

# Transcultural Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences

Print ISSN 4239-2636 Online ISSN 4247-2636



An Online Academic Journal of  
Interdisciplinary & transcultural topics in Humanities  
& social sciences

# TJHSS

BUC Press House



**Volume 5 Issue (4)**

**October 2024**

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| ▣ <b>Print ISSN</b>  | <b>2636-4239</b> |
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تحية طيبة وبعد ،،،

تتقدم إليكم جامعة بدر بالقاهرة بالشكر على ما تبذلونه من جهد مادي ومعنوي لإصدار المجلة،  
فتميزكم المشهود خير قدوة، ممتنين لعملكم الدؤوب وتفوقكم الباهر، ونتمنى لكم المزيد من  
النجاحات المستقبلية.

تحريراً في يوم الأربعاء الموافق 2024/08/07.

رئيس مجلس الأمناء

د/ حسن القلا

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<sup>1</sup> *AI Literacy in K-16 Classrooms*, First Edition (Edited by Davy Tsz Kit Ng , Jac Ka Lok Leung Maggie Jiahong Su , Iris Heung Yue Yim Maggie Shen Qiao , Samuel Kai Wah Chu ) ISBN: 978-3-031-18879-4. Book link : <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-18880-0>



## Studying Political Caricatures from a Pragmatic Perspective

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**Abstract:** Expressing one's opinion is not limited to the written form only. It could be in a form of an illustration or a caricature using a sarcastic image to express an opinion. These caricatures could be political, and the main purpose of a political caricature is to criticize a certain political situation in a sarcastic way. This paper aims at analysing four different caricatures from different online newspapers which are *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Arab Weekly*, and *The Week*. These caricatures describe and present the same situation in Gaza a decade ago from 2014 till 2023. The analysis is done from a pragmatic perspective through Speech Acts Theory, Gricean maxims, irony, and rhetorical devices along with the features of political caricatures. The findings show that the caricatures under study are composed of a variety of direct and indirect speech acts implying death, hunger, revenge, violence, and others. In addition, they show the impact of flouting the maxims of quality and quantity on expressing the message behind each caricature. Moreover, the use of exaggeration and analogy plays a significant role in understanding the cartoonists' opinions along with irony as well. In the end, the cartoonists succeed in convincing their audiences using ethos, pathos, and logos.

**Key Words:** Aristotelian Appeals, Grice's Maxims, Political Caricatures, Pragmatics, Speech Acts Theory

### Introduction

There are many ways to express political satire; caricature or cartooning is one of these most significant ways especially in newspapers and magazines. "Caricature is one of the forms of non-oratorical rhetorical messages used in visual communication (visual commentary)" (Ahmad, 2020, p. 2). Newspapers and magazines use humorous caricatures to portray political events representing real-life or fictional characters to reflect certain ideologies. Over the recent years, there has been an interest in research on caricatures, however, it was limited to semiotics. On the other hand, studying caricatures from a pragmatic perspective is still limited. Caricatures or cartoons "refer more specifically to a style or technique of exaggerating or distorting the subject" (Moore, 2011, p. 13). They have specific features such as exaggeration, symbolism, analogy, irony, however, exaggeration, symbolism, and stereotypes are the most principal features. Firstly, exaggeration plays a vital role in any caricature because it could be expressed in facial expressions, forms, sizes, fonts, and actions. In other words, exaggeration is essential to any caricature as it makes the caricature more vivid. Secondly, using symbols in caricatures is another important feature. Gadalla (1998, p. 67) states that "symbols such as Uncle Sam, Russian Bear and British Bulldog represent concepts, ideas, and notions". "It is important to note that if the reader is unfamiliar with the symbols the cartoonist use, the caricature will be total nonsense" (Razzaq, 2022, p. 2). Finally, the use of stereotypes is significant because it is based on typical physical appearance and typical behaviour patterns. Caswell (2004, p. 20) defines a stereotype as "something that has no individuality or varying".

Therefore, this paper aims at studying the political caricatures found expressing one of the cruellest events taking place in the world over a decade and

more, particularly in the Middle East, which is the genocidal actions by Israel towards Palestinians in Gaza to be displaced from their own lands. This study is based on analysing four caricatures from different reputable online newspapers such as *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Arab Weekly*, and *The Week* to express the same point of view from different parts of the world. The analysis also employs Speech Acts Theory, Gricean maxims of cooperation, irony, and rhetorical devices in order to explain how political caricatures portray political events from a sarcastic point of view to help in understanding the cruelty of the real-life event or situation. Moreover, the study helps in providing a pragmatic analysis of political caricatures to express the significance of pragmatic tools in transmitting the communicative message behind such caricatures.

## 1. Theoretical Background

In this section, Speech Acts Theory, Gricean maxims, humour, irony, and rhetorical devices are explored.

### 1.1 Speech Acts Theory

Speech acts are simply the actions performed through utterances. Speech acts theory has been first developed by the philosopher J.L. Austin. According to him, “not all ‘sentences’ are (used in making) statements: there are, traditionally, besides (grammarians’) statements, also questions and exclamations, and sentences expressing commands or wishes, or concessions.” (Austin, 1962, p. 1). Paltridge (2006) also mentions “such acts refer to the speaker's communicative intension which is interpreted by the hearer” (p. 55). Moreover, Austin (1962) uses “the term ‘speech act’ to refer to an utterance and the ‘total situation’ in which the utterance is issued” (p. 52). In other words, a speech act is an utterance that states a function in communication. Furthermore, Austin (1962) has proposed the notion of performatives which maintains that statements are only used to describe or state, but also to perform action.

Based on Austin's classification of illocutionary acts, Searle (1976 &1979) proposes a classification of five different types of acts as follows:

1. Declarations: They bring about some alteration in the status or condition of the referred to object and tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions (declaring war christening, firing from employment).

For example, I now pronounce you husband and wife.

(The speaker alters the external status or condition of an object or situation)

2. Assertives: They commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, such as statements of facts, assertions, conclusions, and descriptions.

For example: The earth is flat. It was a warm sunny day.

(The speaker asserts a proposition to be true, using such verbs as: Affirm, Believe, Conclude, Deny, Report)

3. Expressives: They express a psychological state, such as thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating, etc.

For example: I'm really sorry. Congratulations.

(The speaker expresses an attitude to or about a state of affairs, using such verbs as: Apologize, Appreciate, Congratulate, Deplore, Detest, Regret, Thank, Welcome)

- 4. Directives: They are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something, such as orders, commands, requests, suggestions, and they can be positive or negative.

For example: Gimme a cup of coffee. Make it black. Don't touch that.

(The speaker tries to make the hearer do something, with such words as: Ask, Beg, Challenge, Command, Dare, Invite, Insist, Request)

- 5. Commissives: They commit the speaker to some future course of action, such as promises, threats, refusals.

For example: I'll be back. We will not do that.

(The speaker commits himself (or herself) to a (future) course of action, with verbs such as: Guarantee, Pledge, Promise, Swear, Vow, Undertake, Warrant). (Searle,

1979, pp. 12-18)

According to Yule (1996), Searle provides a description of the five general functions of speech acts in Table (1):

Table 1

A Description of the Five General Functions of Speech Acts

Speech Act Type	Direction of Fit	S=Speaker; X=Situation
Declarations	Words change the world	S crosses X
Representatives	Make words fit the world	S believes X
Expressives	Make words fit the world	S feels X
Directives	Make the world fits words	S wants X
Commissives	Make the world fits words	S intends X

**Table 1.** Description of the five general functions of speech acts. Adapted from “*Implicature: Pragmatics*” by G. Yule, 1996, p. 55

**1.2 Gricean Maxims**

According to Grice (1989), Maxims are classified into:

- a. Maxim of Quantity

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

b. Maxim of Quality

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

c. Maxim of Relation

1. Be relevant.

d. Maxim of Manner

1. Avoid obscurity of expression. (Avoid being unclear).
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief. (Avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly. (Be organized).

(Grice, 1989,

p. 26)

According to Grice, the four maxims regulate conversation in the sense that they constitute a general principle which participants are expected to observe. In some circumstances, "speakers may not follow the expectations of the cooperative principle" (Yule, 1996, p. 39). In other words, they may deviate from the norm whether on purpose or without intention to do it. Such deviation has more than one type such as: "violating the maxims, flouting the maxims, infringing the maxims, opting the maxims, and suspending the maxims" (Thomas, 1995, p. 64).

### **1.3 Irony**

It is one of the main features of caricature to express the cartoonist or the caricaturist opinion concerning a political event taking place in real-life. It could be found through flouting the maxims of quality, relation, and manner. It is implied and understood from the communicative meaning portrayed in the caricatures. Pollard (1970, p. 67) defines it as "the usage of distortion as a weapon, total distortion in the form of inversion, adding that it includes in its effect implication, insinuation, and omission".

According to Hutcheon (1995, pp. 43-53), there are certain functions of irony, which include; "Reinforcing" to underline a point, "Complicating" to express the richness of interpretation, "Lucid" to express teasing and playfulness as well as to irresponsibility and trivializing, "Distancing" to refuse being pinned down, "Self-Protective" to be a defence mechanism, "Provisional" to entail disapproving, hypocrisy, and deception, "Oppositional" to indicate insults, and offence, the "Assailing" to show an attack or a leaping on something, and finally the "Aggregative" function.

### **1.4 Rhetorical Devices**

The function of rhetorical devices is to persuade the readers or audiences. Brochers (2013, p. 40) states that "according to Aristotle, a statement is persuasive and credible either because it is directly self-evident or because it appears to be proved from other statements that are so". In either case, it is persuasive because it manages to make sense to the audience (readers/ listeners). Aristotle (1967) presents three different persuasive strategies: Logos, Pathos, and Ethos. The aim of the three appeals is to persuade or convince the addressee to "reach out of free choice a goal desired by the

addresser” (Poggi, 2005, p. 298). Logos can be the rational arguments, the logical consequence, or the beliefs. Pathos deals with emotions or the speaker’s ability to control emotions, “manifested by either pleasant or unpleasant feelings. These values are emotionally loaded, therefore, pathos are triggered whenever they are invoked. Once the pathos trigger is pulled, the addressee may feel an urgent desire to achieve the goal or goals in question.” (Poggi, 2005, p. 314). Ethos deals with “attracting the addressee’s attention to the credibility and truthfulness of the addresser.” (Abouelenine, 2021, p. 189)

Another type of rhetorical devices is metaphors which are included in all areas that involve human interaction or experience. “A metaphor is an implied analogy which imaginatively identifies one thing for another.” (Razzaq, 2022, p. 6). Metaphors help a lot in understanding the point of view of the caricaturist through the presence of symbols as well. According to Kövecses (2010, p. 64), symbols in general and cultural symbols, in particular, may be based on well-entrenched metaphors in a culture.

## **2. Review of Literature**

In this section, a review of some previous empirical studies of political caricatures are presented.

In 2023, a study by Khurram Shahzad, Shamas Ul Din, and Farooq Ahmad on the representation of political ideologies through political cartoons in the Pakistani English newspaper "Dawn". The focus of this study is on uncovering the hidden purpose of print media through multimodal analysis of selected political cartoons through applying Machin's (2007) theoretical framework to provide a qualitative analysis.

Ahmed (2020) conducted a study which dealt with 2018 Egyptian presidential elections by applying Semiotics. The focus of this study is to address a major question on how caricature represents the picture of the 2018 Egyptian presidential election, as the caricature poses a specific type of media messages in which it reflects the public opinion about the candidates and the electoral process.

Such studies focus on expressing the impact of political caricatures on understanding ideologies through Semiotic and Multimodal analysis. However, the present study tackles the importance of political caricatures from a pragmatic perspective applying Speech acts theory, Gricean maxims, Irony, and rhetorical devices.

## **3. Methodology**

In this section, a qualitative analysis is employed along with a descriptive one to express the impact of applying pragmatic tools to the analysis of political caricatures to understand the underlying message portrayed by the caricaturists. It represents the data of the analysis along with the analytical framework.

### **3.1 Data of the Analysis**

The analysis is based on a qualitative approach to investigate the impact of applying pragmatic theories to political caricatures. These caricatures are published in online newspapers, namely *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Arab Weekly*, and *The Week*. They represent the suffering of the Palestinians from 2014 till 2023. The four caricatures under study are selected according to certain criteria to meet the purpose of the research. Such criteria include: a) they must have a chronological order to show the ongoing attacks towards the Palestinians a decade ago, from reputable newspapers presenting different points of view, b) expressing the current situation in Gaza

through vivid illustrations c) employing irony, metaphors, and d) including texts or dialogues to be analysed.

### 3.2 Analytical Framework

The analysis of the caricatures under study is based on the following:

- a. Speech act theory to express the impact of direct and indirect acts on expressing the message or the opinion of the caricaturists.
- b. The flouting of the maxims of cooperation by Grice, particularly the maxims of quality, relevance, and quantity.
- c. The impact of irony in showing the caricaturists opinions through speech acts, exaggeration and analogy along with the functions of irony.
- d. The significance of the use of rhetorical devices such as the use of symbols, metaphors, and Aristotelian appeals.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Caricature 1



[Ben Jennings on the Israel-Hamas war – cartoon](#) | [Ben Jennings](#) | [The Guardian](#)

#### Description

This caricature is drawn by Ben Jennings in 2023 in *The Guardian*. It discusses the current situation in Gaza during the war between Hamas and Israel. In this caricature, there are 4 persons. It looks like a family which is composed of a father, a mother, a son, and a baby. They are gathering around a table with empty plates, and they are hungry waiting to be served. They are staying in the street with no home or roof. In other words, it looks like they are homeless. On the top of their heads, there is a shadow of a missile. The dry land is a symbol for hunger and famine. There is exaggeration in the facial expressions of the family members. They have wide eyes to express astonishment because of the source of the shadow which is a missile. They are sad that they are about to die hungry. The analogy in this caricature is represented in the missile which is presented as a substitute for the food they are waiting for. The message underlying this caricature is the consequence of the current war in Gaza, Palestinians are suffering from famine and killing.

#### Speech Acts

For the caption “IT LOOKS LIKE WE WON’T BE HUNGRY FOR MUCH LONGER”, the caricaturist uses an assertive speech act because it is based on the description of the situation that they are going to be bombed. Therefore, they are going to die and won’t be hungry anymore.

### Gricean Maxims

The caricaturist flouts the maxim of quality and relevance to attract the viewers' attention to what is happening in Gaza and how the Palestinians are suffering. The maxim of quality is flouted because the semantic meaning of the assertive act is that they are going to have food to eat. However, in reality, they are going to be bombed. Moreover, the flouting of the maxim of relevance is presented in the situation itself as they are going to die so they are not going to be hungry anymore. They have nothing to do except for accepting the situation to die.

### Irony

Irony is implied from the whole or the communicative situation. There is a reinforcing irony to express the point of view of the caricaturist which is famine and killing. They got used to the scene of dying hungry and having missiles around them everywhere.

### Rhetorical Devices

The caricaturist has portrayed this caricature for *The Guardian* which is a reputable newspaper. Therefore, he applies the logos as the logical consequence of war is famine and death. He focuses on the pathos to touch the feelings and emotions of the viewers regarding the genocide which is taking place there. In other words, the caricaturist applies pathos to play on the emotions of the viewers to sympathize with the Palestinians and to push on their countries to stop such attacks and genocidal actions.

#### 4.2 Caricature 2



[Gaza population pays the price for Hamas-Israel war | Yasser Ahmed | 2023-10-12 | AW \(thearabweekly.com\)](#)

#### Description

This caricature drawn by Yasser Ahmed in October 2023 was published in *The Arab Weekly*. It also describes the current situation in Gaza. It includes a bleeding hand emerging from the rubble and another hand holding a paper and a pen. The surroundings represent a complete destruction of all facilities and means of life in Gaza. In other words, there is no fuel, no electricity, internet, homes, food, or water based on the communicative situation. The paper and pen have more than one representation. They could be the flyers thrown over the Palestinians in the Gaza strip

to evacuate or to be bombed. They could be the peace treaty to release some hostages from both sides – Hamas and Israel. They could represent the Israeli revenge on the Palestinians as a consequence to Hamas’ attack on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2023. The caricaturist’s message is to show that those who are paying the price of war are the civilians.

### Speech Acts

In this caricature, caption plays a vital role in understanding the message that caricaturist wants to convey. He uses the directive act in “HELP” in a speech bubble to show that the Palestinians are asking for saving lives, and support to end the war or to cease fire. They are asking the world to interfere and support them. Moreover, the caricaturist uses the assertive act “THE COST OF WAR” to express that if the Palestinians want support, they have to pay the price for the war. They are not going to get help for free; they have to consider the consequences of it. Furthermore, there is another caption “GAZA POPULATION PAYS THE PRICE FOR HAMAS-ISRAEL WAR”. It is a declaration to express the fact that the people are dying and suffering from the current situation.

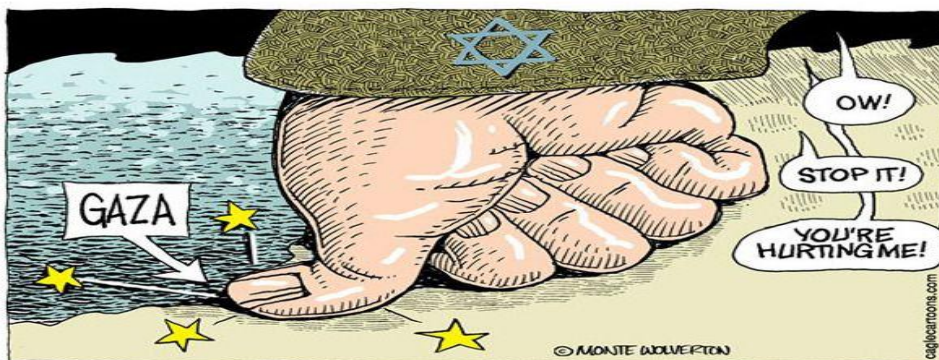
### Gricean maxims

The caricaturist flouts the maxims of quality and quantity in “help” and “the cost of war”. Such deviation attracts the viewers’ attention to reconsider the situation. It is not directed to Arab because such a war is special for religious purposes. However, it is directed to the rest of the world which asks for freedom, liberation, and humanitarian concepts and actions. They need to support and help Palestinians to have the right of living and to stop the genocidal actions which are happening in Gaza.

### Rhetorical Devices

The caricaturist uses exaggeration in more than one aspect. He uses analogy to compare between asking for help and paying for a service. This is significant because according to Israel, this is the natural price for a war which was started by the Palestinians. So, it is normal to suffer from genocide and famine. Moreover, the use of pathos is significant because the caricaturist built his argument on the emotions of the viewers to persuade them concerning the consequences of any war.

### 4.3 Caricature 3



### [Political cartoon Gaza Israel War | The Week](#)

### Description



This caricature is drawn by Monte Wolverton in 2014 and was published in *The Week*. It describes the situation in Gaza ten years ago. It includes a pressing hand on a coast to crush it. This pressing hand has the star of Israel, so it represents Israel. The coast represents Gaza. The caricaturist uses many elements to support his point of view concerning how the civilians in Gaza are crushed by Israeli military.

### Speech Acts

The caricaturist built his argument to support his point of view on the caption. It includes a directive act “STOP IT” because the Palestinians are being bombed, burnt, and killed by Israel. Therefore, they need Israel to stop all acts of destruction and genocide. Moreover, there is another speech act used to support the message conveyed which is an expressive one “OW” and “YOU’RE HURTING ME”. This act expresses the feelings of Palestinians as a result of all the actions done by Israel.

### Gricean Maxims

In this caricature, the caricaturist flouts the maxim of quantity. The significance behind such flouting is that he wants to attract the viewers’ attention to the situation of Gaza. Palestinians are exposed to killing by Israeli forces. Such action is not supposed to be only hurting, but also killing.

### Irony

The caricature has “Reinforcing and Assailing” features of irony. Reinforcing feature is found to help the caricaturist express his feelings and opinion on what is happening in Gaza starting from killing, bombing, destruction, genocide, and famine. Moreover, assailing function is presented to focus on the act of crushing Palestinians in Gaza. It expresses the attack done by the Israeli military to get rid of the people in Gaza.

### Rhetorical Devices

The caricature has many elements that help the viewer get the message conveyed. These elements include exaggeration and analogy. Exaggeration is found in the big size of the hand. It indicates the harm that the Palestinians are facing. Moreover, the size of Gaza cannot be seen which shows the amount of destruction and killing that resulted in shrinking the spot. Also, the size of the hand presents the power of Israel over Gaza and which is more powerful than the other. On the other hand, there is symbolism which is represented in the hand as well. Such hand symbolizes the weapons to destroy Gaza and the Palestinians. Furthermore, the caricaturist succeeds in expressing his point of view through logos and pathos. For the logos, he portrays the consequences of the Israeli attacks over Gaza through the crushing and squeezing hand. For the pathos, he includes the direct speeches to force the viewers to imagine the situation in Gaza and how the people there are suffering.



[Opinion | On the Gaza Protests - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com)

**Description**

This caricature is portrayed by Partick Chappatte in 2018 published in *The New York Times*. It describes the protests by Palestinians who got kicked out of their country and could not return back to even part of it “Gaza”. The Palestinians are standing in front of Israeli soldiers, who are pretending to protect the borders between them and the Palestinians. On the other hand, the Palestinians are unarmed, carrying protest posters and flags, and walking in front of the wired borders while the soldiers are holding shooting guns directed towards them. The message that the caricaturist wants to convey is that Palestinians are fighting unarmed and asking for their legal rights to return to their country as admitted by the soldiers in “non-violence”.

**Speech Acts**

The caricaturist uses the directive act “THE NON-VIOLENCE MUST STOP IMMEDIATELY” to indicate that the Palestinians are unarmed, and Israeli soldiers do not want this. The use of the directive verb “must” indicates obligation and that it is mandatory to stop the non-violent protests.

**Irony**

Reinforcing and provisional features of irony are found. Reinforcing is employed to support the point of view of the caricaturist which is that the owners of the land are fighting unarmed to have their occupied land back. Also, provisional features indicate the hypocrisy of the army and Palestinians' rejection to surrender as they denounce non-violent protests.

**Rhetoric Devices**

The caricaturist succeeds in conveying his message through exaggeration and stereotypes. Exaggeration is found in the number of both the Palestinians and the soldiers. The Palestinians' number is huge compared to the number of the soldiers opposing or threatening them. This has two implications. Firstly, the number of Palestinians is huge, and they are the true owners of the land and are peacefully protesting and asking for their legitimate right of return. Secondly, Israeli soldiers are armed and only two of them are threatening the lives of hundreds of Palestinians thanks to the weapons that the soldiers are holding. On the other hand, the caricaturist employs logos and pathos to support his argument. Logos could be used as the viewers are able to predict the consequence of the protests and they know that the soldiers are going to use violence to stop the non-violence. Pathos could be tackled in attracting the viewers' attention to the actual situation in Gaza. The unarmed people, who are asking for the right to return to their homes, are facing armed soldiers that would kill them.

**Statistical Results of the Analysis**

Pragmatic Notions	Frequency	Percentages
Speech acts (7)		
Assertives	2	28.5%
Declarations	1	14%
Directives	3	43.5%

Expressives	1	14%
Flouting of Maxims (5)		
Quality	2	40%
Quantity	2	40%
Relevance	1	20%
Irony (5)		
Reinforcing	3	75%
Assailing	1	25%
Provisional	1	25%
Rhetoric Devices (14)		
Logo	3	21.5%
Pathos	4	28.5%
Exaggeration	3	21.5%
Analogy	2	14%
Symbolism	1	7.25%
Stereotypes	1	7.25%

According to the statistics provided, the selected political caricatures show:

1. The analysis of the selected political caricatures shows that caricatures employ different speech acts. The majority are directives 43.5%.
2. The flouting of the maxims of quality and quantity have the highest percentage of occurrence (40%) each to attract readers attention to the current situation.
3. Reinforcing is the only function of irony with the highest percentage of occurrence (75%) to attract the readers and viewers' attention to imagine and visualize the reality and cruelty of the situation of the Palestinians.
4. The use of rhetorical devices is significant and the highest is exaggeration 21.5% to help the viewers imagine the cruelty of the situation.
5. Finally, most caricaturists persuade their readers using pathos, which appeals to the audience's emotions 28.5%.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis shows that the caricaturists succeed in conveying their points of view and their own opinions concerning the situation in Gaza from 2014 till 2023. They applied many linguistic tools to express their ideas such as: The analysis of the selected political caricatures shows that caricatures employ different speech acts, for example, assertives, as in "it looks like we won't be hungry for much longer and the cost of war", expressives as in "ow and you're hurting me", directives as in "help, stop it, and the non-violence must stop immediately", and declarations as in "Gaza population pays the price for Hamas-Israel war". Moreover, the analysis shows the flouting of the maxims of quality, quantity, and relevance to help in proving the arguments of the caricaturists portrayed in the caricatures under study. Furthermore, the use of reinforcing, assailing, and provisional features of irony explains the impact of employing irony in attracting viewers' attention. In addition, the caricaturists use

exaggeration and analogy to express their points of view clearly. Finally, most caricaturists persuade their readers using logos and pathos either separately or in pairs to attract their attention, emotions, and predict the consequences of the actions taken.

The analysis could be on more caricatures to express the impact of applying pragmatic tools to caricature analysis with the help of other tools such as inference and intension, and humour. It could be applied to other political events like elections or mems created on social media platforms.

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