

Brand Communication in the Visual Discourse of the Educational Theatrical Performance

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Abstract

Educational theater is considered a significant behavioral mechanism within the educational system, as it plays a crucial role in the teaching and learning process, shaping ideas through visual discourse and the ability to create symbolic meanings and impactful interpretations for the learner within the space of the educational theatrical performance. The research problem revolves around the following question: (What is the role of brand communication in the visual discourse of educational theatrical presentations?), As for the theoretical framework, it includes two chapters: the first discusses brand communication between the concept and application, while the second addresses the concept of educational theater. The third chapter reviews the research methodology, and the fourth chapter presents the research results and draws several conclusions. The study concludes with the list of references.

Keywords: Communication, Brand, Visual Discourse, Theater, Educational Theater.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE - THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Firstly: The Research Problem

Since the beginning of human existence, humans have been a central focus in the process of communication, being dynamic and interactive individuals who express their needs, emotions, and motivations. Their continuous efforts to find a communicative language with those around them have led to an ongoing search for new methods in the process of communication and interaction with their environment. Communication within the theatrical system has been a crucial component in conveying its relational semantic meaning through various kinetic and auditory activities within society. Humans, being social and communicative beings, exchange experiences, behaviors, knowledge, and information. Human beings are distinguished by their communicative capacity, serving as carriers of symbolic meanings within the theatrical space, which have taken on human and ethical dimensions within the educational institution through various expressions. These expressions include body language, verbal language, and the scenography of the performance, which constitute the language of visual discourse. Moreover, educational theater relies on the learner's sensory perceptions, as it combines communication, education, and entertainment, influencing and interacting with the visual image through various communication channels. These channels use symbolic signs that leave a behavioral and psychological impact on the learner's self through a conscious aesthetic and meaningful formulation. This formulation carries educational, social, and psychological dimensions. Based on the above, the researcher finds that the research problem revolves around answering the following question: **What is Brand Communication in the Visual Discourse of Educational Theatrical Presentations?**

Secondly: The Significance of the Research

And we can summarize its significance as follows:

It contributes to stimulating scientific criticism of educational theatrical performances and indicating the scientific bases upon which critics rely in their assessments of theatrical performances within educational institutions.

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It may benefit academic students of postgraduate studies and specialists in the field of theatrical art and art education in colleges and institutes of fine arts.

It enriches the artistic library in the fields of art education and theater with a systematic analytical study of communication and signs within the system of educational theater and its educational, cultural, and social dimensions.

Thirdly: The Research Objective

The current research aims to explore **brand communication in the visual discourse of educational theatrical presentations.**

Fourthly: The Scope of the Research

Spatial Boundaries: Institute of Fine Arts / Al-Karkh First / The Round Theater

Temporal Boundaries: (2017-2019)

Subject Boundaries: Study of brand communication, visual discourse, educational theater.

Fifthly: Research Terminology

Communication: Terminologically

Yassin Amer defines it as "a dynamic social phenomenon that affects and is affected by the components of individual behavior and the factors influencing the two sides of the communication process, which involve the transfer and exchange of information, ideas, and various meanings, understood using a comprehensible language for both parties through specific channels" (Mustafa Youssef Kafi, 2015, p. 132).

Khudra also defines it as "the transmission of information, ideas, attitudes, and emotions from one person to another" (Khudra Omar Al-Muflah, 2015, p. 15).

He also defines it as "the process of interaction between two parties during a message, idea, or experience through communication channels that correspond to the content of the message" (Khudra Omar Al-Muflah, 2015, p. 15).

The researcher defines **communication procedurally** as

A reciprocal process of behaviors resulting from the sender and receiver, which form methods, ideas, and experiences through communication channels that correspond to the content of the directed message, influencing the learner's behaviors within the educational theatrical presentation.

The Sign: Terminologically

Defined by Robert Schultz as: "the study of codes and systems that enable human beings to understand events as signs carrying meaning, and these systems are themselves parts or aspects of human culture" (Schultz, Robert, 1994, pp. 13-14).

Defined by Ahmed Sharji as: "the product of a functional partnership between the signifier and the signified, representing itself and standing for something else other than itself" (Ahmed Sharji, 2013, p. 15).

Also defined by Abdul Karim as: "the science that studies meaning" (Abdul Karim Mohammed, 1990, p. 20).

The researcher defines the **sign procedurally** as:

An interactive associative process between the thing sensed by our sensory perceptions of visual images and auditory perceptions, and the mental image realized from them within the mental system to reach visual forms and meanings that are linked to the mind of the receiver, achieving a response.

Educational Theater: Terminologically

Kamal Al-Din defines it as: "The use of theater techniques and elements to present a number of situations, life experiences, and human models from which students learn many educational, ethical, social, and educational issues" (Kamal Al-Din Hussein, 2004, p. 31).

He also defines it as: "The use of theatrical activity within educational institutions for the purpose of theatrical education, which aims to educate and train learners on various techniques of theater art, discover and develop artistic talents among them in this field, or to assist in the educational process, through what is known as presenting part of a course" (Kamal Al-Din Hussein, 2004, p. 33).

Hassan Mar'i defines it as: "One of the important means that can be used in developing and activating scientific and educational capabilities in educational stages, through which knowledge is presented in an artistic format" (Hassan Mar'i, 2000, p. 5).

The researcher defines **educational theater** as:

A process of employing a set of events and activities within the educational system that, through theater, aim to change the behavior of the learner and achieve educational, aesthetic goals, presenting knowledge in an artistic format according to the mechanism of the educational institution.

CHAPTER TWO - THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The First Section

Brand Communication: Bridging Concept and Application

Communication has been a central axis in the production of meanings, as it is one of the most important channels for conveying signs within the theatrical space. Communication in the theatrical system is divided into two types: verbal communication and non-verbal communication. These two systems achieve the product of a functional partnership that harmonizes to achieve the signified meaning. "Human communication does not arise and exist within a group solely through verbal language, but through all social practices performed by groups, including tangible matters, relationships, human communication involves faces, clothing, furniture, celebratory and spontaneous gestures, music, etc., all of which play a role equivalent to verbal language" (Fawzi Fahmi Ahmed, 1995, p. 12). They are an important support for the visual image, both aesthetically and semantically. Speech "is always connected to the speaker and the listener and their direct links in time and place, and at the same time, it is dynamic to the extent that the participants are subjected to it, and the time and place of the specific speech are a continuous exchange and formation of the link in reality" (Eilam, Kyr, 1992, pp. 212-213). Additionally, the actor's vocal performance does not rely solely on the text or the narration of events; rather, it must have an impact on the recipient's self. This impact is formed through verbal language and the harmony of the voice's tone and layers with the actor's body, forming a communication tool between the actor's performance and the recipient. The actor's voice is one of the necessary tasks that the actor must emphasize through vocal layers and delivery in order to achieve symbolic meanings that work to impart the character of meaning by involving all the auditory and visual components of the educational theatrical presentation. The concept of the sign has been shaped by ideologies that have varied in terms of clarifying meaning, as it is related to human communication. The characteristics of the term became apparent in the twentieth century, as it is considered a science concerned with the semantic, indicative, and symbolic coordination that defines the underlying and manifest structures in the semantic relationships that complete the communication process. "The sign enters into a combinatory relationship with other signs, and is subject to rules specific to the theater, through its function in the theatrical presentation temporally and spatially, and the result of this interaction generates meaning or impression on the viewer, corresponding to it, such as the verbal sentence, other theatrical elements, and in order to acquire a specific meaning, it must be within a contradictory relationship with what precedes and follows it of signs" (Ahmed Sharji, 2013, p. 50). "(Peirce and Saussure) are the founders of what is called semiotics and use the term semiology to refer to the Saussurean tradition, while semiotics refers to the Peircean tradition" (Chandler, Daniel, 2008, p. 30). Peirce also sees that "his classification of the functions of

the sign is the most important and common legacy in the field of semiotics of the theater. His trichotomy for signs consists of (A) Icon: a sign that is related to its subject through similarity, such as a photographic image, (B) Index: a sign that points to its subject or is related to it, such as smoke as an index of fire, (C) Symbol: a sign that has an agreed-upon relationship with its subject and there is no similarity relationship between the sign and the subject, for example, the dove as a symbol of peace" (Stone, Ellen and George Safford, 1996, p. 17). Additionally, in Saussure's theory, the signifier "represents the material, perceptible side, something that can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and the arbitrariness of the relationship between the signifier and the signified is what generates the plurality of receptions. This relationship between the signifier and the signified is called the sign, as it works to present the signified on the sign due to its generative multiplicity in meaning" (Ahmed Sharji, 2013, p. 29).

The Second Section

The Concept of Educational Theater

Educational theater is one of the most impactful means of communication on the learner's psyche. It is not merely a communication tool between the sender and the receiver; it is a channel that conveys social and educational meanings, confirming in the learning processes its development of sensory perceptions, both auditory and visual, and its effects on behavioral and emotional levels. Moreover, it adds an entertaining and playful character, breaking the educational routine and bringing joy to the learner. Studies indicate that 98% of our knowledge is acquired through our auditory and visual senses. The comprehension of information increases by 35% when using images and sound, and the retention of this information increases by 55% in such cases. Moreover, theater used in educational institutions (primary, middle, and high schools) employs a pedagogical technique to achieve set objectives, whether general or specific, targeting intellectual, emotional, and sensory-motor aspects. It transforms educational material into a dialogic text performed before an audience by students, following general rules of playwriting, presentation, and direction, thereby achieving the educational goals of the process. (Hiba Khalid Selim 2019 P47)

Theater in education has played a significant role in establishing visual discourse and influencing the behavior of learners, achieving educational goals by developing motor, gestural, and vocal artistic skills. It enhances interaction and participation among learners, fostering social and cultural awareness. It is a wide arena for developing and refining individuals, strengthening their intellectual, aesthetic, and artistic qualities. It is a way of life within a specific framework that requires prior study to uplift individuals. Sometimes, the physical environment becomes the educational ground for some individuals, as they have adopted a different lifestyle or been judged to have a different lifestyle, imposing a special educational lifestyle in which the individual is a captive of the prevailing customs and traditions of this group, such as the lifestyle of rural people who are usually bound by some family and tribal rules that impose on them a certain educational lifestyle in which the individual is a captive of the prevailing customs and traditions of this group. (Ali Abdul Sahib Abdul, 2021, p. 77.)

The Theoretical Framework Has Resulted In Several Indicators

The communication in the theatrical system is divided into two types: verbal and non-verbal communication. These two systems work together in a complementary partnership to convey meaningful messages.

Human communication doesn't arise or exist within a group through spoken language alone. It involves all social practices carried out by groups, including tangible matters and relationships. Humans communicate through facial expressions, clothing, furniture, celebratory gestures, spontaneity, and even music, all of which play roles equivalent to spoken language.

The iconic sign works to identify and clarify things clearly and explicitly because its function relies on partial resemblance, possessing a real similarity between the signifier and its signified.

The indicative sign stimulates the learner and works to draw his attention to establish a real and tangible causal relationship between him and the signified, which this sign refers to, that is, the indication to a specific action.

The symbolic sign is subject to a cultural convention that determines its nature of production according to the meaning intended by the director to give it a significance that works to convey the intended meaning, that is, gestures aimed at interpretation or metaphor for a specific culture, customs, or behaviors and activities.

The sign works to stimulate the mind and create auditory and visual images in a dynamic and diverse intellectual and aesthetic style for the receiver, helping to activate the imagination of the actor within the theatrical space.

The stages of life determine how to deal with the nature of the presentation and its educational discourse, according to the learner's cognitive process. These stages are defined by three stages that the learner goes through: the stage of imagination, from (6-12), the stage of adventure and imagination from (13-15), and the stage of building personality and attitudes from (16-18).

The actor's vocal performance isn't just about delivering lines or narrating events; it should have an impact on the viewer's psyche. This impact is formed through vocal language, the harmony of tone, and its layers with the actor's body, which serve as a means of communication between the actor's performance and the viewer.

The body's interaction with the auditory and visual aspects of the performance contributes to the formation of iconic, indicative, or symbolic images and the creation of a symbolic image of the time and place of the events of the presentation. This interaction gives them illustrative and meaningful forms that support the presentation's image through conscious control of distance, rhythm, gesture, and movement.

The face is the center of gestures and the most expressive part of the body, rich in producing signs. It is where most of the visual perception tools are concentrated, which can be utilized within the theatrical performance.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

First: Research Methodology

The researcher will present the research methodology starting from the research population and sample. The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical approach in her study due to its suitability with the research path and objective.

Secondly: Research Population

In order to determine the research population, the researcher conducted a survey study and data collection to list theatrical performances through investigating the archive of the Institute of Fine Arts/Baghdad/Al-Karkh, considering the boundaries of her research. The researcher identified the research population as consisting of (3) theatrical performances spanning from (2017-2019)

Table (1) illustrates the research community

Place	Year	The director's name	The name of the play
The Rotating Theater	2017	Mohammed Abd Al-hameed	Blend
The Rotating Theater	2018	Kareem khanjar	Prophecy
The Rotating Theater	2016	Bahaa Zuhaier	Graveyard

Thirdly: The Research Sample

The research sample was chosen to consist of (1) theatrical performance intentionally and in line with the characteristics and objectives of the research, based on the following justifications:

The availability of DVD recordings of the performance.

The researcher's direct observation of this performance.

The fulfillment of the performance conditions in line with the research objectives.

Fourthly: Research Tools

To achieve the current research objective, which is to identify the semiotic communication in the visual discourse of educational theater performance, the researcher relied on the indicators of the theoretical framework in her analysis and previous studies.

Fifthly: Sample Analysis

The director presented in this performance a realistic structure that, through its visual discourse, revealed themes and meanings within the theatrical space subject to composition processes according to symbolic patterns, shaping a visual structure that gave a new formulation to the realism of the literary text. The spatial signs indicated the presence of a cemetery with three figures within it, forming a conflict that showed the debate between the characters through movements, gestures, and dialogues among them. The play began with screams, then the actor appeared in the center of the stage, focusing on the main themes of fear and horror. A sound perception of crying and a passing funeral procession followed. Then, two actors entered and moved to the center of the stage, creating a balance between the masses and achieving harmony in the visual discourse, as shown in Figure (1).



Figure.1

In the presentation of the performance, there was a clear relationship between the physical actions and the intellectual elements, achieving a discursive harmony that referred to a symbolic unity. The concept of meaning was directly presented through the action to a large extent and supported both vocally and physically by the body. The transitions of the actors' movements were rhythmic, contrasting with the character's dimensions, which largely followed a symbolic pattern. The symbolic signs were moderately subjected to the actor's gestures and movements, as they contributed to a realistic performance that was in line with the intended meaning by the director, providing them with the required significance. The iconic signs of the actor were largely presented, giving them a great ability to define and clarify things directly. Meanwhile, the indexical signs of the actor's = gestures and movements were largely achieved, establishing a causal relationship between the actor and the signified, as shown in Figure (2).

In terms of lighting, it was used to highlight the actors, emphasizing their significant meanings. The lighting design mainly utilized flood lighting in most scenes, except for the death scene, which appeared distinct with red lighting. As for the costumes, they endowed the actors with above-average expressive capabilities, adding depth to the communicative and aesthetic impact. Music played a role in enhancing auditory perception through its harmonious connection to the idea, creating a visual discourse indicative of anticipation and astonishment. This presented a semiotic experience rich in meanings, allowing for assumption and interpretation within a performative consciousness based on the duality of technique and physicality. The communicative engagement aligned largely with the stage of personal development and orientations (16-18), defining how to deal with the nature of the performance. Its visual educational discourse was tailored to the age group, and the actor's vocal performance significantly matched the tone and layers of their voice with their body language, forming a communication tool between the actor's performance and the audience, aiding in conveying the events. Furthermore, the body's interaction with the auditory and visual presentation formats significantly contributed to the formation of iconic and indicative images and the formulation of a symbolic image for the time and place of the events in the performance. This gave it an illustrative and symbolic form, supporting the visual discourse through precise control of distance, rhythm, gestures, and movement.



CHAPTER FOUR: THE RESULTS

Iconic visual communication was prominently present in the visual discourse, significantly enhancing the clarity and directness of conveying objects, as it possessed a real similarity between the signifier and its signified.

Indexical visual communication was significantly present in the visual discourse, establishing a clear causal relationship between the signifier and the signified within the presentation discourse.

Symbolic visual communication was weakly present in the visual discourse, leading to clarity in the intended meaning, as the director did not include any codes within the visual image, but rather made it clear and understandable in meaning.

There was a significant alignment between performance and the audio-visual aspects of the presentation, which strengthened the visual communication of the intended meaning and contributed to the formation of images for the time and place of the events, giving them explanatory power.

The director largely relied on liberating words from the control of the text and used gestures and sounds as alternative means to activate visual communication in crafting a visual discourse that stimulates their sensory perceptions.

Visual communication in the visual discourse was largely evident through presenting the dramatic idea in a direct, clear, and communicative manner, broadcasting to the audience the relevant signs and meanings to convey the desired educational message content.

There was a significant emphasis on aligning the visual discourse with the age group's personality and attitudes (16-18), which determined how to deal with the nature of the presentation and its educational visual discourse according to the age group and the intellectual structure of the play, significantly contributing to an informed response to the visual discourse.

CONCLUSIONS

The efficacy of an actor's performance relies heavily on their ability to respond and harmonize with the rest of the stage elements, as they are the main driver and primary conveyor of meaning. They need to be conscious of their functioning mechanism to achieve visual discourse, as any weakness in their performance within the theatrical system would lead to a failure in conveying the semantic meaning of their sign.

The sign represents a content that is only realized in the presence of its form, as it represents a functional partnership between the signifier and the signified subject to compositional processes to achieve its content in a coherent unit that gives its appropriateness to achieve the semantic organization of the visual image. Its individuality causes fragmentation and confusion in reading, affecting its semantic understanding.

The semiotic communication of performance operates in partnership with the rest of the theatrical elements, as the actor's performance is a unit that forms an isolated sign from the stage elements, resulting in a weakness in forming the visual discourse image.

There is a clear dominance of the efficacy of verbal communication in educational theater, as the word still plays the primary role in its formation, being the main influencer in sensory perceptions.

Performance in both verbal and kinetic communication requires actors' training, physical fitness, and occupational awareness to achieve a complete communication channel linked to the learner.

The process of incorporating images that do not have direct expressive meanings within the visual discourse weakens the effectiveness of the employed visual images.

Any theatrical presentation cannot take its intellectual and aesthetic structure without possessing a quantity of significant signs, either through acting or with the rest of the stage elements, as the absence of signs in the performance will disrupt the formation of the visual image and cause fragmentation in the vision, reflecting its response in the learner-audience.

The more adaptable and physically fit the actor's body is, the more they can invest their vocal and physical energy within the performance space to achieve clear signs in their meanings.

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