

Semiotic Analysis of Political Party Posters Used in The Local Elections Held on March 31st, 2024 in Türkiye in the Context of Linguistics

Türkiye’de 31 Mart 2024 Tarihli Yerel Seçimde Kullanılan Siyasi Parti Afişlerinin Dilbilim Bağlamında Göstergebilimsel Analizi

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

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ÖZET

Demokratik ülkelerde, parlamento üyeleri ve yerel yöneticiler seçimle işbaşına gelirler. Türk Vatandaşlar tarafından seçme ve seçilme hakkının kullanılmaya başlanmasıyla, siyasi partiler ve siyasetçiler toplumla siyasal yönden doğrudan iletişim kurma çabası içine girmişlerdir. Partiler, başarılı olmak için, misyon ve projelerinin halka aktarılmasının önemini bilincinde olmuşlardır. İyi iletişim; verilen doğru mesaj ve bu mesajın halk üzerinde bıraktığı etkiyle kendini gösterir. Bunun için seçmenlerin gözüne ve kulağına hitap eden sesli, görüntülü ve resimli reklam ve tanıtım materyallerinin hazırlanıp sunulmasına ihtiyaç duyulur. Siyasiler, bu araçlarla seçmen davranışlarını etkilemek ve onları ikna etmek için dilbilimi ve göstergebilimden oldukça fazla faydalanmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, 31 Mart 2024 tarihinde, Türkiye’de yapılan yerel seçimde siyasi partilerin siyasal iletişim aracı olarak kullandıkları afişlerin göstergeleri, yirminci yüzyılda yaşamış Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce ve Roland Barthes tarafından geliştirilen dilbilimi ve göstergebilim kavramları ışığında analiz etmektir. Ayrıca afişteki sloganlar, liderlerin imajı, tercih edilen renkler ve görsel öğelerin seçmene aktarmak istediği mesajlar, örnekleme, veri toplama, dilbilim ve göstergebilim analizleri ve son olarak veri analizi yöntemleri kullanılarak yorumlanacaktır. Bu çalışmada, seçim afişlerinin dilbilim ve göstergebilim öğelerini kullandıkları tespit edilmiş ve bu mesajlar açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Afiş, Dilbilim, Göstergebilim, Seçim, Siyasal İletişim, Slogan

ABSTRACT

In democratic countries, members of parliament and local administrators come to power through elections. With the beginning of the right to vote and be elected by Turkish citizens, political parties and politicians have made efforts to establish direct political communication with the society. To be successful, parties have become aware of the importance of conveying their mission and projects to the public. Good communication shows itself with the right message given and the effect this message has on the public. For this, it is necessary to prepare and present audio, visual and pictorial advertising and promotional materials that appeal to the eyes and ears of the voters. Politicians make extensive use of linguistics and semiotics to influence and persuade voters’ behaviour with these tools. The aim of the present study is to analyse the signs of the posters used by political parties as political communication

tools in the local elections held in Türkiye on March 31, 2024, in the light of the concepts of linguistics and semiotics developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce and Roland Barthes, who lived in the twentieth century. Additionally, the slogans, the images of the leaders, the preferred colours on the posters as well as the messages conveyed by the visual elements, are interpreted using sampling, data collection, linguistic and semiotic analysis methods. In this study, it was determined that the election posters used linguistic and semiotic elements, and these messages were tried to be explained.

Keywords: Poster, Linguistics, Semiotics, Election, Political Communication, Slogan

1. Introduction

In democratic countries, elections are held in which political parties compete to form governments and administrative powers. For governance, parties or candidates try to publicize their projects through various methods and techniques. These individuals and groups use mass media such as television, radio (Atar, 2006: 217), internet and virtual media, as well as posters, advertisements and brochures (Barut, 1995: 76-89). In Türkiye, citizens periodically go to elections to choose the president, the central government and local administrators. Parties and individuals try to convey their messages and promises to citizens using symbols and icons as well as direct messages in the visual publications, which they use to introduce their programs and projects to the public. They use many methods and techniques for this. While using tools that appeal to the eye, ear and other senses, candidates prepare films, documentaries and posters that appeal especially to the eye by using the criteria of semiotics. Thus, they try to influence the human values, cultural dynamics, spiritual and national feelings of the voters by utilizing semiotics.

Civelek Oruç, C. O., & Türkay, O. (2018) state that enterprises convey the messages they want to transfer to customers through different tools. The authors also emphasize that posters are one of these tools. For this reason, they claim that poster preparers should decide how to construct semiotic tools by considering the message they will give in every element they use (Civelek Oruç, & Türkay, 2018: 312). In this sense, these advertisement means have been used in many general and local elections in Türkiye since the proclamation of the Republic. For our best knowledge, we have not encountered any studies investigating 31st March 2024 Local Mayors' Election posters in terms of linguistics and semiotics in the literature. Therefore, in this study, the posters prepared and used by the political parties during the most recent local elections held on March 31st, 2024 in Türkiye to influence the voters and get their votes will be analyzed in the context of linguistics and semiotics. The objective of the study is to reveal the effects of signs and messages of the posters on the voters using linguistics and semiotics approaches. The scope of the study is restricted to semiotic analysis of the posters with only two posters for each party participating on 31st March 2024 mayors' election.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Semiotics

There are many definitions and descriptions of semiotics; in the light of investigations, it is found out that the etymological origin of the term is derived from the Greek word semeiotike.

The term “semiology” (or “semiotics”) was formed by combining of the Greek word “semeion” (meaning “sign”) and the suffix “-logia” (derived from “logos” signifying “study” or “science”) (Rifat, 2009: 11; Civelek Oruç, & Türkay, 2018: 312-313). When we look at the historical adventure of semiotics, we see that the first discussions began in the 3rd century BC by the Stoics. Later, Plato and Aristotle conducted various studies in this field. According to Plato, one of the scientists asking questions about signs in the early ages, words are universal and whatever name you give to an object is correct. On the other hand, Aristotle linked human progress to linguistic tools (Güneş, 2013:333). However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to define semiotics, to determine its place in history and science, and to distinguish it from other concepts (Civelek Oruç, & Türkay, 2018: 313). Modern Semiotics research began to emerge at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Swedish linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce laid the cornerstones of semiotics with their studies. Saussure emphasized the social function of semiotics, while Peirce emphasized its logical function (Guiraud, 1994: 18; Suzan & Babayiğit, 2024). One of the scientists who made very important contributions to semiotics is Ronald Barthes. According to him, in semiotics, the signifier is used in the sense of evoking that thing, even though it is not that thing itself. The “signifier” is the form and the “signified” is the equivalent of the content (Kınay, 2019:27). Phenomena related to semiotics are encountered in almost every field in our lives. We encounter signs in natural languages used by people, in a piece of music, clothing styles, accessories, a work of literature, a theater show, a television commercial or a poster, in short, in every aspect of life. Semiotics develops a method that helps people make sense of the environment in which they live. Everyone who tries to understand their environment is already a “hunter of signs” to some extent (Rifat, 2009: 23). They attempt to hold a sophisticated understanding of the terms included in the artefacts.

To start with, several definitions of semiotics have been made in the literature. For instance, according to Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, semiotics is the study of life of signs within society. When it comes to the second most important scientist of the field, Charles Sanders Peirce, he defines a sign as something that has a meaning to someone for something (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025a). In short, semiotics is the science of signs and symbols to convey messages to the readers and viewers. Linguistics is the study of language in terms of science. It explores the structure, context and meaning not only the spoken language, but also its evolution, function and interaction with society (Babayiğit et al., 2024; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025b). With this regard, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics are utilized while studying semiotics. Together with these concepts and terms such as advertisement, propaganda, and communication may benefit from the studies dealing with semiotics.

Since semiotics encompasses a wide variety of signs, Umberto Eco proposed a classification system that separates signs into two categories: natural and artificial. Natural signs are further divided into two types: (1) signs associated with natural phenomena or objects, such as the position of the sun, and (2) signs that result unintentionally from human activity, like a rash that signals chickenpox. This second category includes several subtypes. Artificial signs are categorized in a similar manner, falling into two main groups. The first group consists

of signs that are deliberately created to convey meaning, such as a dog's bark uttered by a child to imitate the dog for fun. The second group includes signs designed for a specific purpose, which can be primary (a chair meant for sitting), secondary (a diamond necklace symbolizing wealth), or combined (a police uniform, which both provides coverage and signifies a social role) (Guillemette & Cossette, 2006: 1). Also, Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality remains highly relevant in today's consumer-focused society, where advertisements, social media, and virtual interactions shape perceptions. The overwhelming influx of symbols makes it harder to distinguish between what is real and what is constructed, necessitating an understanding not just of signals but also of the underlying systems that give them meaning. In a culture dominated by simulacra, symbolism representations significantly shape individuals' perception of reality. Baudrillard's approach to semiotics serves as a valuable tool for analyzing truth, particularly in the context of media consumption and socialist thought. By critically assessing digital symbols and signs, we can gain deeper insights into the forces influencing our understanding of reality (Essien, 2024: 31). Here, the author tries to inform us that those who use signs and semiotic principles may manipulate viewers by enhancing the images, especially in commercial advertisements.

Julia Kristeva (2021) applied semiotics through a psychoanalytic lens and moved away from structuralism in the 1970s. Adopting a postmodern approach, she questioned rigid scientific models and used semiotics to challenge absolute frameworks. Her work critically analyzed science and ideology, focusing on how axiomatization shapes scientific discourse and how semiotics exposes the ideological biases within these models. She emphasized that scientific models inevitably influence language and conducted extensive research across semiotics, literary studies, linguistics, and psychoanalysis (Premat, 2021:2). Furthermore, Film posters serve to communicate the movie's theme, characters, setting, relationships, and overall tone, giving the audience an initial impression and understanding. Their goal is to promote the film and enhance box office performance effectively (Rivadulla, & Gibbs, 2000:41). Hua, F., & Xiang, L. (2021), in their work, mainly use Saussure and Barthes' semiotics approaches to analyze 2015 adaptation of *Macbeth* through its movie posters. They argue that there are many signs to convey the message to the audience such as a stained-glass image of Christ, fire, castles, witches and more. Their aim in conducting these analyses is to clarify the abstract content, so the audience can have a clear understanding and perception by seeing the posters before watching the movie (Hua, & Xiang, 2021: 88).

In addition, Boysan, H.C. & Kızıltan, N. (2023) discuss three film posters, *Parasite*, *Mother* and *Whiplash*, using semiotic tools in their study. While they analyze the *Parasite* movie poster by employing classificatory and actional processes, they use analytical and reactional techniques in examining the *Mother* poster. When it comes to the movie, *Whiplash*, the authors investigate the films' posters through verbal and mental process, and all posters are interpreted with respect to denotative and connotative meanings, as well as the significance of colors in conveying cultural and emotional messages. It is possible to claim that images, posters, paintings, and similar visual materials hold great importance in conveying some messages to affect people. Therefore, it is crucial to discuss semiotics analyzing techniques in various

aspects of daily life. In addition, Elements of Semiotics are used professionally in promotional; advertising and propaganda tools used in all areas of life. One of these areas is the advertising and propaganda tools of political parties. Every political party wants to come to power by getting the maximum number of votes from the voters in the elections. In order to achieve their goals, they use posters pasted on billboards and walls quite a lot. In these tools, they use images in line with Ferdinand de Saussure's concepts of sign, signifier and signified and Roland Barthes' concepts of connotation, which are included in the field of semiotics in order to bring together many indicators in line with their own purposes and attract the attention of the voters to vote for them.

In the current study, it is aimed to analyze the posters used in the local elections of March 31st, 2024, in Türkiye in terms of semiotics, which has almost never been studied in the literature. In this direction, starting with the party that received the most votes, two photographs of each party with high photographic quality will be selected and analyzed in terms of semiotics, respectively.

2.2. Political Communication and Political Parties

In the contemporary era, the centrality of communication has resulted in pervasive diffusion of political communication across multiple domains of public life. Political communication constitutes a subfield within the broader discipline of communication, with its significance in the political sphere deriving from its fundamental objectives. This objective is typically associated with the consolidation of authority, governance, and the exercise of power.

For political communication to fulfill its objective, it must effectively persuade the intended audience. The ideological discourse employed in this process is shaped by the political figure and the broader socio-political context in which they operate. After the ideological discourse is established by political figures, it is communicated to the target audience through diverse communication channels (Özer, 2014: 176). Political communication refers to the strategic exchange of information by political actors, employing diverse methods and techniques to gain societal acceptance of specific ideological objectives. This process aims to influence particular groups, populations, nations, or geopolitical entities, facilitating their mobilization and implementation of related political strategies when necessary (Aziz, 2003: 3). Political parties employ diverse strategies of political communication to present their initiatives, missions, and policy agendas to the public, aiming to shape public perception and influence societal discourse. Effective communication is regarded as a fundamental determinant of electoral success. The process of political communication comprises key components such as transmission, reception, channel, message, and feedback, closely mirroring the general communication process. Despite these similarities, the primary distinction lies in the nature of the transmitter or the entities engaged in political communication. Unlike general communication, political messages are typically disseminated by organized groups, which serve as the primary source of information in political discourse (Aziz, 2007:5). In the modern world, digital networks, mass media, posters are the most important ways to communicate

messages correctly and effectively. Politicians make great use of semiotics and signs in order to establish effective resonance with the audience.

The emergence of political parties in Türkiye can be traced back to the Ottoman period in the 19th century, with their development continuing into the present day (Kaştan, 2017: 89-90). Over time, numerous political parties have been founded. As of November 2024, data from the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office of the Court of Cassation indicates that Türkiye has 163 active political parties (Yargıtay Cumhuriyet Başsavcılığı, 2024). Political parties evolve in response to the socio-political conditions of their respective periods and the constituencies they seek to influence. In contrast to many modern democracies, political parties in Türkiye tend to be predominantly leader-centric, with election campaigns largely directed and controlled by the party leadership (Arpacı, 2018: 134). A leader generally determines propaganda and communication strategies.

3. Method

The present study seeks to conduct a semiotic analysis of the Turkish local elections held on March 31, 2024, during which five political parties secured mayoral positions across various provinces (Hürriyet, 2024). Accordingly, this study employs qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is recognized as a systematic approach that seeks to understand human experiences, behaviors, and beliefs, emphasizing the exploration of “why” and “how” rather than relying solely on quantitative data (Mistry, 2012; Tandon, 2021). To gather rich, unstructured data employs focus groups and in-depth interviews; also, it employs document analyses (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). It is rather common to observe this research technique in a variety of fields, such as education, nursing, and the social sciences, this method is especially helpful for investigating novel phenomena and documenting unique viewpoints (Given, 2008). In order to provide rigor through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, qualitative data analysis entails data reduction, display, and conclusion drafting; therefore, this technique offers insightful information on intricate human experiences that are difficult to quantify with standardized quantitative methods (Mistry, 2012). This current study employs qualitative techniques so that it may cover more subtle details of pictures.

Considering the procedure of the current study, it may be claimed that a comprehensive literature investigation was carried out to find the posters that the parties, which gained province mayorships in Türkiye. Afterwards, the best quality and clear posters conveying some semiotics signs were downloaded. Accordingly, it was aimed to conduct semiotics analyses of the posters in the light of twenty-century scientists of the field. The most well-known of semiotics researchers are Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce and Roland Barthes, and therefore, semiotic analyses were performed utilizing the concepts they put forward in this research study. Therefore, the overall steps of this research have been categorized as sampling, data collection and finally data analysis. Many party posters were collected in terms of data collection phase. After that, posters holding a great deal of good photographic quality were included, then clear and semiotic messages were chosen to be utilized in the study. The images were examined in terms of semiotic concepts affecting the voters' decisions. By using semiotic

analysis methods, data analyses for the current study were carried out. In the analysis of the images, the theoretical frameworks of Saussure, Peirce and Barthes were taken into consideration as the basis; signifier and signified elements were established for each photograph. While determining the signifier, the surface and physical shape of the poster were described. During the establishing of the signified, the meaning or concept represented by the physical object was depicted. When it came to producing semiotic meaning out of the image, the reflected meanings were formed and analyzed since each form, color and sketch conveys a message to the audience.

4. Findings

The following part presents a detailed linguistic semiotic analysis of political parties holding roles in the election on 31st March 2024, each of them is highlighted:

4.1. Semiotic Analysis of Political Party Posters from March 31st, 2024, Local Elections in Türkiye

Türkiye held local elections on March 31st, 2024, during which mayors were elected for each province. As a result of the elections, the Republican People's Party (CHP) won 35 municipalities, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) 24, the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) 10, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) 8, the Re Welfare Party (YRP) 2 and other parties won a total of 2 municipalities. The election posters used in the ranking according to the number of provinces won by the parties will be analyzed in terms of semiotics (NTV, 2024).

4.1.1. Republican People's Party (CHP) Election Posters



Picture 1. 1st Poster of Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi [CHP], 2024a)

In the poster of the Republican People's Party, a smiling photograph of the party chairperson is placed in the foreground. A smile is an indicator that evokes positive emotions in the viewer and creates sympathy, anticipation of the person in the picture. In addition, the fact that the person is looking forward to the right side carries the promise of a happy and progressive future to the viewers. The party flag behind him evokes the connotations of ideological and political belonging and the Turkish flag evokes the connotations of patriotism, sovereignty and historical continuity. The people carrying flags in the background are indicators of the large number of supporters of this party, and the flags are indicators of Turkish national symbolism and power and sovereignty. The party flag above and the party name in bold letters seem to invite to voters which party they will support. The hashtag “#Sahip Çıkıyoruz” (#We

Support Our Municipalities) in the center, in red, is intended to attract attention. It indicates that the party embraces the people. The slogans below it, State, Law, Peace, Equality, Constitution, Democracy, Justice, Freedom and Republic, symbolize democracy and the promises the party will make. The capitalization of the word “Constitution” here implies that the most important principle will be the Constitution. At the bottom, the date and time of the rally is indicated. It defines the address in direct meaning.

Table 1. Semiotic Analysis of Picture 1

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Human action	Party president smiling and looking side	Sympathy, anticipation, positive engagement	Smiling and looking side Party leader	Anticipation, Positive emotions, Sympathy
Phenomenon	Big Party Flag and Turkish Flag	Party, Türkiye	Fabric, colors, symbols and patterns	Collective Identity, power structures, ideological narratives
Phenomenon	Turkish Flags waved by audience	Color, flags	Striking red color	National symbolism, power & sovereignty
Party flag & Name	Flag & party name at the top	Party	Red Color and Capital letter	Eye catching and inviting
Statement	Slogan	“#Sahip Çıkıyoruz” (<i>We Support Our Municipalities</i>)	A statement written on the top with large letters in red.	It attracts the attention of the voters.
Statements	Slogans	The principles of a democratic country	Words, big & small, thin & bold.	A promise for a democratic governance
Statement at the bottom	Address and Meeting date & time	Address, Date & Time	Place, Date & Hour	Reminding the voters to attend the meeting



Picture 2. 2nd Poster of Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi [CHP], 2024b)

A smiling leader is brought to the forefront to create a sympathetic and friendly atmosphere. The navy-blue suit worn by the leader is an indication of his authoritative, disciplined, elegant and serious feature of the person. The light blue tie and white shirt he wears evokes peace, tranquility, serenity and coolness; and purity, neutrality, cleanliness according to Barthes connotative meaning of the colors (Hatam, & Al-Ghabra, (2021:471). The party badge on the leader's lapel is used as a symbol of collective identity, power structure and ideological narratives. When we look at the colors used in the background, we see that the color red is dominant. The color red is an indicator that arouses the feeling of passion, power, authority and radical change. Thus, the party embraces the whole society. With the slogan “İşimiz Gücümüz Türkiye” (Our Only Aim is Türkiye), the message is given that they are ready to serve the state and the people. The party emblems placed on the rostrum and in the background indirectly express that the viewer is expected to support his party in the election.

Table 2. Semiotic Analysis of Picture 2

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Human action	Party president smiling	Sympathy, positive engagement	Smiling and side Party leader	Positive emotions, Sympathy
Phenomenon	Color	light Blue and white	Leader's tie and shirt	Purity, Neutrality, cleanliness, Peace, tranquility, serenity, coolness.
Phenomenon	Color	Navy blue	The color of the jacket	Authority, Discipline, Elegance,

				Seriousness, order and control.
Phenomenon	The badge on the lapel	Party badge	Metal, color, pattern, symbol	Collective Identity, power structures, ideological narratives
Phenomenon	Red color at the background	Color	Striking red color	Passion, power, authority, radical change.
Statement	Slogan	“İşimiz Gücümüz Türkiye” (<i>Our Only Aim is Türkiye</i>)	A statement written on the top with large letters in red.	It attracts attention of the voters by focusing on Türkiye.
Phenomenon	Small slogans and Party Emblem	Slogans & Party Emblem	Many slogans & Party Emblems	Having the voters perceive the slogan and emblem.

4.1.2. Justice and Development Party (AKP) Election Posters



Picture 3. The Poster of Justice and Development Party ((Anadolu Ajansı [AA], 2024)

All mayoral candidates of the party are together with the party president. The message here is to strongly imply that they are candidates for all mayorships in the country. The party president is at the center of the picture. This reinforces his powerful and important position. A huge green tree in the background connotes the strength and efficiency of the party, as well as the greatness and continuity of past services. The light blue tone in the background evokes peace and calm. The sea implies happiness and tranquility, and Istanbul signifies the aspiration for the mayorship of Türkiye's most important city. The mayoral candidates clapping together with the president is a sign of unity and harmony within the party. The visuals of Istanbul are also indicative of the value AKP attaches to the city. “Türkiye knows that the real municipalism is the AKP.” This refers to the party's success in municipalism. Thousands of people carrying

flags and pennants behind the mayors seem to imply how much support the party enjoys in the country.

Table 3. Semiotic Analysis of Picture 3

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
People	Stance of people and party president	Serious, sympathetic, diplomatic	All people applause together	Confident, Powerful, determined, Unified
Tree	A large, green and fruitful tree	Freshness, Power, comprehensiveness	A large green tree with fruit	Richness, Fertility, Power, and Happiness
Voters (Background)	Voters and their flags and pennants	Huge crowd waving their flags	Many voters	Great support for the party candidates
Sea (Background)	Blue and Calm	Peaceful and calm sea	Open sea connects two sides of the city	The sea implies peace, serenity and happiness for voters
The city on two sides	Buildings, Minarets, Mosques, ship on the sea	The whole city	A big and crowded city	It implies that the party can govern the city in the best way.
Phenomenon	Color	light Blue	Sky and sea Color	Peace, tranquility and happiness
Phenomenon	Color	Green	The color of the tree	Vividness, renewal, growth.
Action	Male and Female	Mayor Candidates standing and clapping	The mayor candidates	Unity, harmony and power to win.
Statement	Title	“Türkiye knows that the real municipalism is the AKP.”	A statement written on the tree with large letters.	The statement connotes that the party has experience in this issue and messages the voter to choose them again.



Picture 4. The Poster of Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi [AK Parti], 2024)

A poster emphasizes the party leader. The blue tie and white shirt worn by the President represent trust, order and sincerity and navy-blue jacket symbolizes tradition, stability and confidence as Barthes put forward that the things have connotative message, in other words, literal meaning and connotative, which is a mental state of the signs (Hatam, & Al-Ghabra, (2021:471). The party leader's smile reassures the viewer with positive emotions and his determined gaze into the distance symbolizes a bright and peaceful future. The Turkish waving flag badge on his lapel gives the voters a message of unity and solidarity. The slogans “Let Your Decision Be Real Municipalism” and “Real Municipalism is AK Party” emphasize the previous successful municipalism and experience of the party's mayors. At the top of the poster, the concept of “Türkiye's century”, which is constantly used by the AKP, is brought to the forefront and the message is to prefer their candidates for cities compatible with the new century. On the left side of the poster, the party emblem and name and the yes seal imply that voters should recognize the party and its symbol and vote for this party.

Table 4. Semiotic Analysis of Picture 4

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Human	A man's facial expression	sympathetic, Farseeing	Smiling and far looking Party leader	Confident, Positive emotions, Determined, Sympathetic
Stars at the top	A normal star surrounded small stars with Turkish Century	Power, comprehensiveness	The Turkish Presidency badge	Power, Unification, Uniqueness
Phenomenon	Color	light Blue and white	Leader's tie and shirt	Purity, Neutrality, cleanliness, Peace, tranquility, serenity, coolness.
Phenomenon	Color	Navy blue	The color of the jacket	Authority, Discipline, Elegance, Seriousness, order and control.
Phenomenon	Emblem and Stamp	Party & Action	Party Emblem & YES Stamp	It imposes the voters which Party to vote.
Phenomenon	Waving Turkish Flag badge	Turkish Flag	Color, pattern, metal badge Represents Türkiye	Independence, Unification
Statement	Slogan	"Let Your Decision Be Real Municipalism" and "Real Municipalism is AK Party"	A statement written on the top with large letters.	The statement connotes that the real governance will be with this party.

4.1.3. People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) Posters



Picture 5. The Poster of Equality and Democracy Party (Yeni Yaşam Gazetesi, 2024)

The first thing that draws attention on the poster is the pictures of the co-chairs of the Party. This implies the fact that two chairpersons, one female and one male, with the connotation that they want women to have equal power in the administration and lead the party together. Both are smiling, which connotes the message of sympathy and positive emotions. The light blue jacket, tie and shirt they wear represent purity, neutrality, cleanliness, peace, tranquility, serenity and coolness while the navy-blue dress represents authority, discipline, elegance, seriousness, order, control and power. The female co-chair clasps her hands across her chest, a sign that she is distancing herself and becoming defensive, while the male co-chair puts his hands in his trouser pockets, symbolizing his self-confidence. In the background, the crowd of people indicates that there are many voters supporting the party and that the party is participating strongly in the elections. On the left, “Dem Party for Democracy” carries the message of the promise of democracy to the people. Below it, the icon with the party’s name is intended to introduce the party to the voters. Just below the party emblem is the party's full name “Peoples' Party for Equality and Democracy”.

Table 5. Semiotic Analysis of Picture 5

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Human	A man & a woman	President and co-president of the party	Two presidents – male & female	Gender equality in sharing authority
Human action	Party president smiling	Sympathy, positive engagement	Smiling and side Party leader	Positive emotions, Sympathy
Phenomenon	Color	light Blue and white	Jacket, tie and shirt	Purity, Neutrality, cleanliness, Peace,

				tranquility, serenity, coolness.
Phenomenon	Color	Navy blue	The color of the jacket	Authority, Discipline, Elegance, Seriousness, order and control.
Human	Action	Clasping hands over chest	A kind of stance	Self-distancing and Defensing
Human	Action	Putting hands in trousers' pockets	A kind of stance	Self-confidence
Human	Crowd of people	Voters	Crowd of people	Great support from the voters.
Statement	Slogan	"Dem Party for Democracy"	A statement written on the top with large letters in red.	It attracts attention of the voters by focusing on promise for democracy.
Phenomenon	İcon	Dem Party Emblem	An emblem and party's name	It attracts attention of the voters by focusing on name and emblem.



Picture 6. The Poster of Equality and Democracy Party (Equality and Democracy Party, 2024)

The base of the poster consists of two colors: Purple and white, which connotes Richness and depths; Purity, Neutrality, cleanliness, Peace. The message of the poster is conveyed in two languages, Turkish and Kurdish. When we look at it in terms of indicators, it aims to give the message 'I am like you' by using the language generally used by the people that the party wants to reach. With the slogan “DEM GELİR DEVRAN DÖNER” (DEM COMES AND EVERYTHING CHANGES), by using the name of the party, it establishes a connection with

the future and implies change as they wish to give the message that this cycle will not continue like this. The Kurdish slogan “RABE DEM HAT” (STAND UP DEM CAME OR STAND UP IT IS TIME NOW) implies that voters should go to the ballot box, and the Turkish meaning of the word DEM, TIME, is used as a metaphor to emphasize that the time has come. With the slogan “We are coming to take back what is ours!”, the party criticizes the appointment of trustees to municipalities it has previously won and pinpoints that they would get back these municipalities. The party logo takes place under both slogans. When checked carefully, it is possible to see that the tree and the sun in the middle symbolize a woman holding both hands up as is she prays for something. Above the trunk of the tree are green leaves, which connote fertility and peace. With the Party’s name down, it is intended to inform the voters about the logo they will vote for in the election.

Table 6. Semiotic Analysis of Picture 6

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Phenomenon	Color	Purple and white	The colors of the base of poster	Richness and depths; Purity, Neutrality, cleanliness, Peace.
Phenomenon	Color	Yellow	Color of slogans	Dynamism, optimism, movement.
Phenomenon	Emblems	Party	Patterns, drawings, inscriptions.	Having the voters know the party.
Statement	Slogan	“Dem Gelir Devran Döner” (<i>Dem Comes And Everything Changes</i>)	A statement written on the left top with large letters in yellow & white.	It attracts the attention of the voters by focusing on solutions.
Statement	Slogan	“Rabe Dem Hat” (<i>Stand up Dem Came</i>)	A statement written on the top with large letters in yellow & white.	It attracts the attention of the voters by focusing on making the voters act.

4.1.4. The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Posters



Picture 7. The Poster of Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi [MHP], 2024a)

The party leader comes to the fore in this poster. His facial expression give him wisdom, reliability, stamina, self-confidence, determination, sympathy and seriousness. His forward-looking gaze promises the future to the voters. His dark suit represents power, mystery, authority and white shirt connotes purity, neutrality and peace. The burgundy tie evokes the luxury, sophistication, wealth and refinement. The party badge on his lapel represents his belonging. In the immediate background, the crowd carrying banners and flags reflects the demand for the party. The slogan “Towards 2024, Step Step Anatolia” written in red near the center of the poster indicates that the party aspires for mayorships in every city in Anatolia. The slogan, “Strong Legislature, Decisive Executive, and Harmonious Municipality” refers to the republic alliance with the AKP. It is intended to create the perception that the legislative, executive and local government should be on one hand. On the bottom left, the party logo and name are introduced to the voters, and it is implied that the voters will vote for this party.

Table 7. Semiotic Analysis of Picture 7

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Human Action	A man's facial expression	Party President	Fixed look & slight smile	Wisdom, reliability, self-confidence, determination, sympathy
Phenomenon	Color	Black	The color of jacket	Power, mystery, authority
Phenomenon	Color	White	The color of shirt	Purity, Neutrality, cleanliness, Peace.

Phenomenon	Color	Burgundy	The color of tie	Luxury, sophistication, wealth and refinement.
Statement	Slogan	“2024’e doğru, Adım adım Anadolu” (Towards 2024, Step Step Anatolia)	A statement written on the right with large letters in red & white.	It attracts attention of the voters by focusing on aspiring all mayorships of Anatolia.
Statement	Slogan	“Güçlü Yasama, Kararlı Yürütme, Uyumlu Belediye” (Strong Legislature, Decisive Executive, and Harmonious Municipality)	A statement written on the right with large letters in.	It attracts attention of the voters by focusing on its alliance and promises to conduct when the party wins.
Phenomenon	Emblem	Party	Patterns, drawings, inscriptions.	Having the voters know the party.



Picture 8. The Poster of Nationalist Movement Party ((Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi [MHP], 2024b)

On the right side of the poster is the leader, smiling slightly with a fixed look to indicate wisdom, reliability, self-confidence, determination and sympathy; and wearing a dark suit, expressing power, mystery and authority; and white shirt that connotes Purity, Neutrality, cleanliness, Peace. The smile on his face and the sympathy in his eyes looking at the voters seem to embrace them. The party badge on his lapel expresses his political affiliation with the old Ottoman State's crescent flag of past. Placing his right hand on his heart shows his love and respect for people. This poster is designed to mobilize national feelings in society. The

slogan “Ayırmadan Ayırışmadan Türkiye için Canla Başla,” (Without separating and Discriminating, All Our Power for Türkiye) conveys the message that the party's primary goal is to make the utmost effort to unite society. The whole background of the poster is striking red which sends the message of passion, power, authority and radical change.

Table 8. Semiotic Analysis of Picture 8

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Human Action	A man’s facial expression	Party President	Fixed look & slight smile	Wisdom, reliability, self-confidence, determination, sympathy.
Phenomenon	Color	Black	The color of jacket	Power, mystery, authority
Phenomenon	Color	White	The color of shirt	Purity, Neutrality, cleanliness, Peace.
Phenomenon	Color	Burgundy	The color of tie	Luxury, sophistication, wealth and refinement.
Phenomenon	Badge	Party Emblem	Color, pattern, metal badge	Old Ottoman Flag sign, affiliation with past.
Human Action	Action	Placing right hand on the heart	Right hand on the heart	Love and respect for people.
Statement	Slogan	“Ayırmadan Ayırışmadan Türkiye için Canla Başla,” (<i>Without separating and Discriminating, All Our Power for Türkiye</i>)	A statement written on the right with large letters in red & white.	It attracts attention of the voters by focusing on aspiring all mayorships of Anatolia.
Statement	Slogan	“Güçlü Yasama, Kararlı Yürütme, Uyumlu Belediye” (<i>Strong Legislature, Decisive Executive, and Harmonious Municipality</i>)	A statement written on the right with large letters in white.	It attracts attention of the voters by focusing on its alliance and promises to conduct when the party wins.
Phenomenon	Emblem	Party	Patterns, drawings, inscriptions.	Having the voters know the party.

Phenomenon	Color	Red	Background color	Passion, power, authority and radical change.
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4.1.5. Re Welfare Party (YRP) Posters



Picture 9. The Poster of Re Welfare Party (BBC Türkçe, 2024)

The focal point of the poster shows the party leader at the podium. The navy-blue suit he wears gives him an appearance of authority, discipline, elegance, seriousness, order and control. The yellow tie represents vitality, sincerity and optimism. The party badge on his lapel symbolizes his political affiliation. His facial expression appears calm, cool and determined. The numerous microphone indicators placed in front of him express the intense orientation towards him. The red color in the background is used to give feelings of passion, power, authority and radical change to the public and voters. As with the lectern, the white text and the party logo in the background are used in an effort to place it in the viewer's mind. The statement indicator “Türkiye’nin Değeri” (*Türkiye's Value*) is used to express that this party is a value raised by the country and is the property of the people. With the purpose of reinforcing this slogan, namely, “Milletimiz için biz varız” (*We exist for our nation*) is used prominently at the bottom of the lectern so that they can bring the party to the forefront to meet the needs of the society.

Table 9. Semiotic Analysis of Picture 9

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Human Action	A man's facial expression	Party President	Decisive look	Calmness, coolness and determination.

Phenomenon	Color	Navy blue	The color of the jacket	Authority, Discipline, Elegance, Seriousness, order and control.
Phenomenon	Color	White	The color of shirt	Purity, Neutrality, cleanliness, Peace.
Phenomenon	Color	Yellow	The color of tie	Vitality, sincerity and optimism
Phenomenon	Badge	Party Emblem	Color, pattern, metal badge	Party affiliation.
Phenomenon	Microphones	Press and media	Different microphones.	Intense orientation.
Phenomenon	Color	Red	Background color	Passion, power, authority and radical change.
Statement	Slogan	“Türkiye’nin Değeri” (<i>Türkiye's Value</i>)	A statement written on the background with large letters in white.	It attracts attention of the voters by focusing on the value of party given by Türkiye.
Statement	Slogan	“Milletimiz için biz varız” (<i>We exist for our nation</i>)	A statement written on the bottom of lectern with large letters in white.	It attracts attention of the voters by focusing on the party’s presence for the nation’s needs.



Picture 10. The Poster of Re Welfare Party (Yeniden Refah Partisi, 2024)

The poster is divided into two main sections, with the party leader at the focal point on the left side. The hand gesture of the party leader is a sign of the national vision of this party. His smiling face and far looking eyes symbolize confidence, positive emotions, determination, sympathetic and farseeing. His shining eyes, looking ahead, represent that a bright future awaits society. The navy-blue suit he wears symbolizes Authority, Discipline, Elegance, Seriousness, order and control. Behind the leader, a crowd of supporters carrying banners and flags implies a strong interest in this party. The right half of the poster criticizes the failures in the country, and it presents the solutions and promises they will conduct if they come to power. In the lower right corner, above the silhouette of the crowd, the slogan “Yaptık Yine Yaparız” (*We did it, we can do it again*) is written on a red background, referring to the success of the party before him and implying that they maintain their potential for success.

Table 10. Semiotic Analysis of Picture 10

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Human Action	A man's facial expression	sympathetic, Farseeing	Smiling and far looking Party leader	Confident, Positive emotions, Determined, Sympathetic, farseeing.
Phenomenon	Color	Navy blue	The color of the jacket	Authority, Discipline, Elegance, Seriousness, order and control.
Phenomenon	Color	light Blue and white	The tie and shirt	Purity, Neutrality, cleanliness, Peace, tranquility, serenity, coolness.
Human Action	People & Banners	Voters and party banners	Crowd waving party banners	It affects the viewers that a lot of people support the party.
Statement	Slogans	Slogans of promises	Each of four lines mentions about a problems and the rest four mention about solutions.	It aims to affect the voters by focusing on the problems and solutions.
Statement	Slogan	"Yaptık Yine Yaparız" (<i>We did it, we can do it again</i>)	A statement written on the bottom of poster on the right with large letters in white.	It attracts attention of the voters by focusing on the party's power, ability and experience to succeed.

5. Conclusion

In democratic nations that implement electoral systems, the electorate primarily determines governance. Political parties and politicians aim to shape voter preferences in their favor, making electoral campaigns and voter engagement essential components of the political process.

Political campaigns have been found to be a significant communication tool which influences the voter choices in both general and municipal elections, especially among those who are uncertain or have weak party ties. The current study demonstrates that an analysis of the party posters used by mayoral candidates in various provinces of Türkiye reveals the strategic use of political communication by Turkish political parties. Through semiotic elements such as signs, signifiers, and messages, these posters serve as a medium for conveying political narratives and engaging with the electorate. It was revealed in the analyses that all

parties generally used the color sign effectively. In addition, nearly all parties had their leaders in the focal point since the political tradition in Türkiye concentrates on party leaders. Furthermore, in many posters, the parties used great crowds in order to affect the voters implying that their party has the most voters. When it comes to the inscriptions, the parties generally use them to make the viewers understand their missions and projects. Nearly all posters have the party logos to make their supporters keep in mind and vote for them during the election. In some posters, some objects having semiotic signs were used; for example, a big Turkish flag denotes the unity and nationalistic messages, and a big fruitful tree symbolizes power and fertility, and a man embracing the tree gives the message that the party in question supports all its voters, and a large ring is the symbol of power, status, richness and commitment, an ear in the crescent is for giving the message that the party is of a nationalistic type and it brings peace, power and richness.

Besides, two election posters of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Justice and Development Party (AKP), Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and Re Welfare Party (YRP) were analyzed according to the number of provinces they won in the local elections held on March 31st, 2024. When the posters used by the parties are carefully examined according to semiotic approaches, it is understood that the slogans and indicators on the posters are generally a product of an approach that emphasizes the leader. In addition, indicators trying to influence national and spiritual values were frequently used in most of the posters.

This study highlights the role of posters as political communication tools designed to influence voter behavior. Political parties strategically utilize slogans, color schemes, and the visual representation of party leaders to enhance their visibility. Each element within these posters is deliberately crafted to shape voter perceptions and engagement. Further studies could investigate the application of comparable semiotic strategies across various electoral settings or assess their impact on shaping voter perceptions and decision-making.

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