot engage the learner in the process of learning. The rapid and sudden change in communication has changed the learners' brains, languages, but uncritically. They spend more time using technology than thinking, socialising, reading and studying. Thus, the modern classroom should cover this gap into classroom. [18] 'Teaching media needs to adopt the necessary humility of a Freirean educator who is willing to teach in order to learn'. The media educator thus needs to adapt the teaching context to critical strategies, concepts, and frames, but with an open mind towards media content that is often better known by learners.

This new era of multimodal interaction necessitates new forms of communication into classroom. Media education is the appropriate solution to deal with this situation. Engaging the learner in new attractive multimodal material that is available for them whenever and wherever they need is a useful strategy. Engaging students in preparing multimodal presentation facilitated the process of learning English. This can serve preparing learners to blended learning or online learning that is suddenly imposed on the learning process because of the pandemic of coronavirus. Multimodal learning can also reduce learners' consumption of media redirecting their attention to healthy media. Media discourse forms the main focus for critical discourse analyses. CDA was developed by [25] to achieve awareness in the learning process. I suggest the employment and deployment of this approach into Iraqi EFL classroom, as a technique to overcome the gap created by the sudden and rapid development in communication happened after the invasion of Iraq 2003.

## 4. Critical discourse analysis

Janks [26:1] states that 'Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice. All social practices are tied to specific historical contexts and are the means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served'. Critical discourse analysis has been demonstrated to be the appropriate approach for the analysis of media discourse (semiotic and non-semiotic), developing critical awareness among learners. [17] states that applying this approach in the analysis of the media discourse can

201

reveal the embedded ideologies to inculcate a new culture, creating schism and violence. This analysis must be conducted within the historical and political contexts of discourse, providing a critical explanation, interpretation and understanding of the media institutions' ideologies by applying a comparative analysis of two conflicting media outlets.

According to critical discourse analysis, identity is shaped by media discourse, but 'knowledge is power'. Knowledge can empower the learner to defend themselves against bias and ideology, knowing how and why a certain discourse is produced and consumed. [17]adds that comparative analysis of the highly ideological conflicting media is appropriate to explain, understand and interpret the complicated intended mediations made by media institutions. The chaotic confusion happened after the invasion might be a spontaneous result to the sudden intrusion of many conflicting cultures that manipulated their lives. Iraqi people need certain skills and time to cope with the new revolution of information. It is not easy for uncritical people, especially young, to challenge the hidden discourse that is skilfully knitted in discourse. Iraqi people were completely closed from the world by the UN sanctions 1990 and the rule-state media and leadership. The adopted approach aims to create social actors that can help in analysing, understanding the problems of their society, trying to overcome them objectively. Developing new linguistic practices specific to media discourse, that are taught and adapted into every day communication and consumption of discourse can be useful to learners, who adopt these practices. This technique can also make learners aware that technology is only a tool which can be taught in classroom. The social and political impact of media on our lives can be then explained and understood, achieving a long-term vision of its influence on our future.

## 5. News

The emergence and rapid proliferation of new information technologies gives rise to the question what type of media education should be adopted in Iraqi EFL classroom. Taking into consideration that critical thinking skills are neglected by the learning system in Iraq [17]. A critical analysis of consumed media and dominant media institutions and their production that can reflect the learners' lives within their cultural context must be part of media education. In post conflict Iraq, the analysis of news covering the situation in Iraq by the dominant regional powers in the Middle East would be the most appropriate choice. National news can provide a familiar context to learners, situating them within their cultural, political, historical and social contexts, broadening their visions into their present and future in relation to the past. Moreover, choosing conflicting media texts can easily achieve critical engagement, showing the discrepancy in covering the same event. This insight can achieve them awareness and awake their nationalism that is confused by the different inculcated cultures introduced by the proliferated alien media introduced in Iraqis lives after the invasion in 2003. This study will devote the approach of analysis to visual discourse.

She applied [16] model of visual analysis to the semiotic discourse (images) from the Middle East Media addressing the conflict in Iraq.

202

## 6. Visual semiotic resources

Visual communication is part of semiotics that is carried out by sight, it is an analysis of the meaning and interpretation conveyed by face, gesture, gaze, pose, map, chart, poster, design [27]. Ancient civilisations used visual language to communicate its knowledge, beliefs and culture. Visual discourse is better communicated and remembered than textual discourse [17]. Learning and remembering visual discourse processed by memory twice, as both verbal and nonverbal message. Visuals can add new layers of meaning to text [28].

Photos can attract the readers' attention, creating a relationship with the text, because of the emotional reactions that can be evoked by the elements of their composition. [16] and [29] refer to the study of media news as biased and encourage the investigation of visual images included within written texts referring to them as multi-modal analysis.

[16] and [25]encourage the investigation of images accompanying a news text, because of their unpredicted impact on the audience's emotional reaction and perception of the communicated event. Images can add an ideological meaning, having a proposition that cannot be communicated through the text. Visual resources can communicate the discourse that is more difficult to deliver via text, because images 'do not tend to have such fixed meaning' [29]. [30:4] state that 'images, for whatever reason, inspire an interest in related texts'. Images determine the effect of the news more than the story [31].

Visual resources can communicate the discourse that is more difficult to deliver via text, because images 'do not tend to have such fixed meaning' [29]. [30: 4] state that 'images, for whatever reason, inspire an interest in related texts'. Images determine the effect of the discourse more than the text [31].

Cognitive theorists, [32], [33] and [34], assert that visual discourse highly impact the meaning socially conceived. Visual communication is an ideological technique employed by media to articulate the meaning that is not permitted through language. Images add to the explicit meaning to create a proposition or new meanings that can be more ideological than the meanings produced through the written text. Images can be deliberately used in the news to change the reader's perception of events.

[35; 36] emphasize the importance of implicit visual propositioning technique and its impact on the viewers. [37: 65] assert that 'photographs or video footage that may not be defamatory by themselves, through juxtaposition, links the subjects of photos to negative references contained in the text'. [36] demonstrate that images can create opposition, even if the text is not biased. Furthermore, they can activate stereotypes [37]. [36] add that 'partiality in pictorially representing a particular ethnic group with a story has fostered the relative overestimation of risk for that group' (quoted in [37]. Overestimation of risk means that the group, with this kind of bias, is likely to become the subject of extra concern about their safety. [36: 25] confirm that 'the readers' reactions to featured photographs shift primarily text-based perceptions and evaluation of issues in the direction suggested by the photographs'.[36] state that 'visual information has the power to affect ethical reasoning'. [38] affirms that news presented

203

Journal of the University of Babylon for Humanities (JUBH) is licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
Online ISSN: 2312-8135 Print ISSN: 1992-0652
www.journalofbabylon.com/index.php/JUBH     Email: humjournal@uobabylon.edu.iq

through visual communication is more effective than textual in changing the audience's emotions towards an event or group in times of war and conflict. [17] demonstrates that visual media plays a vital role in creating opposition among Iraqi people, leading unaware people to the sectarian conflict, violence. In post conflict Iraq, young learners, specifically uncritical, can be subject to radicalisation by media misinformation. Thus, this study encourages including visual semiotic resources into EFL classroom, because of their massive impact on the learners which might exceed the influence of the text in which they appear.

An image can articulate an independent discourse from the text of which it is part; having its own structure and organization [16]. The objects and settings of an image can indicate discourses indirectly. These discourses can only be reached by investigating what visual elements are highlighted and what are ignored and why. Certain identities and values can be communicated through the elements of an image rather than others. The study of **POSE, SETTING, LIGHTING, COLOURS, ANGLE, DISTANCE, SALIENCE, EXPOSURE, MOTION**, **CAMERA'S HEIGHT, FRAMING** and other stylistic features can give an accurate explanation of the communicative aims and meaning. The viewers interact with the image through each of these features. Each of them has a certain impact on the viewers and how they will react to the image, specifically in images of death, chaos, and violence [39]. The emphasis on critical analysis of images can help identify the way in which ideology is visually perceived and introduced by media, the concern of this study. The stylistic features that form the basic tools for analysing an image are explained in detail in the following sections:

The readers may first scan the whole report as one piece before reading the text in detail. The same occurs with the photo. A connection among the elements is established in terms of their relative importance and values attributed to them by the photographer, and also by the editor(s) when they choose which images to include. The whole article is visually translated setting up a kind of relationship between the readers and the website and then with the event represented in the photo and the story. [29: 75] state some questions that are helpful in analysing an image: What is the space occupied by the social actor? Does s/he interact with the viewer by eye contact, how many persons are there, how the relationship among them is portrayed? Is s/he portrayed as a part of harmonious group? Is s/he depicted as relaxed or intense or opened or closed? The following techniques are suggested by [16], and [29].

## 6.1. Visual analysis approach

An image represents an issue that is automatically and mechanically edited and activated by a certain media outlet according to their point of view. Viewers interpret images, which may be used to articulate a certain group's ideology. The photographer or editor of that image embed their attitude towards an issue within the elements of composition, such as setting, colour, size of elements, distance among them, brightness, contrast, directions and many other features that constitute to the image. When meaning is intended, then viewers consume their intentions. Misinterpretation of their intentions is possible, and viewers can digest more or less than was intended, influenced by

background knowledge, awareness, age, and interests. However, the photographer or editor is still the manipulator [40].

In the narrative of violence and terrorism, images can redirect young people's passion to live the life of street fighters and championship towards a certain direction. Images are presented to seem 'authentic' documentation of the event. Viewers are situated in a partner position; they live the event (Barthes, 1981). Yet, the elements of composition always mediate a certain ideology or point of view, i.e. 'ways of seeing' the event [41]. [42:482] asserts that mass communication, our social life and relationships, require critical thinking skills because media in the age of digitality can have 'ethnocentric inflections' that are presented as 'commonsensical' rubric that it is not. Critical attention is precisely required to mitigate impact of media on viewers, consuming news of conflict, violence, terrorism and extremism. Viewers, lacking critical awareness, may consume the implicit assumptions as being true, without critically asking who, how, why, where the image was produced. As [43:254] state that the instant reaction of empathy to the spontaneous visual consumption of image by the viewer can create two opposing groups, schism, creating imbalance in the relationship between those groups and their supporters. A new culture is introduced that was not available or paid attention to previously. The images can articulate 'texts' that cannot be stated by words. They attract the attention to the differences between groups, one is portrayed as being marginalized along racial, ethnic, class or gender. Being critically aware of how these images are made can help the audience understand why these groups are placed in opposing positions; the in-group, who supports or in good terms with the institution that owns or supports the media outlet, is placed in a positive light, whereas the other, whose interests are against, is positioned in a negative light. People are divided into opposing groups; different communities are (re-)constituted.

[29: 5] state some questions that are helpful in analysing an image: What is the space occupied by the social actor? Does s/he interact with the viewer by eye contact, how many persons are there, how the relationship among them is portrayed? Is s/he portrayed as a part of harmonious group? Is s/he depicted as relaxed or intense or opened or closed? The following techniques are suggested by [16], and [29].

### 6.1.1. Critical Visual Analysis Techniques
The critical visual analysis techniques applied to the data in this study are:

#### 6.1.1.1. Information Value
Images are divided into four types according to the distribution of the elements that compose the item. They are:

##### 6.1.1.1.1. *Given and New/Left and Right*
[16] states that polarisation between two elements is created by placing one element on the left and the other on the right. The element on the left (given, taken for granted, common-sense) cannot be challenged, usually it is negative or less important. The new element on the right is subject of controversy, to which readers must pay attention to, usually, it is the good news that is not yet established as a fact. This structure of reading information is imposed on the audience, even if they are not convinced of the value attached to it. That is, 'particular states of affair are at least implicitly suggested as

205

Journal of the University of Babylon for Humanities (JUBH) is licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
Online ISSN: 2312-8135 Print ISSN: 1992-0652
www.journalofbabylon.com/index.php/JUBH        Email: humjournal@uobabylon.edu.iq

established common sense' [16: 190]. learners are taught to divide the image into two equal halves vertically and horizontally, identifying the position of the elements. By this, they can identify the given from the new, and the horizon from the ground (see the following diagram)
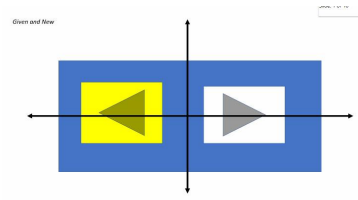


### 6.1.1.1.2. *Real and Ideal*

Opposition can be created by placing the 'ideal' on the top or the upper section of the photo, representing the most important information. The 'real' is the element on the bottom of the image, that is less important. Learners can follow the same division (horizontal and vertical) applied in the following illustration.
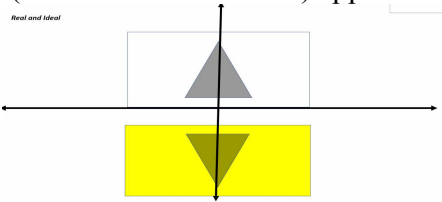


### 6.1.1.1.3. *Centre and Margin*

The element in the centre is more important than the surrounding elements, margins, which function to give the centre its importance. To identify the marginalized out of the centre, as in the following diagram, we add a circle to the centre of the previous division applied to other types of distribution.
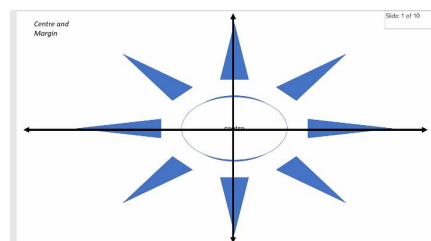


### 6.1.1.1.4. **The Triptych**

This type of distribution joins the Given and New information with Centre and Margin positioning, which compromise the two extremes. The middle is the ideal. The previous ways of distributing the information value, achieved by drawing lines, can identify the triptych type in images (see the following diagram).

206

The Triptych
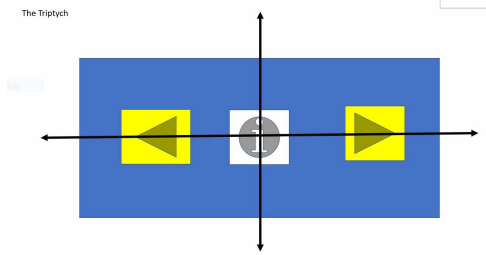
#### 6.1.1.2. Transitivity

[17: 193] states that 'images denote action, participants, place and things which can be identified by asking who and what. Images connote thoughts, values, attitudes and concepts which are represented by what is portrayed in them'. Images communicate discourse through connotation and denotation. The intended purpose of using an image, whether this is denotative or connotative, cannot be accurately identified without studying the context in which the image is employed. Denotative is the most explicit meaning, but images are established carriers of connotations which are supposed to be similarly understood by the target readers. There is a possible sensitive meaning in an image that can be communicated in different contexts. Settings, similar to attributes, imply values of discourses as well as the discourses themselves. Furthermore, settings connote participants and actions. The visual foregrounding and backgrounding of things in an image is ideological. Semiotic choices are visually used to conceal elements, action, participants, or circumstances, which should be ideologically hidden from readers. Placing an element in a certain zone (right, left, up, down, centre or margin) is not done arbitrary.

1) Actors of material processes are portrayed through size, salience, contrast of colour, saturation, sharpness of focus, and or 'psychological salience' that is owned by the participant(s) in relation to the viewers. If there is only one participant, it is the actor. If there are two, one of them is visualised as the actor and the other as the affected participant of the action.

2) Reactional and speaking processes are mediated through facial expressions (visualised as speaking, thinking, affection or perception). The senser reacts to the phenomenon which might not be present.

3) Symbolic processes portray what a participant is or means. It is further divided into two types:

A) Symbolic attribute is communicated through giving salience to the attribute by exaggerated size, place, fine details, sharp focus, conspicuous colour or tone. Pointing at by gesture that cannot be interpreted as an action, or looking out of place in the whole, is conventionally associated with symbolic values. Two participants; one is carrier whose meaning and identity are taken from the attribute, the second participant in the composition of the picture.

B) Symbolic suggestive occurs when the only participant, the carrier, is placed in a setting of soft or extreme contrast of focus, blurring the details rendering the participant as an outline or silhouettes to give the image essence of genericity instead

207

Journal of the University of Babylon for Humanities (JUBH) is licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
Online ISSN: 2312-8135 Print ISSN: 1992-0652
www.journalofbabylon.com/index.php/JUBH        Email: humjournal@uobabylon.edu.iq

of describing a certain moment. Thus, the identity of the participant is derived from the qualities of the carrier itself.

4) Conceptual processes in visual communication refer to the relational and existential processes in language form. 'They represent the world in terms of more or less permanent states of affairs or general truths, (rather than in terms of actions or mental processes).

### 6.1.1.3. Salience

Salience is the technique of attributing meaning, a symbolic value, to a certain feature by a particular placement among other elements in the composition of a visual item. Salience can create coherence and hierarchy of importance among those elements. According to [29] salience in images can be created by one, or more than one, of the following ways:

a. 'Potent cultural symbols' having apparently more cultural denotation than others.
b. 'Size': means that the bigger a thing is the more important it is.
c. 'Colour': The most important element is given more saturated colours than others.
d. 'Tone': this technique points to brightness.
e. 'Overlapping': refers to the employment of images of persons captured in a certain moment to incarnate certain meanings in representing those persons, their characters, attitudes and identities through which events and remarks can be implicitly evaluated. Newsmakers choose an image that represents their interests and intention of how to portray a particular social actor at that event.

### 6.1.1.4. Gaze/ contact

Gaze refers to the direction of the looks of the represented participant(s) at the viewer. Images can unconsciously interpreted into two actions, offer and demand, according to the gaze of the participant(s) [16]. In a 'demand image', the viewer feels that the social actor is addressing him/her and asking for a response. There is interaction between the social actors and viewers. Details of the gaze impact the mood of the addressee: such as a slight frown or pout, in addition to postures like open arms which might join the gaze of the portrayed social actor(s). These factors can determine the limits of interaction between the social actors and the viewers. The 'offer image' is the image in which the social actor who is presented does not observe the viewer, so no interaction is required [16]. The viewer is only an interpreter or an investigator of the information available. This technique can simply be illustrated by the following image



### 6.1.1.5. Poses

In images, poses are highly connotative in that they can indicate abstract ideas, concepts in addition to identities. [16: 74] state that there are 'established meanings to shape how we will perceive the ideas, values and behaviours of those persons depicted'. The way the social actors are standing, the position of their hands and arms are all connotative with reference to other iconographical features such as how the actor is

208

clothed, the location and other available objects in the image. The pose may express action.

### 6.1.1.6. Distance

The distance people keep between themselves indicates the status of their social relationship. The choice of distance can refer to intimacy, friendship, acquaintance, strangers, and others. The relationship between the represented participants, people portrayed in the image, and the viewers is translated through distance. This relationship can be indicated in accordance with the 'size of frame', whether it is close-up, medium or a long-distance shot. The editor of the photograph may intend to take the viewer close up to the person(s) in the image to share their feelings or their situation. A close-up shot is more personal and aims to present the character as an individual. The middle shot aims to present the character as a generic rather than an individual. In a long-distance shot, a person may be understood as being in a negative situation. In news reports, politicians are portrayed through the close-up, but civilians through the long distance shot when news stories portray the consequences of war [29]. The medium perspective is 'the position the viewer actually took up in relation to the image'. Distance can be explained in the following image
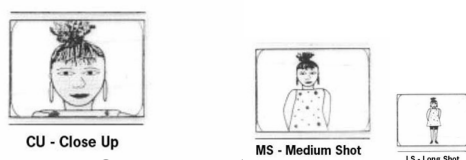


### 6.1.1.7. Height of the Camera

Power relations between the represented participants and the viewers are conveyed by the camera height. It is classified into three types:

1) Eye-level height: the editor intends to create an equal point of view or relationship with the viewers.

2) Low height: the editor intends to provide the represented participants with power over the viewers. To provide participants with superiority, triumph, awesome and imposing look, they are visualized as looking down at the viewers.

3) High height: the editor intends to indicate power by the viewers over the represented participants by reducing them to ground level. This can communicate the insignificance of the participant or of being in a negative situation. The viewer looks down at the participant. See the following image, for clarification of camera heights.
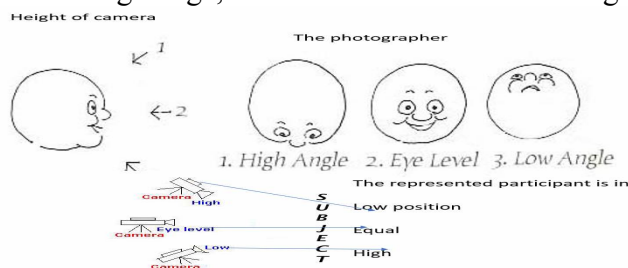
### 6.1.1.8. Angle of the Camera

Images can be classified according to the angle of the camera into frontal, oblique and back angle image, each of which has a different function. The frontal angle expresses equality. It does not discriminate among the participants or the viewers. The oblique one indicates alienation or detachment; it excludes the participant(s). That is, it creates division and opposition among the participants. Back angle is the most complicated view that requires deep investigation of the context in which it is used to find out what kind of mixed feelings it expresses (see the following illustration)



### 6.1.1.9. Individualisation and Collectivisation

depicting certain people as a group may be used to express similarity or equality. Collectivising different people as a homogeneous unit is to achieve certain interests. This visual technique is common in ethnic groups discourse [29]. Individualisation, on the other hand, may be used to differentiate a person from others by emphasising a certain feature. It cannot be explained in isolation from other features such as pose, colour, distance, gaze and the context in which it is used.



### 6.1.1.10. Generic and Specific Depiction

People may be portrayed as individuals, assigning them to a certain group, using their dress, hair style and grooming. Sense of individuality is lost by applying this technique. As we can see in the following generic image, which is highly ideological as it indicates stereotypes.



### 6.1.1.11. Framing

A frameline, consisting of pictorial framing devices or white or empty space is inserted among the elements to disconnect them, differentiating an element from others. Thickness or discontinuity of colour or shape of the frameline can indicate a degree of disconnection among those elements. By contrast, vectors among elements or repetition of shapes and continuity of colour expresses a degree of connection and complementariness between them. See the following images.

## 7. Conclusion

In this paper, the researcher explained the CDA techniques, methods to be applied in the analysis of media data introduced into Iraqi EFL classroom. Each of these techniques must be explained to the learners defining the technique, clarifying the rationale for choosing it and how the technique will be applied in the analysis of the data, followed by visual media examples for illustration. The visual CDA techniques are: INFORMATION VALUE, CONTACT/GAZE, TRANSITIVITY, SALIENCE, POSES, DISTANCE, and FRAMING. These techniques were chosen to represent the main tools used to form an idea and convey the impression of culture. These techniques were chosen for the application of CDA into EFL classroom because they can show how groups of people are represented in news stories, creating opposition.

This study is undoubtedly one of only a few researches applying CDA into Iraqi EFL classroom while bridging the disciplines of history, religion, culture, political science, mass communication and education. Furthermore, visual analysis as an essential part of communicating news, has never to my knowledge previously been studied as a component of CDA multimodality in the realm of sectarianism and terrorism in the Middle East.

An intended outcome of this work is to use the techniques to contribute to improving English Language Education (EFL) classroom education at the university of Babylon/Iraq by encouraging critical visual awareness and critical thinking skills through teaching news visual discourse, for the first time. It aims to create visual awareness in Iraqi EFL learners and to create awareness of evaluating reporting about sectarianism and terrorism that might help discourage further division and violence. Communicative competence can be improved by introducing discussion groups and team work in classroom through the introduction of contentious topics, visual, in news and encouraging students to analyse and discuss them critically.

[24] says that the results of CDA studies can be applied to solve certain social problems (2009) by applying language reflectively (2011) - with this in mind I believe that CDA is a vital first step to help expose the evils of sectarianism and seek to establish a discourse based on principles of unification, reconciliations and community cohesion. Therefore, the study offers practical contributions and identifies best practices to Iraqi EFL learners in post-conflict as they consume, interpret, and disseminate news.

In the Iraqi context of diversity, awareness created by introducing CDA into Iraqi EFL classroom, investigating the current conflict within its historical and current socio-political contexts for injustices, is a process of reconciliation through education. Thus

'objective' teachings about different ideological media discourses of the present, connecting it to the past and the future of Iraq is a processes of integration education system into reconciliation, building national identity.

The development of critical thinking skills and language awareness for peacebuilding by analysis of news discourse on peace and conflict, has proved effective in resisting violent behaviour and extremist reactions. 'Peace education is demonstrating an ability to change perspectives on violence and weapons' [44:9]. Aware citizens can resist discourse of armed groups, either by using social media or by family connections. Developing a democratic way of understanding the conflict from two conflicting points of view, and achieving a more balanced account of the causes and results, can help in managing conflict, and solving problems critically. Introducing team work and discussion groups into classroom can encourage students to respect each other's differences and points of view.

This requires teacher training programs in media education as part of school life. Thus, I am preparing an intensive course for staff members at the University of Babylon, who have good English and interested in the topic, and Education Conference every year to promote professional development, teaching and learning for a media age. Then, i8/dt is intended to expand this activity to include EFL secondary educators to disseminate awareness of this project to more people.

**CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**
**There are no conflicts of interest**

## References

[1] Smith, A. (2010). *The influence of education on conflict and peacebuilding. (Background paper prepared for the Education for all global monitoring report 2011. The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education)*. UNESCO. Recuperado de http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ images/0019/001913/191341e.pdf

[2] Mitchell, K. Elias, M. and Branche, C. (2015) Building Human Capital Through Education. *International Journal of Education and Research*. 3 (8). Available at: www.ijern.com [accessed: 14 May 2019]

[3] Ammar, T. B. (2009) *The Language of Terrorism: Al Jazeera and the Framing of Terrorism Discourse.* PhD. Georgetown University.

[4] Bell, A. (1991). The language of news media. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

[5] Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London: Routledge.

[6] Cohen E. L. (2002) Online journalism as market-driven journalism. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media. 46* (4), pp.532-548.

[7] Bloom, A. (1987). *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

[8] Hoechsmann, M. and Poyntz, S. R. (2012) Media Literacies: A Critical Introduction. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

[9] Tufte, B. (2000) Media education in Europe, with special focus on the nordic countries. In C. von Feilitzen and U. Carlsson (Eds.), *Children and Media: Image, Education, Participation*, (*1999*, pp. 205–217). Go€teborg, Sweden: The UNESCO International Clearinghouse on Children and Violence on the Screen.

[10] McLuhan, E. (1998) *Electric Language: Understanding the Present*. Canada: Stoddart.

[11] Shojaei, A. Youssefi, K. Hosseini, H. (2013) A CDA Approach to the Biased Interpretations and Representation of Ideologically Conflicting Ideas in Western Printed Media. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research. 4*(4), pp. 858-868.

[12] Askeland, G. A. and Payne, M. (2006) Social Work Education's Cultural Hegemony. *International Social Work. 49*(4), pp. 731-743. Retrieved 05 June 2016, from http,//www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2013/07/08-iran-saudimiddle

[13] Meyrowitz, J. (1985). *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behaviour.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[14] Faucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books.

[15] Hug, T. (2009). (Ed.), *Mediatic Turn – Claims, Concepts and Discourses / Mediale Wende – Anspru☐che, Konzepte und Diskurse*, Frankfurt a. M. et al.: Lang.

[16] Kress, G., and Van Leeuwen, T. (1996) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.

[17] Hassoon, N. (2019). Sectarianism and Media: A Critical Discourse Analysis of News Sites Reportage. PhD thesis. Northamptonshire: University of Northampton.

[18] Hoechsmann, M. and Poyntz, S. (2012). *Media Literacies: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publication.

[19] McMahon, B. and Quin, R. (1999). Australian children and the media. In C. von Feilitzen and U. Carlsson (Eds.), *Children and Media: Image, Education*, *Participation* (pp. 189–203). Go€teborg, Sweden: UNESCO International Clearing- house on Children and Violence on the Screen.

[20] Quin, R. (2003). Questions of knowledge in Australian media education. *Television and New Media, 4*(4), pp. 439–460.

[21] Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture*. New York: New York UniversityPress.

[22] Luke, C. (2000). Cyber-schooling and technological change: Multiple literacies for new times. In B. Cope and M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures* (pp. 69–91). London: Routledge.

[23] Silverstone, R. (2004). Regulation, media literacy and media civics. Media, *Culture & Society, 26*(3), pp. 440–449.

[24] Wodak, R. (2009) Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory, and Methodology. In Wodak, R. and Meyer, M. (eds.) *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: SAGE, pp. 1-33.

[25] Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.

[26] Janks, H. (1997). *Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool.* Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand.

[27] Eric, P. (2018) What Is Visual Communication? Definition, History, Theory & Examples, study com. Retrieved 28 May 2019 from

https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-visual-communication-definition-history-theory-examples.html

[28] Messaris, P. (2003). Visual Communication: Theory and Research. Journal of Communication, 53 (3), 551-556. https://doi.org/ 10.1111/j.14602466.2003.tb02608.x

[29] Machin, D. and Mayr, A. (2012). How to do critical discourse analysis: A Multimodal Introduction. London: Sage Publication Inc.

[30] Zillmann, D. Gibson, R. and Sargent, S. L. (1999) Effects of Photographs in News-Magazine Reports on Issue Perception. *Media Psychology*. 1(3), pp. 207- 228.

[31] Zillmann, D. Knobloch, S. and Yu, Hong-sik (2001) Effects of Photographs on the Selective Reading of News Reports, *Media Psychology*. 3 (4), pp. 301-324.

[32] Markie, F. (1987) *Powermatic's: A Discursive Critique of New Communications Technology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

[33] Graber, D. A. (1990). Seeing is remembering: How visuals contribute to learning from television news. *Journal of Communication, 40*(3), 134–155. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1990.tb02275.x

[34] Bandura, A. (2009) Social cognitive theory of mass communication. In J. Bryant and M. B. Oliver (eds.) *Media effects: Advances in theory and research*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, pp. 94–124.

[35] Abraham, L. and Appiah, O. (2006) Framing News Stories: The Role of Visual Imagery in Priming Racial Stereotypes. *Howard Journal of Communications*. *17(3)*, pp.183-203 Available at: https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2006-12672-002002

[36] Gibson,R. Zillmann, D. (2000) Reading between the photographs: The influence of incidental pictorial information on issue perception. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. 77 (2), pp. 355-366.

[38] Coleman, R. (2006) The Effects of Visuals on Ethical Reasoning. *AEJMC J and MC Quarterly*. 83 (4), pp. 835-850.

[39] Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

[40] Kenney, K (2005) Representation Theory, in Smith, K. Gretchen Barbatsis, G. Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, method and media, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

[41] Berger, J., & Heath, C. (2008). Who drives divergence? Identity signaling, outgroup dissimilarity, and the abandonment of cultural tastes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95*(3), 593–607. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.95.3.593

[42] Jackson (2012) The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication. London: Routledge.

[43] Chouliaraki, L. and Blaagaard, B. B. (2013) *Special issue: the ethics of images*. Visual Communication, *12* (3). pp. 253-259. ISSN 1470-3572

[44] Aubrey, M. Aubrey, R. Brodrick, F. and Simpson, R. (2016) *Teaching Peace, Building Resilience, Assessing the Impact of Peace Education for Young Syrians*. London: International Alert Org.