

## CARICATURING TWO REVOLUTIONS: MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF EGYPTIAN POLITICAL CARTOONS

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### **Abstract**

This paper evaluates some editorial cartoons selected from *Al-Ahram*, an Egyptian newspaper, amidst the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2011 and the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2013 public revolutions. The study explicates how visual images are intentionally produced to communicate and disseminate ideologies, values and identities in one of the official print media in Egypt. The study draws upon Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) framework of Visual Grammar applied. The analysis of the political cartoons in *Al-Ahram* reveals political, social, and cultural milieu in Egypt at the time of unrest. The paper proves that through multimodal texts, *Al-Ahram* is able to inscribe its political and ideological stances to its audience.

**Keywords:** Semiotic Analysis, Political Cartoon; Visual Grammar; Multimodality; Critical Discourse Analysis; Visuality

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

An editorial cartoon is a coded means of visual communication that aims at providing socio-cultural meanings construed only within a wider critical context. The move from verbal to visual communication has been debatable in terms of elucidating discursive implications. Cartoons are common sense naturalistic coded visual images (Kress et al., 1997; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Once used, cartoons are intended to project implications and prompt socio-cultural beliefs and practices among all members of the Egyptian society. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), such visual representations are easily decoded by the addressees "regardless of how much education or scientific-technological training they have received" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p.165-6). In terms of the Visual Grammar (VG) proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006), the present study seeks to evaluate how the framework descriptively fits the composition of Arab political cartoons, the way it expounds western-represented visual designs.

### **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Visual semiotics has contributed to enriching human communication. Scholars working on the verbal medium are lagging behind; hence, becoming more aware of the importance of exploring different modes of communication (Machin and Mayr, 2012). According to Machin and Mayr, "meaning is generally communicated not only through language, but also through other semiotic modes" (p. 6).

Research in multimodality allows producers and readers to get involved in the accentuation of various modes of representations. In addition to verbal representations, the use of other semiotic elements must integrate together to communicate meanings through these complex sign-coded texts (van Dijk, 1997b; Machin, 2007; Wodak, 2002; O'Halloran, 2008). Henceforth, "[a]n understanding is required as to how to read these texts, as coherent in themselves" (Kress et al., 1997, p. 282).

As a multimodal discursive practice, communication is contingent with visual structures. That is, multimodality is responsible for reproducing ideological implications, values and contributing to the overall meaning of texts. Multimodality is, also, concerned with decoding the various 'modes' of communication that are intended for transmitting numerous meanings. According to Kress (2009), multimodality is a set of modes where a single mode is "a socially and culturally shaped resource for meaning making" (p. 79).

Multimodality evokes power relations between the participants. In fact, both producers and readers must cooperated to compose and, in turn, comprehend 'complex sign-texts' to accurately infer the socio-cultural implications within a given 'communicational environment' (Kress et al., 1997).

The importance of multimodality emerges from the less focus on visual communication. However, studies are more focused on written discourse which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), "has been the most highly valued, the most frequently analysed, the most prescriptively taught and the most meticulously policed mode in our society" (p.32).

## **2.1 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis**

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) has been adopted by researchers as a multifaceted approach of analysis that focuses on 'denotational' and 'connotational' readings of discourse (O'Halloran et al., 2011; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). For O'Halloran et al. (2011), denotative processes realize the literal message of what is being depicted while connotational processes refer to the socio-cultural ideological ideas and values. That is, connotation represents a "second layer of semiotic meaning construction" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, p.96).

This article investigates visual semiotic representations of political cartoons. The study probes the two approaches, namely, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multimodality. These two approaches are chosen for deeper examination of visual discourse maintained in journalism. The review of CDA literature is influenced by the works of Fairclough (1989, 1992) as well as the dominant critical investigation of the notions of power and ideology by van Dijk (1997, 1998). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) describe CDA as analyzing real social interactions within their linguistic structure. That is, CDA views the complex relationship between language and society. In other words, "It is a form of intervention in social practice and social relationships" (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258). This, in turn, as van Dijk (1997a) claims, attracts attention to its interdisciplinary nature, as combining diverse perspectives in its own analysis in order to project a vast number of social problems. Therefore, Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) is capitalized on both critical linguistics and the Visual Grammar (VG) retaining its importance on the integration of both approaches.

MDA is a critical practice of discourse analysis accentuating the importance of interspersing visual images and concepts of verbal discourse. Scholars claim that MDA accommodates both construction and representation of meaning (van Dijk, 1997b; Wodak, 2002; O'Halloran, 2008). Their claim is based on the fact that visual structures can express ideological meanings and contribute to the overall meaning of texts as much as the linguistic structures in a given context.

In the same sense, van Leeuwen (2009) pinpoints the significance of CDA when analyzing visual semiotics. According to van Leeuwen (2009), integrating the two approaches plays a central role in maintaining and legitimizing inequality, injustice and oppression in society by using appropriate discursive methods.

## **2.2 Visual Grammar**

"Visual communication is always coded" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p.32). In this vein, the concepts of multimodality and visual communication are grounded on studies proposed by Halliday (1978) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) where visual communication and verbal discourse form a comprehensive meaning-making unit.

Based on Halliday's Functional Grammar (FG), Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) have examined meanings of images in visual communication in terms of the function they are coded in. So, it can be realized that in FG, the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions respectively correspond to representational, interactive and compositional functions in VG. In terms of VG, the representational

structure depicts events, participants and settings; interactive relations evaluate power relations between the recipients while compositional structure relates meaning to the positioning and organization of the semiotic elements in the image.

In this sense, VG resembles the Halliday's metafunctions and his representational approach to the real world. Kress et al. (1997, p. 278) argue that there are three requirements that should be available in any discursive practice regardless its mode:

1. To represent and communicate relevant aspects of the social relations of those who are engaged in communication.
2. To represent and communicate those events, state of affairs, perceptions, which the communicator wishes to communicate.
3. To enable the production of messages which have coherence, internally as a text, and externally with relevant aspects of the semiotic environment (the so called 'context').

Just like FG, VG interprets and is interpreted through cultural-bound and historically-specific social interactions. According to van Leeuwen, social semiotic elements are resources imposed on our societies where meaning is decoded "by that complex condensation of cultural and social histories and of awareness of present contingencies" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 12).

### **2.3 Political Cartoons**

Visualization of meaning proved to be a critical tool for political expression (Ademilokun and Olateju, 2015). According to Ademilokun and Olateju, "...visual images are used in media representations or constructions of politicians, political parties, their attitudes to the public, or the effects of their actions and inactions on the public" (p. 1).

Cartoons are important in the representation of identities, attitudes, values and stereotypes (Calder et al., 2000). Producers of cartoons can reflect psychological implications through their recognition of the produced semiotic elements (Calder et al., 2000; Slavney, 2004).

Political cartoon is a visual communicative discourse pursuing transmission of political meanings and implications. "Political cartoon serve four functions entertainment; aggression reduction; agenda-setting and framing; and specific political policy and history" (De Sousa & Medhurst, 1981, p.124). Accordingly, producers of such type of cartoon directly or indirectly seek to convey their political ideologies through the exploitation of available shared semiotic elements pursuing the delivery and the perception of political implications (De Sousa & Medhurst, 1981; Machin, 2007).

The representation of societal and political cartoons integrates a set of other linguistic theories to render the intended meaning its appropriate elucidation. "In fact, the caricature, like all texts, does not offer a single meaning that will be decoded in the same way by all readers" (Mazid, 2000, p. 53). Thus, visualization in cartoon is regarded as multi-tasking permitting linguistic utilizations such as pragmatic incongruity, intertextuality, schema and sexism which render itself to wide range of meanings (Mazid, 2000).

### **2.4 Critical Analyses of Political Cartoons**

Various studies carried out focus on how political cartoons perform a critical function of communicating socio-economic and political meanings to newspaper readerships. Mazid (2000) has used a semiopragma-linguistic analysis of Egyptian caricature about treating women and the females' masculine perception.

Mazid (2008), also, approached political cartoons about George W. Bush and Osama Bin Laden in both Arabic and English by drawing upon the Incongruity Theory, CDA and Visual Metaphor. Similarly, Shaikh, Tareq and Saqlain (2016) utilized persuasive techniques applied in the visual images to evaluate the role played by Pakistani political cartoon on general election campaign. Shaikh, Tareq and Saqlain researched how irony, analogy, labeling, exaggeration, and symbolism are construed in the light of the ideological conflict between the Pakistani government and Taliban on the social, political, religious perspectives.

Pakistani political conflicts have also been the focal point in Tehseem and Bokhari (2015) that attempt to discuss how political cartoons can face-save or face-spoil governmental figures by their visual representation in Pakistani newspapers. Using Kress and van Leeuwen's framework of Visual Social Semiotics, Tehseem and Bokhari shed light on how cartoons configure ideologies according to the political affiliation of the newspapers. Abed and Al Munshy (2017) conducted their research on how multimodality plays a role in presenting women on magazine covers and the influential role assumed among Iraqi women.

In the same vein, Marschik (2018) explored the importance of visual representation of minorities, and how such visualizations can shift the viewer's perception through identifying their positive features. In a study about a Jewish club in the interwar era in Vienna, Marschik identified how cartoons highlight the 'Jewishness' through the context of successful sport practices.

In the same vein, Almohissen (2015) has integrated visual semiotics, CDA, and humor theories to analyze how cartoons mirror Saudi identities and ideologies in print media. Moreover, Almohissen has identified the role of cartoon in reflecting gender, ethnic and religious identities in a comic way.

Drawing its implication from Kress and van Leeuwen's approach of VG, this study looks for a practical expansion of this western-specific approach to the study of Egyptian visual representations of political cartoons in journalistic discourse. In order to carry out a visual analysis of Egyptian political cartoons, VG is especially chosen as a tool for construing how such discourse is utilized in Egyptian print media.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The data of this study is based on eight purposefully selected cartoons posted in *Al-Ahram* newspaper amidst the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2011 and 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2013 revolutions. Each cartoon is presented in its original color. Although political cartoons in *Al-Ahram* are mostly black and white, some instances are depicted in color forms to reflect indicative and significant meanings. "In the visual semiosis, the potential of ideological encoding can be strengthened through the arrangement of colors and visual elements" (Wang, 2014, p. 279).

Selected cartoons are gathered from two periods: (1) during the first 18 days of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution till the step down of President Mubarak; and (2) during the first 10 days of the 30<sup>th</sup> of June Revolution after the ousting of President Mohamed Morsy.

The selection criteria of the cartoons have diverse characteristics:

- 1) The data should include direct semiotic reference to Egypt and one of the two revolutions.
- 2) The cartoons should be published and signed by the cartoonists in the editorial page entitled دنيا الكاريكاتير /donja alkarikati:r/ 'Cartoon World'.
- 3) The selection process should be free of any overt political prejudice. The interpretation of the cartoons is, then, labeled by the theme they connotatively represent.

#### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

The study adopts an integrated theoretical framework of both the VG and CDA as two social semiotic theories. VG, which is postulated by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006), and follows Halliday's FG (1978), provides a comprehensive understanding of how visual images perform three meta-functions simultaneously. Kress and van Leeuwen's model of Metafunctional Visual Grammar (2006) is encapsulated in the following figure:

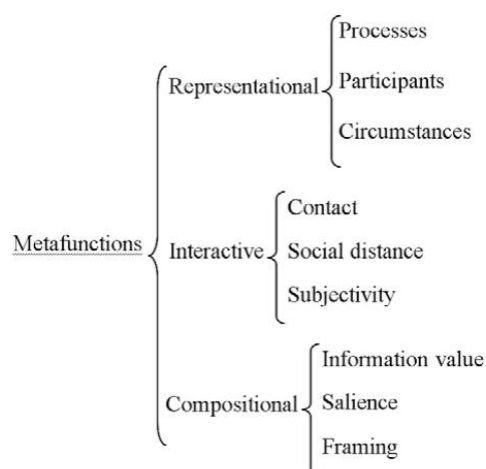


Figure 1 – Visual Grammar Metafunctional Framework Adopted from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

The empirical foundation of CDA (van Dijk, 1997) is also utilized to provide an explication of how power relations, ideologies and other social practices are constructed in the analyzed texts.

### 3.2 Research Questions

The current study seeks to answer the following research questions:

**RQ 1** What is the compositional pattern of the Egyptian cartoon?

**RQ 2** What is the basic linguistic repertoire of Al-Ahram political cartoon?

**RQ 3** How do political cartoons in *Al-Ahram* legitimize the 'US' and identify the identities, ideologies, attitudes and values of the in-group?

## 4 ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

The selected cartoons are nonlinear visual representations where viewers have the choice of deciding what to see first. This means that viewers read the elements of the images in any order regardless of what has been decided for them. Also, they decide which elements to stop at or reread. These drawings, thus, thematically reflect how the cartoonists employ the representational resources available to them to reflect their ideas and the reality they perceive.

### 4.1 The 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution, 2011

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2011, numerous young Egyptian people gathered in El-Tahrir Square announcing their rejection of the political regime back then. The number of the gathered protesters rapidly increased till millions arrived in that famous square and the revolution intensity increased in not more than two days. Declaring their demands, protesters struggled till they succeeded to get the President Mubarak ousted with the Egyptian army taking over the reign.

#### 4.1.1 Cartoon 1: Egyptian People and Egyptian Officials

In the following cartoon, the two participants are symbolically depicted. In the image, the driver represents the Egyptian people after the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution whereas the police officer symbolizes the Police Department. The citizen, who is driving his car, is addressing the police officer by looking at him (vector). Conversational interaction is conveyed by the verbal representation in the scrutinized speech balloon and the police officer is directly linked to the driver by the hand positioning (vector). Such representation mirrors equality and mutual intimate interpersonal relations between the Egyptian people and the Police Department which has long been accused of its superiority over the Egyptian citizens before the revolution.



The 25<sup>th</sup> of January Cartoon No. 1

The cartoon is dynamic and dramatic, and its narrative representation relates the transactional schema between the Egyptian citizen (sayer) and the police officer (receiver). Conversion is also attained with the virtual line drawing another vector in a bidirectional transaction maintained by the police (actor) handling (material process) a driving ticket (tool) to the driver (beneficiary). This schematic representation reflects the exchange of services attained between the Egyptian people and the Police Department. This implicature is also constructed by the locative circumstance which is represented through the foregrounding of the police officer and the contrast made in the black and white color modulation.

Before the revolution, the relationship between the police Department and the Egyptian people was accused of being superior-inferior kind of relationship. Cartoon (1), however, succeeds in connoting equality which is reflected in the equal size of the participants. The leaning position of the police officer and the high-positioned face of the citizen reflect the tendency of the police officer to cooperate with the proud-looking and the post-revolution citizen. The represented offer of help from the officer to the citizen holds a social meaning due to the medium shot and the eye-level angle.

Cartoon (1), hence, elucidates the current situation in Egypt by bringing in natural individuals in the Egyptian society that revolted against injustice and social inequality personified in the harshness of some social institutions especially the Police Department. The conjoined participants and the whole angle foregrounding the body of the officer create a strong bond between the police and the Egyptian people. Nevertheless, the verbalization of the utterance enclosed in the dialogue balloon communicates social hierarchy between the officer and the citizen. The vocative 'يا فندم' 'O, sir' and the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural bound pronoun 'نا' 'us' in the verb 'تعملولنا' 'to make for us' are social markers showing appropriate social distance with the police officer and inclusiveness and generalization with the receptors. Such verbal mode, again, reflects the interpersonal metafunction intended through the demand made by the citizen to the officer within the celebrations of the Police Day which is concurrent with the people's revolution against the regime and its social institutions.

The composition of the representational and interactive meanings is, thus, integrated through the information value presented by the conjoined participants and the salience of the foregrounded cooperating participants. Such visual cues stress the meaning of the cartoon which is only construed through socio-cultural standards represented by the visual semiotic modes.

#### 4.1.2 Cartoon 2: Social Relations and Gender Empowerment

The following cartoon connotes socio-cultural relations between husbands and wives which are controlled by gendered schema. The humorous effect is triggered by imposing an opposite schema, i.e. of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution and husband-wife relations.



The 25<sup>th</sup> of January Cartoon No. 2

Cartoon (2) represents an interaction between two types of participants: the represented (spouse) and interactive (producer and viewer). In this cartoon, the represented wife is controlling the scene exercising power over her husband. The physically detached wife (sayer) is linked with the passive husband by her speech balloon and her eye gaze (vectors). Social detachment can be inferred by the division of the image



into two separate halves by a virtual line. That is, husband-wife deference is ideologically framed by that invisible line drawn to disconnect the elements of the image.

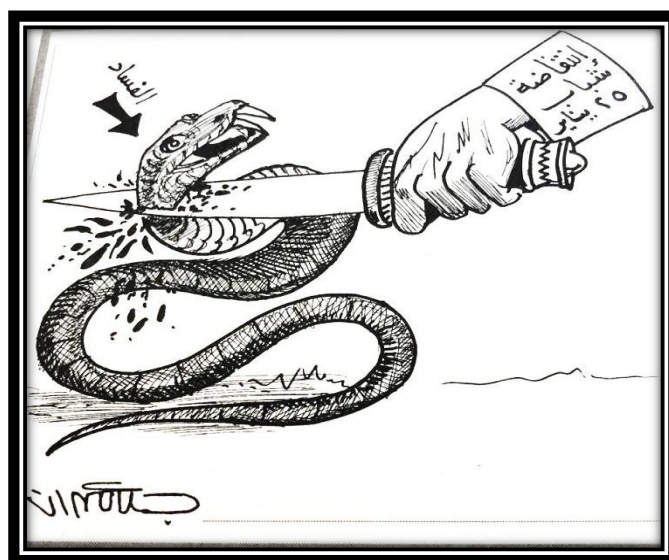
The heritage of the Egyptian literature has been known of humorous depictions of wives' supremacy over their husbands. Thus, this cartoon is not about what the represented participants are doing, but it is about how they fit together to create a humorous image of a societal inconsistency between what the husband holds (verbal message about the increase of food prices) and how the wife reacts as presented in the speech balloon يعني احضرلك جركن البنزين 'Shall I prepare a gasoline bucket for you'. This verbal message intertextuality refers back to the suicidal of a Tunisian male protester by burning himself to death in front of the Tunisian Peoples' Assembly. The image projects that Tunisian incidence which triggered the Tunisian revolution in December 2010, that is one month only before the Egyptian revolution.

Like left-to-right alignment of English texts, the image positions the given information filled with verbal text in the left and the new information is positioned in the right. The left and right placement of the opposing verbal message attracts the viewers' attention to the opposite attitudes of the represented social members.

The inferiority of the husband is reflected by his fusion with the verbal message while the superiority of the wife is depicted through her dynamic representation. This inferior-superior relationship appears in positioning the husband in the background behind the foregrounded newspaper (circumstance). The newspaper represents a symbolic foregrounded object with a borne message transmitted through the exaggerated font size. The transactional process is formed by the vector and is bidirectionally drawn from the wife and the husband. Such compositional structure connotes a social meaning of Egyptian husbands and wives belonging to different incongruent social groups.

#### 4.1.3 Cartoon 3: Socio-economic Status

Unlike cartoons (1) and (2), the following image is impersonal and metaphorical in nature. Prevailing corruption in Egypt is connoted and the symbolic implications of the image are interpreted through the 'assimilation' of corruption and snakes. Semantically, the 'hand' is a figure of speech referring to the revolution. Such metaphorical reference emulates economic and political statuses and not interpersonal relations. The semiotic elements in the image are construed through interpreting the cultural as well as the semiotic activities performed by the represented participants.



The 25<sup>th</sup> of January Cartoon No. 3

In the cartoon, the visual elements are fused to imply strength and power to the activities performed. That is, the image is a multi-process depiction of a hand (carrier) that possesses a decision-making sword (attribute). In the meantime, the hand grasping the sword is performing a material process. The hand (actor) and the knife (circumstance of means) are fused to strongly hit (material process) the snake (goal) on the head (locative circumstance). The mono-directionality of the action implies the reinforced decisiveness of getting rid of corruption which is visually symbolized by a snake and verbally labeled by the word فساد 'corruption'.

One of the demands of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution is to end corruption in Egypt, and this is reflected in this polarized composition where the sword (a circumstance of means) forms a mediator bridging the hand

and the head of the snake. The straightness of the knife is to imply decisiveness to the revolutionists which is ideologically valued by *Al-Ahram*'s image. In this image, *Al-Ahram* marks the conjoined relations between the revolution and the negatively attributed curved snake that is associated "with the world of organic nature" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, p. 55).

The key to understanding the meaning of this cartoon is the homogenous organization of the visual and the verbal elements in the image. That is the horizontal elongation of the image which displays the hand with a sword to lean towards corruption. The placement of given information (snake) on the left and the new information (the striking hand) on the right draws the viewer's attention to look for the implied meanings. A deeper investigation of the hand shows that it performs a left-handed action which is likely symmetrical with the western-like images.

The symbolization of the threat of corruption is made salient by being represented through a sharp-gazed black snake which is contrasted with a white-colored cuff and a plain sword in the hand of the revolutionists. The symbolic value of the visual participants here appears in depicting corruption as adopting the attributes of the snake with its poisonous effect on the well-being of the country's economy. In fact, *Al-Ahram* image is shot from an oblique angle to prove its detachment from corruption and, in the meantime, portrayed in a big close-up shot cutting off the revolutionist's whole body showing only the hand and the tool to reflect its ideological attachment and close social distance with the revolutionists.

Despite the previous representation of cartoon (3), *Al-Ahram* real ideological position is mirrored in the new verbal information labeling the hand of the revolution as 'انتفاضة شباب 25 يناير' *The uprising of the youth of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution*. Semantically, the disrupt happening on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January is lexically described by its opposition as an 'uprising' while supporting people ideologically describe it as a 'revolution'. The mitigation of the lexical description of such events as 'an uprising', and not 'a revolution', reflects the actual ideological stance adopted by *Al-Ahram* editorial policy.

#### 4.1.4 Cartoon 4: National Values and identity

The 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution witnesses the death of a considerable sum of innocent people who were declared to be the fuel of that revolution. In cartoon (4), the inclusive analytical image is an assembly of martyr faces (possessive attributes) joined together to build up the dress of a lady symbolizing Egypt after the revolution. The image represents a 'meronymy' where a part-whole between the participants is depicted. The squared frames of the faces of the martyrs' faces (part) are stacked and aligned with each other to construct the body (whole) of this young lady. Holistically, the image metaphorically personifies Egypt as a young lady (carrier) with a dress decorated with the images of martyrs (possessive attributes). The black and white color modulation reflects low modality especially with the absence of backgrounds.



The 25<sup>th</sup> of January Cartoon No. 4

This decontextualized lady symbolizing Egypt directs its gaze to the viewers as if she is requesting something. It connects the semiotic participants with the viewer to create a 'visual you'. The smile and the optimistic facial expression of the lady also consolidate the social relations with the viewers. In the meantime,



the calendar with the date of the 25<sup>th</sup> of January Revolution is topped as a crown on the head of the personified Egypt. This long shot image with the whole body construction creates a positively valued 'Self'.

The image represents the main participant of Egypt in a triangular pyramid compositional structure which reflects its prone power and hierarchy topped with the date of the revolution. Such triangular shape represents "a symbol of generative power" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, p.55). The vertical elongation of the top-bottom hierarchal composition positions the important and the powerful on the top. Due to the verbal description of martyrs as شهداء الفرح 'Martyr of Happiness', the circular framing highlights their positive organic nature.

The composition of the cartoon is manifested through the syntagmatic connection between the frames of the martyrs creating a powerful unit endowing unified informative values through the centralization of the personified Egypt. The message is composed through the size of the people frames within the border of the symbolic dress of happiness.

In this cartoon, *Al-Ahram* declares its appreciation to the revolution with the topped revolution calendric crown (ideal) as positioned at the highest level of the image, whereas, the lower part is composed of pictures of the martyrs (real). In fact, the text is ideologically motivated by patriotism.

## 4.2 The 30<sup>th</sup> of June Revolution, 2013

In 2012, the first presidential election was arranged and Mohamed Morsy, a member of the Muslim Brothers (MBs) took over the presidency. In his one-year ruling period, Egypt was weighed by a number of political conflicts and upheavals leading the Egyptian people to revolt against his regime on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 2013.

### 4.2.1 Cartoon 5: Historical Supremacy

The cartoon metaphorically depicts the character of a history writer. Recalling intertextuality, the discourse of history and politics are merged within the context of the 30<sup>th</sup> of June Revolution. The visual elements are piled up in a dramatic narrative action of a historian recording with pride the political events of this revolution.



The 30<sup>th</sup> of June Cartoon No. 5

As a historical revolution of people, the 30<sup>th</sup> of June Revolution is valued and positively esteemed by *Al-Ahram*. The image connotes valuable attachment with the revolution practices. This is reflected in the non-transactional relation between the historian (actor) and his notebook. This is realized by the vector that links them, namely, the oblique line drawn by the leaning arm, the pen and the process of typing in his notebook.

In this cartoon, *Al-Ahram* cartoonist seeks to disseminate emotional connectedness with the revolution as a grand social practice. This is revealed through the conjoined semiotic composition of the historian holding tightly the notebook with one hand and the pen inscribing this historical event with the other. That is, the historian is seen to be intersecting horizontally with the desk, creating an atmosphere of amalgamation and consolidation. The emotional effect of such amalgamation is achieved by utilizing other visual elements such as a square-shaped laptop as a sign of technological power which is, in turn, connected to the historian

through their physical closeness. Such elements reinforce not only emotional connectedness but also physical power as well. In this sense, the triangular compositional construction of the historian is regarded as “a symbol of generative power” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 55).

In general, the 30<sup>th</sup> of June Revolution is positively propagated in Egyptian mass media. In *Al-Ahram*'s cartoon, the revolution is represented as a historical event worth special attention by the viewer. This is attained by the horizontal elongation where the historian is placed on the left position (given) whereas the verbal comment, the history notebook and the laptop are placed on the right (new).

The image also employs textual elements to support the same effect of the visual semiotics on its viewers. The material process خرج 'got out' is attributed to the Egyptians to state how dynamic the Egyptian people are while the mental process تتظر 'look' is metaphorically ascribed to Egypt (senser) that is emotionally attached to the revolutionists (phenomenon).

خرج المصريون الى الشوارع و الميادين و كانت مصر تتظر اليهم من شرفتها بمزيج من مشاعر الفخر و القلق

*“Egyptians got out to streets and squares while Egypt is looking at them from the window with mixed feelings of pride and concern.”*

This verbal comment on the right top of the image supports the effect of the image on the viewers. The image, thus, maintains a sense of interchangeability between both the verbal and the visual elements.

#### 4.2.2 Cartoon 6: Democracy and the Powerful US

Cartoon (6) uses metaphorical implications by personifying both Egypt and the revolution. People and army, in addition, are represented through a complex set of semiotic elements which are coherently integrated to create a holistic political image. The image displays homogenous elements with varying messages constructing an ideological position of the producer. Although the image is much less naturalistic than the previous cartoons, the structure of cartoon (6) symbolically reflects the real world of the producer and the prospective target viewers.

The setting and the contextualization of the image reflect visual modality. Modality in this image is expressed through the fine details of all the semiotic elements such as the young lady with her long strand, Pyramid-and-Nile decorated dress, and the background which is drawn with less details and softer focus. Modality, in this sense, sustains symbolization which is reflected through the size differences between the depicted elements. The young lady, for instance, is verbally crowned as مصر 'Egypt' which is formed by an exaggerated font size symbolizing greatness, power and supremacy. Also, the bold black arrow is a gesture bearing movement directionality. The young man, also, symbolizes the revolutionists with optimistic, decisive and rapid-paced attitudes. In the same vein, the low angle and the very longshot of the human figure allow Egypt to occupy the whole height of the frame highlighting the Egyptian supremacy where the viewers are looking high at it.



The 30<sup>th</sup> of June Cartoon No. 6

Through the compositional configuration and the size of the lady in relation to the size of all the other elements in the image, greatness and embedded power are reflected. The image represents a dynamic

transactional schema in which three foregrounded elements are depicted. The young man who is verbally labeled *شباب الثورة* 'revolution youth' is the executive actor who is leading Egypt (beneficiary) to the verbally and symbolically labeled arrow of democracy (Locative circumstance). The destination of both participants is represented as conjoined and linked by two vectors: (1) the oblique line drawn by the outstretched arms of both the man and the young lady, and (2) the man's eye gaze up to Egypt.

In this sense, the man is not only an actor, but also a reactor who expresses his happiness to Egypt (Phenomenon). The lady's gaze, on the other hand, is directed to something outside the frame. The lady is looking towards where democracy goes. This triggers the viewers' optimistic imagination of how the future will be especially with the smile of approval on the lady's face. Such narrative and reactional processes highlight the strong relationship and connection between Egypt and youth after the 30<sup>th</sup> of June Revolution. The third foregrounded element is the intensified and amplified arrow signifying implied conspicuous movement and mobility due to the dominant changes after the revolution. Still, the horizontal elongation of the three foregrounded elements lean to the right position and the right sided arrow, i.e. the direction of 'democracy'. Egypt is positioned on the left as given information, while youth and democracy are rightly positioned as new information eliciting the viewers' attention.

The image also displays a set of background visual and verbal participants: military man behind Egypt and Egyptian people chanting a classic patriotic song behind the young man. The cartoonist brings about intertextuality by quoting a verbal element of a classical song chanted after the liberation of Sinai

سينا رجعت كامله لينا و مصر اليوم في عيد

*'Sinai entirely returned to us and Egypt is today in triumph'*

The verbal element utilized has words replaced with other lexical items fitting the current context to be as follows:

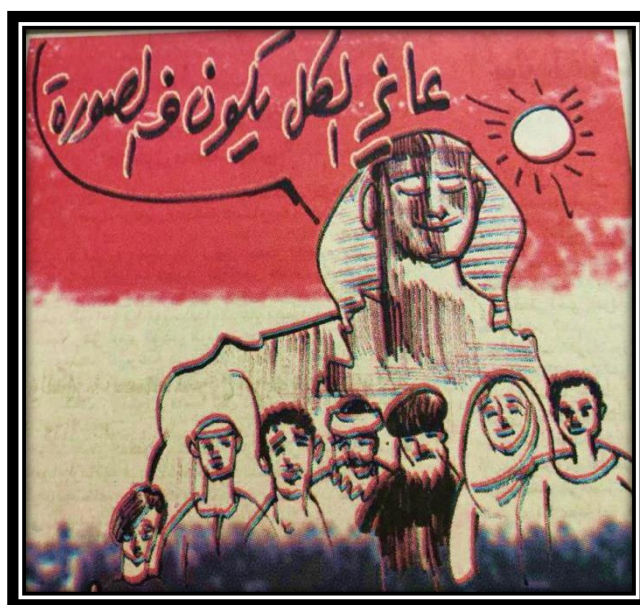
مصر رجعت تاني لينا و احنا اليوم في عيد.

*'Egypt returned to us and we are today in triumph'*

In this verbal representation *سينا* 'Sinai' is replaced with *مصر* 'Egypt' and *مصر* 'Egypt' is replaced with *احنا* 'we'. This textual utilization assimilates the two contexts of foreign colonization and the sovereignty of the MBs before the 30<sup>th</sup> of June Revolution. These heterogeneous semiotic elements are syntagmatically related to imply a strong bond between all the social members after the revolution drawing a picture about how the Egypt was before and after this revolution.

#### 4.2.3 Cartoon 7: Social Equality

The image utilizes semiotic elements chosen from signs stored in the Egyptian mental reservoir and construed within a socio-cultural context.



The 30<sup>th</sup> of June Cartoon No. 7

The image is narrative and transactional where Sphinx is the main participant (sayer) linked with the protrusion of speech balloon (vector). All the included participants are combined with their identities explicitly expressed. The arrangement of the participants in the image constructs a whole under the supremacy of over-sized Sphinx symbolizing the authoritarian voice of wisdom and unity. The hierarchy is realized by the pyramid-shape composition.

*Al-Ahram's* support to the revolution is sustained in the sun as a symbol of the revolution. *Al-Ahram* depicts the revolution in contrast to darkness during the ruling period of MBs who acted discriminatively towards the represented social members. The values attached to the social members are schematic lying in the socio-cultural construction of the closeness of the Egyptian society. Physical attachment between the 'equal sized' social members is depicted by leaving no spaces between them. These visualizations reflect a number of values; schemata about gender is realized by the man standing beside the woman; religious ideological compliance is realized by a Christian priest standing beside a Muslim Sheikh; socio-economic implications are reflected through the young modern man standing beside a peasant who is, in turn standing beside a child. All social members are sought to be presented in a subordinate position under the superordinate, The Great Sphinx.

Hierarchy is also maintained through the vertical elongation and the positioning of Sphinx, the sun and the speech balloon on the top. *Al-Ahram's* cartoon connote that these semiotic elements represent the dominant participants that control the course of events in Egypt especially after the success of the 30<sup>th</sup> of June Revolution.

According to *Al-Ahram*, this revolution is the real revolution of the Egyptian people. The truth-value and the credibility of the realized significances are maintained through modality marked in the present color modulations. Color saturation is articulated in the naturalistic Egyptian flag colors red and black which maximize the patriotic and nationalistic values of this naturalistic-coded cartoon. *Al-Ahram's* connotations are also supported by the eye gaze of the represented social members (reactors). Their gazes are intended to be directed to the viewers (phenomenon) through a frontal angle to mark involvement and attachment with the prospective viewers. The way of addressing the viewers constructs a relationship with an imaginary 'you'. It is a demand of involvement that is verbally supported by the speech balloon which makes a request to the viewers to join their company. Through the utterance 'عايز الكل يكون فالصورة' *I want all to join the picture*, interpersonal closeness to the viewers is maintained.

#### 4.2.4 Cartoon 8: Political Conflict of Interest

The naturalistic coding of the two marginal participants is interacting by both the whole angle of their bodies and the eye line (vector) and the reciprocal bidirectional teasing act (reactional process).



The 30<sup>th</sup> of June Cartoon No. 8



The visual composition of this image is based on a centered lady that symbolizes Egypt. On both the left and the right margins, there are two men with two different ideological stances. Displayed in equal sizes and performing the same teasing action, the portrayal of the two men reflects detachment from the central participant, i.e. Egypt. This detachment is visually explicated through spacing and verbally expounded through the 'ideal' speech balloon place on the top right corner of the image. The textual element uttered by Egypt (sayer) 'لو فضلتموا كدة أنا اللي خسرانة' 'If you kept on doing this, it is I that will lose' directly enunciate the intention of the cartoonist.

Though visualization of central composition in western images "is relatively uncommon" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.194), the analysis of *Al-Ahram* cartoon shows that central structuring is common and is frequently produced to display superiority and supremacy as in cartoon (8). The horizontal triptychs display the informative value according to the give (left-sided) and new (right-sided). The MB citizen is portrayed as the new information and its value lies in the conceptual newness of the implied fanatic attitudes. The two are equally salient and their threat to the Egyptian stability is equally portrayed.

The visual elements are extricable especially with the frontal angle of the lady representing Egypt and her eye looking to the viewers. Such eye-contact represents an explicit demand to stop doing similar actions in a direct interaction with the viewers. This directness is met with another technique to reveal social distance. The image producer chose a long shot to display the whole body posture to socially distance the represented participants from the viewers. Egypt's naturalistic flag-colored dress bears a foregrounded message with high modality reflected through the red, white and black color saturation, in contrast with the black and white background. Cartoon (8) is an instance of how *Al-Ahram* inscribes its ideological stance to its audience.

## 5 FINDINGS

Political cartoons have a critical value in disseminating ideologies, attitudes and point of views. The analysis of *Al-Ahram*'s cartoons reflects how print media perceives the incidents during the two revolutions.

The deduced layout of the Egyptian cartoons is represented in Figure (2). The Egyptian cartoons in *Al-Ahram* are found to follow the same syntagmatic and paradigmatic patterns as western image compositional patterns without considering the right-to-left alignment of the Arabic writing system. Figure (2) illustrates the compositional pattern of the semiotic elements in the political cartoon even with the organization of the **givenness** and the **newness**.

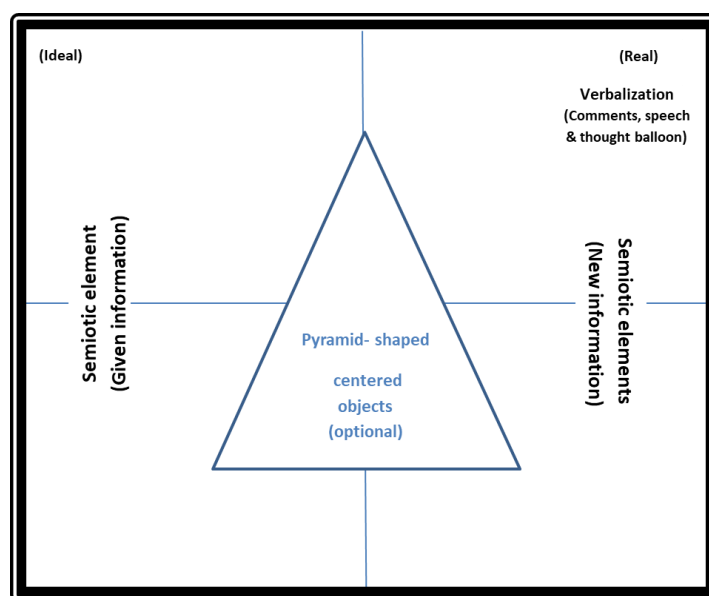


Figure 2 Compositional Layout of Political cartoon in *Al-Ahram*

As seen in the above figure, the Arabic representation of the semiotic elements relies much on **hierarchal pyramid-shaped centered** objects and not much on the marginal organizations.

The manifestation of ideologically loaded Egyptian cartoons depends mainly on the employed semiotic features recognizable through the understanding of the cultural contexts of verbal **intertextuality** (cartoon No. 6), **color modulations** (cartoon No. 7 & 8), **symbol-associated meanings** (cartoon No. 3), **gender roles** (cartoon No. 2) and **stereotyping** (cartoon No.6). Nevertheless, the Egyptian cartoons tend to guide

the reader to the intended interpretation by guiding them through the verbal accentuation of symbolized elements such as مصر (cartoon No. 4 & 6) انتفاضة شباب يناير (cartoon No.3), etc. Political cartoons portraying the two revolutions seek to stress the ideology of nationalism, to highlight their success and to identify their positive and idealized motives.

The basic repertoire of *Al-Ahram* political cartoon is expounded by drawing a comparison between the Egyptian images and western-like images as suggested in Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). First and foremost, *Al-Ahram* repertoire of basic forms is not fixed. **Circular** and **curved** shapes are rather context-based. This can be proved in Cartoon (3) by the circle framing of the verbal description of martyrs شهداء لفرح 'martyrs of happiness'. The object reflects positive organic nature which opposes the circular curvedness of the snake.

Egyptian cartoons are also characterized by using symbolic figures and visual metaphors. For instance, the producers use **personification** of Egypt as a young lady, **metonymy** of the revolutionist in a form of a hand and **symbolization** of the snake, sword, and Sphinx to imply corruption, power and supremacy, respectively. In addition, black and white is the normal **color modulation**. However, some colorful objects such as the colored flag are still symbolic and foregrounded in some images. Despite the disjunction between the context of production and the context of reception and the various aspects of representations, the images are successfully construed by the target audience.

In accordance with the above observations, **legitimization** of the '**SELF**' is obviously adopted by *Al-Ahram*. This claim is attained by the enunciation of the voice of the state mirroring its values and attitudes. The semiotic analysis of the eight analyzed cartoons reflects how the two revolutions are likely perceived as if it is part of the Egyptian public opinion. The cartoons share the same perspective of representations showing social attachment with the viewers and making generalizations about the practices involved in them. Standing for its ideological stance, *Al-Ahram's* editorial policy seeks to involve the newspaper as a member of the **in-group** who support the two revolutions. Interestingly, the cartoon succeeded in achieving its purpose at that time. They have sought to debunk persons positively (e.g. protesters in Cartoon No. 6) or negatively (e.g. corrupts in Cartoon No. 3), or to glorify incidences (e.g. both revolutions in Cartoon No. 7), portray psyche beliefs (e.g. military support in Cartoon No. 6) reflecting opinion rather than joking (e.g. cooperation between people and officials in Cartoon No. 1).

## 6 CONCLUSION

Political cartoons in *Al-Ahram* do not only reflect socio-culture meanings, but also seek to positively portray the two revolutions and the revolutionists. The two revolutions are, thus, embodied as legitimate practices and all the embedded objects depicted are reflections of such attitudes and values. *Al-Ahram* intends to publish serious political cartoons about the two revolutions not targeting the amusement of the viewers, but, rather, constructing a social reality about the status of Egypt amidst the two history-changing revolutions. In fact, *Al-Ahram's* policy is successfully maintained through its political editorial cartoons which stress socio-cultural meanings targeted to and construed by the Egyptian audience.

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