Semiotics across Cultures: An Analysis of Shop Signs in American and Iraqi Contexts

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Abstract:
This study examines the textual and visual resources of shopfront advertising signs in two different linguistic and cultural contexts, namely, American English and Iraqi Arabic from a semiotics perspective. A multi-analytic semiotics model has been used to examine forty Iraqi and American café and restaurant signs, divided equally into twenty signs for each language. The corpus analysis has revealed that the verbal and visual resources work in parallel in the shop advertising discourse of the two linguistic landscapes under investigation. That is, the discourse of shop advertising signs of the two linguistic landscapes generally tends to use the same textual and visual resources. Moreover, American and Iraqi advertising shop signs are laden with the socio-cultural practices and assumptions of the American and Iraqi societies. Finally, a number of conclusions are presented.

1. Introduction
The beginning of the third millennium has witnessed an increasing research interest in what is known as "Linguistic Landscape" which is a recent research domain within sociolinguistics. The domain of linguistic landscape has been defined as "the visibility of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region" (Sebba, 2010:73). More precisely, it is the study of "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration" (Landry and Bourhis, 1997: 24 ). Shohamy and Waksman (2009: 314) remark that the most unique feature of linguistic landscape is that it refers to a text presented and displayed in the public space, and investigates public uses of written languages. Linguistic landscape studies are a multi-hub connection between various disciplines including linguistics, sociology, semiotics, politics, and geography which altogether bring fruitful insights.
Linguistic landscape is closely related to the study of social semiotics, that is, they are both intertwined with socio-cultural practices and as such it would make no sense at all to examine a linguistic landscape or social semiotics work without its surrounding. Although both disciplines have so much in common, it is believed that a combination of the two will greatly help examine the textual and visual modes of a given linguistic context. Social semiotics employs tools of analysis to study the multimodal contemporary scenery and to highlight the non-linguistic practices besides their linguistic ones. Semiotic landscape, originally proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), is an extension to the study of linguistic landscape. It looks at how landscape generates meanings by combining tools of analysis from three major disciplines; language, visual literacy, and sociolinguistics, and also the changes this have brought and applied to the art of advertising (Finzel, 2012:2).

Linguistic landscape is a rich empirical area of study which addresses the topic of language and space and really enhances a number of related topics such as multilingualism, globalization, language dominance, language contact, lexical borrowing, demographic change, language mixing and so on. The study of shop signs from a semiotic viewpoint is highly relevant for linguistic landscape research. Shop advertising signs provide an easy, visual and clear way to promote language and culture while they also provide excellent materials for language learning in ‘real life’ situations and indeed for comparative linguistic analysis. The textual and visual resources of advertising signs can best symbolize and reflect the socio-cultural and linguistic identity of a given society.

The present study investigates the textual and visual resources of shopfront advertising signs in two different linguistic and cultural contexts, namely, American English and Iraqi Arabic from a semiotics perspective. Furthermore, it explores how the textual and visual resources of shopfront advertising signs are constructed to reflect the underlying socio-cultural value systems of American English and Iraqi Arabic. To the best of researchers’ knowledge, it is the first research of its type that examines the semiotics systems of two different linguistic landscapes. Hence, the study is intended to close a lacuna in linguistic landscape and semiotics research.

2. Semiotics and Advertising Signs

All kinds of messages are being generated when looking at shop signs, posters, billboards, brand logos, and even traffic lights. Meanings are being made everywhere. One of the most powerful and influential ways of thinking about communication has been known as semiotics. Semiotics is a way of analyzing meanings by looking at the signs like words, images, and symbols which communicate a lot of
meanings. Because society is so pervaded by media messages, semiotics can contribute to the means of communication whether visually or textually. Semiotics has been interwoven in every aspect of human modes of communication, i.e., hearing, sight, taste, touch and smell. Thus, it can refer to the study of the innate capacity of human beings to produce and understand signs of all kinds (Crystal, 2008:431).

The study of linguistic landscape tends to identify what languages are prominent and valued in public and private spaces. It indexes the social positioning of people who identify with particular languages; to reveal much about the culture, history, and politics of people in places. Besides, it is one way that people mark territory, actively including some people while excluding others. Semiotics is frequently consulted as the fundamental theory underlying linguistic landscape research (Dagenais et al., 2009:254). This is reasonable because the analysis of a given signage requires the contemplation of more than just the linguistic material with its spatial organization, for example, font type and size; non-linguistic material such as symbols and other semiotic elements also constitute the meaning and effect of a sign. But if this be the case as for example Shohamy and Waksman (2009) argue, then either linguistic landscape should be reclassified as a subcategory of semiotics, or a more autonomous theory of linguistic landscape must be found.

Advertising is defined as "the promotion of goods or services for sale through impersonal media" (Cook, 2001:9). Likewise, Dyer (1982:1) maintains that advertising is mainly used to "introduce a wide range of consumer goods to the public and thus to support the free market economy", as the years pass by, the role of advertising has been extended to "become more and more involved in the manipulation of social values, ideologies, and attitudes, and less concerned with the communication of essential information about goods and services". Cook (2001) emphasizes the significance of the combination of different modes for the whole meaning of a given advertisement (p. 43). Advertising is about the promotion of certain branded products or services, adding that the advertisements can also enhance the image of an individual, group or organization. Thus, advertising is the combination of "linguistic signs with visual"; it invests what those modes have to achieve a certain communicative goal. The main focus of advertising is the consumer (Goddard, 2005: 8). Advertising is a field characterized with quickness of how one can do things in a professional way in a limited period of time. Semiotics has helped a lot in the promotion of the field of advertising although it is used in criticizing advertising for not being an independent field but it has also contributed greatly by focusing on the points of weaknesses
advertising used to have (Bignell, 2002:29). Dyer (1982:13) states that the advertiser employs language, image, ideas and values drawn from the culture, and assembles a message which is fed back into the culture”. This, in turn, clearly shows advertisements as "cultural products" since both the communicator and the receiver are products of the culture; they share "its meaning".

The work of the advertiser is the same as the semiotician where the interest is on the selling signs that selling products. The aim of the semiotic inquiry in advertising is to determine the users of a product or a service meeting their demands in adding, changing or dropping the products. Advertisers focus on the motivation that why people buy a product and the scope the product reach and its frequency.

The study of shop signs within a semiotics framework provides a visual way to promote language and culture and excellent grounds for comparative semiotics analysis. This means that the textual and visual resources of shop advertising signs can best symbolize and reflect the socio-cultural and linguistic identity of a given society. Due to the dearth of research on the semiotics systems from a cross-cultural comparison perspective, the present study examines the semiotics of linguistic landscapes of two different linguistic and cultural contexts, not examined before. This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the textual resources used for promotional goals in American and Iraqi shop signs?
2. What are the visual resources used for promotional goals in American and Iraqi shop signs?
3. How are socio-cultural practices and perceptions encoded in the textual and visual resources of American and Iraqi shop signs?

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Sampling of Corpus

For collecting a representative corpus, forty Iraqi and American café and restaurant signs are considered for analysis. More specifically, twenty advertising signs are selected from each language, divided equally into ten signs for cafés and other ten for restaurants. The selected signs are laden with cultural implication and content on both textual and visual levels as such the linguistic conventions and socio-cultural practices of the two linguistic contexts under investigation can be thoroughly uncovered.

The collection of corpus has started in June 2016 till February 2017. Since the study corpus depends on pictures taken for shop signs, the researchers have used different tools to collect them, namely, the researcher's camera mobile, friends' camera mobiles, social media such as Facebook Pages, Web Pages and mobile application (such as Trip Advisor, Dalini, Yelp, and Google Search Engine).
3.2 Analytic Framework and Procedures

For the analysis of study corpus, a multi-analytic model has been adopted. In other words, the textual and visual levels of shop signs of the two languages under examination are analyzed via using an eclectic semiotics model.

As far as the textual level is concerned, it is mainly concerned with the linguistic resources and conventions used in the composition of the shopfront signs. For analyzing the textual categories of American English and Iraqi Arabic shop signs, Scollon and Scollon's (2003) and Beasley and Danesi's (2002) taxonomies of textual features are adopted. The textual categories chosen for the analysis of study corpus are the following; code preference, variety preference, formality level, phrase/clause type, lexical choices, cohesion, coherence, figures of speech, rhetorical devices, and macro-discourse structure. Table (1) below illustrates the selected textual categories along with their sub-categories selected for corpus analysis;

**Table (1): The textual categories with their features selected for analysis.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Textual Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Code preference</td>
<td>English, Arabic, Mixed Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Variety preference</td>
<td>Standard, Colloquial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Formality</td>
<td>Formal, Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Phrase/clause type</td>
<td>Nominal, verbal, adjectival &amp; adverbial phrases, Simple, compound &amp; complex clauses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lexical choices</td>
<td>Nouns (common/abstract), verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, articles, prepositions, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>Grammatical &amp; lexical cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>Illustration, relay, and anchorage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Figures of speech</td>
<td>Metaphor, allusion, simile, alliterations, personifications, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rhetorical devices</td>
<td>Slogan, jingles, imperative forms, formulas, the absence of language, intentional omission, parallelism, and synecdoche.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Macro-discourse structure</td>
<td>Heading, describing, identifying &amp; closing components.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the analysis of the visual structure of shop signs, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal social semiotics and Scollon and Scollon's (2003) geosemiotics are employed. The visual mode provides an access to the world as much as the textual mode does. The resources of understanding the process of meanings making may differ from those represented by language only. Relatedly, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) maintain that "information is vast, so complex, and has to be handled visually because the verbal [or textual] mode is no longer adequate". Hence, visual social semiotics shapes the "intrinsic characteristics and potentialities" and the "requirements, histories, and values of societies and their cultures" (p. 30-35). Four main visual categories are selected for the analysis of the present corpus of American English and Iraqi Arabic shop signs. The selected visual categories are; representation, interaction, composition, and place semiotics. Table (2) below illustrates the main visual categories along their subcategories selected for corpus analysis;

Table (2): The visual categories with their sub-categories selected for analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Main Categories</th>
<th>Sub-Categories</th>
<th>Minor Sub-Categories/Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>Conceptual Classifications 1 process</td>
<td>Covert Single-leveled Overt Multi-leveled Overt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Transactional Actional process Non-transactional reational process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The presence of a vector forms an action and its absence shows an event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Social distance</td>
<td>Close shot  personal Medium shot  social Long shot  impersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Point of view (angle)</td>
<td>Involvement Frontal involvement side detachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Power High angle  viewer power Eye-levelled angle equality Low angle image power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gaze (contact)</td>
<td>Demand asking Offer presenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Information value</td>
<td>left-right (right-left) gives-new up-down ideal-real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>No frames connectedness With Frames disconnectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Salience</td>
<td>Foregrounded highlighted Size importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Natureanism Real high modality Abstract low modality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emplacement</td>
<td>Contextualization sign-context relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inscription</td>
<td>Situated semantics sign-place relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paper handwritting or electronic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Material showing durability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Layering showing old and new signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State change signs with different states</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For corpus analysis, a mixed-approach is used where both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods are employed. The quantitative method complements the qualitative one giving the analysis more objectivity and precision. Every single shopfront sign has been analyzed textually, then visually and finally socio-culturally.

4. Analysis and Results

This section presents the analysis of study corpus. Due to space limitations, the semiotic analysis of textual and visual resources of shop signs of both American and Iraqi linguistic landscapes is largely presented quantitatively, whereas the analysis of the socio-cultural practices associated with the textual and visual resources of shop signs is mainly presented qualitatively.

4.1 The Textual Level

By and large, the qualitative analysis has revealed that the textual resources of American and Iraqi shop advertising signs employ the same textual resources in terms of code preference, variety preference, formality, phrase/clause type, lexical choice, cohesion, coherence, figures of speech, rhetorical devices, and macro-discourse structure.

Quantitatively, Table (3) displays the statistical distribution of textual categories in the American English and Iraqi Arabic corpus. Though there is similarity in the distribution of textual categories across the entire corpus of both languages, there is relative variation. As a start, the category of code preference constitutes a 4.28% (20) of the American corpus and a 4.31% (23) of the Iraqi corpus with no significant difference between the two contexts. The statistical finding indicates that both American and Iraqi shop signs depend on their principal linguistic code to deliver their own semiotic practices that each code evokes. Also, it reinforces that each sign should have at least one dominant linguistic code to attract viewers without which the messages of those signs cannot be comprehended meaningfully.

As far as the categories of language variety and formality preferences are concerned, Iraqi shop signs employ mixed linguistic varieties and formality preferences with a 5.25% which is relatively higher than the American shop signs amounted to a 4.28%. The category of phrase/clause type comprises an 11.63% (62) of the Iraqi corpus and an 11.34% (53) of the American corpus with no significant difference. It has been noted that both languages show a tendency towards using more condensed and concise language, that is, they prefer phrases over clauses in their advertising discourse. Such preference reinforces brevity and economy of language used in the advertising discourse of shop signs.

The category of lexical choices constitutes a 37.52% (200) of the Iraqi corpus in comparison to a 33.83% (158) of the American corpus.
with a relatively statistical difference. It can be said that Iraqi sign-makers tend to use an abundance of Arabic vocabulary in order to manifest their socio-cultural background or promote their products advertised.

The cohesion category accounts for a 14.34% (67) of the American corpus and a 13.52% (73) of the Iraqi corpus. There is a slight statistical difference between the two sets of corpus. Both languages depend heavily on the cohesive ties of homophoric references and collocations which best mirror the socio-cultural practices and assumptions associated with American and Iraqi shop signs. The coherence category comprises a 3.85% (18) of the American corpus and a 3.66% (19) of the Iraqi corpus with no significant difference. Therefore, both corpus sets tend to use related image-text relations as much as required to promote the products or services advertised.

The category of figures of speech accounts for a 9.85% (46) of the American corpus while a 7.31% (39) of the Iraqi corpus. It can be observed that American signs rely relatively more on such figurative and aesthetic devices than Iraqi signs do to attract the attention of their potential customers through creating images. The category of rhetorical devices constitutes a 4.06% (19) of the American corpus and a 2.62% (14) of the Iraqi corpus in favor of American shop signs. This category has a crucial role in persuading the potential customers of the kind of products or services advertised. The last category of macro-discourse structure occupies a 9.85% (46) of the American corpus and an 8.81% (47) of the Iraqi corpus with no significant statistical difference between the two linguistic sets.

4.2 The Visual Level

Like the textual categories, the visual resources of American and Iraqi shop advertising signs employ relatively the same visual resources of representation, interaction, composition and place semiotics. Table (4) presents the statistical distributions of main visual categories along with their subcategories and minor subcategories across the American and Iraqi corpus. The main differences lie in the distributions of those subcategories and minor subcategories across the entire corpus of both languages.

The first main category of representation constitutes a 5.95% (20) of the American corpus and a 6.02% (20) of the Iraqi corpus. Within this main category, the conceptual classificational process constitutes a 5.05% (17) of the American and a 6.02% (20) of the Iraqi corpus, whereas the narrative processes constitute a 0.89% (3) of the American corpus and a 0% (0) of the Iraqi corpus. The distributions of the features of the conceptual classificational process subcategory are as follows; covert feature 10% (2) for American and 5% (2) for Iraqi, multi-leveled overt feature 0% (0) for American and 20% (4) for Iraqi,
and single-leveled overt feature 75% (15) for American and 75% (15) for Iraqi. As for the narrative subcategory, the transactional actional process feature constitutes a 5% (1) of the American corpus and a 0% (0) of the Iraqi corpus, while the non-transactional reactional process feature constitutes a 10% (2) of the American corpus and a 0% (0) of the Iraqi corpus.

The differences show that the Iraqi corpus relies on conceptual multi-leveled overt structure (i.e., having a superordinate and an interordinate in the structure of the representation of visual elements) whereas the American corpus relies on the use of covert structure. Also, the American corpus tends to narrate a story visually by using narrative structures unlike the Iraqi corpus which depends on the idea of classes as revealed by the corpus analysis. The convergence between both corpora sets shows that the advertising techniques of visual representation used by American and Iraqi sign-makers are the same especially the use of single-leveled overt feature. This technique contributes to the idea of promoting consumerism via centralizing the advertised materials in the signs by means of using only single-levelled overt structure which, in turn, enhances the visual focus on the advertised products (Beasley and Danesi, 2002:149).

The second major category of interaction constitutes a 23.80% (80) of the American corpus and a 24.09% (80) of the Iraqi corpus. This main category has three sub-categories, namely, social distance 5.95% (20) for American and 6.02% (20) for Iraqi, angles 11.90% (40) for American and 12.48% (40) for Iraqi, and gaze 5.95% (20) for American and 6.02% (20) for Iraqi. The subcategory of social distance has three features, namely, close distance, mid distance and long distance. The feature of close distance constitutes a 70% (14) of the American corpus and a 55% (11) of the Iraqi corpus showing that American signs have more personal attachments than Iraqi ones. The feature of mid distance comprises a 15% (3) of the American corpus and a 35% (7) of the Iraqi corpus showing that Iraqi signs reveal more social tendency with their potential viewers. Long distance feature constitutes a 15% (3) of the American corpus and a 10% (2) of the Iraqi corpus reflecting that American signs have more impersonal relations with their potential viewers. The kind of social distance employed in the Iraqi corpus reflects that Iraqis are more sociable and friendly.

The second subcategory of angles has two minor subcategories, and these are; involvement and power. Involvement constitutes a 5.95% (20) of the American corpus and a 6.02% (20) of the Iraqi corpus. Involvement, in turn, has two features, and these are frontal shot and side shot. Frontal shot constitutes a 75% (15) of the American corpus and an 85% (17) of the Iraqi corpus revealing that
Iraqis are socially close and welcoming. The side shot, on the other hand, constitutes a 25% (5) of the American corpus and a 15% (3) of the Iraqi corpus showing that American signs reveal some detachments. Power constitutes a 5.95% (20) of the American corpus and a 6.02% (20) of the Iraqi corpus. It has three features, namely, high angle, eye-leveled, and low. High angle constitutes a 5% (1) of the American corpus and a 0% (0) of the Iraqi corpus reflecting that the relative power of viewers in the American signs. Eye-levelled angle constitutes a 65% (13) of the American corpus and a 75% (15) of the Iraqi corpus revealing that Iraqi sign-makers tend to consider their viewers visually alike. Low angle constitutes a 30% (6) of the American corpus and a 25% (5) of the Iraqi corpus revealing that American signs compel their viewers to realize the power of the image. The last subcategory of gaze comprises a 5.95% (20) of the American corpus and a 6.02% (20) of the Iraqi. It has two features, namely, demand and offer. The demand feature constitutes a 15% (3) of the American corpus and a 0% (0) of the Iraqi showing that American signs are likely to impose advertising goals over their viewer. The offer feature constitutes an 85% (17) of the American corpus and a 100% (20) of the Iraqi corpus reflecting that Iraqi advertising signs seem to allure their viewers by the gaze type employed. Throughout the use of this category, it can be detected that Iraqis tend to be sociable, friendly, welcoming, and open people as reflected in the visual organization and structure of their shop signs.

The third major category of composition constitutes a 42.26% (142) of the American corpus and a 43.07% (143) of the Iraqi corpus. It has four subcategories, namely, information value, framing, salience and modality. Information value constitutes a 16.36% (55) of the American corpus and a 17.46% (58) of the Iraqi. It has three features: text vector (L-R/R-L) 36.36% (20) for America and 39.65% (23) for Iraqi, up-down (ideal-real) 27.27% (15) for American and 25.86% (15) for Iraqi, and central-marginal 36.36% (20) for American and 34.84% (20) for Iraqi. The second subcategory of framing constitutes a 2.67% (9) of the American corpus and a 1.5% (5) of the Iraqi corpus showing that Iraqi sign-makers tend to show that their signs are socially connected and engaged with their viewers unlike American sign-makers who are likely to show some disconnectedness with their viewers.

Salience constitutes a 17.26% (58) of the American corpus and an 18.07% (60) of the Iraqi corpus. It has three features; foregrounded, size and colour. The foregrounded feature constitutes a 34.5% (20) of the American corpus and a 33.3% (20) of the Iraqi corpus with slight difference. The size feature constitutes a 31% (20) of the American corpus and a 33.3% (20) of the Iraqi corpus. And the colour feature
constitutes a 34.5% (20) of the American corpus and a 33.3% (20) of the Iraqi corpus.

Modality constitutes a 5.95 % (20) of the American corpus and a 6.02% (20) of the Iraqi corpus. Modality has two features; high and low. More precisely, high modality constitutes a 30% (6) of the American corpus and a 70% (14) of the Iraqi corpus, while low modality constitutes a 70% (14) of the American corpus and a 30% (6) of the Iraqi corpus. Such distributions indicate that Iraqi signs show a preference towards the use of real authentic images that stimulate reality to persuade their potential viewers unlike American ones which use abstract or imagined images. These tendencies might have their roots in the socio-cultural practices of both languages. In other words, Iraqi food traditions are manifested and realized by the abundance of food advertised in these signs to show the welcoming nature of Iraqis, while the American signs tend to show a tinge of urbanity and thriftiness.

Scollon and Scollon (2003) maintain that the data chosen for their study reveal a kind of situated semiotics based on the physical location of the sign in the real world. In this regard, the fourth major category of place semiotics constitutes a 27.97% (94) of the American corpus and a 26.85% (89) of the Iraqi corpus. It has two subcategories, namely, emplacement and inscription. Emplacement constitutes an 11.90% (40) of the American corpus and a 12.48% (40) of the Iraqi corpus. It has, in turn, two features: contextualization, 50% (20) for American and 50% (20) for Iraqi, and situatedness, 50% (20) for American and 50% (20) for Iraqi. These features assert the significance of the context and the sign place in enhancing the underlying semiotic meanings intended by the sign-makers. The two languages utilize the place as an advertising tool in promoting not only the advertised products but the culture of place as a whole. Inscription constitutes a 16.07% (54) of the American corpus and a 14.75% (49) of the Iraqi corpus. It has four features, namely, fonts 36% (20) for American and 41% (20) for Iraqi, material 36% (20) for American and 41% (20) for Iraqi, layering 19% (10) for American and 14% (7) for Iraqi, and state change 7.40% (4) for American and 4% (2) for Iraqi. The two features of font and material reveal a similar tendency in both languages to use permanent material and font style that indicate the stability and long-term endurability. They can also reveal the cultural and ideological background of the sign-makers to establish a long-term relationship with the sign viewers by creating trust.

The layering and state change features are durable, and short-term signs contain information intended by the sign-makers to be displayed for a short time. These two features are used more in the American
corpus than in the Iraqi corpus as the Iraqi signs contain such information within the permanent sign. It indicates that Iraqi signs have the same advertising goals intended to be served for as much as those signs are there. Although those features show certain underlying semiotic meanings, the major category of place semiotics indicates that American signs pay much attention to the placement of signs. Such tendency can reflect the ethnic fragmentation of American society (American minorities, in particular, are represented textually and/or visually in most shop sign).

4.3 The Socio-Cultural Level

It has been observed that shop signs rely heavily on their linguistic and cultural contexts, and placement for their textual and visual interpretation. The advertising discourse of shop signs reflects the influence of the socio-cultural context of the two languages under investigation on the textual and visual levels.

As an important component of their advertising discourse, the textual structure of the shop signs focuses on naming. Creating a well-perceived brand name is a crucial advertising technique for sign-makers due to its role in creating chains of connotative meanings. The connotative chains are inspired by the sign-makers' socio-cultural and ideological backgrounds. Thus, there is a main focus on choosing the best brand name which functions as a bridge between the sign and its potential viewers. By means of creating affinity with the viewers, the names of shop signs of English and Arabic languages are best reflective of their socio-cultural context. This practice is best realized in choosing names which are typical reflections of their socio-cultural contexts, for example, Popeye's, Howard's, شهرزاد, الحاتي, etc.

Furthermore, the data analysis shows that the linguistic landscape has manifested indexicality. That is, the language variety (standard/colloquial) is used in a specific indexical place where the sign is located. It has an important socio-cultural implication due to the reliance of sign-makers on creating affinity with the sign's context and placement through the use of linguistic code which, in turn, enhances the advertising indexical goals. It is through the linguistic code, the socio-cultural backgrounds of the sign can be largely inferred. The English data have used the standard variety more often than the Arabic data which have used mixed language varieties and mixed linguistic codes. For instance, English café sign no. (1) "The House" uses a formal Standard English while Arabic café sign no. (1) "حاجاً" (Tea café) uses a colloquial Iraqi Arabic, and Arabic restaurant sign no. (5) "بٍج بٍىث" "Bait Byout" which uses a mixed codes Iraqi colloquial Arabic and its transliterated form in English.

On the visual level, the signs have shown a common advertising tendency in that more than two thirds (85%) of the entire data use a
single-leveled overt conceptual representation. This advertising technique is very important in unifying the sign's major goal of product advertising as much as the cultural implication interwoven within. The major role of this feature focuses on the name as a unifying superordinate of the other subordinates (whether textual or visual items). The socio-cultural meaning of the visual items used in all the signs contributes to the major advertising goal but with little reliance on the textual items as shown in the image-text relations of illustrations and rely.

On the same context, images play a major role in advertising culture. The entire data have invested images in different ways in accordance with the indexical place where the sign is located. It has been found that the context determines the use of images to deliver the socio-cultural meanings. Thus, images have contributed to the enhancement of promoting shared socio-cultural values. The use of images varies as a reflection of what they are actually mean to the people whom the sign-makers address. By means of using familiar images of food, drinks, and cultural-specific references, a sense of cherishing culture, presenting it in positive way, can be achieved. For example, the Iraqi restaurant signs no. (2) "باجطا الحاتي" (Al-Haty's Offal) uses the image of sheep head which represents one of the most authentic Iraqi dishes or meals while the American restaurant sign no. (6) "Buffalo Wild Wings" contains the figure of a typical North American animal. Also, the use of colours plays an important role as an eye-catching element that can deliver the semiotics of culture-specific meanings, and enhance the overall visual outlook of signs. The newness or oldness of colours used in shop signs can indicate the originality of the sign and its authenticity by showing for how long it has been set as a shop sign. The Iraqi restaurant sign no. (5) "كسبس سلٍ والان" (Suleimani Kebab) reflects that the sign is old and original when visually perceived, and the same is true with the American restaurant sign no. (7) "Porky's"

One of the main cultural differences found across American and Iraqi data is the difference in labeling the type of the shopfront sign as a restaurant or a café in the sample data chosen for analysis. It has been observed that the American data show a high tendency towards no-labeling the sign as a restaurant or a café but they rely on contextual cues to denote the kind of foods or drinks served. They use layering signs to give extra information about the type of services offered, for example, the American restaurant sign no. (10) "Nathen's" uses many layering signs to show the kind of services offered. The Arabic data, on the other hand, have revealed the opposite tendency where a definite label is used in most signs to indicate whether it is a café or a restaurant, for example, the Iraqi café sign no. (5) "مقهى
الشاباندر (Al-Shabander Coffee House). It has been noted that Iraqi Arabic signs have invested both textual and visual devices in a menu-like design without using layering or state change signs. Relatedly, the Arabic welcoming traditions of guests at any time are revealed by the non-use of state change signs indicating no time-specific for serving unlike the American signs where punctuality is recorded.

The most important socio-cultural aspects found to be greatly influential in determining the sign's meanings are indexicality and contextualization. The American data depend on the indexical place since shop signs imply a reference to the shared common socio-cultural assumptions between sign makers and potential viewers. American signs are indexical or symbolic where their composition shows the hidden ideological backgrounds of their makers. For instance, the American café sign no. (3) "Mississippi Café" indexes a reference to the Black minority who were marginalized during the 1960s. Furthermore, contextualization plays a major role in reflecting the underlying semiotic systems of the sign-maker's ideological background manifested in shop sign. It contributes to enrich the overall meanings of the sign by combining the meaning within the sign frame to the real world outside the sign. For example, the American café sign no. (3) "Mississippi Café" is linked to its outside world by means of the purple flowers drawn along with the sign name to the context where they are in. Briefly stated, place has been documented to influence the name choice, colours, images, styles, types of sign-viewer relation, and sign situatedness.

5. Conclusions

The textual and visual resources of shopfront advertising signs in American and Iraqi contexts have been examined from a semiotics perspective. The corpus analysis has revealed that the verbal and visual resources work in parallel in the shop advertising discourse of the two linguistic landscapes under investigation. More precisely, though there is a relative variation in the distribution of such textual and visual resources, the analysis of shop advertising signs of the two linguistic landscapes generally tend to use the same textual and visual resources. Moreover, American and Iraqi advertising shop signs are laden with the socio-cultural practices and assumptions of the two languages under investigation. That is, the textual and visual resources of advertising signs are loaded with socio-cultural practices of American and Iraqi societies.

The textual and visual resources along with their socio-cultural contexts work altogether to achieve their communicative function of persuading potential customers of the products and services advertised. All of them serve the meanings making and the promotion of the intended advertising goals. The dependence of American
English and Iraqi Arabic shop signs upon using the same semiotics systems and resources along with their placement supports the advertising goals. Thus, by indexing culture, those signs manifest the effect of place as a determining factor in attracting potential customers.

Kress and van Leeuwen's theory of visual grammar (2006) focuses exclusively on Western visual semiotics. One of the main contributions of this study is the expansion of the scope of Kress and van Leeuwen's theoretical framework to include non-Western visual semiotics, i.e., Iraqi visual semiotics. The flexibility and adaptability of the 'visual grammar' proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen across different semiotic systems validates its strong potentiality and applicability to different socio-cultural contexts.

References
Appendix
A Sample of American and Iraqi Shop Signs
النماذج اللغوية والثقافية
مرأة فراس عبد الله
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية - كلية الآداب – جامعة بغداد
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المستخلص
تتضمن هذه الدراسة المصادر النصية والمرنية لنشرات مهارات بحثية في وسطين لغويين، وثقافيين مختلفين، وتحديث الإنجليزية الأمريكية والعربية العراقية من منظور سيميائيي. تم استخدام أنماط سيميائي متعدد التحليلات لدراسة أربعين نشرة مقيق ومطعع عراقي وأمريكى، مقسمة بالتساوي إلى عشرين نشرة كل لغة. وقد كشف التحليل أن المصادر اللغوية والبصرية تعمل بالتوازي مع الخطاب الإعلائي للمجالين اللغويين قيد البحث وهذا يعني أن خطاب النشرات التجارية للمؤسسات اللغوية ميل عموما إلى استخدام نفس الموارد النصية والمرنية. فضلا عن ذلك، وجد أن نشرات الإعلانات الأمريكية والعربية محتلة بممارسات والالتزامات الاجتماعية والثقافية للمجتمعين الأمريكي والعراقي. وختاما، تم تقديم عدد من الاستنتاجات.