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## A Pragmatic Study of Speech Acts in Iraqi and American Parliamentary Electioneering Campaign Posters

### A B S T R A C T

Posters are one of the most effective tools for communicating ideas, thoughts, and plans. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes, with various goals and objectives. One example is the political posters, which are concerned with elections and seek to familiarize voters with candidates and their ideologies. Posters are designed to enhance the impact of candidates' election programs (platforms, manifestos) in order to achieve their political aims. Politicians purposefully use various types of pragmatic elements in their election campaign posters in order to gain more votes by influencing voters. Furthermore, they rely on a variety of pragmatic means to express a wide range of speech acts. This study is concerned with investigating the Iraqi and American parliamentary election campaign posters pragmatically. The data is analyzed from pragmatic perspective. The data is taken from Iraqi parliamentary elections that are held in 2021, and American senate elections that are held in 2020. It applies Searle's theory of speech acts (1979).

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## دراسة تداولية لأفعال الكلام في الملصقات الانتخابية البرلمانية العراقية والأمريكية

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### الخلاصة:

تعتبر الملصقات من أكثر الأدوات فعالية في توصيل الأفكار والخطط، تأتي في مجموعة متنوعة من

الأشكال والأحجام ، ولها أهداف وغايات مختلفة. ومن الأمثلة على ذلك الملصقات السياسية ، التي تتعلق بالانتخابات وتسعى إلى تعريف الناخبين بالمرشحين وأيديولوجياتهم. تم تصميم الملصقات لتعزيز تأثير البرامج الانتخابية للمرشحين (البرامج ، البيانات) من أجل تحقيق مكاسبهم السياسية. تختص هذه الدراسة بالتقصي البراغماتي في ملصقات الحملة الانتخابية البرلمانية العراقية والأمريكية. يستخدم السياسيون بشكل مقصود أنواعًا مختلفة من العناصر البراغماتية في ملصقات حملاتهم الانتخابية من أجل كسب المزيد من الأصوات من خلال التأثير على الناخبين. كذلك فهُم يعتمدون على مجموعة متنوعة من الوسائل البراغماتية للتعبير عن مجموعة واسعة من أفعال الكلام. تم تحليل البيانات من مفهوم تداولي ، وهي مأخوذة من الانتخابات البرلمانية العراقية التي أجريت في عام (٢٠٢١) وانتخابات مجلس الشيوخ الأمريكي التي أجريت في عام (٢٠٢٠). تطبق الدراسة نظرية سيرل (1979) في أفعال الكلام .

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الملصقات، المرشحين ،الشعارات، الانتخابات البرلمانية، أفعال الكلام ،الوعد

## 1. Introduction

Posters have become a significant aspect of public life, and their origins may be traced back to ancient times when people attempted to influence one another through language. They are, in fact, utilized as linguistic devices to capture attention and influence views. This study is concerned with political posters that are designed to enhance the impact of candidates' election programs (platforms, manifestos) in order to achieve their political objectives. Posters are typically handwritten or printed notices, announcements, and advertisements that are displayed in a public place.

The primary goal of politicians' use of posters is to persuade voters to adopt and accept their ideologies. As a result, they should understand how to choose slogans, which are one of the primary components of posters. Slogans are typically a word, phrase, or sentence that politicians repeat while presenting election campaigns. Slogans can be thought of as persuasive interactions that must be understood and effective for the audience. Politicians purposefully use various types of linguistic elements in their election campaign posters in order to gain more votes by influencing voters. To do so, they may rely on a variety of syntactic and pragmatic means to express a wide range of speech acts.

The current study tries to answer the following questions:

- 1.What are the types of speech acts used in Iraqi and American parliamentary election campaign posters ?
2. What are the most commonly used types of speech acts utilized in Iraqi and American parliamentary election campaign posters ?
3. What are the similarities and differences between Iraqi and American parliamentary election campaign posters ?

In order to find answers to the study research questions , the study aims at :

1. Showing the types of speech acts used in Iraqi and American parliamentary election campaign posters .
2. Pinpointing the most commonly speech acts employed in Iraqi and American parliamentary electioneering campaign posters .
- 3.Detecting the similarities and differences between Iraqi and American electioneering campaign posters .

## **2. Definition of Posters**

Hutchinson ( cited in Sharndama and Mohammad ,2013:65) define poster as a large announcement , usually printed on paper and usually displayed on wall or billboard to the general public . Laserow and Delgado (2020:13) define a poster or bill as a graphic method of communication that is frequently seen in public places. They are usually seen on vertical surfaces and can include both graphic and typographic components, or just graphic or typographic elements.

According to Cull et al (2003:313), posters are notices, announcements, and advertisements that are handwritten or printed and displayed in a public place. Posters have existed since people began to write announcements on parchment or paper and mount them on buildings, particularly in prominent locations such as street corners.

Kaid and Holtz-Bacha (2008:626) define a poster as a type of printed mass media product. Graffiti and murals do not qualify as posters because reproducibility is one of the defining characteristics of a poster. While graffiti and murals exist only as single objects attached to a specific location, posters are

movable objects manufactured in large quantities to cover a large geographical area (ibid).

### 3. Functions of Posters

According to Mabur(2018:2), posters are still one of the most widely used techniques for advertising and informing the public about products, activities, services, and a variety of other events . Messages and information sent by posters are usually delivered to the reader in the form of photographs, pictures, or texts.

Seidman (2008:2) points out that posters can be used to draw attention to a party or candidate during election campaigns. This is true not only for the voters who pass them by, but also for the public who see them in newspapers and on television news shows. This is especially true for election posters that are aesthetically distinctive and/or outlandish in design.

Furthermore, posters play an important function during times of war. Propaganda posters are the name for these types of posters. Chambers (cited in Kaminski ,2014:64) states that the purpose of these posters was to inform, instruct, or give new perspectives on the war. Their core ideas are to either correlate to the viewer's mentality and ideals, or manipulate them in a favorable or bad way. The target audience ought to be able to understand the idea or message. It is more emotional than rational in its appeal.

Posters remain a crucial medium of communication in nations where illiteracy is rampant, because a large portion of the population is unable to read. Broadsides put in public areas could be a good method to reach out to illiterate people before universal education becomes a reality. This was due to the fact that they could be read aloud by literate people ( Seidman , 2008:13).

Posters are still used by many governments and interest organizations to inform citizens about occupational, safety, and health hazards. Workplace harassment and discrimination, disease immunization, and the dangers of smoking, drugs, alcohol, and unprotected sexual behavior are all topics that can be included on these posters. Posters, as David Crowley pointed out, can utilize more direct language and imagery than broadcast media, and they can be used in places where target people congregate ( ibid: 13-14).

Laserow and Delgado(2020:6) state that “ From the confrontational and political , to the promotional , persuasive and educational , the poster in all its forms has persisted as a vehicle for the public dissemination of ideas , information and opinion”. They are portals into our reality, serving as a collective community conscience.

#### **4. Speech Acts**

Atolagbe (cited in Alkumet,2021:30) states that pragmatics in linguistic is hinged on the premise of Speech Act Theory and is concerned with the ways utterances can be used to present information and carry out actions .More accurately ,it is the performance of individual actions such as asking questions , giving orders , and making statements .

##### **4.1 Types of Speech Acts**

According to Austin (cited in Simamora,2020:11), the actions taken when an utterance is created can be classified into three categories: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. A locutionary act is basically comparable to saying a specific sentence with a specific sense and reference, which is roughly equivalent to the traditional understanding of "meaning." Illocutionary acts are words or phrases that have a certain (conventional) meaning, such as informing, commanding, warning, or undertaking. A perlocutionary act is a speech made with the purpose of achieving a goal by stating something, such as persuading, discouraging, or even startling or misleading. The three types of speech acts listed above can be utilized to study human communicated utterances. Illocutionary act is the one that has the most implicit and intended meaning of the utterance.

According to Yule (1996:54),the distinction between the types of speech acts can be formed on the basis of structure . The three fundamental sentence forms in English give a very easy structural distinction between the three general categories of speech acts. The three structural forms (declarative, interrogative, imperative) and the three general communicative functions (statement, question, command/request) have a clear link.

Furthermore, we have a direct speech act whenever there is a direct relationship between a structure and a function. We have an indirect speech act if there is an

indirect relationship between a structure and a function. A declarative used to make a statement is a direct speech act, but one used to make a request is an indirect speech act. One of the most common indirect speech acts in English is that of an interrogative, however it is rarely employed to ask a question. In English, indirect speech acts are usually associated with more politeness than direct speech acts. We need to look at a wider picture than simply a single phrase performing a single speech act to understand why (ibid : 55-56).

## **4.2 Searle's Classification of Speech Acts**

According to Searle (1979:12-17) ,there are five types of speech acts that he identifies. The following are the classes:

### **a. Assertives**

This category includes verbs like "state," "assert," "complain," "affirm," "report," "conclude," "describe," and so on (ibid:12).

Mey(cited in Ahmed and Gaffori ,2021:3) states that assertive are speech acts which carry the values 'true' or 'false' . Assertion often embodies a subjective state of mind of the speaker who asserts a proposition like true does so as he/she persuades by his or her confidence .

### **b. Directives**

The illocutionary point of this category is to persuade the addressee to do (or not do) something. 'ask', 'order ', 'request', 'demand', 'advise', 'warn', 'insist', 'instruct', 'forbid' , 'require', 'beg', and similar verbs are used in directives, like in the following examples: 'open the door' (order), 'could you lend me some money' (request). It is impossible to know whether such acts are true or false, yet they can be obeyed or disobeyed (Searle,1979:13).

### **c. Commissives**

Commissives are speech acts in which the addresser is committed to take a specific action in the future. They cannot be true or false, but they can be followed, maintained, or broken. Commissives contain verbs such as 'promise', 'vow', 'commit', 'threaten' , 'swearing', 'pledge', 'offering', 'agreeing', 'undertaking', and many others. For example, ' I'll be there tonight' .(ibid:14)

#### **d. Expressives**

In turn, Mey (1993:121) claims that expressives allows the speaker to communicate his inner condition, as the term implies. This is a subjective expression that informs us nothing about the world.

#### **e. Declarations**

This category of illocutions has both a word-to-world and a world-to-word direction of fit, so their utterances can change the world. Declaratives do not express any psychological condition. 'Declare', 'name', 'appoint', 'nominate', 'quit', and other verbs denote declarations (Searle, 1979:16).

### **5. Methodology**

#### **5.1 Research Design**

This study employs a mixed method i.e., a qualitative and quantitative analysis . The qualitative method is used to determine the pragmatic characteristics of each poster using model developed for this study and then presenting a better understanding of the language used. Whereas the quantitative method is used to demonstrate that some techniques are used to numerically explain the data and to illustrate the measurable features of each poster. This method employs a range of degrees to demonstrate the similarities and differences between Iraqi and American election posters.

#### **5.2 Data Description**

The current study is concerned with the pragmatic analysis of election campaign posters . Some pragmatic features are easy to spot in some posters , but others are more difficult to spot because they are hidden . The Iraqi posters are from the Iraqi parliamentary elections in (2021), while the American ones are from the American parliamentary elections in (2020).

#### **5.3 The Model Adopted**

The current study will depend on Searle's (1979) model .The choice of this model is dictated by the aims of the analysis and the nature of the selected data. This will ensure identifying the pragmatic features of Iraqi and American parliamentary



election campaign posters . Searle's (1979) classification of speech acts is adopted to explain the pragmatic features of election posters and to identify the purpose that is conveyed through using election posters

## 6. Data Analysis and Discussion

### 6.1 Pragmatic Analysis of Iraqi Parliamentary Election Campaign Posters

The current section presents the analysis of Iraqi parliamentary election campaign posters.

**Text 1: قادة جدد لعراق جديد**

**(New leaders for new Iraq)**



The slogan here is introduced in a simple yet meaningful image. In this poster , the candidate tries to emphasize the importance of electing new leaders for the country. The content of the slogan has two expressions by which people may evoked and influenced , قادة جدد (*new leaders*) and عراق جديد (*new Iraq*).These two expressions have the vision of a new future and a new way of thinking and this depends on the electorates' active participation .

Pragmatically speaking , the slogan here represents an implicit commissive speech act since the speaker promises the public that she and her party will become new leaders to form a new country .

**Text 2: ثقة الزعيم**

**(The trust of the leader)**





The candidate here tries to highlights his slogan to attract the attention of the voters by using influential expression (ثقة الزعيم) , *the trust of the leader* ,a matter that may affect people about the characteristics of their representative. In this sense, the nominee employs such words to empower his slogan and influence the electorates . Furthermore, such expressions encourage them to consider this candidate as the best one for improving Iraqis' social, economic, and educational sectors.

In the pragmatic level , an implicit assertive speech act is found in this slogan since the nominee tries to assert his viewpoint that he has the trust of the leader . He also attempts to convince the electorates in order to win their trust . This matter makes him more close to them and more effective in their eyes .

### Text 3: نريد دولة

(We want a state)



Here, the candidate focuses on the idea of participation of ordinary people in forming a government. In this poster, the slogan captures the attention of the electorates by using influential words such as *نريد دولة* ( *we want a state*). Here, the candidate states that both he and the electorate desire a state, hence building a state is the responsibility of all Iraqis. Furthermore, the candidate strives to capture the attention of the audience by employing words like *we*, which conveys a sense of unity and cooperation. He intends to sway voters in order to get their support.

Pragmatically speaking , the slogan represents an implicit directive speech act since the candidate asks the electorates to do what he wants or desires . *We* here simplify the interaction between the party and his supporters , so this matter creates a sense of intimacy among them . Thus , this feeling of solidarity with the public gives a great amount of hope to the candidate that the people would positively react to this information that delivered in this poster . So the candidate tries to persuade the voters to elect him in order to accomplish his plans for their interest.

### Text 4: معكم بدأنا ولإجلكم نستمر:

( With you we started , for your sake we continue )



In the hope of achieving great goals for the sake of the people , this slogan is introduced . The attractive words captures the attention of the voters , i.e., معكم بدأنا (with you we started )this phrase indicates the sense of unity and cooperation , and لأجلكم نستمر (for your sake we continue) indicates that the candidate (through her party) dedicates all her efforts to the people and for their sake she would continue to work for their benefit .

Pragmatically speaking, two speech acts are used in this slogan . The speech act in معكم بدأنا (with you we started) is an explicit assertive speech act whereas an implicit commissive speech act is used in لأجلكم نستمر (for your sake we continue ). The candidate here promises the voters that she will work for their interest . She tries to persuade them to unify efforts under the umbrella of their country .

**Text ٥ : نعمل معاً من أجل رفاهية شعبنا**

**(We work together for the welfare of our people)**



The candidate, in this poster, emphasizes her desire to improve the lives of Iraqi people by strengthening the country's social, economic, and educational sectors.

Because of their needs and suffering, the slogan's entire content has an impact on the minds of the electorates.

Pragmatically speaking , the slogan here represents an explicit commissive speech act since the speaker promises the public that she ‘through her party’ will work for the benefit of Iraqi people . In this way , the candidate tries to convince them to adopt his view in order to accomplish what she has already planned to do for them.

#### Text 6: قادمون للتغيير

( Coming for change )



Since the Iraqi people are eager to change, the candidate focuses on the concept of change. The erroneous policies of previous governments have had a negative impact on several elements of life, which is why the problem of change is addressed in this slogan. The content of the slogan قادمون للتغيير ( *coming for change*), carry what evokes people’s thinking about their current situation and the one who will change it to make it better .

In the pragmatic level, the slogan represents an implicit commissive speech act since the candidate promises the electorates that he would convert the bad situation to a better one . Since this change represents the hope for the electorates and this asserted information would be the motive to persuade them to elect this party’s candidate because he has the ability to accomplish the desired change .

#### Text 7: إرادة حرة .. قرار مستقل

(Free will .. independent decision )



Here the whole content of the slogan attracts the electorates' attention by using influential words to motivate them and arouse their feelings ; *إرادة حرة ( free will)* have an impact on the voters' minds due to the importance of making the will of the people free, and *قرار مستقل (independent decision)* indicates that the independence of decision is one of the rights that people should have .

Pragmatically speaking , the slogan here presents two implicit commissive speech acts . First , the speaker commits himself to a future action that they have free will and independent decision as citizens in [we will have] free will . Secondly , it also presents an implicit commissive speech act since the speaker mentions that [we will have] independent decision and promises the voters that he will work for achieving his plan by giving them the hope which they dream to make it true . The candidate here attempts to persuade the voters and win their support to accomplish the intended aims .

## 6.2 Analysis of American Parliamentary Election Posters

The current section presents the analysis of American parliamentary election campaign posters .

### Text 1: The choice for the better change .Your vote can make the difference

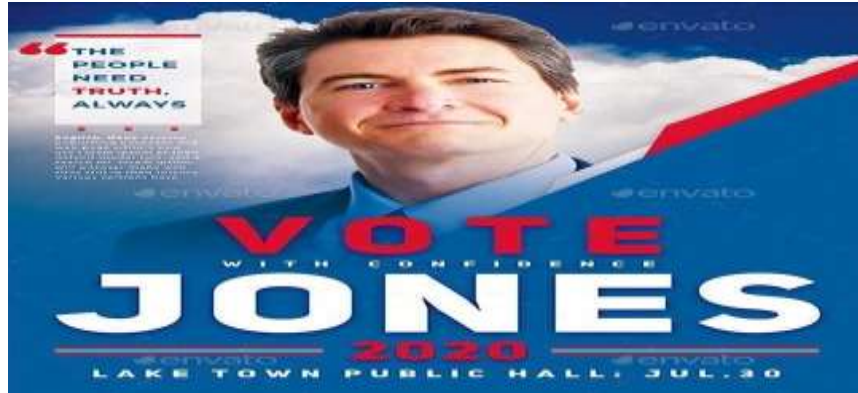




Begin with the content that evokes the public's emotions, *the choice for a better change*, such words represent hope and private benefits for the people. Thus, the word *change* is actually oriented toward the electorates themselves, and it represents the candidate's primary interest in influencing voters who are eager for such a change.

Pragmatically speaking, the first part of the slogan presents an implicit commissive speech act since the speaker promises the public that he will be the choice for the better change . Such a matter evokes people's thinking , the matter of changing bad situations to better ones . The second part of the slogan , *your voice can make a difference* involves an implicit assertive speech act .Here, the candidate tries to persuade the voters to participate in the elections since this participation can make a change that will be made for their benefits.

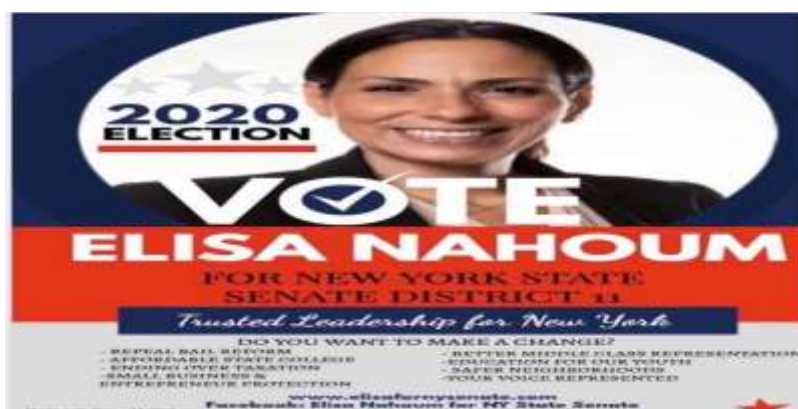
## Text 2: Vote with confidence



The content of the slogan in this poster indicates a casual invitation and gives the impression of an intimate relationship between the candidate and the electorates. To put it another way, *vote with confidence*, there is two words that are the most appealing components of the slogan that captures the attention of the voters.

Pragmatically speaking, an explicit directive speech act is presented in this slogan since the speaker asks the voters to vote for him with confidence . Thus, he tries to persuade them to vote for him in order to achieve his goals for their interest .

### Text 3: Trusted leadership for New York



Another candidate introduces his slogan with a great emphasis on the trust issue . The content of the slogan has influential words that evoke the electorates to support the slogan's producer . Furthermore, the candidate represents herself as a trusted leader for her city California .

Pragmatically speaking , the slogan represents an explicit assertive speech act since the speaker states her point of view that she will a confident leader for the people . Thus, the candidate tries to convince the audience to gain their trust to accomplish her commitment .

### Text 4: True service for the people



In this poster, the candidate demonstrates his commitment to serve the public and work for their benefit. The entire content of the slogan captures the attention of the electorate and evokes their feelings to vote for the candidate as their representative.



Pragmatically speaking , the slogan presents an implicit commissive speech act since the speaker indirectly suggests that he will work to serve the people .Regarding presupposition , this slogan here is categorized as an existential presupposition , it is triggered by the use of the definite noun phrase *the people* .

#### Text 5: Share your voice, make a difference



In this poster, the candidate motivates the public to share their voices in the elections . Thus, the candidate reassures that the difference i.e. change is to be done through their active participation .

Pragmatically speaking , two implicit directive speech acts are presented in the slogan represented in *share your voice* and *make a difference* . Here ,the speaker asks the electorates to participate in the elections and also make a change through this participation . Furthermore, the candidate attempts to convince the voters in order to elect him as a means of building their future .

#### Text 6: Leading the future



The candidate in this poster introduces his slogan by focusing on the future issue . Here, he represents himself as a leader for the people who strives to improve their life in the future . This matter emphasizes the confidence between the candidate and his voters .The whole content of the slogan has attractive vocabulary that catch the people's attention .

Pragmatically speaking , the slogan here presents an implicit commissive speech act since the speaker indirectly promises the public that he will become the leader who can work for their benefits.

### Text 7: Protecting our vote



In this poster , the candidate tries to prove his determination to be the one who will protect the votes of people . The content of the slogan captures the electorates' attention , starting with *protecting* is a word that catches the voters' eyes since they are in need to have a strong leader to strive for protecting their votes as one of their rights .

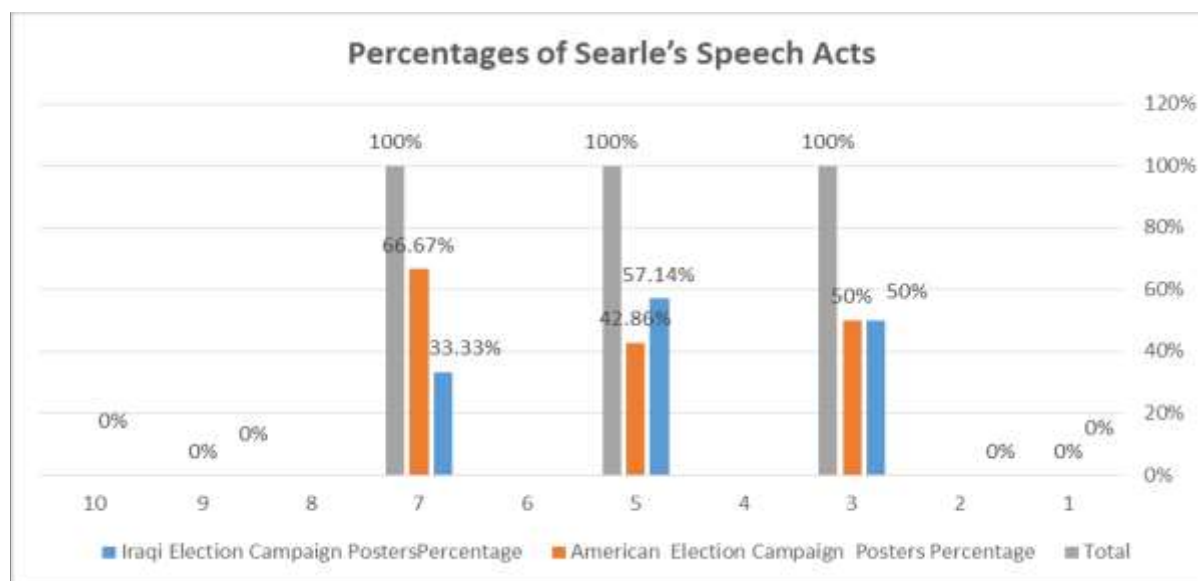
Pragmatically speaking , the slogan presents an implicit assertive speech act since the speaker asserts that he will protect the votes of his electorates. Thus , the candidate tries to convince the public to adopt his view in order to accomplish what he has already planned to do for them .

## 7. Findings

**Table (1) Frequencies of Searle's speech acts in both Iraqi and American parliamentary election campaign posters**

Searle's Speech Acts		Iraqi Election Campaign Posters			American Election Campaign Posters			Total	
		Frequency		Percentage	Frequency		Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Expressives	Explicit	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0%
	Implicit	0			0				
Assertives	Explicit	1	2	50%	1	2	50%	4	100%
	Implicit	1			1				
Commissives	Explicit	1	4	57.142%	0	3	42.858%	7	100%
	Implicit	3			3				
Directives	Explicit	0	1	33.333%	1	2	66.667%	3	100%
	Implicit	1			1				
Declaratives	Explicit	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0%
	Implicit	0			0				

Table (1) below shows how the five speech acts according to Searle , are used in both Iraqi and American parliamentary election posters to specify the total number of the frequency and percentage of each act in both data .



**Figure(1) Percentages of Searle's Speech Acts in both Iraqi and American Parliamentary Election Campaign Posters**

Figure(1) above states that the most commonly speech act used in Iraqi data is the commissive act which is realized implicitly, it records (57.142%) , the remaining acts record (50%, 33.333%). In American election campaign posters , the commissive act is also used and realized implicitly and constitute (42.858%) from the total data of this study since most political candidates use promises to attract the voters' attention and achieve their goals .While the assertive is (50%) , and the directive is (66.667%) . The expressive and declarative acts are not used in both Iraqi and American election posters, and they do not have percentages.

## 8.Conclusions

The study has come up with the following:

1. It is found that only commissive , assertive and directive speech acts are employed by candidates in Iraqi and American parliamentary election campaign posters.

2. The assertive and commissive acts are commonly used more than the others since political candidates in both data use promises to convince the voters and to change their minds .

3. There are some similarities and differences between Iraqi and American election posters since this study aims at identifying the linguistic features in both Iraqi and American election campaign posters . One of the similarities is that the assertive, commissive and directive speech acts are the most commonly used in both data .

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