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## A Pragmatic Study of Political Cartoons in Al-Ahram Weekly Newspaper<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

During the past century, political cartoons were considered as the most extreme form of expression in newspapers, as they were not committed to any norm of journalistic objectivity, or even the domain of objective reality. Some cartoonists consider political cartoons as historical sources of satirical critique of the political status quo. Generally speaking, there are various forms of cartoons, such as political, social, and humorous cartoons. Each one has a different function.

The function of political cartoons lies in making a real change in a society in favor of suppressed classes through criticizing the status quo and unjust practices in political life. In addition, cartoons help newspapers and magazines look better by taking some space among columns of words which might be boring for the reader. At the same time, political cartoons have real contributions in affirming the role newspapers play as means of communication between a reader and a cartoonist. Political cartoons are also capable of bold dealing with different societal problems as they can escape different types of censorship. Thus, political cartoons have the mechanisms to correct the negatives of a society faster than written words, especially they are easily understood by readers.

As cartoons are viewed as methods of communication, pragmatics is also concerned with determining the elements of communicational content, which are essential to interpretation. It is quite common for an utterance to display a number of pragmatic features. Hence, it is clear that pragmatics plays a key role in the interpretation of the communication process represented by the cartoons' language. This communication process, whether verbal or non-verbal, includes expressions and recognition of intentions. From this perspective, pragmatic interpretation is simply an exercise in which a reader infers a cartoonist's intended meaning from his cartoon.

Within this framework, this study tries to discuss the aspects of the implicit meanings in the language of political cartoons. The importance of the study is obviously shown by shedding light on the role of the language that can be employed to convey explicit and also implicit meaning by pragmatic devices. This study, therefore, attempts to clarify the role of pragmatic devices in explaining the hidden meaning in political cartoons. In doing so, it tries to emphasize the importance of implicature in the language of political cartoons,

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<sup>1</sup> This study is part of an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation compiled by the author.

whether it abides or flouts Gricean's maxims with its effect to convey the meaning. Also, it attempts to figure out why cartoonists frequently use this aspect of pragmatics in writing the language. Another goal of this study is to explain the role of speech acts, whether used directly or indirectly, and why a cartoonist sometimes uses the literal and sometimes prefers to use non-literal speech acts.

Moreover, this study underscores the importance of the distinction between language use and linguistic meaning. Besides, it asserts a parallel distinction between speaker's reference and linguistic reference, which provokes the assumption to what extent linguistic expressions refer independently to speaker's use of them. In addition, this thesis attempts to consider the politeness phenomenon as a pragmatic device, and its role in understanding the meaning.

Given the distance between a cartoonist and his addressees, this study sheds light on how language users sometimes depart from the conditions of optimal information exchange which may cause confusion. In addition, this thesis emphasizes the function of deictic expressions and the role of presupposition with its relation to the implicature. In short, it shows the linguistic insights of implicit meanings employed in cartoons and attempts to discover whether or not cartoonists succeed in conveying the meaning to the addressees by employing pragmatic devices.

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## **Introduction**

Political cartoons play significant role in shaping public opinion about various issues on a daily basis. Such political cartoons seek to influence public opinion through their use of widely understood symbols, slogans and allusions. The most obvious aspect in political cartoons is their ability to simplify and crystallize the complex events of the day. They are designed to convey an opinion or meaning in a frame that is easily understood. The strength of cartoons, as forms of communication, derives from the fact that they are particularly visual modes of communication, even though they sometimes use texts for purposes of clarification.

While language is considered a complex form of communication, the visual forms of communication possess unique features that are clearly more persuasive than written language. Discussing the concept of cartoons requires shedding light on the differences between cartoons and caricatures. Although some artists do not differentiate between cartoons and caricatures, others believe that cartoons, as a form of communication, are the development of caricatures. Yousif (1993:15) argues that the term "cartoons" is currently used to reflect the dominant ideas, situations and actions of a given society.

Moreover, Al-Ahram Weekly's prominent cartoonist Abou Elezz (2006) suggests, during an interview with the researcher, that some artists in the Arab region make a distinction between caricatures and cartoons. While the former is related to exaggerations in drawings, and the latter is linked to animations, it is evident that cartoons, as used in the Western world, include caricatures, paintings, animations, and even movies.

In another interview with the researcher, Farahat (2006), another prominent cartoonist in Al-Ahram Weekly, suggests the term "cartoons" instead of "caricatures," as the most suitable and appropriate one to be used. That is because cartoons, which are remarkably used not only in United States but currently all over the world, are influenced by the U.S. overshadowing of the

media. This term can be used comprehensively to include different forms of paintings and animations. Given the fact that this term is commonly used, it will be adopted in this study.

Generally speaking, there are various forms of cartoons, such as political, social, and humorous cartoons. These different forms have different functions. The important roles of political cartoons lie in making real changes in the society in favor of suppressed classes through criticizing the status quo and unjust practices in political life.

At the same time, political cartoons make real contributions in affirming the role newspapers play as a means of communication between the reader and the cartoonist. Political cartoons are also capable of dealing with different social problems as they can escape various types of censorship. Thus, political cartoons have the mechanism to correct the negatives of a society faster than written words, and are easily more received by readers.

### 1. Political Cartoons in Al-Ahram Weekly

It seems from the previous overview that political cartoons can be used as tools through which to view and interpret political discourse. In other words, they attempt to face the problems in question within the context of everyday life and exploit universal signs as a mean of persuading readers to identify with images and their implicit views. Regarding these views, it seems that political cartoons are forms of symbolic interactions that serve as means of mirroring, reviewing, or remembering the dominant culture. Considering the branches of political cartoons in Al-Ahram Weekly Newspaper, they are classified into the three following categories;

#### A) Translated type

The first type is originally written in Arabic and published in an Arabic-language newspaper. It is adopted in Al-Ahram Weekly Newspaper and published in English translation. This type commonly consists of a dialogue between two persons; namely, there is a dialogue between the two, which this study aims to analyze.

#### B) Portrait type

The second type is called *Portrait* in which the cartoonist tries to portray the character with positive or negative description, using a specific style of writing to convey his ideas to the reader. The third type *Non-verbal* is drawn without any comment. In this type, the cartoonist attempts to convey his ideas to the addressee by drawing without using words. However, in all three types, the cartoonist tries to convey an implicit meaning, and he uses the language with a high level of humor and manipulation for achieving his particular objectives.

#### C) Non-verbal type

### 2. The Relationship Between Pragmatics and Political Cartoons

It is noteworthy that cartoons and pragmatics have common ground. As cartoons are methods of communication, pragmatics is also concerned with determining the elements of communicational contents that are essential for interpretation. While Levinson (1983:5) defines pragmatics as "the study of language usage" Blum Kulka (1997:38), in the same vein, explains that pragmatics is "the study of communication in relation to the context."

Leech (1983:1) views pragmatics as concerned with "language use and aims at helping understand how the user uses language in text and how the receiver interacts with language used in a text to interpret it." Leech's point of view is reinforced by Blum-Kulka's (1997:38) perspective of pragmatics' role in the context and the communication process. In this regard, Blum-Kulka (1997:38) observes the following:

In the broadest sense, pragmatics is the study of linguistic communication in context. Language is the chief means by which people communicate, yet simply knowing the words and grammar of a language does not ensure successful communication. Words can mean more or something other than what they say. Their

interpretation depends on a multiplicity of factors, including familiarity with the context and cultural assumptions. The same phrase may have different meanings on different occasions, and the same intention may be expressed by different linguistic means. Phenomena like these are the concern of pragmatics.

Mey's view (2001:5) that "pragmatics is the science of language seen in relation to its users" comes in agreement with Blum-Kulka's (1997) assumptions. She (1997:38) explains that "the focus of pragmatics is on both the processes and the products of communication, including its cultural embeddedness and social consequences." Therefore, the process of interpretation is not a simple straight operation. There are many intriguing aspects that characterize language use, and language interpretation. Some of the most prominent aspects of language use, that only pragmatics can handle, are implicit and explicit meanings, presupposition, speech acts, implicature, inference, politeness, and context.

The above-mentioned features do not operate separately. Rather, it is quite common for an utterance to display a number of these features. Hence, it is clear that pragmatics plays a key role in the interpretation of the communication process represented by the cartoon's language. This communication, whether verbal or non-verbal, is the expression and recognition of intentions. From this perspective, pragmatic interpretation is an exercise in which the reader infers the cartoonist's intended meaning from his cartoon.

DeSousa and Medhurst (1982:85), as explained by Speedling (2004:14), argue that "political cartoons are forms of symbolic interaction that serve as a means of mirroring, reviewing or remembering the dominant culture." From this definition, it becomes obvious that political cartoons are considered as a communication process whereby ideas are conveyed. This process consists of many elements such as the sender, the medium, the receiver, the political and cultural background, and the context that contains all these elements.

Asserting the role of context, Traugott and Pratt (1980:11) point out that "when language is used, it is always used in a context. What gets said and how it gets said, is always in part determined by a variety of contextual factors." In this regard, Mey (1998:41) agrees with this concept by contending that "context is more than just reference. Context is about understanding what things are for; it is also what gives our utterances their true pragmatic meaning and allows them to be counted as true pragmatic acts."

In his review of the basic idea of context, Van Dijk (1997:11) emphasizes that context seems to imply some kind of environment or circumstances for an event, action or discourse. He shows that context is something we need to know about in order to understand properly the event, action or discourse, which may function as background, setting, surrounding, conditions or consequences

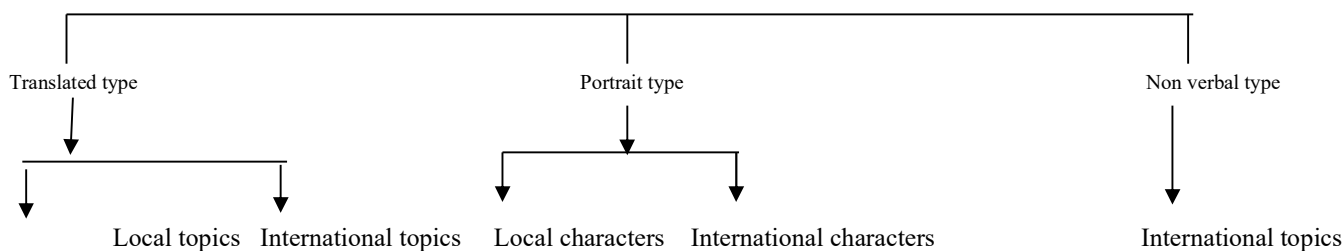
Besides, he contends that the main distinction between abstract discourse analysis and social discourse analysis is that the latter takes the context into account. It was provisionally suggested that this context may involve such parameters as participants, their roles and purposes, as well as properties of a setting, such as time and place. Given the fact that there is a strong relation between political cartoons as a mass communication medium and pragmatics, this study attempts to clarify how pragmatic tools are employed in the language of political cartoons for achieving its targets.

### **3. Methodology of the Analysis**

Taking the previous background into consideration, the approach adopted for analyzing the selected forms is that of pragmatic-oriented analysis as illuminated by Levinson (1983). The selected forms of political cartoon are divided into three branches: Translated, Portrait and Non-verbal. The first branch (Translated) is sorted out into two categories, the local and international-oriented political cartoon.

The first one is characterized as anti-regime form tackling, for instance, the scandal of rigging the elections in Egypt, the deterioration of the economic status, the hike of prices, the QIZ agreement, the ration card troubles, and the confidence crisis in the market. The latter handles international topics such as the UN weakness in the world crises, the repetition of holding Arab summits with no fruitful results, America's stance towards the crisis in Lebanon, and Hizbullah's victory against Israel. The second branch (Portrait) is classified into two main parts (Local characters and International characters). The third branch (Non-Verbal) tackles only international topics.

**A Model of Political Cartoons Classification in Al-Ahram Weekly**



In so doing, the study attempts to discuss the pragmatic devices that are employed by the cartoonist to convey his ideas to the reader. Deixis, implicature, presupposition, speech acts and politeness are among the pragmatic devices manipulated in analysis of the selected data. Besides, this study explores how the gap between the two levels of meaning can be connected by these devices. In this domain, this study discusses the ways for investigating the invisible meaning and raises the question of what determines the choice between what is said and what is unsaid.

#### 4. Significance of the Study

Over the past years, attention was critically lacking towards political cartoons. Many scholars depicted political cartoons as the neglected branch in political communication. In fact, different disciplines tackled the cartoons in journalism, communication, but not in linguistics. The problem seems to lie in this approach, through which historians, philosophers, journalists often view the political cartoons solely as works of art or expression of humor. They consider political cartoons as symbols of fun or humor, but not as processes of linguistic communication in which the cartoonist tries to convey his ideas to the addressee. From this perspective, this study tries to discuss the aspects of the implicit meanings in the language of political cartoons. The importance of the study is obviously shown by shedding light on the role of the language that can be employed to convey explicit and also implicit meaning by pragmatic devices. This study, therefore, attempts to clarify the role of pragmatic devices in explaining the hidden meaning in political cartoons.

#### 5. Objective of the Study

This study attempts to provide pragmatic analysis of the political cartoons in Al-Ahram Weekly Newspaper. In doing so, it tries to emphasize the importance of implicature in the language of political cartoons, whether it abides or flouts Gricean's maxims with its effect to convey the meaning. Also, it attempts to figure out why the cartoonist frequently uses this aspect of pragmatics in writing the language. Another goal of this study is to explain the role of speech acts, whether used directly or indirectly, and why the cartoonist sometimes uses the literal and sometimes prefers to use non literal speech acts.

Moreover, this study also underscores the importance of the distinction between language use and linguistic meaning. Besides, it asserts a parallel distinction between speaker reference and linguistic reference which provokes the assumption to what extent

linguistic expressions refer independently to speakers' use of them. In addition, this study attempts to consider the politeness phenomenon as a pragmatic device, and its role in understanding the meaning.

Given the distance between the cartoonist and his addressees, this study sheds light on how language users often depart from the conditions of optimal information exchange which may cause an amount of lost face. Moreover, it emphasizes the function of deictic expressions and the role of presupposition with its relation to the implicature. In short, it shows the linguistic insights of implicit meanings employed in cartoons and attempts to discover whether the cartoonist succeeds in conveying the meaning to the addressee or not.

## 6. The Analysis

In this section, political cartoons to be analyzed tackle only local topics inside the Egyptian society, such as the rigging of elections, price hikes and the confidence crisis in the market, the unemployment, etc. This type of political cartoons commonly consists of two persons, and there is a dialogue between them. The speech is written by a cartoonist inside the speech balloon. He sometimes prints his name in his cartoon and usually uses some words to indicate the context of a certain event that can help the reader to understand the purpose of such cartoons.

### A) The crisis of confidence in the Egyptian market



Al Ahram Weekly Newspaper, (8 -14 June 2006, issue 798), By Ezzeddin in the Egyptian magazine Sabah Al-Kheir  
"Master, I just heard there's a crisis in confidence. Then buy up all the confidence you can get your hands on and put in storage."

### Background

This above-mentioned cartoon marks the period, in which the Egyptian market suffered from the lack of confidence, price hikes, raising the rate of inflation and unemployment. In fact, many investors made their decisions to end their business in Egypt. Still, on the other hand, the government is trying hard to save the situation. Usually, it adds bonuses in civil servants' salaries, and sometimes launches campaigns to control prices in the market. In spite of the strict measures the government is trying to apply, the greedy merchants ignore them and seek for anything that may increase their profits.

*The analysis*

In this cartoon, the cartoonist tries to reflect how serious the economic deterioration in Egyptian market has become. The cartoonist uses a sense of humor which aims at exploring the ignorance among many merchants and reflecting the level of monopoly in which those traders are manipulating. In fact, the cartoonist uses a dialogue inside speech balloon between the master and the apprentice which generally reflects the level of ignorance of a number of merchants and their thirst for monopolizing merchandise. It is filled up with a variety of pragmatic tools that are used to explain the implicit message of the cartoonist.

It seems from this dialogue that the cartoonist says something while intending to say something else. The question is how can an addressee or a reader understand the implicit meaning of such a cartoon? It seems just as if the Grice's Cooperative Principle entails cooperation between the addressor and the addressee to understand each other. As a result, there is a Cooperative Principle between the cartoonist and his reader, that is based on the interaction between the two sides vis-à-vis the four Gricean maxims. Hence, it can be understood from the previous dialogue that the maxim of quality is clearly violated.

The phrase, *a crisis in confidence*, does not hold any true value, nor does the sentence, *buy up all the confidence you can get your hands on and put it in storage*, indicate any truth in real life. Considering whether or not these words are informative, it seems that they are not, since they do not indicate the information required for understanding the causes of deterioration in Egypt. The master's response also flouts the maxim of quantity, since it is not informative to buy confidence and put it in storage. The maxim of manner is satisfied, as there is no ambiguity or obscurity putting in mind the economic deterioration in the market and the lack of confidence.

Therefore, on the basis of cooperation assumption, an addressee is able to realize that the cartoonist's words are irrelevant, as it seems at the face value. The cartoonist wants to convey his idea to an addressee; however, instead of expressing his meaning directly, he prefers to convey it indirectly. Regarding whether or not the implicature is bound to context, it seems that the implicit meaning is particularized to the context. If we consider the same speech that occurs in the context of the existence of confidence, instead of the crisis of confidence, the cartoonist will no longer criticize the government. Rather, he will praise the government for providing the confidence.

The strong relationship between implicature and presupposition in explaining implicit meaning clarifies the presupposed meaning of the dialogue. In fact, it provides another type of pragmatic inference or implication that is related to what is said rather than what is the meant. The sentence, *Master, I just heard that there is a crisis in confidence*, presupposes structurally that there is a lack of confidence in the market. The first part of the second sentence, *Then buy up all the confidence*, implies non-factive presupposition that the confidence can be bought up. The second part, *put it in storage*, provides the same presupposition.

The cartoonist uses speech acts indirectly whether in the dialogue or even in his drawing. In the first sentence, the cartoonist uses a direct speech act in the apprentice's words, *Master, I just heard there is a crisis in confidence*, which is assertive act, since the apprentice tries to explain or state the truth of the market. On the other hand, the master's reply uses a kind of indirect speech act that is a directive, as the Master just orders his apprentice to do this. It seems from this speech act that it has a force of ordering his apprentice.

Clearly, this non-literal act of directive leads the utterance to be contradictory to one's background knowledge. How can this apprentice buy up all the confidence in the market! The cartoonist employs indirect speech act to avoid the contradictory truth of the utterance and to express his idea about the level of monopoly in the market. In his drawing, he reflects other acts, such as the drawing of the apprentice rushing towards his master, which is assertive speech act reflecting good news to his master. The drawing of the master with tummy, unkempt moustache with his unshaved beard illustrates the state of his low-educational level, perhaps his buckling down in business only.

In this dialogue, the cartoonist uses a variety of deictic expressions. Person deixis is used clearly through the vocative *Master*. The first person pronoun, *I*, refers to the apprentice, and the third person pronoun, *you*, refers to the apprentice. Time deixis is obviously used in the dialogue. The time adverb, *just*, refers to the recent action of hearing, while the past tense of the verb, *heard*, indicates this action occurred in the past. The master's reply employs two imperative verbs that indicate the power from the master to his apprentice.

Place deixis is applied through the motion verb, *put*, while the verb, *buy up*, refers to motion action. Discourse deixis involves the word, *then*, which connects the utterance of the apprentice with the utterance of the master, and confirms the meaning that there is a crisis in confidence. Social deixis can be clarified through the level of language, whether it is modern standard or colloquial. Regarding the social background of the characters, the language level employed in the above-mentioned cartoon reflects a colloquial variety of language of non-educated people.

The level of politeness in this speech is clearly Face Threatening Act (FTA) with positive face strategy, as the cartoonist's intention in this cartoon is to criticize the deterioration in the market and the greedy merchants. The cartoonist wants to convey his message that the government must interfere to stop the monopoly practices. For fear of offending the reader, the cartoonist indirectly expresses his ideas; hence, he resorts to indirectness so as to mitigate the aggressiveness of his message.

#### B) The scandal of rigging the elections in Egypt



Al Ahram Weekly Newspaper (25 – 31 August 2005, issue 757) By Amr Selim in the new Egyptian daily *Rose El-Youssef* alludes to rigged elections that use the names of dead people to pad up vote counts. "Enough tears for the deceased. The elections are near and for sure he'll be voting in one of the polling stations."

#### Background

The above-mentioned cartoon reflects the period in which Egypt witnessed a variety of elections, whether presidential or parliamentary, or even municipal elections. In this period, Egypt witnessed political opposition movements, such as Kifaya "enough" that raises the slogan "enough corruption, enough negativity, enough authoritarianism." The political awareness has increased and the interest of the people has become more focused. However, the Egyptian people were shocked by the same practices performed by the government as it was before Mubarak's announcement of amending the article 76 that was the cornerstone of the new political changes in Egypt.

The Egyptian people were upset by the same practices that were performed before. One of the clearest examples of such practices is using the violence against the opposition members and also using names of some dead persons in the polling station in order to increase the voters' counts. In fact, it was a scandal against the whole political system to have the same defects



that happened during the past eras. On the other hand, some pundits claim that although Egypt witnesses some troubles during these multi-candidate elections, it moves in the right direction. They assert that democratic concepts can not be practiced suddenly but only step by step, claiming that the Egyptian society now lives in the scope of democracy and freedom that was not available before.

These aspects of freedom can be found in the media, the street, or even inside working places. The obvious example of this is the above-mentioned cartoon drawn by Amr Selim in the new Egyptian daily Rose El-Youssef. Such drawing which may be offensive towards the government and its practices, it clarifies how much freedom the Egyptian people live. All in all, the cartoon embodies the period of Egypt's history with all its pros and cons and clarifies which level of democracy, freedom, and development the Egyptian society witnesses.

#### *The analysis*

In this cartoon, the cartoonist tries to reflect the level of rigging the elections in Egypt. The cartoonist uses a sense of humor to draw the attention to the loosening system of the elections. The dialogue is between a lamented wife that lost her husband and a certain relative, who is condolencing her. The cartoonist does not exaggerate in his description, since this event happened more than once during the electoral process. It was discovered that some officials in Egypt use the names of the dead people to increase the number of the vote accounts in their favour which shows how much deterioration in the electoral system in Egypt.

On the basis of cooperation assumption, an addressee may realize that the cartoonist's words are relevant as it seems from the explicit meaning. The cartoonist resorts to indirectness to assert his ideas by using a sense of humour. The cooperative principle between the cartoonist and his reader is based on the interaction between the two sides. In the first clause, *Enough tears for the deceased*, it seems that the maxim of quality is violated since there is no real value on the tears for the deceased. Moreover, in the second clause, the maxim of quantity is violated. How can the reader interpret that there could be tears for the deceased!

The clause is not informative because it does not abide to the maxim of quantity, so this maxim is violated. How is a dead described as a voter in the elections. In the second sentence, *the elections are near and for sure he'll be voting in one of the polling stations*, the words may be informative which entails that the second sentence abides to the maxim of quantity. The maxim of relevance is satisfied in the first clause but not in second sentence, as the tears are always relevant to lament. Yet, in the second sentence, there is no relation between the dead man and voting in the polling station. The maxim of manner is satisfied in both the first clause and in the second sentence as there is not any kind of ambiguity.

Pragmatic inference enforces a reader to search for a presupposition, since the cartoonist depends on the reciprocal presupposition in large quantity of tears and limitless sadness on the deceased. In the second sentence, *the elections are near and for sure he'll be voting in one of the polling stations*, there is another structural presupposition that there will be election to be held in the future. In the second part of this sentence, *for sure he'll be voting in one of the polling stations*, this part gives non-factive presupposition that the dead can vote in polling stations.

In his cartoon, the cartoonist uses direct and indirect speech acts to convey his ideas to readers. The arrival at such an intended meaning depends on having mutual background knowledge about the electoral status in Egypt. On having this background knowledge, it seems clearly that the cartoonist aims at describing the given state of elections in Egypt through an assertive speech act. At the same time, the cartoonist tries to criticize the electoral system when he mentions that this deceased will vote in the following election. The cartoonist uses another indirect speech act that is commissive act which refers to his criticism to the government.

The cartoonist doesn't use only the verbal text to convey his concepts. He, as well, uses his specific style of drawing to reflect other acts. The drawing of the portrait of the deceased, hung on the wall reflects the simplicity of such family and the style of

their life. That kind of description can be described as an assertive act. In his drawing of the wife's tears, he reflects how sad she feels for her husband's passing away. Regarding deictic expressing, the cartoonist uses the words, *for sure*, as a discourse deixis for indicating the result of the deceased voting in one of the polling station. This kind of discourse deixis is used to link the previous texts with the following ones.

The verb, *will be voting*, is a place deixis, since the verb, *vote*, is a motion verb refers to a dynamic action. Considering the social deixis used, it is clear that the colloquial language is used between the two characters which refers to the social background of the characters. In other words, it shows that they belong to the middle or perhaps the lower class. The cartoonist uses Face Threatening Act with positive face strategy (criticism) that doesn't directly convey his message to the other side. So, he intends to use a mean of releasing the effect of an offensive message to back up the positive face of the addressee.

He could have written another direct message such as (the electoral system in Egypt is so deteriorated and terribly false so that the dead persons' names might be counted in the voting process). In this case, the cartoonist could have explained his position in a very aggressive way. Instead, he aims at using a strategy which is indirect criticism to minimize as much as possible the offensiveness of his FTA. Therefore, he uses the idea of the deceased man to vote in one of the polling stations.

### C) The corruption in the parliament



Al Ahram Weekly newspaper (8 - 14 December 2005, issue #772) Mustafa Hussein in the Egyptian daily Al-Akhbar. "I spent a lot of money to get into parliament. But the august parliament will make it up 100 times over."

### Background

The above-mentioned cartoon reflects how Egypt faces high levels of corruption, and many analysts say that official corruption, more than any other factors, represents the root cause of poverty. Corruption is rampant in many areas of Egyptian society, from young people's dependence on *wasta* 'connections in Arabic' in order to find jobs to wealthy businessmen buying political power through seats in parliament. Some claim that there is bribery on various levels. The obvious example is PM candidates pay their dues before being given a seat in parliament, while patients bribe doctors to get appointments on time.

Some argue that no one can get anything done without utilizing some form of financial corruption. Others, on the other hand, claim the rise of the private sector in the last decade has also bred its own form of corruption. The government protects corrupt businessmen from exposure, while businessmen fund officials' campaigns and lifestyles. One could describe the current atmosphere as one dominated by a Mafia, Egyptian-style. Allegations of this nature have put pressure on the Egyptian government to address the issue of corruption.

Nevertheless, the government exerts great efforts in an attempt to limit the trend, while newspapers are increasingly reporting high-level corruption cases. On the streets of Cairo, public opinion does not hold much faith in the government when it comes to corruption. Had the system been less corrupt, all Egyptians would have shared in this country's plentiful wealth.

#### *The analysis*

In drawing the businessman talking with his wife, it seems that their talking is expressive and revealing. The verbal language and the drawing have many symbols and signs that refer to specific points. The cartoonist reflects the period Egypt witnessed after the open door policy in the seventies of the last century. One can understand from the speech balloon that this businessman tries to get in the parliament by using all his powers whether by money or connections with higher officials in Egypt.

Further, the cartoonist draws this businessman with specific hints that refers to his status, such as the unprepared tie and his large tummy that refers to his buckling down in his business. Moreover, his facial features, his moustache with a few locks of hair refers to the style of this greedy character. Although the cartoonist's message from drawing the cartoon is probably clear. The cartoonist tends to the implicit meaning to help the reader guess or imagine his intended purpose.

The cartoonist draws the cartoon shown above in the period in which the concept of open economy becomes in a full swing, and it seems that businesses have important roles in the politics. It is obvious from such cartoon that parliament membership can be used to gain or increase the profits which means that the corruption levels reached the highest level in Egypt. Regarding the verbal language, the cartoonist uses in the speech balloon, *I spent a lot of many to get into the parliament*, which does not have any real meaning in our world. How can one get into the parliament by his money not by a voting system! Hence, the first clause does not have any truth.

The second clause, *But the august parliament will make it up 100 times over*, does not also have any true meaning, since it is incredible to make the parliament as a source for increasing the profits of anyone. Therefore, both clauses violates the maxim of quality. On the contrary, the informative sense is clear in both, which enables the reader to understand the context. It seems also that this speech is related to the topic that is the corruption in every aspect in the Egyptian society. The strong correlation between money, politics and the businessmen are clear-cut example of the corruption.

The maxim of manner is also abided, as there is no ambiguity or unclarity of the meaning whether explicitly or implicitly. The implicit meaning confirms a presupposed meaning in the words, *I spent a lot of money*, which means that spending money is a normal way and it gives a structural presupposition of spending the money. In the words, *to get into the parliament*, there is another structural presupposition that he did not get into the parliament before. The word, *august*, gives lexical presupposition that parliament has a respected impressive reputation. The clause, *But the august parliament will make it up 100 times over*, gives non-factive presupposition that the parliament is a set or a machine to generate the money.

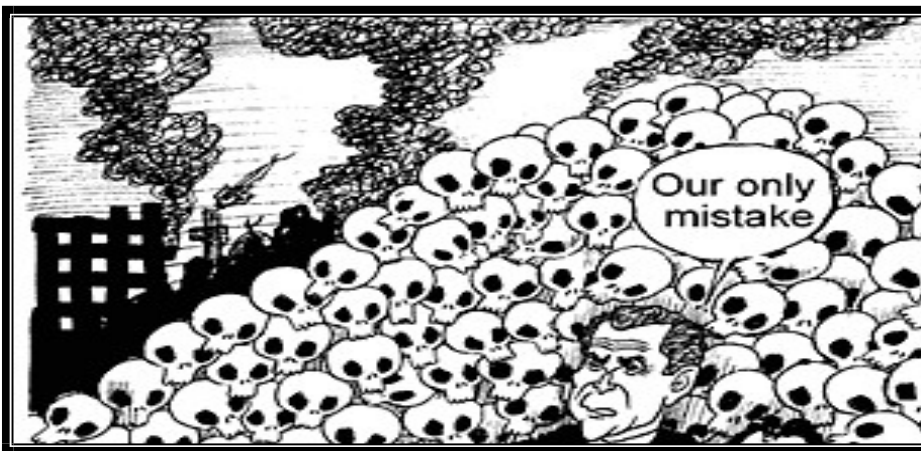
In the speech balloon, the cartoonist uses a direct speech act in the words, *I spent a lot of money to get into parliament*, in order to describe a given state, so the act is expressive. In the second sentence, *will make it up 100 times over*, the cartoonist uses indirect speech act which is the commissive, since this parliament will double the amount which is a future action. At the same time, this indirect act also includes another expressive act. One can feel from the speech that this businessman is praising the parliament for its role to increase the profits.

Deictic expressions are among the pragmatic devices used by the cartoonist to convey his ideas to his readers. The cartoonist employs a first person singular pronoun, *I*, to refer to the businessman. Pronoun, *it*, in the second clause, is a second person singular pronoun, refers to the wealth and fortunes of him. Time deixis is also used in this dialogue. The verb, *spent*, is in past simple tense, referring to the action that occurred in the past. The verb, *will make*, indicates the future event of making these profits.

The word, *But*, is used as discourse deixis for referring to the contradiction between losing or spending the money to get into the parliament and getting it back again from the parliament. Social deixis expresses the social background of the speakers that can be described as the new riches. This term is used for those who were suffering from penury and now become rich. The employed language variety is colloquial, reflecting the educational level of the speaker.

In the above-mentioned cartoon, the cartoonist uses FTA again with positive strategy to save the face of an addressee. Instead of slashing the government for its corruption and its malfeasance, he uses indirect criticism to government. The cartoonist's message is "the government must stop all the corrupted practices, particularly from those who are working inside the parliament" For fear of being aggressive towards the reader, he expresses his concepts indirectly, as it may be the best way to get his message understood.

### The State of Iraq after the U.S. occupation



AlAhram Weekly Newspaper (1 - 7 June 2006- Issue No. 797). Cartoon by Gommaa

### Background

It was known as Abu Ghraib Scandal, an incident involving acts of torture and abuse committed by United States military personnel against Iraqi prisoners held in Abu Ghraib prison, just west of Baghdad, Iraq, during the U.S.-Iraq War. The public phase of the scandal began in late April 2004 when the CBS News program *60 Minutes* broadcast photographs on television depicting some of these acts of torture. These images and others subsequently made public, such as those of a naked prisoner lying on the floor with a leash around his neck, a hooded prisoner standing on a box with wires attached to his hands and genitals. Such horrible scandals became infamous throughout the world.

The photographs and investigative reports sparked demands for an accounting of U.S. treatment of prisoners captured in the war on terror, which included the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and of Iraq in 2003. These military expeditions, which followed the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, led to the detention of prisoners in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other nations, and at a U.S. Navy base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The demands for a full accounting of prisoner treatment quickly led to the official and unofficial release of many documents. The most notable documents originated from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the U.S. military.

Subsequent reports explored general government policy on the treatment and interrogation of detainees taken in the war on terror. Still other documents offered a picture of how officials in the administration of the U.S. President George W. Bush, notably those

in the Department of Defense, the Department of Justice, and within the White House itself, had made decisions that altered the U.S. policies regarding the interrogation of wartime prisoners.

Thus, the Abu Ghraib scandal came to involve the legality, morality, and consequences of the use of extreme interrogation techniques on detainees during the U.S. war on terror. These techniques were used not only at Abu Ghraib, but also at U.S. military bases in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo, among other places. Many observers believe the scandal encompasses not only the acts of abuse and torture depicted, but also the ways in which the U.S. government investigated and assigned responsibility for those acts. A number of enlisted soldiers and some officers faced criminal charges, and a few high-ranking officers were reprimanded. However, no senior administration officials, responsible for setting a policy that led to torture, were punished, removed from their position, or reprimanded.

### ***The analysis***

The cartoon above is a clear vision of gross mistakes the U.S. President "George Bush Jr" and the former British Prime Minister "Blair" made in their illegitimate war against Iraq. Before waging this war, the U.S. President announced that the U.S. army will do nothing but only liberating Iraq from tyranny and the Iraqi people will receive the invading forces with greetings and flowers. However, after invading Iraq, The Iraqi people face the most ferocious attacks by the occupying forces and culminated by Abu Gharib scandal.

The cartoonist draws this cartoon and attempts to blame Bush and Blair for their mistakes. In the sentence, *Our only mistake*, there is implicit meaning from this sentence and also from drawing such a cartoon. The maxim of quality is not satisfied as there is no true meaning in the sentence. The maxim of quantity is also not satisfied as there is no available information for understanding the meaning. Yet, the maxims of relevance and manner are satisfied as there is a strong relationship between the context of the speech and the cartoon.

The phrase, *our only mistake*, gives a structural presupposition that all the U.S. President and British prime minister did was nothing but only one mistake. The drawing of limitless number of skulls gives factive presupposition that Bush and Blair policies led to many horrific killings among the Iraqi people. The drawing of the covered hanged prisoner gives another factive presupposition that refers to the scandal of Abu Gharib prisoners. Smoking emissions from the building gives another factive presupposition about what Iraq witnesses of destruction and devastation.

Speech acts are clearly employed in this cartoon whether directly or indirectly. In the phrase, *our only mistake*, gives a direct speech act that is representative. The drawing of the hanged prisoner covered by a black gown reveals an indirect act that is expressive as the cartoonist tries to blame the U.S. President and British prime minister for their decision to wage this war. The drawing of skulls beyond both leaders reveals another indirect speech act that is expressive in which the cartoonist blame both leaders and holding them the responsibility for what happens in Iraq.

#### 5.4. Iranian Topics

##### A) Iran's indifference to the U.S. threats



Al Ahram Weekly Newspaper (20 - 26 April, 2006). Cartoon by Goma

#### **Background**

At the beginning of 2002, President George W. Bush tried to punish Iran for supporting anti-Israel militants, refusing to adopt a Western-style democracy, and for allegedly trying to produce weapons of mass destruction. He included Iran, along with Iraq and North Korea, in the "axis of evil." Among foreign diplomats and journalists in Tehran, it became fashionable to speak of the coming implosion of the Islamic Republic, Iran's revolutionary state. Weakened by a power struggle between reformists and conservative hard-liners, Iran was vulnerable to the sort of threat that the United States, whose forces had easily toppled the Taliban and scattered al-Qaeda, seemed to represent.

The fear of intervention by the U.S. in Iran became more urgent among Iran's leaders, when America invaded Iraq the following year. Indeed, it later became known that, in early 2003, the Iranian Foreign Ministry quietly sent Washington a detailed proposal for comprehensive negotiations, in which the Iranian government said it was prepared to make concessions about its nuclear program and to address concerns about its ties to groups such as Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, in return for an agreement from the White House to refrain from destabilizing the Islamic Republic and start lifting long sanctions. The U.S. rejected this overture out of hand. It seemed that Bush didn't want to offer guarantees to a regime that he intended, at a later date, to try to destroy.

After the tragic events of the U.S. troops in Iraq, it is hard to imagine the Iranian government repeating this sort of offer. It is their apparent strength and good fortune that they take a provocatively long time to respond to diplomatic overtures, such as the proposal that the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, China, and Russia offered them before, and which they rejected. The six powers had offered a series of incentives including nuclear technology whose peaceful application can be verified. These incentives are like a very modest relaxation of the U.S. sanctions, and diplomatic support for Iran's bid to join the World Trade Organization as an inducement to Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment program.

Among American and Israeli government officials, and some of their allies, there is a fear that Iran is playing for time. Iran's technicians still have several years' work ahead of them before they can produce enough fuel to run a reactor and build a bomb. It seems likely that Iran's leaders have calculated that there is little appetite, even in the Security Council, for serious punitive action. Even if the U.S. and its allies manage to impose sanctions, these will very likely be limited to the transfer of some nuclear and non-nuclear military technology, travel restrictions on senior officials, and the freezing of Iranian assets abroad instead of the far more threatening possibility of restrictions on non-military trade or an oil embargo. Iran, Ahmadinejad "the Iranian President" asserts, will not give up its nuclear rights.

For many in the U.S., Europe, and Israel, Iran's determination to produce nuclear weapons in defiance of the world's significant powers seems clear. Some go further, suggesting that Iranian leaders, who have a bomb, will be temperamentally inclined to use it. In fact, Ahmadinejad, and every other Iranian politician and official, who speaks on this subject, takes care to reiterate Iran's longstanding claim that it has no intention of developing nuclear weapons, and such program is exclusively peaceful.

### ***The analysis***

Implicit meanings can be inferred indirectly from the drawing. The cartoonist tries to make a link between the brutality of the crocodile and the tragic events that occurs daily in Iraq. Although the communication is non-verbal, the cartoon is filled with signs and symbols that are used in human communication referring to, not only language, but also cultural and political concepts. Regarding Gricean's maxims, the maxim of quality in the words, *Iran-Iraq*, is flouted, since they don't indicate truth value. The maxim of quantity is flouted, as the two words don't convey any sufficient information. The maxim of relevance is satisfied in the word, *Iran*, however it is flouted in the word, *Iraq*, since there is no relevance between the state of Iraq and the drawing crocodile. The maxim of manner is satisfied, because there is no ambiguity involved in the meaning.

Regarding presupposition, there are three items. Iranian President, the U.S. President and the crocodile that represents the crisis in Iraq. The drawing of the President's leg between the crocodile's jaws presupposes that the U.S. President found himself in a quagmire through the U.S. occupation in Iraq. The drawing of President Bush holding a baton in one hand and waving his fist on the other hand presupposes that he is willing to fight his enemy in spite of the troubles he is still facing.

The word, *Iraq*, written on the crocodile, lexically presupposes that Iraq became a place of crisis for the U.S. forces. On the other hand, the drawing of Iran's President with his "V" sign on one hand and his high thumb finger referring back to the nuclear facilities on the other hand, presupposes that he is confident of his actions and his policies. The drawing of his tongue sticking out presupposes his indifference to the US threats.

Considering speech acts, there is no verbal speech in this cartoon. However, the drawing holds an act which encompasses an indirect non-literal one voicing criticism to the U.S. that suffers from its policies in the Middle East, specifically in Iraq. The drawing of Iranian President, showing his high thumb in one hand, and his "V" sign with the other hand, performs an indirect, non-literal commissive act, expressing a confidence of the Iranian stance against the U.S. Perhaps there is conformity between the drawing of crocodile and the explosive situation in Iraq.

The purpose of this study was to develop a pragmatic approach for analyzing the selected forms of political cartoons in Al Ahram Weekly Newspaper. Throughout the analysis, many aspects related to the implicit meaning were highlighted to show how political cartoons can function as mediators of meanings between the cartoonists and the receivers. In this respect, the analysis of the data in this thesis revealed the following findings:

First, political cartoons are messages which can be described in terms of content and complexity, but they also operate on a larger communication context. Within this larger framework, we can look at cartoonists and social factors which influence the message of cartoons. In addition, cartoons are forms that carry symbolism and exaggeration messages. These messages are supposed to come quicker than written editorials. The integration of language, visual art, and creativity into the production of cartoons enable the artists to communicate more effectively than they would do using only one style.

Second, characters in cartoons must be recognizable to the viewer, and the drawing must have a basis in reality even though it may contain a philosophical tendency. Also, a purpose is necessary in cartoons because without it, cartoons are not given any universal meaning. To achieve its communicative purpose, political cartoons, unlike other forms of the media, employ humor in an attempt to make a political statement. Cartoons are sometimes amusing, but can be emotionally devastating. That means that cartoons can generate anger and outrage as well as funny sensations.

Third, although political cartoons are often perceived as forms of amusement, they are also powerful media for political discourse. Since they act as a means of establishing and evaluating political situations, political cartoons can also establish political agendas by presenting judgements about politics that may affect reader's beliefs and attitudes. Moreover, simplicity is an important element in the communicative process of political cartoons. That means cartoonists are not committed to the rules of grammar or lexicography, and they are not compelled by the rules of sentence and paragraph formation.

Fourth, humor is a central element in conveying the meaning to the viewers. It plays a unique and central role in the way political cartoons communicate ideas. It also functions most often in cartoons as a vehicle for expressing the persuasive messages of cartoonists. The function of humor in the political messages is the release of tension it provides. Because political humor is often a reaction to the greatest concentration of power in society, it is considered as a safe release for aggressiveness against superior force.

Fifth, translated political cartoons reflect the local and international events that exist in our daily life. A cartoonist uses his talent in drawing to mirror the trends in the political life locally and internationally. On the other hand, the analysis of portrait political cartoons reflects the stance of the cartoonist over the character he portrays. In most cases, the cartoonist attempts to recover the main features of the character. Through a number of pragmatic devices, the cartoonist attempts to convey his implicit meaning to his readers.

Non-verbal cartoons are the third branch of the political cartoons that focuses on the international topics. This branch of cartoons does not contain a dialogue or a verbal description unlike the translated or the portrait cartoons. Yet, this branch of political cartoons contains only symbols and signs that indicate implicit meanings. Portrait and non-verbal cartoons play important roles in framing and determining the public feeling towards the current events. Cartoonists may be closer and simpler to explain the political situation than the political writers do.

In non-verbal cartoons, cartoonists may use few words that refer to their points. It is remarkable that in this type there is no usage of deixis or politeness strategies, but only speech acts, presupposition, and implicature. Cartoonists generally depend on indirectness to shape their concepts to the readers. Portrait cartoons depend on the description of the famous Egyptian cartoonist "George Bahgory" who is probably the only cartoonist specialized in drawing portrait cartoons with attached verbal description. The cartoonist expresses his personal perspective over the character. For a perfect understanding of the meaning, the readers should have a contextual aspects or background of the portrait to arrive at the intended meaning of the cartoonist.

Sixth, context plays an important role in explaining and interpreting cartoons. Probably, without a context, there will be no interaction between the cartoonist and the addressees, as a cartoonist may cause obscurity to his ideas, and readers could be confused about such unclarity. A cartoonist commonly tends to the indirectness in his speech acts, which means he explicitly uses a number of words, and he implicitly intends to convey another meaning. The most common sense in his writing is his criticism of the negative aspects in a society. The cartoonist uses this kind of indirect speech acts either to escape the censorship or to draw the attention of the readers to think carefully about his ideas over local and international topics.

Seventh, since cartoons tend to be excessive, visual satire is also among the various tools that are employed in cartoons. Visual satire differs from written satire in its use of depiction or the deliberate distortion of a particular individual's features for purposes of mockery. Agenda-setting and framing are central instruments for political cartoons in the political communication in society. Agenda-setting is responsible for spreading information to the public and organize them. Political cartoons contribute to the agenda-setting through providing readers with a sense of the most significant issues, events, or topics. Frames reduce complex issues or events to a simple metaphorical form. Therefore, political cartoons provide the reader with an allusion of understanding events or thoughts.



Finally, cartoons play important roles as effective ways of persuasion. That is because cartoons have an ability to simplify complex issues into forms, which are easily understood by the audience. Implicitness of visual meaning has also a major consequence for the persuasive use of visual image. Since a visual argument can not be entirely explicit, it may require a viewer to have a greater degree of mental participation. The analysis of political cartoons can be handled using other approaches in order to capture the various aspects of linguistic concepts in the visual discourse. This can be done from a semantic or semiotic perspective. The present study was an attempt in this direction from a pragmatic perspective.

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### **Interviews**

- 1- Abou Elezz, F. An interview on October 2, 2006.
- 2- Farahat, G. An interview on October 4, 2006.