



Wasit University
Repository

Wasit University Repository

repository.uowasit.edu.iq

دراسة تداولية سيميائية مقارنة لمعاناة
الأطفال في مأساتي كربلاء وغزة

A Pragma-Semiotic Comparative Study of Childrens Suffering in the Tragedies of Karbala and Gaza

Hamzah, Ranyah Faisal Hamzah

إشراف: Prof. Mazin Jasim Mohammed Al-Hilu (Ph.D.)

جامعة واسط — 2026

<https://repository.uowasit.edu.iq/handle/123456789/227>

<https://doi.org/10.31185/uowasit-71>

حُمِّلَ هذا الملف من مستودع جامعة واسط

Downloaded from the Wasit University Repository — repository.uowasit.edu.iq

**Republic of Iraq
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Wasit University
College of Education for Human Sciences
Department of English**



A Pragma-Semiotic Comparative Study of Children's Suffering in the Tragedies of Karbala and Gaza

A Thesis

Submitted to the Council of the College of Education for Human Sciences, Wasit
University, in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Education in English Language and Linguistics

By

Ranyah Faisal Hamzah

Supervised by

Prof. Mazin Jasim Mohammed Al-Hilu (Ph.D.)

June 2026 A.D.

Muharram 1448 A.H.

Examining Committee's Certificate

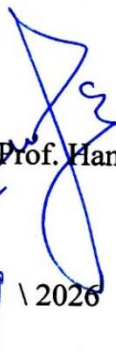
We certify that we have read the thesis entitled (**A Pragma-Semiotic Comparative Study of Children's Suffering in the Tragedies of Karbala and Gaza**) and, as an examining committee, we examined the student (**Ranyah Faisal Hamzah**) in its contents and that, in our opinion, it is adequate as a thesis for the degree of Master of Education in English Language and Linguistics.

Signature: 

Name: Prof. Enas Naji Kadhimi (Ph.D.)

(Chairwoman)

Date: 6 \ 9 \ 2026

Signature: 

Name: Asst. Prof. Hamid Tarad Lafta (Ph.D.)

(Member)

Date: 2 \ 9 \ 2026

Signature: 

Name: Asst. Prof. Salah Raheem Jabbar (Ph.D.)

(Member)

Date: 23 \ 8 \ 2026

Signature: 

Name: Prof. Mazin Jasim Mohammed (Ph.D.)

(Member and Supervisor)

Date: 24 \ 8 \ 2026

Approved by the Council of the College of Education for Human Sciences, Wasit University.

Signature:

Name: Prof. Mahmoud Hamoud Arraq Al-Quraishi (Ph.D.)

Dean of the College of Education for Human Sciences

Date: \ \ 2026

Supervisor's Certificate

I hereby certify that the thesis entitled (A Pragma-Semiotic Comparative Study of Children's Suffering in the Tragedies of Karbala and Gaza) by (Ranyah Faisal Hamzah) has been prepared under my supervision at the Department of English/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ Wasit University as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in English Language and Linguistics.

Signature



Supervisor: Prof. Mazin Jasim Mohammed Al-Hilu (Ph.D.)

Date: 28 \ 6 \ 2026

In view of the available recommendations, I forward this thesis for debate by the Examining Committee.

Signature:



Name: Prof. Hashim Aliwy Mohammed Al-Husseini (Ph.D.)

Head of the Department of English

Date: 28 \ 6 \ 2026

الأستاذ الدكتور
هاشم عليوي محمد الحسيني
رئيس قسم اللغة الانكليزية

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

{وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٥﴾}

(القصص: ٥)

صدق الله العلي العظيم

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

And We wished to be Gracious to those who were being depressed on the land. To make them leaders (in faith) and make them heirs. (*The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 2004, Surah Al-Qasas 28:5)

Allah, the Most High, the Almighty, has spoken the truth.

Dedication

To the children of Karbala,
the youngest descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.

To the cherished memory of my beloved father.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, all praise and gratitude are due to Almighty Allah, the Most Merciful, whose guidance and mercy have sustained me throughout this study. Through His grace, I was granted the strength, patience, and perseverance to bring this work to completion.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Mazin Jasim Mohammed Al-Hilu (Ph.D.), for his valuable guidance, constructive comments, and continuous encouragement throughout this study. His insightful observations, academic expertise, and careful supervision have played a vital role in shaping this thesis and enhancing its quality. It has been a privilege to benefit from his mentorship, which has greatly enriched my academic experience.

I sincerely thank Prof. Hashim Aliwy Mohammed Al-Husseini (Ph.D.), Head of the Department of English, for his support and continued efforts to maintain a positive academic environment in the Department. I am also grateful for the opportunity to learn from him during my postgraduate studies and to benefit from his knowledge and experience.

My thanks are likewise extended to all the professors of the Department of English for their dedication to my academic development. I am particularly indebted to Prof. Enas Naji (Ph.D.), Prof. Qassim Al-Ebadi (Ph.D.), Prof. Khalida Al-Ghezzi (Ph.D.), and Asst. Prof. Mohammed Nassir. Their lectures, intellectual depth, and thoughtful perspectives enriched my learning, broadened my outlook, and strengthened my appreciation of the field.

My deepest love and appreciation go to my mother for her patience, prayers, and sacrifices throughout my studies. I am also thankful to my maternal uncle for his encouragement and confidence in me. Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who supported me, stood by me, and contributed in one way or another to the completion of this study.

Abstract

The tragedies of Karbala and Gaza have attracted scholarly interest due to the suffering and violence associated with them. Although separated by centuries, both have produced a body of texts in which children occupy a central role. The study investigates children's suffering in the tragedies of Karbala and Gaza from a pragma-semiotic perspective. It aims to explore the mechanisms through which this suffering is constructed and to identify points of convergence and divergence between the two contexts. Previous studies have examined Karbala and Gaza from historical, religious, political, and humanitarian perspectives; however, comparative research on child representation across these settings remains limited. This qualitative study employs an eclectic analytical framework integrating Frank and Goodman's (2012) Rational Speech Act framework, Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition, and Barthes' (1968) semiotic theory. The data consist of twelve selected texts organised into six comparative pairs. The analysis is limited to written linguistic material rather than visual data. The findings reveal pragmatic differences: the Karbala texts more often present children speaking, moving, or resisting within specific events, whereas the Gaza texts more often present them in conditions of deprivation, confinement, and loss. In both contexts, children are individualised through naming, kinship, age, or spatial placement, while their suffering is encoded through bodily detail. Semiotic analysis shows that literal descriptions of harm also convey broader meanings, representing the child in terms of bodily suffering, innocence, and family loss. Overall, the comparison demonstrates that common patterns of child representation remain shaped by circumstances specific to each tragedy.

Keywords: Children's Suffering, Karbala, Gaza, Pragmatics, Semiotics

Table of Contents

Dedication	V
Acknowledgements	VI
Abstract	VII
Table of Contents	VIII
List of Tables	XII
List of Figures	XIII
List of Abbreviations	XIV
Arabic Transliteration System	XV
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	2
1.3 Research Objectives	3
1.4 Research Questions	3
1.5 Procedures of the Study	3
1.6 Scope and Limits of the Study	4
1.7 Significance of the Study	4
1.8 Layout of the Study	5
CHAPTER TWO	6
LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 Introduction	6
2.2 Pragmatics	6

2.2.1 Implicature -----	7
2.2.2 The Rational Speech Act Framework -----	9
2.2.3 Presupposition -----	14
2.3 Semiotics-----	17
2.3.1 The Peircean Theory of the Sign-----	18
2.3.2 Barthes' Theory of Semiotics-----	20
2.3.2.1 Denotation -----	20
2.3.2.2 Connotation -----	21
2.4 Language in the Expression of Human Suffering-----	22
2.5 Children's Suffering in Armed Conflict-----	23
2.6 The Historical Context of the Tragedy in Karbala -----	25
2.7 The Chronology of the Recent Crisis in Gaza-----	27
2.8 Previous Studies -----	30
CHAPTER THREE -----	35
METHODOLOGY-----	35
3.1 Introduction-----	35
3.2 Nature of the Study -----	35
3.3 Data Collection and Description -----	36
3.4 Data Selection-----	38
3.5 Criteria for Data Selection-----	40
3.6 Procedures for Analysing Data-----	41
3.7 Theoretical Framework-----	42
CHAPTER FOUR-----	46

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION-----	46
4.1 Introduction -----	46
4.2 Weaponised Deprivation of Water-----	46
4.2.1 Karbala Excerpt (1)-----	46
4.2.2 Gaza Excerpt (1)-----	52
4.3 Targeted Killing of Children-----	57
4.3.1 Karbala Excerpt (2)-----	57
4.3.2 Gaza Excerpt (2)-----	62
4.4 Child Agency Amid Extreme Violence-----	66
4.4.1 Karbala Excerpt (3)-----	66
4.4.2 Gaza Excerpt (3)-----	72
4.5 Destruction of Shelter and Spaces of Safety-----	77
4.5.1 Karbala Excerpt (4)-----	77
4.5.2 Gaza Excerpt (4)-----	82
4.6 Child Terror and Extreme Vulnerability-----	86
4.6.1 Karbala Excerpt (5)-----	86
4.6.2 Gaza Excerpt (5)-----	91
4.7 Loss of Parents and Orphanhood-----	95
4.7.1 Karbala Excerpt (6)-----	95
4.7.2 Gaza Excerpt (6)-----	100
4.8 Findings and Discussion-----	104
CHAPTER FIVE-----	113

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER

RESEARCH -----	113
5.1 Introduction -----	113
5.2 Concluding Remarks on Research Question 1 -----	113
5.3 Concluding Remarks on Research Question 2-----	115
5.4 Concluding Remarks on Research Question 3-----	116
5.5 Contribution of the Study -----	118
5.6 Recommendations -----	119
5.7 Suggestions for Further Research-----	119
References -----	121
المستخلص -----	133

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Sources of the Selected Data-----	39
Table 4.1 Pragmatic Analysis Based on the Rational Speech Act Framework-----	104
Table 4.2 Pragmatic Analysis Based on Presupposition Theory-----	107
Table 4.3 Semiotic Analysis Based on Barthes' Semiotic Theory-----	110

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 The Saussurean Sign-----	18
Figure 2.2 Peirce's Triadic Theory of the Sign-----	19
Figure 3.1 The Theoretical Framework of Data Analysis -----	44

List of Abbreviations

AH	Anno Hegirae
AS	Alayhi al-Salam
CE	Common Era
GCI	Generalised Conversational Implicature
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
PCI	Particularised Conversational Implicature
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RSA	Rational Speech Act
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Arabic Transliteration System

Arabic Alphabets (*Adopted from Nakhilawi, 2016*)

No.	Arabic Alphabets	Transliteration
1	أ	ā
2	ب	b
3	ت	t
4	ث	th
5	ج	j
6	ح	ḥ
7	خ	kh
8	د	d
9	ذ	dh
10	ر	r
11	ز	z
12	س	s
13	ش	sh
14	ص	Ṣ
15	ض	ḍ
16	ط	ṭ
17	ظ	Ẓ
18	ع	‘
19	غ	gh
20	ف	f
21	ق	q
22	ك	k
23	ل	l
24	م	m
25	ن	n
26	ه	h
27	و	w
28	ي	ī
29	ء	ʔ

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The tragedy of Karbala is a pivotal event in Islamic history that occurred in the plain of Karbala, in central Iraq, southwest of Baghdad, and west of the Euphrates River, in 61 AH (680 CE). It culminated in the killing of Imam al-Husayn bin Ali, alayhi al-salam (AS), and members of his household, followed by the plight of those who survived the battle (Vaglieri, 1971). The event has been recorded in the earliest biographical writings in the context of reported accounts, where the martyrdom of al-Husayn and the tragedy of his family following this event is presented in a consecutive narrative format (al-Mufid, 1981). These accounts are not confined to written sources but also pass from one generation to the next throughout religious gatherings where the story is retold (Pinault, 2001). According to Aghaie (2004), the memory of Karbala is preserved in the form of established practices of commemoration. In all these contexts, the event is consistently linked with depictions of loss and suffering.

In the modern context of armed conflict, children's suffering in Gaza following the events of October 2023 has been extensively reported in humanitarian and human-rights reports. Children have experienced death, injury, displacement, and disruption to access to essential services, as well as disruption of healthcare, education, water, and food supply (UNICEF, 2024). Meanwhile, civilian populations have been subjected to killing, maiming, forced displacement, starvation, and the destruction of homes, schools, hospitals, and infrastructure (Human Rights Watch, 2025). The reports on children and armed conflict also highlight serious violations, such as killing and maiming, attacks on educational and medical facilities, and humanitarian access restrictions (United Nations, 2023). The general backdrop of these conditions is a statement of the global scene

of the documentation of children suffering in contemporary conflict situations (Andersen et al., 2024).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The written reports of Karbala recount the tragedy through historical narration and record the events, the people involved, and the nature of the suffering. In the study of early Islamic historiography, these narratives are typically studied in the context of their source, transmission, and textual reliability. In this orientation, more emphasis is placed on the reporting of events than on the language in which suffering is expressed in the texts (Humphreys, 1991). In a more specific sense, Fakhr-Rohani (2023) considered the accounts of the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn to be a recognised maqal genre in Islamic writing. Although these studies clarify the historical and narrative nature of Karbala accounts, they do not examine how children's suffering is constructed linguistically in the wording of the texts.

Studies concerning children and civilians in situations of armed conflict focused on lived experiences represented through narratives. Research in this area examined the effects of wartime exposure and the circumstances that shaped responses to such experiences. A review of studies on war-affected children identified adverse mental health consequences associated with war-related violence and loss (Betancourt & Khan, 2008). In this field, Hamamra et al. (2025) demonstrated that narratives from Gazans through interviews reveal common themes of war-related trauma, such as difficulties, traumatic events, emotional reactions, future expectations, and coping strategies for survival. Likewise, Palestinian children's narratives were explored in the context of the continuous violence (Jawad et al., 2025).

Even with all these contributions, children's suffering in the Karbala accounts and the texts related to Gaza were not studied at the linguistic level. The way in which this suffering was

expressed and organised was not clear in the wording of texts. The two contexts were not explored together. The present study, therefore, investigated the linguistic construction of children's suffering in selected texts from the tragedies of Karbala and Gaza, and offered a comparative account through pragmatic and semiotic approaches.

1.3 Research Objectives

The present study seeks to achieve the following research objectives:

1. To identify the pragmatic strategies used to represent children's suffering in the selected Karbala and Gaza texts.
2. To examine the semiotic aspects of children's suffering in the selected Karbala and Gaza texts.
3. To determine the points of convergence and divergence in the representation of children's suffering between the Karbala and Gaza texts.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the pragmatic strategies used to represent children's suffering in the selected Karbala and Gaza texts?
2. What are the semiotic aspects of children's suffering in the selected Karbala and Gaza texts?
3. What are the points of convergence and divergence in the representation of children's suffering between the Karbala and Gaza texts?

1.5 Procedures of the Study

To fulfil the objectives of the study, the following steps are followed:

1. Presenting a literature review of the study about pragmatics, semiotics, and children's suffering in armed conflict with reference to Karbala and Gaza tragedies.

2. Choosing twelve representative texts drawn from the contexts of Karbala and Gaza, which are sufficient to meet the aims of the study.
3. Adapting an eclectic model for analysing the selected data based on the Rational Speech Act framework (Frank & Goodman, 2012) and Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition. As for the semiotic analysis, it includes Barthes' (1968) semiotic theory.
4. Discussing the results, summing up the conclusions, and presenting recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

1.6 Scope and Limits of the Study

The study is qualitative, and it uses a pragma-semiotic approach to analyse children's suffering in the tragedies of Karbala and Gaza. The texts selected come from two different contexts: historical and devotional texts that record the tragedy of Karbala, and contemporary texts that document the experiences of children in Gaza after the events of 7 October 2023. Together, all these materials form a corpus of twelve representative texts that are presented in six pairs, each of which contains one Karbala text and one Gaza text. The Karbala texts come from Sunni historical sources as well as Shi'ah devotional works, while the Gaza texts are from reports by internationally recognised institutions such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Reuters, and The Guardian. The data are analysed pragmatically and semiotically, according to the theories mentioned above.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The pragma-semiotic investigation of children's suffering in the tragedies of Karbala and Gaza has significance beyond the linguistic, methodological, and cultural levels. This work enhances the knowledge of the construction and encoding of human suffering in language and provides more insights into the textual means by which tragedy is represented in various historical

and cultural contexts. Linguistically, it encourages scholarly engagement by combining pragmatics and semiotics into a coherent comparative framework applied to two bodies of text which are historically far removed but thematically convergent. In doing this, the study provides new methodological directions in comparative linguistic analysis and widens its scope in a manner that has not been explored before. It is also hoped that the study will be useful for students and researchers in the field of linguistics, as it shows how the pragmatic and semiotic tools can be applied systematically to reveal the multi-layered meanings in religious and historical texts in order to enhance the analytical understanding of such contexts.

1.8 Layout of the Study

The study consists of five chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the study, covering the background, the statement of the problem, the research objectives and questions, the procedures, the nature and limits of the study, its significance, and the thesis layout. The second chapter introduces a literature review concerning the fields of pragmatics and semiotics, children's suffering in armed conflict, and the historical and humanitarian contexts of Karbala and Gaza. The third chapter details the methodology of the study, including the nature of the study, data collection, data selection, the criteria of selection, and the theoretical framework. In the fourth chapter, the twelve selected texts are drawn into six comparative pairs for the sake of a pragma-semiotic analysis, followed by the findings of the study. The fifth and final chapter presents the conclusions of the study, together with recommendations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The current study seeks to cover a number of pragma-semiotic theories relevant to the topic under investigation. In order to obtain a comprehensive insight into the ways in which the children suffered in two different tragedies, the study employs two complementary approaches. Pragmatics is interested in the study of the use of language in context, while semiotics is interested in the study of signs and sign systems. This chapter commences with an overview of pragmatics and some important concepts related to it, such as implicature, rational speech act theory, and presupposition. Then, the study presents an overview of semiotics with particular reference to the contributions of Saussure, Peirce, and Barthes, and their interpretations of the concept of the sign. In addition, the chapter highlights the issue of children's suffering in armed conflicts as an important thematic dimension. It further inspects the origins of the Battle of Karbala and offers a chronological account of the most recent crisis in Gaza. Finally, relevant prior studies are systematically reviewed and discussed to situate the current research within the existing scholarly literature.

2.2 Pragmatics

The modern meaning of the word 'pragmatics' is traceable to Morris (1938), who, when the foundations of semiotics were being laid, suggested a threefold division of the discipline. He identified three levels of semiotic inquiry: Syntactics studies the formal relations of signs to one another, semantics deals with the relation of signs to their designata and to the objects they refer to, whereas pragmatics is concerned with the relation of signs to their interpreters. It is also worth noting that Yule (1996) provided four definitions of pragmatics, which are: (1) a domain that explores the meaning intended by the speaker, (2) a domain that explores how context contributes

to the interpretation of meaning, (3) a domain that explores how listeners infer meanings beyond what is explicitly stated, and (4) a domain that explores the expression of relative distance in communication.

From Crystal's viewpoint (2008), pragmatics is the inquiry into the standards that guide the practical utilisation of language, especially during conversation, standards that may be analysed as potential universals or limited to the study of certain languages. Besides that, Huang (2014) described pragmatics as the systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or reliant on, the use of language. Moreover, Siddiqui (2018) noted that pragmatics is a significant branch of linguistics that clarifies the implicit meanings conveyed by a writer or speaker in relation to the collaborative function of linguistic structure, and its users indicate it.

In actuality, the fundamental topics of inquiry of pragmatics include implicature, presupposition, speech act, and deixis (Levinson, 1983).

2.2.1 Implicature

Within the frame of pragmatics, implicature has received extensive academic attention. Grice (1975) contended that conversational participants tend to understand utterances based on the presumption that the speakers are cooperating and making a contribution, usually in accordance with the objectives of communication. From this perspective, communication means not only what is said explicitly by a speaker but also what can be inferred through the pragmatic reasoning of a hearer. On this basis, Brown and Yule (1983) pointed out that conversational interpretation is not based on the semantics of sentences in isolation, but on shared expectations regarding discourse behaviour. Individuals interpret utterances using assumptions regarding cooperative communication along with contextual information. This perspective emphasises the contribution

of pragmatic inference in terms of restoring the intended meanings of speakers in the process of interaction.

According to Grice (1989), there are two forms of implicature, namely, conventional implicature and conversational implicature. Conventional implicature is linked to specific lexical elements with a conventional meaning, conveying an additional meaning to the propositional meaning of the message. This kind of implicature is explained by the following example,

2.1 She is poor, but she is honest.

In (2.1), the conventional meaning of the conjunction 'but' simply states a difference between the two propositions; therefore, the truth value of the statement does not depend on this difference but on the traditional meaning of this connective. On the other hand, Yule (1996) argued that conversational implicature arises whereby the speakers are assumed to adhere to general principles of cooperative communication and proceed to make an inference on the possible meaning of a message conveyed.

In addition, Grice (1975) identified two subtypes of conversational implicatures, namely generalised conversational implicature (GCI) and particularised conversational implicature (PCI). GCI generally does not depend on a specific context, since some of the manifestations of language result in an equilibrium of conclusions. For instance,

2.2 Harry is meeting a woman this evening.

In (2.2), the indefinite article 'a' indicates a non-specific referent that almost satisfies the criteria for the word 'woman', suggesting that the person to be met is neither Harry's mother, sister, wife, nor a close friend. In contrast, PCI is driven more by situational aspects of an utterance. In an exchange such as:

2.3 A: Do you attend the meeting this very evening?

2.4 B: I still need to mark the papers of my students.

On the basis of the reply provided by speaker B, it can be inferred that B would not be present at the meeting based on the response, and therefore, because of the conversational situation, the hearer would probably make the assumption that B would not be present at the meeting because of his workload (Yule, 1996).

Subsequent developments of pragmatic theory have further elaborated on the nature of the phenomenon of conversational implicature and its role in interpretation. Levinson (2000) developed the discussion of generalised conversational implicature by proposing the notion of presumptive meanings, according to which certain interpretations arise as preferred or default inferences unless they are cancelled by contextual information. This proposal grants a more systematic role for GCI in pragmatic theory. In the same line, Horn (2004) regarded implicature as a central component of speaker meaning, since it explained the gap between what is linguistically expressed and what speakers intend to communicate.

Empirical work has also focused on the comprehension process of such inferences. Breheny et al. (2006) examined whether generalised conversational implicatures arise as default interpretations or whether they require contextual reasoning in their interpretation. Introductory pragmatic accounts also focus on the inferential nature of implicature. More generally, Paltridge (2006) defined conversational implicature as the meanings that are extracted by listeners in interaction between literal meaning, contextual knowledge, and assumptions about cooperative communication.

2.2.2 The Rational Speech Act Framework

Meaning in communication often goes beyond literal meaning in sentences. In his account of conversational implicatures, Grice (1975) asserted that utterance interpretation by listeners is

based on assumptions that speakers engage cooperatively in communication and choose expressions to achieve communicative goals. Under this assumption, hearers engage in reasoning about why a particular utterance was produced in a given context and then infer the speaker's intended meaning beyond the literal semantic content.

One important development that would expand on this inferential view is the Rational Speech Act (henceforth RSA) framework proposed by Frank and Goodman (2012). In this framework, communication is considered in terms of rational probabilistic reasoning between speakers and listeners. Speakers are then assumed to choose utterances that achieve their communicative purposes while listeners interpret utterances by reasoning about what a rational agent would have wanted to communicate in the given situation. Therefore, meaning does not arise from literal linguistic form, but instead arises through reasoning about speaker choice (Frank & Goodman, 2012).

Further, Goodman and Stuhlmüller (2013) explained that the pragmatic interpretation in this framework is the result of recursive reasoning between speakers and listeners. In this process, listeners evaluate not only the utterance that was produced but also the alternative expressions that could have been used in the same communicative context. By comparing the chosen expression with these possible alternatives, the listeners infer the communicative intention behind the utterance. Equally important, Goodman and Frank (2016) argued that this probabilistic perspective offers a more explicit explanation of both how pragmatic inferences come about and why their strength may vary depending on contextual conditions.

A central area in which the RSA framework is used is the analysis of scalar implicature. Scalar implicatures occur when the speaker chooses a weaker expression, even though there is a

stronger alternative on the lexical scale available to him or her. Consider the following instance:

2.5 Some of the apples are red.

In (2.5), the use of the expression 'some' typically leads the hearers to infer the claim that not all of the apples are red. This interpretation arises because the listener assumes that a knowledgeable and cooperative speaker would have used the stronger alternative 'all' if that statement were true. Consequently, the choice of the weaker expression gives rise to the inference that the stronger alternative does not hold. From the standpoint of the RSA framework, this inference captures the listener's attempt to account for why the speaker chose one expression over some available alternative (Frank & Goodman, 2012).

The framework also predicts that pragmatic inferences, such as scalar implicatures, are depend on contextual information about the speaker's knowledge. As illustrated above in (2.5), the implicature involved with the utterance may be relative to what the speaker knows about the relevant situation. If the speaker does not provide complete information, this inference may become weaker. For example, if the speaker is only given partial evidence, the listeners might take the utterance more seriously. This sensitivity to contextual knowledge is a consequence of the probabilistic reasoning assumed as the basis of this framework, under which all listeners take into account the speaker's epistemic state in understanding utterances (Goodman & Stuhlmüller, 2013; Bergen et al., 2016).

More recent studies have further expanded the theoretical scope of the RSA framework. According to Scontras et al. (2021), RSA offers a unified account of pragmatic interpretation by linking linguistic meaning, contextual knowledge, and rational communicative behaviour into a unified theoretical account. Correspondingly, as per Degen (2023), the pragmatic interpretation is based on the interaction between the utterance meaning, the prior beliefs held by listeners, as well

as their expectations about how rational speakers select their expressions in various communicative contexts. From this point of view, RSA provides a wider account of how listeners extract richer meanings from utterances in actual communication.

In the RSA framework, pragmatic interpretation is captured as a rational inference between speakers and listeners. The framework is based on a number of theoretically related assumptions that describe how speakers choose utterances and how listeners infer communicative intentions in the situation (Frank & Goodman, 2012; Goodman & Frank, 2016).

These theoretical principles can be summed up as follows:

1. Speaker Rationality assumes that speakers are cooperative and goal-oriented agents who choose utterances rationally to achieve their communicative goals. Instead of producing sentences in a mechanical manner, speakers are conceptualised as choosing utterances that optimise informativeness and communication effectiveness in a certain situation. In the original framework of RSA, speakers are seen as agents who select utterances based on the expected interpretation by the listener, so it fits well with this framework to incorporate audience design directly into the process of utterance creation (Frank & Goodman, 2012). This formulation extends Gricean points about cooperative communication, because it provides a formal description of the process by which speakers choose from a range of linguistic alternatives, in the light of an anticipated interpretation of their listeners. Consequently, meaning is created through the selection of contextually relevant alternatives rather than through the literal encoding of meaning alone (Goodman & Frank, 2016).

2. Speaker's Choice of Utterance refers to the speaker's selection of a specific expression from a set of contextually available alternatives. Pragmatic inference emerges when listeners assess the reasons for the choice of a particular formulation in preference to stronger or more informative

formulations that could be used in the same communicative situation. When reasoning about the non-selection of such alternatives, the listeners generate inferences about the communicative intentions that motivate the speaker's choice and come up with interpretations that are enriched with, for instance, scalar implicatures. This evaluative process consists not in operating over an unlimited set of lexical possibilities but over a set of contextually relevant alternatives. In this way, RSA provides an explanation of how pragmatic interpretations arise in terms of reasoning about speaker choice among competing expressions in a given communicative situation (Frank & Goodman, 2012; Goodman & Stuhlmüller, 2013; Goodman & Frank, 2016).

3. Prior Probability refers to a listener's background assumptions concerning possible states of affairs held before an utterance is processed. Within the Rational Speech Act framework, interpretation is initiated by these prior expectations about the likelihood of different situations, and is subsequently updated when linguistic evidence becomes available (Frank & Goodman, 2012). Since listeners come to interpretation with prior knowledge regarding potential communicative contexts, such prior probabilities influence how strongly an observed utterance changes the listener's interpretation. As a result, the same utterance can have different pragmatic inferences depending on the listener's expectations about the situation before the utterance is produced. In this sense, pragmatic interpretation reflects an interaction between linguistic evidence and the listener's background beliefs about possible states of the world (Degen, 2023; Goodman & Frank, 2016).

4. Bayesian Listener Inference contributes to the concept that when people understand what they hear, they actually are modifying their prior knowledge in light of what may be linguistic evidence. In the frame of RSA, the listener makes a rational consideration about the likelihood of a rational speaker having preferred a specific utterance given the various possible states of the world (Frank

& Goodman, 2012). Interpretation therefore proceeds in the form of probabilistic belief updating in which prior assumptions are altered towards a posterior interpretation that best explains the utterance observed. Through this inferential process, listeners make judgments about the relationships between certain ground-level expressions of the speaker and the underlying communicative intentions. Such probabilistic reasoning thus enables pragmatic enrichments, such as implicature, to emerge through a structured inference process about speaker intentions instead of being based on fixed semantic rules only (Goodman & Stuhlmüller, 2013).

2.2.3 Presupposition

Presupposition, as a fundamental characteristic of language use, is defined by Yule (1996) as an assumption made by the speaker prior to uttering a statement. Such assumptions may arise from particular linguistic constructions or lexical items, which are referred to as presupposition triggers (Levinson, 1983).

Furthermore, presupposition is a proposition that is semantically entailed by a statement and by the negation of that statement. For instance,

2.6 The policemen have ceased the 'softly softly' approach.

Together with its negation

2.7 The policemen have not ceased the 'softly softly' approach.

Both sentences imply that the policemen indeed employed a 'softly softly' strategy in their policing of inner cities. Therefore, presuppositions communicate information presumed to be known and mutually acknowledged by both the writer and the reader, and hence do not require explicit articulation. In this way, the press may indirectly and occasionally subtly assert information that is not actually known by the readers, but is merely implied to be common knowledge (van Dijk, 1991).

The term presupposition can additionally refer to a significant mechanism for organising information. It enables speakers to convey multiple propositions inside a single sentence, while also delineating the primary statement from the supporting propositions. For instance,

2.8 Daniel began smoking yesterday.

(2.8) entails both that Daniel started smoking yesterday and that he did not use to smoke until yesterday (Sauerland, 2008). As a result, Rubab et al. (2021) noted that the term presupposition denotes the act of assuming that something is already known. The significance of presupposition lies in revealing that the wrongful acts committed by others are not the result of ignorance but are committed knowingly.

Yule (1996) classifies presuppositions into six categories:

1. Existential Presupposition

It is the presupposition that specific entities or concepts are extant. It is generally initiated by definite descriptions (noun phrases with the), possessive constructions such as (my, or your), or proper nouns. In other words, the speaker is presumed to affirm the existence of the referenced entities, as in:

2.9 Your father's shirt is exquisite. (>> Your father exists and has a shirt).

The symbol (>>) means 'presupposes'.

2. Factive Presupposition

It originates from terms that presuppose the veracity of their complement sentence. Common triggers encompass words such as 'know', 'realise', 'regret', 'be aware', 'glad', and 'odd'. Thus, the information that comes after triggers such as 'know' can be regarded as a fact and is termed a factive presupposition, as in:

2.10 Stephen wasn't aware that Victoria was wrong. (>> Victoria was wrong).

3. Non-Factive Presupposition

It refers to an assumption that is assumed not to be true and is associated with a number of English verbs, such as 'dream', 'imagine', and 'pretend'. These verbs are used with the presupposition that what follows is not true, as in:

2.11 Isabella imagined she was in Canada. (>> she was not in Canada).

4. Lexical Presupposition

In general, lexical presupposition refers to the employment of one form with its declared meaning that is commonly interpreted alongside the assumption that an alternative (non-asserted) meaning is comprehended. The lexical assumption is illustrated by terms like 'stop', 'start', and 'again', as in:

2.12 Christine started wearing oversized sweaters. (>> Christine was not wearing oversized sweaters before, and she started wearing them).

5. Structural Presupposition

Structural presuppositions involve specific sentence constructions that are usually understood to imply that a portion of the structure has been accepted as true. Speakers may utilise such structures to present information as presupposed and consequently accepted as true by the listener, as exemplified in:

2.13 Where did she travel? (>> She travelled).

6. Counterfactual Presupposition

This type of presupposition is based on the general concept that what is presupposed is contrary to fact, rather than just not true. A certain conditional structure, usually known as a counterfactual conditional, assumes that information covered in if-clauses is false during the time of utterance, as in the following example:

2.14 If you were her father, you would have supported her. (>> You are not her father) (Yule, 1996).

2.3 Semiotics

The origins of modern semiotics are usually traced to the work of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. They established two major theoretical traditions. The term 'semiotics' occasionally refers to the Peircean tradition, whilst Saussure's term 'semiology' is often employed to signify the Saussurean tradition. Nevertheless, in modern times, the expression 'semiotics' is commonly used to encompass the entire field (Nöth, 1995).

Eco (1976) noted that the study of semiotics focuses on anything that can be interpreted as representing something else. According to him, semiotics is the field of study that investigates everything that can be used to tell a lie. This is due to the fact that if something cannot be used to tell a lie, then it cannot be used to tell the truth; in fact, it cannot be used to tell anything at all. According to Chandler (2007), semiotics is defined as 'the study of signs'. It can also be applied to the analysis of textual structures and the production of meaning.

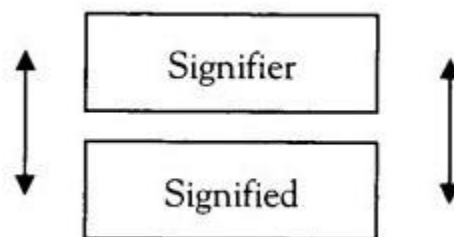
More specifically, Crystal (2008) defined semiotics as the scientific study of the characteristics of natural and artificial signalling systems. In its most ancient meaning, it denotes the study of symbols and sign systems in general within the domain of philosophy. Alternative designations for it include semiotic, semeiotics, significs, semeiology, and semasiology. In combination, linguistic, philosophical, social, and psychological aspects of communication systems are studied in semiotics. Studies of communicative systems are conducted in a holistic manner, encompassing linguistic, psychological, philosophical, and sociological aspects.

Another point to consider is that Saussure (1959) conceptualised the linguistic sign as a dual entity made up of two inseparable components: the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the linguistic form of the sign, such as the spoken or written form of a word, while the signified is the mental concept accompanying the form. Importantly, it is not form or concept alone that constitutes a linguistic sign, but this sign results from the associative relationship between these two components. For example, in the linguistic sign 'tree', the spoken or written form 'tree' is considered the signifier, and the mental concept of a tree is considered the signified.

The subsequent figure exemplifies Saussure's notions regarding the relationship between a signifier and the signified.

Figure 2.1

The Saussurean Sign



Note. From "The Semiotic Analysis of Trademark Law," by B. Beebe, 2004, *UCLA Law Review*, 51(3), p. 634 (<https://www.uclalawreview.org/the-semiotic-analysis-of-trademark-law/>). Copyright 2004 by Barton Beebe.

2.3.1 The Peircean Theory of the Sign

The concept of the sign plays a central role in the theory of semiotics. Peirce (1991) proposed that a sign or representamen is anything that stands for something else in some respect. Within Peirce's semiotic theory, signification is described in terms of a triadic relation involving three elements of the semiotic process: the representamen, the object to be represented, and the

interpretant. The representamen is the form taken by the sign, the object is the entity to which the sign refers, but the interpretant is the meaning produced in the relation between the sign and the object. In this framework, the meaning does not simply occur in and through the sign itself but through the interaction among these three components.

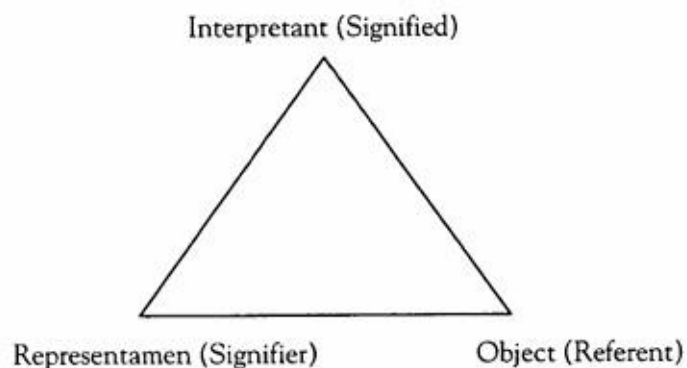
Likewise, Chandler (2007) explained that Peirce's conception of the sign differs from the dyadic model proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure. Whereas Saussure conceptualised the sign as a relation between the signifier and the signified, Peirce proposed a triadic structure in which the sign involves a relation among the representamen, the object, and the interpretant. This triadic construction supplies an expansive framework for understanding the functioning of signals in meaning formation processes.

Furthermore, according to Nöth (1995), the interpretant is the meaning produced in the relationship between the sign and the object. The object can be a concrete thing, an abstract idea, or even a fictional idea. Consequently, the scope of signification in Peirce's theory is not limited to physical referents.

The following figure illustrates Peirce's triadic theory, or semiotic triangle:

Figure 2.2

Peirce's Triadic Theory of the Sign



Note. From “The Semiotic Analysis of Trademark Law,” by B. Beebe, 2004, *UCLA Law Review*, 51(3), p. 636 (<https://www.uclalawreview.org/the-semiotic-analysis-of-trademark-law/>). Copyright 2004 by Barton Beebe.

2.3.2 Barthes' Theory of Semiotics

Crystal (2008) stated that semiotic (or semiological) analysis has developed, particularly in Europe, as part of an attempt to analyse all aspects of human communication as systems of signals (semiotic systems), including not only language but also music, eating, clothing, and dance. One notable figure in this field is the French semiotician Roland Barthes. In relation to Barthes (1968), semiology, also known as semiotics, is the study of sign systems. It goes beyond language codes, which are the purview of linguistics, and encompasses any ‘system of signs’ that can be found in the world, including images, musical sounds, gestures, and objects.

Furthermore, Barthes (1968) formulated denotation as a first-order system and connotation as a second-order system built upon it, as follows:

2.3.2.1 Denotation

In the first level of signification, denotation is described by Barthes (1968) as the ‘literal’ or ‘surface’ meaning of the sign, where the signifier (the form) and the signified (the concept) come together to create a sign that seems to have an objective, clear meaning. Therefore, what an audience or reader takes in at first glance is what is meant by denotation. Moreover, denotation is commonly characterised as the definitional, explicit, literal, fundamental, or intuitive meaning of a sign. The denotative meaning of linguistic signs is what a dictionary seeks to convey. A linguistic sign denotes what it represents; however, in classical philosophical terminology, the term denotation is limited to entities that genuinely exist in reality (Chandler, 2017).

Particularly, Sebeok (2001) elucidated that each sign inherently encodes meaning at the denotative level, signifying its most direct and literal referent. Denotation represents the primary

and most objective level of meaning that a sign aims to communicate. Despite this, he clarified that what is indicated is not any specific thing in the external world but rather a conceptual or archetypal category. For example, the word 'tree' is not the name of an individual tree but rather the general concept of 'treeness', characterised by attributes such as a trunk, branches, and leaves. This abstract conceptualisation enables language users to identify any actual or hypothetical case that conforms to the category. Thus, denotation establishes the essential connection between linguistic form and its conceptual significance.

2.3.2.2 Connotation

Barthes (1968) stated that in a second-order semiological system known as 'connotation', the sign that was originally produced at the denotative level (which includes both the signifier and the signified) takes on a new, higher-order meaning as the signifier. This second level is where the influence of culture, ideology, and history is recognised. Various interpretations, including those that are emotive, associative, and value-laden, are superimposed over the literal meaning. However, it is possible to read secondary overtones into any sign, regardless of intent, since denotation is always accompanied by connotation. While 'connotation' in literature and popular culture often refers to people's subjective interpretations of a word or phrase, semiotics places more emphasis on the collective understanding of a society or subculture. Although context typically limits signs, their connotations are more 'polysemic', or open to interpretation, than their denotations (Chandler, 2017).

It is also worth noting that Sebeok (2001) described connotation as the mechanism by which signs extend to include supplementary layers of meaning arising from association, emotion, or cultural context. Connotation occurs when a sign broadens its reference to encompass other

meanings that are figuratively or symbolically linked to the original denotatum. For example, in the phrase:

2.15 Camila is the root of the problem.

In the above instance, the term 'root' no longer denotes the subterranean portion of a plant but signifies the essential source or cause of a dilemma. Likewise, when an individual is characterised as having 'deep roots' in a community, the term is suggestive of ideas of belonging and enduring affiliation. In each case, the original denotative meaning delimits and informs the succeeding figurative interpretation. Thus, connotation shows the flexibility and depth of human semiosis in that it represents the way that meanings are interpreted beyond their literal reference. It reveals the way that emotions, cultural experiences, and creative associations extend the capacity of signs to be interpreted. Through connotative processes, signs move from being simple literal references towards having subtle, symbolic, culturally important meanings (Cobley & Jansz, 1999).

2.4 Language in the Expression of Human Suffering

Concerning the linguistic representation of pain, Halliday (1998) clarified that human experience is represented by the lexicogrammatical resources of language. In his discussion of pain expression, pain was linguistically reconstructed as a process, quality, or thing based on its semantic and grammatical representation, while the expression of pain was also connected with its grammatical and communicative context. Likewise, Lascaratou and Hatzidaki (2002) examined the verbal expression of pain in Modern Greek and found that pain is primarily perceived as a process rather than a participant or a quality. The linguistic configuration of pain was related to experiential involvement in painful situations, while verbal structure and transitivity patterns were factors in the linguistic construal of suffering. In relation to the linguistic aspect of pain, it was

also explained that painful experience would be linked to meaning construction and experiential perception rather than only to an objective description (Lascaratou, 2007).

Pragmatically, Galofaro (2011) examined the connection between language and pain in terms of contextual interpretation and communicative meaning. Pain expression was related to communicative interaction and meaning interpretation, not just to the sensation alone. In a cross-linguistic study, Jamindang (2022) showed that pain language is determined by linguistic and cultural structures that affect the conceptualisation and communication of suffering. Pain was also demonstrated to be linguistically construed as a process, a quality, or an entity, as determined by the semantic and grammatical resources of language.

In semiotic studies of suffering, Bacchini (2012) studied the linguistic encoding of pain in terms of lexicogrammatical representation and construal from the experiential perspective, considering patterns of evaluation, intensity, and representation. Similarly, Long (2019) explained that pain is a semiotic phenomenon in which signs, symptoms, and semiosis are involved. The interpretation of pain was also related to communicative and social meaning in addition to bodily sensation, and painful experience was related to processes of signification and interpretation through which suffering becomes communicatively meaningful.

2.5 Children's Suffering in Armed Conflict

Childhood is commonly framed as a distinct developmental phase that extends from birth to adolescence and is frequently operationalised within international legal discourse as including everyone under eighteen years of age (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, art. 1). Another point to consider is that Freh (2015) explained that children in situations of armed conflict are exposed to conditions associated with fear, loss, and emotional distress. He further argued that in war environments, children are exposed to repeated stressors that have a negative

impact on their psychological well-being and emotional stability, and that these impacts might remain over time rather than only be a temporary reaction.

Moreover, Macksoud and Aber (1996) reported that children's experiences of war are affected by their disruptions to family life, education, and community structures. Armed conflict affects the social environments required for normal psychosocial development of children, specifically with the disruption of the caregiving systems and daily routines that support emotional regulation and identity formation. From this perspective, Boothby et al. (2006) observed that, irrespective of where the conflict is occurring, children usually suffer enormously from the loss of protective factors of normal childhood. They often have difficulty with feelings of abandonment and insecurity of being torn from caregivers or familiar surroundings. These patterns of trauma, bereavement, fear, and disrupted development are beyond the specific wars and are universal dimensions of children's suffering in armed conflict.

Within the domain of wars, Cummings et al. (2017) showed that the impact of prolonged exposure to violence during formative years may have an enduring effect on children's emotional regulation and sense of self. Children's developmental trajectories are affected not only by direct exposure to violence, but also by secondary stressors such as economic destruction, loss of educational continuity, and family disruption. These conditions erode social environments necessary for healthy development and have longer-term consequences that may linger into the child's development into adolescence and adulthood.

On the whole, Laila et al. (2025) emphasised the crucial role of language, maintaining that when children exposed to conflict share common thematic expressions related to fear, loss, and hopelessness, they articulate these experiences through culturally and linguistically specific

vocabularies. Their analysis conceptualised children's suffering as not only experienced but also narrated and encoded through language shaped by local political and cultural environments.

2.6 The Historical Context of the Tragedy in Karbala

The origins of the tragedy in Karbala can be traced to the earliest dispute over succession within Islam. Following the death of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him (PBUH), the matter of leadership caused divisions in Muslim society, subsequently resulting in the formation of a group faithful to the Prophet's family, afterward known as the Shi'ah. This group believes that Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS), who is the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, and his offspring have the greatest legitimacy for authority (Madelung, 1997).

However, following Imam Ali's tenure, the authority devolved to the Umayyads, controlled by Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan. Importantly, Imam al-Hasan ibn Ali's choice to make an agreement for peace with Muawiyah is seen as a practical solution to the deep instability in politics after Imam Ali's martyrdom. Al-Hasan realised that continued conflict would worsen the plight of the Muslim community; thus, the agreement for peace works as a way to save lives and avoid additional communal disagreement. This peace deal involves pledges that Muawiyah depends on the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah in his ruling, and he also must not assign a successor, so the Muslim community can select their own leader (Momen, 1985).

The rise of Muawiyah marked a turning point, as the capital of the caliphate was transferred to Damascus and the caliphate assumed a more monarchical character. In fact, it is commonly attributed to Muawiyah that he turned the caliphate into a hereditary monarchy. This represented a controversial departure from a society in which leadership had traditionally been determined on the basis of merit or agreement. Yazid ibn Muawiyah became the second Umayyad caliph, following the demise of Muawiyah. This hereditary succession is a critical turning point, as this

was the first time in the history of Islam that the supreme office was inherited (Hawting, 2000; Jafri, 1979).

Jafri (1979) maintained that Yazid is not widely revered in the Muslim community. His anti-Islamic conduct and overtly irreligious ways are not unknown in the Muslim world and bring him contempt and disdain, particularly among those who are concerned with religion. The few authors who try to downplay some of the facts which are uncomplimentary to the Umayyad house are unable to avoid reporting that Yazid is the first of the caliphs to be seen drinking wine in public and that he looks for the worst companions and spends most of his time in the delights of music and singing and in enjoying himself with monkeys and hunting dogs.

Yazid's succession was strongly opposed by some of the remaining companions of the Prophet (PBUH). Yazid was eager to unite his forces. He desired to make important men across his empire swear allegiance to him. He particularly wanted the allegiance of al-Husayn, but Imam al-Husayn felt that hereditary succession by Yazid was not legitimate, and he was unwilling to legitimise it by pledging allegiance (Szanto, 2020).

In this context, the people of Kufa sent letters to al-Husayn. The Kufans did not want to be ruled by the Umayyads, and they vowed to rebel against the Umayyads in case Imam al-Husayn became their leader. Al-Husayn departed Medina and headed to Kufa after sending his cousin, Muslim ibn Aqil, initially. Yazid became aware that al-Husayn was going to do this and sent forces led by the governor of Kufah, Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad, to suppress and terrorise the populace, and his scheme succeeded. Husayn's messenger, Muslim ibn Aqil, arrived earlier in Kufah but was shortly taken captive and executed after support for him in Kufah had collapsed under the Umayyad campaign (Kennedy, 2004).

Unaware of these developments, al-Husayn departed Mecca accompanied by his male supporters, as well as the women and children of his household, and continued his journey towards Iraq. They were never permitted to enter Kufa and were captured in a desert, named Karbala, somewhere along the banks of the Euphrates, on 2 Muharram by a vastly superior force of Yazid. After ten days of waiting, negotiating, and even fighting, one last battle was fought, in which al-Husayn and all of his adult male relatives, as well as supporters and even some children, were killed in a cruel manner (al-Ṭabarī, 1990).

Following the battle, the camp was overrun, and the tents of the camp were set on fire, leaving the remaining members of the household, including women and children, exposed in the desert without protection (Qummi, 2001). Within the domain of the tragedy, the women and children, with the son of al-Husayn, Imam Ali Zayn al-Abedin (AS), who, because of illness, was not able to take part in the fighting, are then captured, with the heads of the martyrs, which were set on spears, to the court of Yazid in Damascus. When they were on their way, they were shown in chains in the marketplaces of the cities through which they passed, and a series of ugly episodes followed (Aghaie, 2004).

2.7 The Chronology of the Recent Crisis in Gaza

To provide historical context, Smith (2017) traced the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1947, the United Nations adopted Resolution 181, known as the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine. The plan was accepted by the Jewish leadership but rejected by the Arab states and Palestinian Arabs, and the State of Israel was subsequently established in 1948. Against this historical background, Alkhaldi et al. (2024) observed that decades of armed conflict have had profound effects on health outcomes,

including disease prevalence, shortages of medical supplies, deteriorating sanitation, damaged infrastructure, and worsening mental health.

The Gaza Strip, one of the occupied Palestinian territories, has been under Israeli occupation for decades and has been subject to an Israeli blockade since 2007. Before the recent escalation, it was home to nearly 2.3 million inhabitants (Boukari et al., 2024). Furthermore, Lardo (2020) argued that Israel exercised effective control over the Gaza Strip through a military administration that regulated many aspects of civilian life while restricting the functions of the Palestinian Authority. During this period, restrictions on the entry of fuel and other essential supplies contributed to severe humanitarian conditions and disrupted the operation of the Gaza Power Plant, reducing the availability of electricity for approximately 1.8 million residents.

Indeed, when Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in 2006, Israel imposed economic sanctions on the Palestinian Authority. Following Hamas's assumption of power in the Gaza Strip in 2007, Israel imposed a severe blockade and conducted repeated military operations in the territory (Qarmout & Béland, 2012).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict escalated sharply on 7 October 2023, when Hamas launched coordinated attacks against Israel following a barrage of rockets. Hamas fighters and members of other Palestinian armed groups breached the border fence surrounding the Gaza Strip and entered southern Israel at several locations. They used a variety of weapons to attack both civilian and military targets, raided numerous locations, and took approximately 250 hostages. Later that day, Hamas announced the launch of an operation named 'Operation Al-Aqsa Flood', describing it as an effort to end the Israeli occupation. These attacks were the deadliest single-day attacks against Israel since 1948, resulting in the deaths of approximately 1,200 people (Amnesty International, 2024).

Following the initial attack, the Israeli military conducted extensive airstrikes and ground operations across the Gaza Strip. Such operations led to the displacement of virtually the entire population. More than 1 million people in northern Gaza were instructed to leave their homes within a single day, forcing over 50% of the population to relocate to Rafah, which was later subjected to further military attacks, displacing approximately 1.4 million residents. Assistance to northern Gaza was subsequently suspended, resulting in further displacement. Al-Mawasi, which was designated by Israel as a humanitarian area, lacked adequate shelter, water, sanitation, and other essential infrastructure. The education sector was also severely affected, with over 87% of schools destroyed or damaged, including all universities. Since 7 October 2023, more than 10,000 schoolchildren and 441 education personnel have been killed in Gaza (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has created severe environmental challenges, resulting in a public health crisis that requires urgent attention and intervention. Its consequences have led to a rise in mental health problems, particularly among children and adolescents, with trauma-related symptoms expected to persist. The water and sanitation crises also pose serious public health threats, as the overwhelming majority of water is unfit for consumption and infectious diseases continue to increase (Beiraghdar et al., 2023).

The report issued by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (2025) documented the devastating impact of the ongoing war in Gaza on children. Since the outbreak of the conflict on 7 October 2023, 18,592 children had been killed, more than 25,000 had been injured, and 864 had lost one or more limbs as a result of military attacks. The report further indicated that approximately 17,000 children had been separated from their parents or relatives, while nearly 38,000 had been orphaned. Many other children had also lost one or both parents, leaving them to

grow up under conditions characterised by displacement, family separation, and severe psychological hardship.

2.8 Previous Studies

This section is concerned with giving an account of some studies that are related to the present study.

The first study was carried out by Bhat (2003) entitled “*Tragedy of Karbala: An Analytical Study of Urdu Historical Writings during the 19th–20th Century*” in India. This study sought to analyse the viewpoints of Urdu historians towards the Karbala event and its political, ideological, and religious ramifications. The researcher employed a qualitative analytical historical approach to examine Urdu historical writings on the tragedy of Karbala. The study identified three interpretive trends: Pro-Ahl-i-Bait, whose writers justified al-Husayn’s position; Pro-Khilafah, whose writers supported Yazid’s candidature for the caliphate and regarded al-Husayn’s movement as a revolt against the established caliphate; and Moderate, whose writers maintained a balanced position towards both sides. The findings showed that the tragedy of Karbala had its roots in the political developments that followed the assassination of Caliph Uthman and contributed to continuing ideological divisions within Muslim intellectual thought. The conclusion of this study was that history should be told in an objective manner, free from sectarian bias, in order to reflect the essence of the early Islamic events.

Hylén (2007) conducted a study in Sweden entitled “*Husayn, the Mediator: A Structural Analysis of the Karbala Drama according to Abu Ja’far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310/923).*” This study has aimed to investigate al-Ṭabarī’s description of the martyrdom of al-Husayn from two perspectives: that of a historical text and a myth. To analyse the structure of the narrative, the researcher adopted Claude Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist theory. Oppositions, codes,

and mediations were determined through an analysis of the chosen text of reference. The study revealed how metaphors could be altered into metonyms, in this case, the comparison of blood and water, which symbolises legitimacy and sacrifice. Al-Husayn is represented as a bridge between the divine and human world, and he is a mediator between good and evil. The results showed that structuralism may efficiently elucidate the ideological and mythic capacities of the early Islamic historiography. The researcher concluded that the structuralist method explained the moral and theological depth of the narrative within Shi'ah thought.

Another study was conducted by Deacon (2021) entitled "*Retelling Karbala: A Literary Analysis of Key Plays of the Iranian Ta'zīyeh Repertoire*" in the United Kingdom. This study sought to examine the literary features and historical development of four major ta'zīyeh plays, namely The Martyrdom of Abbas, The Martyrdom of Qasem, The Martyrdom of Imam Husayn, and Bazar-e Sham. The researcher employed a qualitative literary and historical approach to analyse different versions of the selected plays through their narrative structure, characterisation, compositional features, and historical development. The study revealed the strong influence of naqqali and pardeh-dari traditions on the narrative construction of the plays, while demonstrating an increasing emphasis on family relationships, women's roles, and the representation of children and young characters. The findings also showed that children's suffering was portrayed through the thirst of the children in the besieged camp, Qasem's orphanhood and premature martyrdom, and the suffering of the surviving children following the tragedy of Karbala. The conclusion of the study was that ta'zīyeh scripts preserved the cultural memory of Karbala while continually developing through literary adaptation and historical transmission.

Manzanero et al. (2024) carried out a Spanish study entitled "*War, Torture and Trauma in Preadolescents from Gaza Strip. Two Different Modalities of PTSD.*" This study sought to assess

the effect of prior traumatic experiences on the children's mental health status and identify possible modes of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The study used a quantitative research design and involved a sample of 521 students aged between 11 and 13 from United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East schools. Data were collected using the Arabic version of the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire to assess exposure to war, torture, and symptoms of PTSD. Patterns of trauma were identified using statistical and machine learning methods. Findings pointed out that 26.29% of subjects met the criteria for experiencing the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder after being exposed to damage, death, and torture. Two modalities of PTSD have been found: socially conserved and socially weakened, with the latter showing more severity and social isolation. The study found that traumatic events that recur had a considerable negative effect on children's psychological well-being and highlighted the need for targeted strategies to build Palestinian adolescent psychological resilience.

Ashour et al. (2025) published a Palestinian study under the title "*The Impact of War on Gaza on Children's Malnutrition Since 2023*." This study examined the impact of the war on Gaza on child malnutrition since October 2023 and highlighted its contribution to the increase in mortality among children under five years of age. The researchers described the major forms of malnutrition and discussed the increase in child malnutrition associated with food insecurity following the outbreak of the war in October 2023. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, drawing on field observations, hospital records, interviews with affected families and healthcare professionals, and relevant reports. The findings highlighted the necessity to improve the opportunity to get nutrition and healthcare to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe harming the future of children in Palestine in general and in Gaza in particular.

Further, a Malaysian study was conducted by Salim and Syed Ismail (2025) entitled *“Decoding Innocence in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Semiotics of Palestinian Children’s Cartoons on Twitter.”* The goal of the study was to uncover the symbolic representation of innocence in combat narratives. The study employed a qualitative approach based on Barthes’ semiotic model and Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory. Fifty-five cartoons were purposively selected and analysed using thematic analysis. Six themes were identified by the researchers: Emotional Appeal, Resilience, Political Commentary, Unaligned Representation, Victimhood, and Cultural Context. The findings revealed that the majority of depictions of children centered on their suffering as innocent victims, mirroring the in-group Palestinian experience. The diverse viewpoints that emerged from the unaligned theme served to disprove unilateral assumptions. Cartoons represented children’s innocence and defiance, and also humanised the battle, according to the study.

Finally, a British study was carried out by Latif et al. (2025), entitled *“Cases of Trauma Due to War and Violence Among Children in Gaza.”* This study sought to explain the psychological burden of war on children in Gaza and to highlight their multifaceted mental health needs within enduring conflict. The methodology included a qualitative case report of four children who received support. The researcher employed medical observations and psychological evaluation in a case-study outline. The outcomes indicated widespread dysregulation of emotion, isolation from society, sorrow, and worsening of pre-existing illness caused by ongoing violence, family loss, and homelessness. The findings showed that the children’s conditions deteriorated due to the limited accessibility to mental health services in the context of ongoing conflict. The study concluded that there is an urgent need for comprehensive psychological interventions, improved

mental health services, and continued support to minimise the long-term psychological consequences of war for children in Gaza.

The current study distinguishes itself from previous studies by employing two interrelated levels of analysis within an integrated comparative framework, thereby providing a more comprehensive examination of the phenomenon under investigation. It combines pragmatic and semiotic approaches to investigate how children's suffering is constructed in selected texts from the tragedies of Karbala and Gaza. At the pragmatic level, the study adapts the Rational Speech Act framework developed by Frank and Goodman (2012) for the analysis of historical texts, examining how meaning extends beyond literal expression. It also draws on Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition to analyse the implicit assumptions embedded in the discourse. Accordingly, this level explores the role of linguistic choices in shaping the interpretation of suffering. At the semiotic level, the study is based on Barthes' (1968) semiotic theory to analyse how textual elements function as signs. The denotative level focuses on explicit representation, whereas the connotative level reveals broader cultural and ideological meanings. By integrating these two levels of analysis, the study establishes a coherent comparative framework for examining two historically distinct events. The selection of Karbala and Gaza is deliberate, as both contexts present structurally comparable representations of children's suffering. This integrated design provides a systematic account of the linguistic articulation and symbolic construction of suffering across different historical contexts.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a presentation of the methodology that is used in the present study. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), research methodology may be understood as the general approach that guides the conduct of a research project and informs the selection of the tools and methods used for analysis and data collection. Furthermore, Crotty (1998) defined research methodology as the strategy or plan of action underlying the selection of particular methods and connecting their use to the desired outcomes.

The current chapter begins with a description of the nature of the study. Then, it introduces the process of data collection and provides an overview of the dataset. The choice of the textual data is then explained, and a specification of the criteria adopted in determining the inclusion of the selected texts is provided. The procedures used to analyse the data are then described. The final section in this chapter presents the theoretical framework of the analysis in the present study.

3.2 Nature of the Study

In general, there are three broad approaches to research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Gay et al. (2012) defined quantitative research as involving the collection and analysis of numerical data for the purpose of describing, explaining, predicting, or controlling phenomena of interest. In contrast, Creswell (2014) described qualitative research as an approach to exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. He further explained that qualitative research generally involves emergent questions and procedures, data collected in participants' settings, inductive data analysis, and a flexible reporting structure.

Qualitative research is usually characterised by several methodological features that distinguish it from quantitative approaches. Lapan et al. (2012) explained that qualitative research examines phenomena from the perspective of those directly involved, enabling the subject under investigation to be understood within its context. Bryman (2012) similarly stated that “qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (p. 380). Additionally, Maxwell and Reybould (2015) characterised qualitative research as an inductive and open-ended approach that emphasises understanding participants’ meanings, examining the influence of context, and explicitly incorporating researcher subjectivity. In a similar vein, Aspers and Corte (2021) defined qualitative research as an iterative process through which the scientific community develops an improved understanding by making significant new distinctions arising from closer engagement with the phenomenon under study.

In light of these considerations, the current study adopts a qualitative research approach because it seeks an in-depth interpretation of how children’s suffering is constructed pragmatically and semiotically in the selected texts rather than its measurement through numerical or statistical analysis.

3.3 Data Collection and Description

Conceptually, Taherdoost (2021) stated that “data collection is the process of collecting data aiming to gain insights regarding the research topic” (p. 11). In qualitative research, the process of data collection is an integral part of the research design rather than being an isolated procedural stage. Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that qualitative inquiry is often iterative because data collection and analysis happen simultaneously and inform each other. Equally important, Maxwell (2013) described qualitative research design as interactive, that is, decisions about the

use and interpretation of data develop in response to emerging analytical insights during the research process.

The present study relies solely on written textual materials as its data sources. Because the objective of the research is to explore the ways in which children's suffering is constructed linguistically and semiotically in the selected texts, document analysis is used as the principal method for collecting and analysing the data. More specifically, document analysis is well established in qualitative research as a systematic process of analysing written materials. Bowen (2009) defined it as a method that involves examining and interpreting documents to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge. Accordingly, visual materials are excluded from the corpus because the present study is specifically restricted to written linguistic representations and does not investigate visual signs or multimodal forms of communication.

The corpus analysed in this study is composed of twelve textual excerpts drawn from two groups of sources: classical Arabic sources relating to Karbala and contemporary reports concerning Gaza. The first dataset is made up of passages taken from classical historical accounts of the tragedy of Karbala, and the second dataset is composed of contemporary reports detailing the experiences of children in Gaza following the events of October 2023. Each excerpt is a unit of analysis on its own.

The Karbala dataset contains excerpts drawn from Sunni historiographical works and Shi'ah devotional sources, thereby incorporating accounts from both traditions. On the other hand, the Gaza dataset is composed of reports issued by internationally recognised news organisations and human rights institutions, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Reuters, the Associated Press, and The Guardian. Taken together, these materials

make up a corpus of twelve excerpts that form the documentary basis of the pragma-semiotic analysis undertaken in this study.

3.4 Data Selection

The choice of textual materials is based on their relevance to the research goals as well as their potential to provide analytically rich information. Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that qualitative inquiry generally involves the intentional selection of cases that can illuminate the phenomenon under study and facilitate deeper contextual analysis. Similarly, Patton (2015) contended that purposeful sampling enables qualitative researchers to focus on “information-rich cases” (p. 264) that contribute meaningfully to understanding the research problem.

The texts chosen for the study provide explicit narrative representations of children's experiences of violence, deprivation, and loss and thus constitute appropriate material for pragma-semiotic analysis. The materials relating to the events of Karbala are drawn from recognised historical and devotional writings within the narrative tradition of the tragedy. These materials concern the events of the Karbala tragedy in 61 AH (680 CE), which defines the historical and temporal scope of the Karbala dataset. These sources contain detailed descriptions of the thirst, fear, bereavement, and violence experienced by young members of the Prophet's household and provide linguistically rich material for pragma-semiotic analysis.

The materials relating to Gaza, in turn, are derived from formal reports produced by internationally recognised news organisations and human rights organisations. These reports include narrative descriptions and testimonies concerning the experiences of children in the context of conflict. They provide comparable thematic material, enabling an examination of how the effects of violence and loss on children are represented pragmatically and semiotically across the two contexts.

The selected textual excerpts and their corresponding sources are presented in Table 3.1. The table identifies the original sources of the Karbala excerpts, their published English translations, and the sources of the Gaza excerpts.

Table 3.1**Sources of the Selected Data**

Pair	Karbala Data	Original Arabic Source	Published English Translation	Gaza Data	Gaza Source
1	Excerpt (1)	Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī: Tārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk (Al-Ṭabarī, 1966)	The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Caliphate of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah, A.D. 680–683/A.H. 60–64 (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990)	Excerpt (1)	Thirst as a Weapon: UN Experts Condemn Israel's Deliberate Dehydration and Starvation of the Palestinian People (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2025)
2	Excerpt (2)	Waq'at al-Ṭaff (Abū Mikhnaf, 1988)	The Event of Taff: The Earliest Historical Account of the Tragedy of Karbala (Abu Mikhnaf, 2012)	Excerpt (2)	A Gaza Father Mourns His Baby Boy, Killed in Bed by an Israeli Airstrike (Hana & Shurafa, 2024), Associated Press
3	Excerpt (3)	Waq'at al-Ṭaff (Abū Mikhnaf, 1988)	The Event of Taff: The Earliest Historical Account of the Tragedy of Karbala (Abu Mikhnaf, 2012)	Excerpt (3)	Killing of Young Siblings at Gaza Water Point Shows Seeking Life's Essentials Now a Deadly Peril (Tantesh & Graham-Harrison, 2025), The Guardian
4	Excerpt (4)	Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī: Tārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk (Al-Ṭabarī, 1966)	The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Caliphate of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah, A.D. 680–	Excerpt (4)	Israeli Strikes Kill 10 at Gaza Shelter, Israel Says Targeted Militants (Al-Mughrabi & Abu Alkas, 2025), Reuters

Pair	Karbala Data	Original Arabic Source	Published English Translation	Gaza Data	Gaza Source
			683/A.H. 60–64 (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990)		
5	Excerpt (5)	Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī: Tārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk (Al-Ṭabarī, 1966)	The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Caliphate of Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiyah, A.D. 680–683/A.H. 60–64 (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990)	Excerpt (5)	‘I’m So Scared, Please Come’: Hind Rajab, Five, Found Dead in Gaza 12 Days After Cry for Help (Sinmaz, 2024), The Guardian
6	Excerpt (6)	Nafas al-mahmūm fī muṣībat sayyidinā al-Ḥusayn al-maẓlūm (Al-Qummī, 1992)	Nafasul Mahmoom: Relating to the Heart Rending Tragedy of Karbala (Qummi, 2001)	Excerpt (6)	Bombarded Twice in Gaza, 4-Year-Old Ahmed Loses Parents, Then Legs (Al-Mughrabi, 2023), Reuters.

The selection process, therefore, prioritises texts containing analytically rich narrative content and clear linguistic constructions suitable for the comparative pragma-semiotic analysis conducted in this study.

3.5 Criteria for Data Selection

Data selection in qualitative research is usually guided by methodological criteria to ensure analytical relevance and adequacy of the data, instead of statistical representativeness. Qualitative inquiry often relies on purposive sampling, where materials are selected because they constitute information-rich cases capable of helping to illuminate the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

Accordingly, the corpus used in this thesis is guided by three main criteria, namely, information richness, analytical saturation, and documentary credibility. First, information

richness refers to the choice of texts that have enough narrative and linguistic details to enable detailed qualitative interpretation (Patton, 2015). Therefore, the selected excerpts contain explicit narrative descriptions in which the pragmatic and semiotic examination of children's experiences within conflict narratives can take place.

Second, analytical saturation describes the point at which additional data no longer provide substantially new information. It is reached when the occurrence of recurring patterns and themes becomes sufficiently observable within the dataset (Guest et al., 2006), and therefore, additional data collection would not contribute significantly to the analysis.

Third, documentary credibility deals with the reliability and verifiability of the sources from which the texts have been taken. In qualitative document analysis, documents are required to be examined systematically and interpreted in a publication context in order to provide an analytically credible interpretation (Bowen, 2009). For this reason, the corpus is limited to identifiable and formally published sources with a clear institutional or historiographical provenance.

3.6 Procedures for Analysing Data

The analysis of the selected texts follows a systematic qualitative procedure that includes the following steps:

1. The analysis is organised around six thematic axes, each comprising two texts: one from the Karbala context and one from the Gaza context.
2. In each pair, the Karbala text appears first in Arabic, together with its published English translation.
3. The Karbala text is analysed pragmatically using the principles of the RSA framework.
4. Presupposition analysis is carried out to identify the implicit assumptions embedded in the text.

5. The semiotic level is then applied by identifying and analysing the textual signs and their denotative and connotative meanings in accordance with Barthes' semiotic model.
6. The corresponding Gaza text is then introduced and analysed following the same sequence of analytical steps.
7. The findings obtained from the selected texts are compared to identify similarities and differences in their pragmatic and semiotic representations across the two narrative contexts.

3.7 Theoretical Framework

The present study employs an adapted eclectic analytical framework that operates at two complementary levels: pragmatic and semiotic. It aims to explore how meaning is constructed in the analysed texts. The framework integrates three theoretical components: Frank and Goodman's (2012) Rational Speech Act (RSA) framework, Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition, and Barthes' (1968) theory of semiotics.

At the pragmatic level, the researcher adapts the RSA framework and Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition. Frank and Goodman's (2012) RSA framework is selected because it provides systematic principles for investigating how speakers make deliberate, goal-oriented linguistic choices to achieve specific communicative effects on their audiences. This dimension is central to the texts examined in the present study. All four principles are modified for qualitative textual analysis. Speaker Rationality explores how speakers construct utterances purposefully to maximise communicative effect. Speaker's Choice of Utterance investigates how speakers make specific choices among available lexical and structural forms to achieve particular communicative outcomes. Prior Probability represents the culturally and religiously shared knowledge on which speakers draw when constructing their utterances to activate specific inferential responses.

Bayesian Listener Inference is regarded as a process whereby a rational listener updates their interpretation in response to successive linguistic choices and the available contextual evidence.

Turning to Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition, six types of presupposition are employed in the analysis: existential presuppositions, triggered by definite noun phrases and possessive constructions that presuppose the existence of an entity; factive presuppositions, triggered by verbs that presuppose the truth of their complements; non-factive presuppositions, triggered by verbs that presuppose the falsity of their complements; lexical presuppositions, triggered by lexical items whose use presupposes an unstated meaning; structural presuppositions, triggered by grammatical constructions that present certain information as given; and counterfactual presuppositions, triggered by structures that presuppose information contrary to fact.

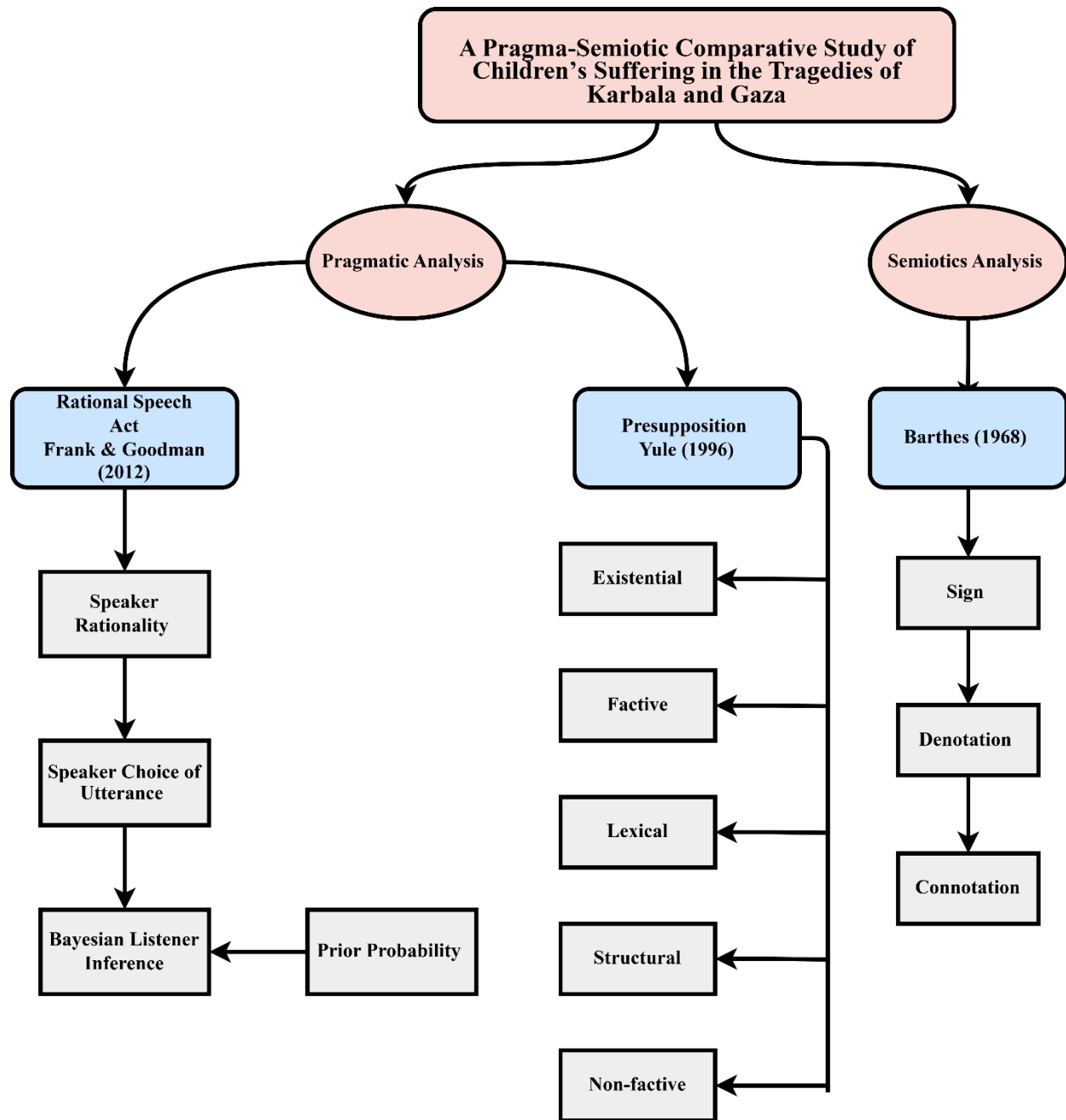
At the semiotic level, Barthes' (1968) theory of semiotics is used. The analysis begins by identifying the central semiotic sign in each text, understood as the central unit around which meaning is constructed. The identified sign is then analysed in terms of two levels of signification: denotation, which represents the literal and direct representation of children's suffering in the selected texts; and connotation, which represents the cultural, religious, and ideological meanings constructed through the sign in its contextual use.

The three theoretical components are used in a complementary manner and together form the pragma-semiotic framework of the study. The RSA framework traces the inferential trajectories produced by speakers' deliberate linguistic choices. Yule's classification describes the implicit assumptions treated as shared knowledge and activated by those choices. Barthes' semiotic theory then demonstrates the cultural, religious, and ideological meanings that emerge as

these linguistic choices form layered semiotic patterns across the texts. The analytical framework is presented in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

The Theoretical Framework of Data Analysis (adapted from Frank & Goodman, 2012; Yule, 1996; Barthes, 1968)



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the twelve selected texts from the contexts of Karbala and Gaza are analysed pragmatically and semiotically in six thematic comparative pairs dealing with different aspects of children's suffering. The eclectic analytical framework adapted in this study, as described in Chapter Three (Section 3.7), is employed during the chapter in a consistent manner. At the pragmatic level, the analysis is based on the Rational Speech Act framework by Frank and Goodman (2012) and upon presupposition as presented by Yule (1996), before moving to the semiotic level based on Barthes' (1968) semiotic theory. In this way, the chapter has a parallel analytical structure in both contexts and is consistent in the way that all six pairs are treated.

4.2 Weaponised Deprivation of Water

In the selected texts, the deprivation of water does not result from natural scarcity but from deliberate action. The texts represent this deprivation through language that expresses restriction and assigns responsibility. In both contexts, the withholding of water is linked to its immediate consequences.

4.2.1 Karbala Excerpt (1)

فقال الحر: يا أهل الكوفة، لأَمَّكُم الهَيْلُ . . . أَمْسَكْتُمْ بِنَفْسِهِ، وَأَخَذْتُمْ بِكَظْمِهِ، وَأَحْطَمْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ . . . وَأَصْبَحَ فِي أَيْدِيكُمْ كَالْأَسِيرِ لَا يَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِهِ نَفْعًا، وَلَا يَدْفَعُ ضَرًّا، وَحَلَّاتُمُوهُ، وَنَسَاءَهُ وَأَصْيَبِيَّتَهُ وَأَصْحَابَهُ عَنْ مَاءِ الْفَرَاتِ الْجَارِي الَّذِي يَشْرَبُهُ الْيَهُودِيُّ وَالْمَجُوسِيُّ وَالنَّصْرَانِيُّ، وَتَمَرَّغُ فِيهِ خَنَازِيرُ السَّوَادِ وَكِلَابُهُ، وَهَاهُمْ أَوْلَاءُ قَدْ صَرَعَهُمُ الْعَطَشُ، بِنُسْمَا خَلَفْتُمْ مُحَمَّدًا فِي ذَرْبِهِ! لَا سِقَاكُمْ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الظُّلَمِ إِنْ لَمْ تَتُوبُوا وَتَنْزِعُوا عَمَّا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا فِي سَاعَتِكُمْ هَذِهِ.

(الطبري، 1966، ص. 428)

Then al-Ḥurr said, “People of al-Kūfah, may your mothers be deprived of their sons and may tears come to their eyes . . . You have laid hold of his life; you have seized his throat; you have encircled him on every side . . . He has come into your hands like a prisoner who no longer can attract benefit to himself and cannot secure himself against harm. You have prevented him, his womenfolk, his children, and his followers from the water of the flowing Euphrates, which Jews, Magians, and Christians may drink, and which the pigs and dogs of Sawād wallow in. Now they are likely to die of thirst. How wickedly you have treated the offspring of Muḥammad! May God not give you water to drink on the Day of Thirst, if you do not repent and do not desist from what you are set upon this day and this hour.” (al-Ṭabarī, 1990, pp. 128–129)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: From the perspective of the Rational Speech Act framework, al-Ḥurr is the speaker, while the people of al-Kūfah are the intended listeners. The speaker's rationality is reflected in the linguistic organisation of the utterance, particularly in the explicit encoding of the agent, action, affected participants, and resource. In “وَحَالَتْهُمُ، وَنِسَاءَهُ وَأَصْصِيْبَتَهُ وَأَصْحَابَهُ” “You have prevented him, his womenfolk, his children, and his followers from the water of the flowing Euphrates”, the second-person plural verbal form “وَحَالَتْهُمُ” explicitly encodes the addressees as the agents of the action, whereas the coordinated noun phrases “وَنِسَاءَهُ وَأَصْصِيْبَتَهُ وَأَصْحَابَهُ” identify the affected participants. The prepositional phrase “عَنْ مَاءِ الْفُرَاتِ الْجَارِي” “from the water of the flowing Euphrates” specifies the resource associated with the action. The utterance therefore establishes a linguistically explicit relation among agent, action, affected participants, and resource, allowing the listeners to identify the represented state from the linguistic information encoded in the utterance. The speaker's rationality is consequently manifested through

the selection and arrangement of linguistic forms that make the relevant participants and relations explicit.

Speaker's Choice of Utterance: The selected formulation can be compared with alternative utterances that could communicate a similar state. The expression “وَحَالَّتُمُوهُ، وَنِسَاءُهُ، وَأَصْنَابُهُ” “You have prevented him, his womenfolk, his children, and his followers from the water of the flowing Euphrates” is more informative than an alternative such as “There is a water shortage”, which does not linguistically specify an agent, affected participants, or the particular resource. Another alternative, “You have deprived them of water”, identifies an agent and a general action but does not explicitly identify the affected participants individually or specify the Euphrates as the resource. The selected utterance instead combines the agentive verbal form “وَحَالَّتُمُوهُ”, the coordinated noun phrase “وَأَصْنَابُهُ وَأَصْنَابُهُ”, and the specific noun phrase “مَاءِ الْفُرَاتِ الْجَارِي” thereby encoding more information. This greater elaboration increases the utterance's cost, whereas its greater specificity increases its utility by enabling the listener to recover the intended state more precisely. The choice therefore reflects the RSA trade-off between informativeness and production cost.

Prior Probability: Before processing the water-related utterance, the listeners have already encountered linguistic information concerning the referent's restricted condition. The preceding expression “وَأَصْبَحَ فِي أَيْدِيكُمْ كَالْأَسِيرِ، لَا يَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِهِ نَفْعًا، وَلَا يَدْفَعُ عَنْهَا ضَرًّا” “He has come into your hands like a prisoner who no longer can attract benefit to himself and cannot secure himself against harm” establishes a contextual representation before the subsequent statement is processed. The prepositional phrase “فِي أَيْدِيكُمْ” “into your hands” encodes the relation between the referent and the addressees, while “كَالْأَسِيرِ” “like a prisoner” establishes an explicit comparison. The two negative constructions “لَا يَمْلِكُ” and “لَا يَدْفَعُ” further encode restricted agency. Accordingly, the

listener's prior representation is formed from the linguistic context already provided before the water-related utterance. The relevant prior is therefore the listener's pre-existing contextual information, not an interpretation of the meanings of individual lexical items.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The listeners subsequently use the linguistic evidence in the utterance to update their interpretation of the true state. In “وَحَالَتْهُمْ، وَنِسَاءَهُ وَأَصْصِيْبَتَهُ وَأَصْحَابَهُ عَنْ مَاءِ “*“الْفُرَاتِ الْجَارِي*” “You have prevented him, his womenfolk, his children, and his followers from the water of the flowing Euphrates”, the second-person plural form “وَحَالَتْهُمْ” identifies the addressees as the agents, the coordinated noun phrases identify the affected participants, and “مَاءِ الْفُرَاتِ الْجَارِي” identifies the resource. The listener then incorporates the information in “الَّذِي يَشْرَبُهُ الْيَهُودِيُّ وَالْمَجُوسِيُّ” “*“وَالنَّصْرَانِيُّ*” “which Jews, Magians, and Christians may drink”. This additional linguistic information changes the listener's representation from a possible state involving unspecified thirst to a more specific state in which the identified water source exists and is available to other participants, while access to it is prevented for the previously identified group. The inference therefore goes beyond the literal wording by integrating the speaker's lexical and structural choices with the listener's prior information. The resulting interpretation is a pragmatic inference about the state that best accounts for why the speaker selected this particular utterance, rather than an inference derived merely from grammatical connectors or syntactic structure.

As regards presupposition, the existential definite noun phrases “مَاءِ الْفُرَاتِ الْجَارِي” and “the water of the flowing Euphrates” present the water source as specific and identifiable. Definiteness is encoded through the annexation of “مَاءِ” to the proper noun “الْفُرَاتِ” in Arabic and through the definite article in “the water of the flowing Euphrates” in English. Both constructions therefore presuppose the existence of the Euphrates and its flowing water rather than introducing the source as new information. The corresponding possessive expressions “نِسَاءَهُ وَأَصْصِيْبَتَهُ وَأَصْحَابَهُ” and “his

womenfolk, his children, and his followers” presuppose the existence of the participants and their relationship to the previously established referent. This relationship is grammatically marked by the Arabic pronominal suffix attached to each coordinated noun and by the English possessive determiner “his”. Coordination maintains one possessive relationship throughout. Similarly, the related possessive forms “نريته” and “the offspring of Muḥammad” presuppose the existence of Muḥammad’s offspring and their relationship to him. The relationship is encoded by the attached possessive suffix in “نريته” and by the of-construction in “the offspring of Muḥammad”. In both constructions, the existence of the related participants is treated as established information and remains presupposed when the clause is negated. The lexical contrast in “لا يملك لنفسه نفعًا، ولا يدفع ضرًا” and “no longer can attract benefit to himself and cannot secure himself against harm” lies in the English item “no longer”, which presupposes an earlier state in which the referent could obtain benefit for himself. The Arabic verbal negation “لا يملك” and “لا يدفع”, by contrast, asserts the present absence of the abilities to obtain benefit and prevent harm without lexically presupposing their previous existence. Thus, “لا يملك لنفسه نفعًا، ولا يدفع ضرًا” and “no longer can attract benefit to himself and cannot secure himself against harm” share the assertion of present inability, whereas the presupposition of an earlier ability is linguistically encoded only by “no longer” in the English construction.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: “ماء الفرات الجاري” “the water of the flowing Euphrates” functions as the central Sign because the passage organises the representation around the relationship between an identifiable essential resource and differentiated access to it. Its connection with “حالتموه . . . عن” “You have prevented him . . . from” establishes restriction, while the subsequent participant expressions distinguish those who are denied access from those represented as able to drink from the same

source. The sign is therefore constructed through the textual relationship between the resource and the contrasting access patterns established around it.

Denotation: “ماء الفرات الجاري” “the water of the flowing Euphrates” directly identifies a particular physical water source, with “الفرات” “Euphrates” specifying its geographical reference and “الجاري” “flowing” describing its physical condition. The construction “عن . . . حائلتموه . . . عن” “You have prevented him . . . from” directly represents restricted access, while “نساءه وأصبيته وأصحابه” “his womenfolk, his children, and his followers” identifies those affected. The relative construction “الذي يشربه اليهود والمجوسى والنصراني” “which Jews, Magians, and Christians may drink” directly represents access by other human groups. The subsequent “خنازير السواد وكالبه” “the pigs and dogs of Sawād” introduces non-human entities represented as having contact with the same source. The direct representation therefore comprises the physical resource, its geographical and physical specification, the participants denied access, and those represented as having access to or contact with it.

Connotation: The contrast between “عن . . . حائلتموه . . . عن” “You have prevented him . . . from” and “الذي يشربه” “which . . . may drink” produces the second-order association of unequal accessibility. The resource remains represented as available, but access to it is linguistically differentiated according to the participants concerned. The reference to “خنازير السواد وكالبه” “the pigs and dogs of Sawād” strengthens this contrast by placing non-human entities within the sphere of access while the previously identified group remains excluded. The coordinated “نساءه وأصبيته وأصحابه” “his womenfolk, his children, and his followers” extends the associative effect across several categories. The resulting meaning is therefore deprivation through unequal access to an available essential resource, generated by the contrastive organisation of access and restriction rather than by the literal reference to the resource itself.

4.2.2 Gaza Excerpt (1)

Israel is using thirst as a weapon to kill Palestinians, the experts said. Cutting off water and food is a silent but lethal bomb that kills mostly children and babies. The sight of infants dying in their mothers' arms is unbearable. How can world leaders sleep while this suffering continues? . . . Israel's blockade and destruction of civilian infrastructure has left most of Gaza's two million residents displaced and without access to the minimum vital amount of drinking water, the experts said. This has led to deaths and widespread illness caused by water pollution, and a lack of sanitation and hygiene. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2025, paras. 2–3)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: From the RSA perspective, The UN experts are the speakers, while the readers of the statement are the intended listeners. The linguistic organisation of “Israel is using thirst as a weapon to kill Palestinians” encodes the participant and action relations through the subject “Israel”, the progressive verbal construction “is using”, the noun “thirst”, the instrumental phrase “as a weapon”, and the infinitival construction “to kill Palestinians”. The subject identifies the agent, the instrumental construction assigns a functional role to “thirst”, and the infinitival construction specifies the represented purpose and affected group. The subsequent statement, “Cutting off water and food is a silent but lethal bomb that kills mostly children and babies”, further specifies the represented action through the participial construction “Cutting off”, the coordinated noun phrase “water and food”, and the relative clause “that kills mostly children and babies”. The speakers consequently use linguistic forms that explicitly encode the agent, action, means, purpose, resources, and affected population. The utterance therefore provides the listeners

with sufficient linguistic information to establish the relevant participant and action relations without relying on a general description of the situation.

Speaker's Choice of Utterance: The selected formulation can be compared with possible Alternatives such as "Palestinians are suffering from thirst" and "There is a shortage of water and food." The first alternative identifies the affected population and the physical condition but does not specify an agent or establish the instrumental relation expressed by "as a weapon"; the second identifies the resources but does not specify who is responsible for their interruption or who is predominantly affected. By contrast, "Israel is using thirst as a weapon to kill Palestinians" combines the agent, the means, the instrumental relation, and the affected population within one construction. The additional formulation "Cutting off water and food is a silent but lethal bomb that kills mostly children and babies" further specifies the resources and the affected group through its relative clause. These additional linguistic elements increase Cost in comparison with the shorter alternatives, but they also increase Utility by providing more precise information about the agent, the resources, the affected population, and the represented outcome. The speaker therefore selects a formulation whose additional linguistic material provides greater communicative precision than the less informative alternatives.

Prior Probability: Before processing the later statement "without access to the minimum vital amount of drinking water", the listeners have already encountered "using thirst as a weapon" and "Cutting off water and food", followed by information concerning children and babies. These preceding expressions establish contextual information concerning deprivation of essential resources and its effects. The later phrase "the minimum vital amount of drinking water" is consequently processed against this established context. "Drinking water" specifies the resource already introduced through "water", while "minimum vital amount" narrows the representation by

specifying the amount concerned. The listeners therefore possess prior contextual information about water deprivation before processing the later proposition. Prior Probability consequently resides in the information already established in the discourse, rather than in an interpretation of the lexical meanings of individual expressions.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The pragmatic listeners integrate the successive linguistic information to update their representation of the true state. The statement “Israel is using thirst as a weapon to kill Palestinians” establishes an agent, an instrumental relation, and an affected population. The following statement, “Cutting off water and food is a silent but lethal bomb that kills mostly children and babies”, adds the affected resources and identifies children and babies as the predominantly affected group. The later expression “most of Gaza’s two million residents displaced and without access to the minimum vital amount of drinking water” further specifies the represented state by introducing displacement and restricted access to drinking water. The final statement, “This has led to deaths and widespread illness caused by water pollution, and a lack of sanitation and hygiene”, supplies additional information concerning the outcomes and conditions associated with the preceding state. Through pragmatic inference, the listeners therefore update the true state from a general representation involving thirst and deprivation to a more specific representation involving restricted access to essential drinking water, displacement, deaths, and widespread illness. The inference results from integrating the successive propositions with the contextual information already available, rather than from grammatical structure or connective expressions alone.

Concerning presupposition as presented, the existential definite phrase “the minimum vital amount of drinking water” presents an identifiable threshold whose existence is treated as established. The definite article in “the minimum vital amount” marks this threshold as

identifiable, while the prepositional complement “of drinking water” specifies the resource concerned. The corresponding possessive phrase “Israel’s blockade and destruction of civilian infrastructure” presupposes the existence of Israel and of the blockade and destruction attributed to it. The nominalisation “destruction of civilian infrastructure” also presupposes the prior existence of the infrastructure affected by the destructive process. Similarly, the possessive expression “Gaza’s two million residents” presupposes the existence of Gaza and the residents associated with it. The lexical construction “Cutting off water and food” presupposes an earlier state in which water and food were available before their supply was interrupted. The phrasal verb “cutting off” encodes a change from availability to non-availability, while “water and food” identify the affected resources. The related verb “continues” in “while this suffering continues” presupposes that the suffering existed before the time referred to and remains in progress. The structural interrogative “How can world leaders sleep while this suffering continues?” embeds the continuation of suffering within the subordinate while-clause as presupposed information. The interrogative asks how world leaders can sleep under that condition rather than whether the suffering continues. Consequently, the questioned proposition occurs in the main clause, while the subordinate clause retains the prior existence and continuation of the suffering as backgrounded information.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: “thirst” functions as the central Sign because the passage organises deprivation through the relationship between a bodily condition, restricted access to essential resources, and their stated consequences. The construction “Israel is using thirst as a weapon to kill Palestinians” establishes an instrumental relation, while “Cutting off water and food” and “without access to the minimum vital amount of drinking water” extend the representation to restricted access. The

subsequent “deaths and widespread illness” develops the same textual configuration through its consequences. The sign is therefore constructed through the connected representation of condition, restriction, and outcome.

Denotation: “thirst” directly refers to a physical bodily condition associated with the need for water. The phrase “as a weapon” directly places that condition within an instrumental construction, while “to kill Palestinians” explicitly identifies the stated outcome and affected group. “Cutting off water and food” directly represents the interruption of access to essential resources, while “the minimum vital amount of drinking water” specifies the required resource. “without access” directly represents restricted availability, and “deaths and widespread illness” identifies the stated consequences. The references to “water pollution” and “a lack of sanitation and hygiene” further specify the conditions associated with those consequences. The direct representation therefore comprises the bodily condition, the essential resources, restricted access, and the stated physical and environmental consequences.

Connotation: The combination of “thirst” with “as a weapon” produces an associative shift from a physiological condition to an instrumental function. This association is extended through “Cutting off water and food”, where deprivation is linguistically connected with the removal of essential resources. The phrase “without access to the minimum vital amount of drinking water” further associates necessity with restricted availability rather than simple absence. The movement towards “deaths and widespread illness” extends the association to severe consequences, while “water pollution” and “a lack of sanitation and hygiene” broaden it to environmental and sanitary conditions. The resulting second-order meaning is deprivation produced through restricted access to an essential resource and extended through its consequences.

This meaning emerges from the relationships among the expressions across the passage, rather than from the literal meaning of “thirst” alone.

4.3 Targeted Killing of Children

The killing of children is represented as an action directed towards a particular child rather than as an undifferentiated outcome. The texts mention this act by using linguistic forms that name the child and locate him in a particular setting. In both situations, the act is associated with the vulnerability of the child and the situations in which it takes place.

4.3.1 Karbala Excerpt (2)

وقعد الحسين [عليه السلام ف]أتي بصبي له، [هو الرضيع أو اكبر منه] عبدالله بن الحسين، فأجلسه في حجره فهو في حجره إذ رماه أحد بني أسد [حرملة بن كاهل أو هاني بن ثببت الحضرمي] بسهم فذبحه، فتلقى الحسين [عليه السلام] دمه، فلما ملأ كفه صبه في الارض ثم قال: رب إن تك حبست عنا النصر من السماء فاجعل ذلك لما هو خير، وانتقم لنا من هؤلاء الظالمين. (أبو مخنف، 1988، ص. 246)

Al-Husayn [(as) then] sat down and his baby was brought to him. [He was an infant or [a little] older than that] called ‘Abdullah bin al-Husayn and he seated him on his lap. [The baby] was in his lap as one of the Banu Asad [either Harmalah bin Kahil or Hani’ bin Thubait al-Hadhrami] shot an arrow which slaughtered him. Al-Husayn (as) caught [the child’s] blood [in the palm of his hand]. When his palm was full, he poured it onto the ground and said: “O Lord, if it be so that You have kept the help of Heaven from us, then let it be for something better [according to Your wisdom]. Take vengeance on these oppressors on our behalf.” (Abu Mikhnaf, 2012, p. 238)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: According to the RSA framework, al-Husayn is the speaker, while those present at the scene constitute the pragmatic listeners; the prayer is addressed to Allah. The

utterance “O Lord, if ربّ إن تك حبست عنا النصر من السماء فاجعل ذلك لما هو خير، وانتقم لنا من هؤلاء الظالمين” “if it be so that You have kept the help of Heaven from us, then let it be for something better [according to Your wisdom]. Take vengeance on these oppressors on our behalf” contains linguistic forms that establish the relations among the participants. The vocative “ربّ” “O Lord” identifies the addressee of the prayer, while the second-person reference “You” and the first-person plural forms “us” and “our” distinguish the participants referred to in the utterance. The conditional construction “إن تك حبست عنا النصر من السماء” “if it be so that You have kept the help of Heaven from us” presents a condition, followed by “فاجعل ذلك لما هو خير” “then let it be for something better”, which specifies the requested response to that condition. The imperative “وانتقم لنا” “Take vengeance on our behalf” then expresses the requested action, while “من هؤلاء الظالمين” “on these oppressors” identifies its target. The linguistic organisation therefore encodes the speaker’s condition, the requested response, and the participants involved, providing the pragmatic listeners with identifiable relations through the forms selected in the utterance.

Speaker’s Choice of Utterance: He selected utterance can be compared with possible Alternatives such as “انصرنا وانتقم منهم” “Help us and take vengeance on them” or “انتقم منهم” “Take vengeance on them.” These alternatives would communicate a direct request with less linguistic material, but they would omit the conditional construction “إن تك حبست عنا النصر من السماء” “if it be so that You have kept the help of Heaven from us” and the consequent expression “فاجعل ذلك لما هو خير” “then let it be for something better.” The selected utterance consequently has greater Cost because it contains a conditional clause, a consequent clause, and an additional imperative. However, these forms increase Utility by specifying the situation to which the request responds, the speaker’s response to that situation, and the action requested. The expression “هؤلاء الظالمين” “these oppressors” is also more informative than the shorter alternative “them”, because the

demonstrative identifies the group contextually and the noun specifies its categorisation. The speaker's selection therefore uses additional linguistic material to provide greater precision concerning the condition, requested outcome, and target of the utterance.

Prior Probability: Before the utterance “رَبِّ إِن تَكُ حَبِستَ عَنَّا النِّصْرَ مِنَ السَّماءِ” “O Lord, if it be so that You have kept the help of Heaven from us” is produced, the pragmatic listeners have already encountered the preceding representations “بَسَمِهِ فذبحه” “shot an arrow which slaughtered him”, “فَتَلَقَّى الحُسَيْنَ [عليه السَّلَام] دَمَهُ”, “Al-Husayn (as) caught the child's blood”, and “فَلَمَّا مَلَأَ كَفَّهُ صَبَّه” “when his palm was full, he poured it onto the ground.” These preceding linguistic propositions establish the immediate situation before the speaker produces the prayer. The listeners therefore have contextual information concerning the child's killing and its physical consequence before processing the speaker's reference to the absence of help. Prior Probability consequently concerns the information already available to the listeners from the preceding event before the new utterance is processed, rather than their prior knowledge of the meanings of individual words.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The pragmatic listeners integrate the speaker's utterance with the preceding context to update their representation of the true state. The conditional expression “إِن تَكُ حَبِستَ عَنَّا النِّصْرَ مِنَ السَّماءِ” “if it be so that You have kept the help of Heaven from us” introduces a possible state concerning the absence of help, while “فَاجْعَلْ ذَلِكَ لِمَا هُوَ خَيْرٌ” “then let it be for something better” specifies the speaker's requested response to that state. The subsequent imperative “وَانتَقِمْ لَنَا مِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ الظَّالِمِينَ” “Take vengeance on these oppressors on our behalf” identifies the requested action and its target. The listeners therefore combine the information from the preceding killing and its physical consequence with the conditional proposition and the subsequent request. Through pragmatic inference, the listeners update the true state from the immediately represented violent event towards a more specific representation involving the speaker's expressed

understanding of the situation and his requested response. The inference consequently depends on the integration of the utterance with the contextual information already available to the listeners, rather than on the conditional grammatical structure alone.

In terms of presupposition, the existential pattern is realised in “أُتي بصبيّ له” and “his baby was brought to him”, where the Arabic relational construction and the English possessive expression presuppose the child's existence and his relationship to al-Husayn. In Arabic, the prepositional expression “له” establishes the relationship following the indefinite noun “صبيّ”, whereas the English possessive determiner “his” encodes the same relationship within the noun phrase “his baby”. This is reinforced in “عبدالله بن الحسين” and “Abdullah bin al-Husayn”, where the proper name identifies the child as a specific referent. The genealogical expressions “بن الحسين” and “bin al-Husayn” presuppose the existence of al-Husayn and the relationship between the two named participants. The possessive expressions “في حجره” and “on his lap” maintain this relationship and locate the same referent within the spatial construction. The Arabic pronominal suffix attached to “حجر” and the English possessive determiner “his” presuppose the existence of the possessor, while the pronouns in “فأجلسه في حجره فهو في حجره” and “he seated him on his lap . . . [the baby] was in his lap” preserve the same referents across the successive clauses. Similarly, “دمه” and “the child's blood” presuppose the existence of the blood and its relation to the child through the Arabic possessive suffix and the English possessive form. The possessive constructions “كفّه” and “his palm” preserve the relationship to al-Husayn without reintroducing him as a new referent. The demonstrative expressions “هؤلاء الظالمين” and “these oppressors” additionally presuppose the existence of an identifiable group. The Arabic demonstrative “هؤلاء” and the English demonstrative “these” mark the group as contextually accessible, while “الظالمين” and “oppressors” provide its nominal description. The lexical value is realised in “وانتقم لنا من هؤلاء”

الظالمين” and “Take vengeance on these oppressors on our behalf”, where the meaning of vengeance presupposes a preceding offence or harmful act for which vengeance is sought. The Arabic verb “انتقم” and the English construction “Take vengeance” encode the requested response, while the offence motivating that response remains backgrounded rather than being asserted within the imperative construction.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: “صَبَّى له، . . . عبدالله بن الحسين” “his baby . . . ‘Abdullah bin al-Husayn” functions as the central Sign because one child remains the stable referential centre while the linguistic relations surrounding him progressively change. The passage moves from initial reference and individual identification to spatial positioning, directed action, and physical consequence. The continuity of reference across these stages makes the child the central semiotic element, while the surrounding linguistic forms determine the changing relations through which he is represented.

Denotation: “صَبَّى له” “his baby” directly introduces a young child in a possessive relation, while “عبدالله بن الحسين” “‘Abdullah bin al-Husayn” specifies his individual identity. “فأجلسه في حجره” “he seated him on his lap” directly establishes a spatial relation, maintained through “فهو في حجره” “the baby was in his lap.” The construction “إذ رماه أحد بني أسد . . . بسهم” “one of the Banu Asad . . . shot an arrow” directly represents the action and its agent, while “فذبحه” “slaughtered him” represents the action affecting the identified participant. The subsequent “فتلقَّى الحسين [عليه السلام]” “Al-Husayn (as) caught the child’s blood” and “فلما ملأ كفه صبه في الأرض” “when his palm was full, he poured it onto the ground” directly represent the physical consequence and its subsequent handling. The direct representation consequently follows the participant from identification through spatial placement, directed action, and physical consequence.

Connotation: The second-order meaning develops from the transformation of the relations surrounding the same referent. The possessive construction and the repeated spatial positioning establish proximity and dependency, whereas “إذ رماه أحد بني أسد . . . بسهم فذبحه” “one of the Banu Asad . . . shot an arrow which slaughtered him” abruptly changes this configuration from physical closeness to directed violence. The subsequent “دمه” “the child’s blood” maintains the referential connection while representing the participant through the material consequence of the action. This progression produces the associations of dependency, vulnerability, disrupted protection, and material loss. These meanings are not directly stated by the designation of the child; they arise from the sequential transformation of the linguistic relations surrounding the referent.

4.3.2 Gaza Excerpt (2)

“What did he do wrong, my God? What did he do wrong?” screamed Mahmoud Mikdad, his voice hoarse, lifting his face toward the sky. His son, Yaman, was killed by an Israeli airstrike . . . The strike killed the boy instantly. He wasn’t yet 2 years old. Mikdad carried Yaman’s body through central Gaza from Nuseirat camp to Al Aqsa Martyrs hospital in nearby Deir al-Balah. Yaman’s bare legs dangled limply from beneath a white sheet soaked with blood. (Hana & Shurafa, 2024, paras. 2–6)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: According to the RSA framework, Mahmoud Mikdad is the speaker of the quoted utterance, while the people present at the scene constitute the pragmatic listeners; the expression “my God” functions as the address within his exclamation. The repeated interrogative “What did he do wrong, my God? What did he do wrong?” uses the same interrogative structure twice, while the subsequent declarative “His son, Yaman, was killed by an Israeli airstrike” identifies the participant and the event. The repetition of “What did he do wrong”

maintains the same proposition rather than introducing a competing participant or event, whereas the identifying clause specifies the referent through the kinship expression “His son” and the proper name “Yaman.” The following forms “the boy,” “He,” and “Yaman” maintain reference to the same child. The linguistic organisation therefore limits the interpretation to one participant and one event, with repetition and subsequent identification working together to maintain referential continuity.

Speaker's Choice of Utterance: The repeated question “What did he do wrong, my God? What did he do wrong?” can be compared with Alternatives such as “Why was he killed?” or “Why did this happen to him?” The selected wording does not directly ask about the mechanism or cause of death; instead, the interrogative “What did he do wrong” selects the predicate “do wrong”, thereby formulating the event in terms of whether the child had committed an offence. Repeating the same question increases Cost because the second interrogative adds linguistic material without introducing a new proposition. Its Utility, however, lies in retaining the same question as the central linguistic focus and intensifying its prominence within the utterance. The subsequent specification “His son, Yaman” provides identifying information that a shorter reference such as “the boy” would not provide, while “The strike killed the boy instantly” selects “instantly” rather than a less precise expression such as “quickly.” The choices therefore combine repetition with specific lexical selection to preserve focus and precision.

Prior Probability: Before the later descriptions of Yaman's death and body, the discourse has already established the child through the interrogative sequence and then explicitly identified him as “His son, Yaman.” The pragmatic listeners therefore have contextual information about the participant before processing “The strike killed the boy instantly” and “He wasn't yet 2 years old.” The phrase “His son” additionally establishes a kinship relation before the proper name is supplied,

creating an already available representation of the participant. Prior Probability here therefore concerns the information about the child and the immediately preceding event that is available to the listeners before each subsequent expression is processed. It does not concern their knowledge of the lexical meanings of “boy,” “strike,” or “killed.”

Bayesian Listener Inference: The pragmatic listeners update their representation of the true state by integrating the repeated interrogative, the identification of Yaman, the statement of his immediate death, his age, and the later physical description. The question “What did he do wrong” establishes an unresolved issue concerning the child, after which “His son, Yaman, was killed by an Israeli airstrike” identifies both the participant and the event. “The strike killed the boy instantly” further specifies the outcome, while “He wasn’t yet 2 years old” adds his age. The final description of “Yaman’s body” and “Yaman’s bare legs” supplies further information about the physical state represented after death. The listeners therefore update the true state progressively as new linguistic evidence specifies the participant, the event, its immediacy, the child’s age, and the subsequent bodily condition. The inference results from integrating these successive propositions rather than from any single grammatical construction.

As far as presupposition, the existential pattern is realised in “His son, Yaman”, where the possessive kinship construction presupposes the child’s existence and relationship to his father. The proper name “Yaman” commits the speaker to the existence of an individual, while “the boy” maintains the referent without introducing another participant. This pattern continues in “Yaman’s body” and “Yaman’s bare legs”, where the possessive constructions presuppose the existence of the body and legs and relate them to the established child. The change from the personal name to the bodily expressions maintains referential continuity, but the physical condition is asserted rather than presupposed. The structural form is realised in the repeated interrogative “What did he do

wrong, my God? What did he do wrong?" The *wh*-interrogative asks for the nature of the alleged wrongdoing and therefore presents the proposition that the child did something requiring explanation as information embedded within the question. Its repetition reinforces this proposition while maintaining the embedded proposition across both interrogative constructions. The clauses "His son, Yaman, was killed by an Israeli airstrike" and "The strike killed the boy instantly" explicitly assert the killing. The passive construction in the first clause and the active construction in the second present the same outcome differently, but neither creates a factive reading merely because the killing is represented as realised. Likewise, "killed" entails a change of state but does not operate like the conventional lexical triggers "managed", "stopped", "started", or "again" described by Yule. The age statement "He wasn't yet 2 years old" asserts the child's age, while the description of the white sheet and blood elaborates the consequences of the asserted event. These expressions add asserted information about the event without creating further presuppositional values.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: "Yaman" is the central Sign because the passage repeatedly maintains the same child as its referential centre through different forms of identification and bodily reference. He is first introduced indirectly through "he," then identified through "His son, Yaman," and subsequently represented as "the boy," "He," "Yaman's body," and "Yaman's bare legs." This movement from pronominal reference to personal naming, categorical reference, and bodily reference keeps one referent at the centre while the mode of representation changes across the event.

Denotation: The sequence directly establishes a particular child and progressively specifies information about him. "His son, Yaman" identifies the participant through both kinship and personal name. "The boy" categorises him according to age and gender, while "He wasn't yet

2 years old” directly specifies his age. “Yaman’s body” identifies the physical remains belonging to the same individual, and “Yaman’s bare legs” specifies a particular bodily part. The phrase “was killed by an Israeli airstrike” directly represents the event affecting him, while “The strike killed the boy instantly” specifies the immediate result. The direct representation therefore moves from personal identification to age specification, death, and subsequent bodily description while maintaining the same referent.

Connotation: The changing forms of reference create a second-order meaning through the movement from person to body. The proper name establishes an individual identity, whereas the later shift to “Yaman’s body” and “Yaman’s bare legs” changes the mode of representation from the child as a person to his physical remains. The adjective “bare” and the adverb “limply” further associate the bodily representation with exposure and loss of bodily vitality, while “a white sheet soaked with blood” connects the remains with visible physical aftermath. The progression consequently connotes the reduction of an identified child to the bodily traces of violent death, while the continued use of the personal name preserves his individual identity within that physical representation. The meaning therefore emerges from the textual transition among naming, categorical reference, and bodily reference rather than from the literal meaning of any single expression.

4.4 Child Agency Amid Extreme Violence

In contrast to the earlier texts, the child in these texts is not only a victim of violence but also a voice and an agent of action. The analysis focuses on the lexical and structural choices that are used in the construction of this representation in the texts of Karbala and Gaza.

4.4.1 Karbala Excerpt (3)

ثم ان شمر بن ذي الجوشن اقبل في الرجالة نحو الحسين [عليه السلام، وفيهم] سنان بن انس النخعي، وخولي بن يزيد الاصبحي، وصالح بن وهب اليزني، والقشعم بن عمرو الجعفي، وعبد الرحمن الجعفي، فجعل شمر بن ذي الجوشن يحرضهم [ف]أحاطوا [بالحسين عليه السلام] احاطة! واقبل الى الحسين [عليه السلام] غلام من أهله فقال الحسين [عليه السلام] ل [أخته زينب ابنة علي: احبسيه، فأخذته أخته زينب ابنة علي لتحبسه، فأبى الغلام وجاء يشتد الى الحسين [عليه السلام]. وقد أهوى بحر بن كعب الى الحسين [عليه السلام] بالسيف، فقال الغلام يا بن الخبيثة! اتقتل عمي! فضربه بالسيف، فاتقاه الغلام بيده فاطنّها إلى الجلدة، فاذا يده معلقة، فنادى الغلام! يا أمّته! فأخذه الحسين [عليه السلام] فضمه الى صدره وقال: يا بن أخي اصبر على ما نزل بك ، واحتسب في ذلك الخير، فان الله يلحقك بأبائك الصالحين برسول الله وعلي بن أبي طالب وحمزة والحسن بن علي صلى الله عليهم اجمعين. (أبو مخنف، 1988، ص. 253-254)

Thereafter, Shamir bin Dhi al-Jaushan advanced towards al-Husayn (as) with the foot soldiers. Among them were Sinan bin Anas al-Nakha'i, Khauliyy bin Yazid al-Asbahi, Salih bin Wahab al-Yazani, Qash'am bin Amr al- Ju'fi and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ju'fi. Shamir bin Dhi al-Jaushan began inciting them against Husayn (as), so they completely encircled al-Husayn (as). A boy from among his household came out towards al-Husayn (as). Al-Husayn (as) said to his sister, Zainab bint 'Ali: "Stop him." So she held him in order to stop him, but he refused to take notice of her and determinedly advanced towards al-Husayn (as). Bahr bin Ka'b rushed towards al-Husayn (as) with his sword. The young lad said to him: "O son of an impure woman! Are you trying to kill my uncle?!" [Bahr] struck at him with his sword. The boy tried to fend off the blow with his arm, but the sword cut through his arm to the skin on the other side. The boy cried out: "O my mother!" Al-Husayn (as) took hold of him and embraced him. He said: "My nephew, be patient on what has come to you, and anticipate in this the best from Allah, for Allah will unite you with your righteous ancestors, the Messenger of Allah, 'Ali bin Abi Talib, Hamzah and Hasan bin 'Ali. May Allah bless them all." (Abu Mikhnaf, 2012, p. 241)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: Regarding the RSA framework, al-Husayn is the speaker of the direct utterances in this excerpt, while his sister Zaynab and the people present at the scene constitute the immediate pragmatic listeners; the child is the participant whose actions are represented in the surrounding narrative. The sequence “فأبى الغلام وجاء يشنّد الى الحسين [عليه السّلام]” “but he refused to take notice of her and determinedly advanced towards al-Husayn (as)” linguistically organises the child’s action through two successive verbal selections. “فأبى” “he refused” marks non-compliance with the preceding directive “احبسّيه” “Stop him”, while “جاء يشنّد” “determinedly advanced” specifies the subsequent directional movement towards a fixed participant, al-Husayn. The same grammatical subject is maintained across the two predicates, so the sequence does not introduce a competing actor or alternative destination. The linguistic construction therefore represents one continuous action path in which refusal is followed by movement, allowing the immediate participants to identify the child’s action from the verbal progression rather than from an abstract description of agency.

Speaker’s Choice of Utterance: The child’s direct utterance “يا بن الخبيثة! اتقتل عمّي؟” “O son of an impure woman! Are you trying to kill my uncle?!” can be contrasted with Alternatives such as “لماذا تقتله؟” “Why are you killing him?” or “اترك عمّي” “Leave my uncle.” The selected formulation combines a vocative construction with an interrogative, whereas the alternatives would either request an explanation or issue a direct command. The vocative “يا بن الخبيثة” “O son of an impure woman” explicitly directs the utterance towards the approaching attacker, while “اتقتل” “are you trying to kill” selects the action under question and “عمّي” “my uncle” specifies the participant through a kinship relation. The formulation therefore has greater Cost than a shorter alternative because it contains both address and interrogative material, but this additional linguistic

material increases Utility by simultaneously identifying the addressee, specifying the threatened action, and establishing the speaker's relation to the threatened participant. The selection is thus informationally concentrated: the addressee, action, and referent are encoded within one utterance rather than distributed across separate propositions.

Prior Probability: Before the child produces “يابن الخبيثة! اتقتل عمي؟” “O son of an impure woman! Are you trying to kill my uncle?!” the participants at the scene already have contextual information about the surrounding action: the forces have approached al-Husayn, the child has moved towards him, and Bahr bin Ka'b has advanced with a sword. The immediately preceding “وقد أهوى بحر بن كعب الى الحسين [عليه السلام] بالسيف” “Bahr bin Ka'b rushed towards al-Husayn (as) with his sword” establishes the action frame within which the child's question is produced. The pragmatic listeners therefore possess a prior representation of an armed approach and an impending action before processing the child's subsequent utterance. Prior Probability consequently concerns the contextual state already established before the utterance, particularly the presence of the armed attacker and the threatened participant, rather than the meanings of the individual words in the question.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The pragmatic listeners update their representation of the true state by combining the child's utterance with the contextual information established immediately before it. The interrogative “اتقتل عمي؟” “Are you trying to kill my uncle?” presents the action of killing as the proposition under consideration, while “عمي” “my uncle” identifies the threatened participant through a kinship relation. The listeners integrate this information with the preceding representation of Bahr bin Ka'b approaching al-Husayn with a sword and subsequently striking at the child. The resulting inference therefore moves from an armed approach to a more specific representation in which the child identifies the action as a threat to his uncle and responds

directly to that threat. The update is consequently based on the integration of the utterance with the contextual event already established, rather than on the interrogative form alone.

From the perspective of presupposition, the existential configuration is realised in “ثم إنَّ” and “شمر بن ذي الجوشن اقبل في الرجالة نحو الحسين [عليه السلام]” and “Shamir bin Dhi al-Jaushan advanced towards al-Husayn (as) with the foot soldiers”, as “شمر بن ذي الجوشن” and “Shamir bin Dhi al-Jaushan” and “الحسين” and “al-Husayn” function as definite referring expressions that encode already existing and identifiable participants within the discourse. The existential value is continued in “غلام من أهله” and “a boy from among his household” and “أخته زينب ابنة علي” and “his sister, Zainab bint ‘Ali’”, as nominal and kinship expressions preserve the pre-established relational frame rather than presenting new entities, while the same referential continuity persists in “فأبى الغلام” and “the boy refused” and “وجاء يشتدّ الى الحسين” and “and determinedly advanced towards al-Husayn (as)”, as “الغلام” and “the boy” remain a stable referent without re-identification. The phrases “!اتقتل عمي” and “Are you trying to kill my uncle?!” as “عمي” and “my uncle” encode the existing kinship relation anchored to the same participant. The lexical value is encoded in “فأبى” and “refused”, because the verb presupposes the initial attempt to restrain the boy, which is left implicit; this backgrounded state is carried on in “فضربه بالسيف” and “[Bahr] struck at him with his sword” and “فألقاه الغلام بيده” and “the boy tried to fend off the blow with his arm”, since the initial part of the interaction is left unstated. The interrogative form is used to express the structural value in “!اتقتل عمي” and “Are you trying to kill my uncle?!” by using the contextually available proposition without adding new information. This underlying configuration is kept in “فضربه” and “his arm was hanging” and “فأذا يده معقّاة” and “[Bahr] struck at him with his sword” and “فأخذه الحسين [عليه السلام] فضمّه الى صدره” and “al-Husayn (as) took hold of him and embraced him”, as the pronominal suffix “له” and “him” preserve an anaphoric connection to the previously

established referent, and the possessive “يدِه” and “his arm” encode the same participant as the bearer of the bodily state, thereby preserving referential cohesion across the development without re-identification.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: “الغلام” “the boy” is identified as the central Sign because the passage maintains this participant as the stable referential centre while changing the linguistic relations through which he is represented. The referent moves from “فأبى الغلام” “the boy refused” to “جاء يشنّد الى الحسين” “determinedly advanced towards al-Husayn”, then to “الغلام فاتقاه بيده” “the boy tried to fend off the blow with his arm”, and finally to “فاذا يده معلّقة” “his arm was hanging.” The sign is therefore organised through the continuity of the same participant across action and bodily consequence, rather than through any single isolated expression.

Denotation: “فأبى الغلام وجاء يشنّد الى الحسين” “the boy refused and determinedly advanced towards al-Husayn” directly represents a refusal followed by directional movement towards an identified participant. “يابن الخبيثة! اتقتل عمّي؟” “O son of an impure woman! Are you trying to kill my uncle?!” directly represents verbal confrontation and identifies the threatened participant through the kinship expression “عمّي” “my uncle.” The subsequent “فاتقاه بيده” “tried to fend off the blow with his arm” directly represents a physical defensive action, while “فاذا يده معلّقة” “his arm was hanging” directly represents the resulting bodily condition. “يا أمّاه” “O my mother!” directly expresses a vocative cry, followed by “فضمّه الى صدره” “embraced him”, which directly represents al-Husayn’s physical response to the injured child. The direct representation therefore follows the participant through movement, verbal intervention, bodily defence, injury, and subsequent physical contact.

Connotation: The second-order meaning develops from the transformation of the participant's role and bodily representation across the sequence. The movement from “فأبى” “refused” to “جاء يشنّد” “determinedly advanced” associates the child with an active response rather than mere physical presence. His direct use of “عمّي” “my uncle” then associates that movement with a specific kinship bond, while the transition from verbal intervention to “فألقاه بيده” “tried to fend off the blow with his arm” shifts the representation from linguistic action to bodily defence. The subsequent “يده معلّقة” “his arm was hanging” transforms the same bodily resource into the visible consequence of the attempted defence, while “يا أمّاه” “O my mother!” returns the linguistic representation to a primary kinship address at the point of injury. The sign consequently connotes child agency, kinship-based loyalty, physical vulnerability, and the disruption of protection, with these meanings emerging from the sequential transformation of action, relation, and bodily state rather than from the literal designation “the boy” alone.

4.4.2 Gaza Excerpt (3)

In Gaza, being a helpful, loving child can be a death sentence. Heba al-Ghussain's nine-year-old son, Karam, was killed by an Israeli airstrike because he went to fetch water for the family, and her 10-year-old daughter, Lulu, was killed because she went to give Karam a hand. The siblings were waiting beside a water distribution station, holding jerry cans and buckets, when it was bombed last Sunday, killing six children and four adults and injuring 19 others, mostly children. Both Lulu and Karam died instantly, torn apart by the force of the blast and so disfigured that their father prevented Heba from seeing their bodies. “They didn't allow me to say goodbye or even look at them one last time,” she said. “One of my brothers hugged me, trying to block the scene from me as he cried and tried to

comfort me. After that, I don't remember anything. I lost touch with reality.” (Tantesh & Graham-Harrison, 2025, paras. 1–4)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: Examined through the RSA framework, The journalist's narrative voice is the speaker of the declarative propositions in this excerpt, while the discourse addressee is the recipient of the reported account; within the embedded quotation, Heba is the speaker and the people who prevented her from seeing the bodies constitute the referential addressees of “they.” The opening proposition “being a helpful, loving child can be a death sentence” linguistically connects the behavioural description “being a helpful, loving child” with the nominal outcome “a death sentence” in one predication construction. The following causal clauses specify the actions associated with Karam and Lulu through “he went to fetch water for the family” and “she went to give Karam a hand.” The pronouns “he” and “she” maintain the respective child referents without reintroducing their names, while the later noun phrase “Both Lulu and Karam” explicitly identifies both participants. The linguistic organisation therefore constructs the relationship between the children's actions and the reported outcome through a sequence of bounded predicates and maintained reference, rather than through a general description of child behaviour.

Speaker's Choice of Utterance: The formulation “because he went to fetch water for the family . . . because she went to give Karam a hand” can be compared with Alternatives such as “because he helped the family . . . because she helped her brother” or the more general “because they were helping.” The selected verbs “fetch” and “give” specify two concrete actions, while the complements “water for the family” and “Karam a hand” identify the purposes and relational targets of those actions. The repeated conjunction “because” explicitly marks the relation between each action and the subsequent outcome. The selected formulation therefore has greater Cost than

the broader alternatives because it contains more specific lexical and syntactic material, but its Utility is higher because it distinguishes the two actions and their respective purposes. The first clause identifies the resource being obtained and the beneficiaries, while the second identifies the recipient of the assistance. The wording consequently reduces the range of possible interpretations by selecting concrete actions rather than a general verb such as “help.”

Prior Probability: Before the bombing is introduced through “when it was bombed last Sunday,” the pragmatic addressee has already been given contextual information about the children’s activity: “The siblings were waiting beside a water distribution station, holding jerry cans and buckets.” This establishes a prior situational frame of children engaged in water collection before the subsequent event is processed. The expressions “water distribution station,” “jerry cans,” and “buckets” therefore contribute to the contextual representation already available before “it was bombed” is interpreted. Prior Probability here concerns the addressee’s prior knowledge of the situation represented in the discourse, particularly the location and activity in which the children were engaged, rather than the lexical meanings of “jerry cans” or “buckets” themselves.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The pragmatic addressee updates the representation of the true state by integrating the previously established activity with the later propositions describing the bombing and its consequences. The expression “They didn’t allow me to say goodbye or even look at them one last time” contains the pronoun “they,” whose referent is not explicitly named within the clause. The addressee therefore retrieves its referent from the preceding discourse, where the father, Heba, and other family members have already been introduced. The same process applies to “them,” which is interpreted through the previously established reference to Lulu and Karam. The subsequent “I lost touch with reality” then updates the representation further by supplying Heba’s reported response. The inference thus results from integrating the new

propositions with the established participants and events, allowing the addressee to resolve the pronominal references and update the true state without requiring explicit repetition of every participant.

From a presuppositional perspective, the existential configuration is encoded in “Heba al-Ghussain’s nine-year-old son, Karam, was killed by an Israeli airstrike,” in which “Karam” is a definite referring expression that presupposes an already existing and identifiable participant. This presupposed identifiability is extended in “her 10-year-old daughter, Lulu” and “the siblings,” which maintain a recognised relational grouping without introducing new entities. The same referential continuity is maintained in “he went to fetch water for the family” and “she went to give Karam a hand,” in which the pronouns “he” and “she” preserve the same referents across successive clauses without re-identification. It continues in “The siblings were waiting beside a water distribution station” and “holding jerry cans and buckets,” where the definite noun phrase remains anchored to the same established participants. The lexical value is realised in the sentence “he went to fetch water for the family” because the meaning of “fetch” implies that there was previously a lack of or need for water as a background condition. This backgrounded condition is maintained in “she went to give Karam a hand,” as the expression presupposes an already existing situation requiring assistance, and is further reinforced in “They didn’t allow me to say goodbye or even look at them one last time,” as “allow” presupposes the availability of the prevented actions. In comparison, “one last time” implies finality by presupposing non-repetition. This presupposed background is continued in “Both Lulu and Karam died instantly” and “their father prevented Heba from seeing their bodies,” where the possessive words continue to refer to the same background without being introduced again.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: “being a helpful, loving child” is identified as the central Sign because the passage organises the representation of the two children around the relationship between their ordinary supportive actions and the fatal outcome that follows. The construction “being a helpful, loving child can be a death sentence” establishes the central relation, which is then developed through “he went to fetch water for the family” and “she went to give Karam a hand.” The later reference to “Both Lulu and Karam died instantly” completes the textual progression from supportive action to fatal consequence. The sign is therefore constructed through the relationship between the behavioural category and the specific actions attributed to the children, rather than through either child’s name in isolation.

Denotation: “being a helpful, loving child” directly describes a behavioural category attributed to children, while “a death sentence” directly names a fatal outcome within the opening predication. The construction “he went to fetch water for the family” directly represents Karam’s movement and the purpose associated with it, while “she went to give Karam a hand” directly represents Lulu’s movement towards her brother for assistance. “The siblings were waiting beside a water distribution station, holding jerry cans and buckets” directly specifies their location and the objects they were carrying. The subsequent “when it was bombed” directly introduces the destructive event, and “Both Lulu and Karam died instantly, torn apart by the force of the blast and so disfigured” directly represents the immediate death and physical condition resulting from the explosion. The final expressions “their bodies” and “I don’t remember anything” directly represent the physical remains and the speaker’s subsequent reported experience. The denotative content therefore consists of the children’s identified actions, their location and activity, the bombing, the physical outcome, and the subsequent reference to their bodies.

Connotation: The second-order meaning emerges from the contrast between the behavioural qualities attributed to the children and the outcome attached to those qualities. The combination of “helpful, loving” with “a death sentence” produces an association in which behaviour conventionally connected with care and familial support is placed in direct relation to fatal exposure. This association is developed through the parallel constructions “he went to fetch water for the family” and “she went to give Karam a hand,” both of which encode purposeful acts performed for others rather than acts of aggression. The setting “beside a water distribution station” and the objects “jerry cans and buckets” further associate the children with an ordinary resource-gathering activity before the abrupt transition to “bombed”. The subsequent “torn apart by the force of the blast and so disfigured” shifts the associative field from social action to bodily destruction, while “their bodies” extends the consequences to the surviving family member’s experience. The sign consequently connotes the vulnerability of ordinary childhood care, the disruption of protective familial relations, and the transformation of an act of assistance into a site of violent loss. These meanings arise from the contrast and progression among the linguistic constructions rather than from the literal meanings of “helpful” or “loving” alone.

4.5 Destruction of Shelter and Spaces of Safety

In this section, shelter is considered a concrete spatial component in the chosen texts. The section explains how spaces of habitation are represented, including tents and buildings. It also establishes the analytical focus on the relationship between these spaces, their inhabitants, and the actions that are directed toward them.

4.5.1 Karbala Excerpt (4)

وَحَمَل شَمْرُ بْنُ ذِي الْجَوْشَنِ حَتَّى طَعَنَ فِلسْطَاطَ الْحُسَيْنِ بِرُمَحِهِ، وَنَادَى: عَلَىَّ بِالنَّارِ حَتَّى أُحَرِّقَ هَذَا الْبَيْتَ عَلَى أَهْلِهِ؛
 قَالَ: فَصَاحَ النِّسَاءُ وَخَرَجْنَ مِنَ الْفِلسْطَاطِ؛ قَالَ: وَصَاحَ بِهِ الْحُسَيْنُ: يَا بْنَ ذِي الْجَوْشَنِ، أَنْتَ تَدْعُو بِالنَّارِ لِتَحَرِّقَ بَيْتِي عَلَى

أهلى، حرّقك الله بالنار! . . . عن حُميد بن مسلم، قال: قلت لشَمْر بن ذي الجوشن: سبحان الله! إن هذا لا يصلح لك، أتريد أن تجمع على نفسك خلصتين. تعذّب بعذاب الله، وتقتل الولدان والنساء! (الطبري، 1966، ص. 438)

Shamir b. Dhī al-Jawshan came up to al-Ḥusayn's tent. He struck against it and called out, "Bring me fire so that I can burn this tent and the people inside it." The women screamed and rushed out of the tent. Al-Ḥusayn called out to him, "Ibn Dhī al-Jawshan are you calling for fire to burn down my tent and my family? May God burn you in Hell-fire!" . . . Ḥumayd b. Muslim: I said to Shamir b. Dhī al-Jawshan, "Glory be to God! This is not appropriate for you. Do you want to impose on yourself two evil qualities for which you will be punished by God? You are killing women and children." (al-Ṭabarī, 1990, p. 141)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: According to the RSA framework, the utterance “وعلا شمر بن ذى” and “Shamir b. Dhī al-Jawshan came up to al-Ḥusayn's tent. He struck against it and called out, ‘Bring me fire so that I can burn this tent and the people inside it’” organises the event through a restricted sequence of action and target identification. The verbal forms “طعن” “struck” and “أحرق” “burn” specify successive actions, while “فسطاط الحسين” “al-Ḥusayn's tent” establishes the spatial referent and “على” “the people inside it” extends the target to its occupants. The subsequent shift to “هذا البيت” “this tent” does not introduce another location but reselects the same spatial referent through a demonstrative expression. The wording therefore keeps the shelter and its occupants within one action frame, with each linguistic element narrowing the relation between the agent, the targeted space, and the people located within it.

Speaker's Choice of Utterance: The formulation “على بالنار حتى أحرق هذا البيت على أهله” “Bring me fire so that I can burn this tent and the people inside it” can be contrasted with

Alternatives such as “Burn the tent” or “Attack the people inside.” The imperative “عَلَى بالنار” “Bring me fire” selects the instrument explicitly, while “أحرق” “burn” specifies the intended action more precisely than a general verb such as “destroy.” The demonstrative “هذا” “this” narrows the spatial reference to an immediately identifiable entity, while “على أهله” “the people inside it” incorporates the occupants into the same construction. The lexical shift from “فسطاط” “tent” to “بيت” “tent” changes the nominal form without changing the referent. The selected wording therefore combines a specific instrument, action, spatial reference, and affected participants within one compact structure, reducing the range of alternative mappings available to the listener.

Prior Probability: Before the command involving fire is processed, “فسطاط الحسين” “al-Ḥusayn’s tent” has already established an inhabited spatial frame. The possessive construction identifies the shelter in relation to al-Ḥusayn, while “أهله” “the people inside it” makes its occupancy available within the same frame. The subsequent “هذا البيت” “this tent” is consequently interpreted against an already established spatial referent rather than as a new location. The pragmatic listener therefore processes “النار” “fire” in relation to an identified inhabited shelter and its occupants. The prior probability resides in this already activated representation of the place and its inhabitants, which constrains the interpretation of the subsequent action.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The pragmatic listener integrates the successive expressions to determine the most restricted event configuration. “فسطاط الحسين” “al-Ḥusayn’s tent” first establishes the spatial referent, while “هذا البيت” “this tent” reselects the same referent through demonstrative reference. “أهله” “the people inside it” extends the target to the occupants, and “عَلَى بالنار” “Bring me fire” identifies the instrument associated with the intended action. The subsequent “أحرق هذا البيت على أهله” “burn this tent and the people inside it” therefore resolves the relation between the instrument, the spatial referent, and the occupants within one configuration. The

listener arrives at this interpretation cumulatively, with each expression restricting the possible relation between the action and its target.

From the perspective of presupposition, the existential pattern is realised in “شمر بن ذي الجوشن” and “Shamir b. Dhī al-Jawshan” and in “فسطاط الحسين” and “al-Ḥusayn’s tent,” where the definite referring expressions encode already identifiable participants and a fixed spatial setting within the discourse. This presupposed identifiability is retained in “هذا البيت” and “this tent,” where the demonstrative form presupposes the availability of a referent in the context, and in “أهله” and “its people,” where the possessive relation treats the existence of the occupants as given rather than reintroducing them. It extends to “فصاح النساء وخرجن من الفسطاط” and “The women screamed and rushed out of the tent,” where “النساء” and “the women” remain anchored to the same spatial frame. The possessive forms “بيتي” and “my tent” and “أهلي” and “my family” maintain the established connection between the enclosure and its occupants. The lexical trigger is found in “طعن . . . برمحه” and “struck . . . with his spear,” as well as “أحرق” and “burn”; both verbs presuppose the prior existence of a structure capable of being acted upon and altered. This prior state remains backgrounded rather than explicitly stated. The same condition is reinforced in “خرجن من الفسطاط” and “rushed out of the tent,” where the verb of movement presupposes that the participants were contained within the enclosure before leaving it. The structural form is realised in “أنت تدعو بالنار” and “لتحرق بيتي على أهلي؟” and “Are you calling for fire to burn down my tent and my family?” where the interrogative treats the proposition as already available within the discourse. It is similarly realised in “أتريد أن تجمع على نفسك خصلتين” and “Do you want to impose on yourself two evil qualities?” where the interrogative operates on a contextually available proposition. Throughout the sequence, the possessive forms “بيتي” and “أهله,” “أهلي” and their English equivalents “its people,” “my tent,”

and “my family” maintain anaphoric continuity and referential cohesion without re-identification or re-specification.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: “فسطاط الحسين” “al-Ḥusayn’s tent” constitutes the central Sign because the passage organises the representation around a specific inhabited space and the actions directed towards it. The spatial referent is subsequently reselected through “هذا البيت” “this tent”, while “أهله” “the people inside it” links the occupants to the same space. The subsequent movement of the women out of the enclosure and the later possessive form “بيتي” “my tent” maintain the same spatial referent across different grammatical constructions. The sign is therefore established through the continuity between the named shelter, its occupants, and the actions directed towards the enclosed space.

Denotation: “فسطاط الحسين” “al-Ḥusayn’s tent” directly identifies a particular shelter through a possessive construction, while “هذا البيت” “this tent” directly reidentifies the same place through demonstrative reference. “أهله” “the people inside it” explicitly connects the occupants with the enclosure, and “طعن فسطاط الحسين برمح” “He struck against it” represents direct physical interaction with the spatial referent. “على بالنار” “Bring me fire” introduces fire as the specified instrument, while “أحرق” “burn” directly represents the intended action. The subsequent “فصاح” “The women screamed and rushed out of the tent” represents the occupants’ vocal and directional responses, and “بيتي” “my tent” together with “أهلي” “my family” maintains the connection between the speaker, the shelter, and its occupants. The direct representation therefore establishes a specific enclosure, its occupants, the physical actions directed towards it, and the movement that follows within the same spatial frame.

Connotation: The second-order meaning develops from the repeated association between the enclosure, its occupants, and the lexical field of burning. The recurrence of “النار” “fire” with “أحرق” “burn” and later “حرقك الله بالنار” “May God burn you in Hell-fire!” extends the same semantic field across the utterances. At the same time, “أهله” “the people inside it” and “أهلي” “my family” repeatedly incorporate the human occupants into the predicates associated with the shelter, preventing the spatial referent from being represented as an isolated structure. The transition from “الفسطاط” “the tent” to “خرجن من الفسطاط” “rushed out of the tent” further changes the spatial relation from containment to displacement. The resulting second-order meaning is the disruption of an inhabited space through the extension of destructive action from the shelter to those contained within it. This meaning emerges from the lexical repetition, possessive relations, and change in spatial configuration rather than from the literal reference to the tent alone.

4.5.2 Gaza Excerpt (4)

“We were sleeping and suddenly something exploded, we started looking and found the whole school on fire, the tents here and there were on fire, everything was on fire,” said eyewitness, Um Mohammed al-Hwaiti. “People were shouting and men were carrying people, charred (people), charred children, and were walking and saying: ‘Dear God, dear God, we have no one but you.’ What can we say? Dear God, only,” she said. (Al-Mughrabi & Abu Alkas, 2025, paras. 7–8)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: According to the RSA framework, the sequence “We were sleeping and suddenly something exploded, we started looking and found the whole school on fire” organises the event through successive linguistic restrictions. “We were sleeping” establishes the initial state of the participants, while “something exploded” introduces an event without specifying

its source. The following “we started looking” introduces a perceptual response, and “found the whole school on fire” restricts the previously unspecified event to a particular spatial referent. The subsequent “the tents here and there were on fire” and “everything was on fire” extend the same predicate across additional referents. The progression therefore moves from an initial state, through an unspecified event, to perception and spatial identification, while maintaining one coherent event frame.

Speaker's Choice of Utterance: The expression “something exploded” represents a deliberate lexical choice because the indefinite pronoun “something” leaves the source unspecified rather than selecting a more specific noun. The verb “found” is selected instead of a general verb such as “saw” because it follows the perceptual sequence “we started looking” and represents the result of that search. The repeated predicate “on fire” is retained across “the whole school,” “the tents here and there,” and “everything,” rather than being replaced by different expressions. Alternatives such as “the school burned”, “the tents burned”, or “everything burned” would change the grammatical organisation by replacing the repeated predicative structure with active verbal predicates. The selected formulation therefore combines indefiniteness, perception, and repeated predication within one controlled linguistic pattern.

Prior Probability: The opening “We were sleeping” establishes a prior situational frame in which the participants are located in an inhabited setting. The subsequent definite expressions “the whole school” and “the tents here and there” specify the spatial entities within that frame. This previously established setting allows “on fire” to be interpreted as a condition affecting inhabited spaces rather than as an isolated predicate without a defined location. The later references to “charred people” and “charred children” are likewise processed within the established frame of occupants associated with those spaces. Thus, the prior probability is provided by the already

activated representation of an inhabited environment and its occupants before the destructive condition is extended to them.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The indefinite “something” initially leaves the source of the explosion unresolved. The subsequent “the whole school on fire” narrows this uncertainty by linking the event to a definite spatial referent. “The tents here and there were on fire” extends the same condition to additional locations, while “everything was on fire” broadens the reference to an unrestricted set. The subsequent “charred people” and “charred children” extends the destructive condition from spaces to their human occupants. The listener therefore integrates each successive linguistic cue to arrive at one increasingly restricted event configuration in which the explosion, the affected spaces, and the physical condition of the occupants are connected.

From the perspective of presupposition, in the existential pattern, the definite expressions “the whole school,” “the tents here and there,” and “the children” function as a mechanism to encode referents in the discourse and to keep a fixed referential field without reintroducing entities. This grounding is maintained in “we were sleeping” and “we started looking,” where the pronoun “we” maintains the same participant group along the sequence of unfolding events, and extends in “people were shouting and men were carrying people” and “charred children,” where “people,” “men,” and “children” remain anchored in the same human field without adding referents or changing the discourse frame. The lexical trigger is found in “charred children,” where the adjective “charred” refers to a previous unmodified state of the body, which, though not explicitly expressed in the sentence, is nonetheless necessary to the interpretation of the state of the body resulting from the destructive action indicated by the expression, whereas the repeated predicate “on fire” in “the whole school on fire, the tents here and there were on fire, everything was on fire” is not a trigger, but once introduced in the discourse, it forms a continuous destructive frame. The

pronominal forms “we” and “you” are used to maintain anaphoric continuity throughout the sequence, and the referential cohesion is achieved without re-identification. The overall structure maintains the referential stability between the location and the occupants without adding new entities or breaking the discourse frame.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: “the whole school” and “the tents here and there” constitute the central Sign through their representation as inhabited spaces subjected to the same condition. The predicate “on fire” is repeatedly attached to these spatial referents and is subsequently extended through “everything was on fire.” The later reference to “charred children” transfers the destructive lexical field from spaces to human occupants. The sign is therefore constructed through the textual relation between inhabited spaces, their repeated condition, and the extension of that condition to the people within them.

Denotation: “We were sleeping” directly represents the participants in an initial state, while “something exploded” directly introduces an event through the indefinite subject “something.” “The whole school on fire” identifies a particular structure through the definite noun phrase “the whole school” and assigns it the predicative condition “on fire.” “The tents here and there were on fire” extends the same condition to plural spatial referents, while “everything was on fire” extends the reference to an unrestricted set. The expressions “People were shouting” and “men were carrying people” directly represent human reactions and actions, while “charred children” directly specifies a physical condition through the participial adjective “charred.” The vocative “Dear God, dear God” directly represents repeated address, and “we have no one but you” directly represents the absence of another available person or entity through its negative

construction. The denotative representation therefore covers the initial state, the explosion, the affected spaces, the human responses, the bodily condition, and the direct appeal.

Connotation: The second-order meaning develops through the repeated distribution of “on fire” across progressively broader spatial referents. Its recurrence with “the whole school,” “the tents here and there,” and “everything” creates a pattern in which the same destructive condition expands from one definite structure to multiple locations and finally to an unrestricted field. The shift from spatial referents to “charred children” then transfers this condition from places to human bodies, changing the lexical field from spatial destruction to bodily consequence. The repeated address “Dear God, dear God” and the negative construction “we have no one but you” further alter the discourse relation by placing the affected participants within a restricted field of available human support. The resulting second-order meaning is the expansion of destruction from inhabited spaces to their occupants, accompanied by the narrowing of available human support. This meaning arises from the progressive distribution of the repeated predicate, the shift in referential domain, and the final relational construction rather than from the literal meaning of “on fire” alone.

4.6 Child Terror and Extreme Vulnerability

Child representation in this section is characterised in terms of the linguistic forms that present states, actions, and movements attributed to child referents in the selected texts, especially those that display exposure to threat and limited control. These elements are manifested through lexical choice, clause structure, and consistent reference to child participants throughout the utterance.

4.6.1 Karbala Excerpt (5)

إذ خرج غلامٌ من آل الحسين وهو ممسك بعُود من تلك الأبنية، عليه إزار وقميص، وهو مذعور، يتلَفَّت يمينًا وشمالًا، فكأنني أنظر إلى دُرَّتَيْن في أذنيه تذبذبان كلما التَفَّت، إذ أقبل رجل يركض، حتى إذا دنا منه مال عن فرسه، ثم اقتصد الغلام فقطعه بالسيف. (الطبري، 1966، ص. 449)

As a young man from the family of al-Ḥusayn came out clutching a stick from the tents and wearing a waistcloth (izār) and a shirt. He was very frightened and looked to the right and left. I saw two pearls in his ears swinging whenever he turned. A man approached. Riding until he was close to him, he leaned down from his horse. Then he overcame the boy and cut him down with his sword. (al-Ṭabarī, 1990, pp. 155–156)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: Within the RSA framework, the narrative sequence “إذ خرج غلام من” “As a young man from the family of al-Ḥusayn came out clutching a stick from the tents and wearing a waistcloth (izār) and a shirt. He was very frightened and looked to the right and left” maintains one referent through successive linguistic selections. “غلام من آل الحسين” “a young man from the family of al-Ḥusayn” first identifies and relationally restricts the participant, while “ممسك بعُود” “clutching a stick” and “عليه إزار وقميص” “wearing a waistcloth and a shirt” add physical specifications without introducing another referent. The continuation “وهو مذعور، يتلَفَّت يمينًا وشمالًا” “He was very frightened and looked to the right and left” combines an explicitly stated state with a directional action, thereby further restricting the representation of the same participant. The later sequence “إذ أقبل” “A man approached. Riding until he was close to him, he leaned down from his horse. Then he overcame the boy and cut him down with his sword” introduces another participant and progressively establishes his spatial relation to

the child. The linguistic organisation therefore maintains a stable mapping of the child while successively specifying his condition, movement, and relation to the approaching participant.

Speaker's Choice of Utterance: The selection “وهو مذعور، يتلفت يميناً وشمالاً” “He was very frightened and looked to the right and left” demonstrates a preference for precise lexical forms over broader alternatives. The adjective “مذعور” “very frightened” specifies the child's state more narrowly than a general expression such as “afraid”, while “يتلفت يميناً وشمالاً” “looked to the right and left” specifies the direction of movement rather than using a less precise expression such as “looked around.” The description “دُرَّتَيْنِ فِي أُذُنَيْهِ تَذْبَذْبَانِ كُلَّمَا التَفَتَ” “two pearls in his ears swinging whenever he turned” further selects a particular physical detail linked directly to the preceding movement. Alternatives such as “he was afraid and looked around” would provide less lexical specification. The selected forms therefore increase Utility by encoding the child's emotional state, direction of movement, and associated physical detail with greater precision, while the additional descriptive material increases Cost through the amount of information supplied.

Prior Probability: The expression “غلام من آل الحسين” “a young man from the family of al-Husayn” establishes the initial contextual frame by identifying the participant as a young member of a particular family. This information precedes the descriptions “وهو مذعور” “He was very frightened” and “يتلفت يميناً وشمالاً” “looked to the right and left”, allowing these expressions to be interpreted as properties and actions of the same participant. The spatial expressions “من تلك الأبنية” “from the tents” and the later “أقبل رجل يركض” “A man approached” further develop the event frame before the final action is represented. Thus, the prior representation consists of an identified young participant, his familial affiliation, his location, and the surrounding event situation before the later action is processed.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The listener updates the true state progressively as each linguistic expression adds evidence about the event. The initial identification “غلام من آل الحسين” “a young man from the family of al-Husayn” establishes the referent, while “مذعور” “very frightened” and “يَنظُرُ يَمِينًا وَشِمَالًا” “looked to the right and left” provide information about his state and movement. The introduction of “رجل يركض” “a man approached” adds another participant, and “حتى إذا دنا منه” “until he was close to him” establishes the spatial relation between them. The final “فقطعه بالسيف” “cut him down with his sword” resolves the developing sequence by specifying the action directed towards the child. The listener therefore moves from an identified and frightened child to an event in which another participant approaches him and performs the final action, with each successive expression reducing the range of possible interpretations.

In terms of presupposition, the existential pattern is found in “غلام من آل الحسين” and “a young man from the family of al-Husayn”; both the Arabic relational construction “من آل الحسين” and the English prepositional construction “from the family of al-Husayn” denote a participant that is already identifiable in a known social frame rather than newly introduced. This referential givenness is carried over in “الغلام” and “the boy,” both of which treat the same participant as given without re-identification, and is reinforced in “دُرَّتَيْنِ فِي أُذُنَيْهِ” and “two pearls in his ears,” in which the possessive relation in “أذنيه” and “his ears” is not newly established but presupposed as given. The lexical signal is manifested in “خرج” and “came out,” in that both verbs imply a prior state of being within, and in “يَنظُرُ يَمِينًا وَشِمَالًا” and “looked to the right and to the left,” in that both expressions presuppose an already structured spatial field within which movement to the right and left is interpretable. This lexical continuity also appears in “دنا منه” and “was close to him,” where both of these forms assume a prior distant position, and in “مالَ عن فرسه” and “leaned down from his horse,” where both forms in both instances assume a prior elevated position before the

downward motion is performed. The structural form is found in “إذ خرج . . . إذ أقبل رجل يركض” and “As a young man . . . A man approached,” whereby the sequence suggests that the actions are already connected in one action frame rather than being separate occurrences, and the same structure is maintained in both versions through the order of emergence, approach, and contact. In the overall sequence, the Arabic and English forms operate in parallel to maintain one referential chain and one event frame, so that the presuppositional structure is found not only in the Arabic text but also in the English one.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: “غلام من آل الحسين” “a young man from the family of al-Husayn” constitutes the central Sign because the passage maintains the child as the stable referential centre while progressively changing the linguistic relations surrounding him. The participant is first identified and affiliated with a family, then represented through physical and emotional descriptions, and subsequently positioned in relation to another participant. The sequence ends with “فقطعه بالسيف” “cut him down with his sword”, which changes the child’s position from an acting and moving participant to the recipient of a directed action. The sign is therefore constructed through the continuity of reference across identification, movement, proximity, and bodily action.

Denotation: “غلام” “young man” directly identifies the participant, while “من آل الحسين” “from the family of al-Husayn” specifies his familial affiliation. “ممسك بعود” “clutching a stick” and “عليه إزار وقميص” “wearing a waistcloth and a shirt” directly describe his physical circumstances. “وهو مذعور” “He was very frightened” directly represents his emotional state, while “دُرَّتَيْنِ فِي أُذُنَيْهِ” “looked to the right and left” represents his directional movement. “تَدْبِذْبَانِ كُلَّمَا التَفَتَ” “two pearls in his ears” specifies a physical detail, and “أقبل رجل يركض” “A man turned” directly links that detail to his movement. The subsequent

approached”, “حتى إذا دنا منه” “until he was close to him”, and “فقطعه بالسيف” “cut him down with his sword” directly represent the introduction, approach, proximity, and final action of the second participant.

Connotation: The second-order meaning develops from the progression of the child's representation from a specifically identified participant to a frightened and increasingly exposed body within the approaching action. “مذعور” “very frightened” is linguistically connected with “يتلفت يميناً وشمالاً” “looked to the right and left”, producing an association between the stated emotional condition and repeated directional movement. The description “دُرَّتَيْنِ فِي أُذُنَيْهِ تَذْبِذْبَانِ كُلَّمَا” “two pearls in his ears swinging whenever he turned” links bodily appearance with that movement, keeping the physical detail dependent on the child's repeated turning. The sequence “أقبل رجل يركض . . . حتى إذا دنا منه” “A man approached . . . until he was close to him” then reorganises the spatial relation by moving the second participant towards the child. Finally, “فقطعه بالسيف” “cut him down with his sword” changes the child's position from an active participant to the endpoint of the approaching participant's action. The resulting second-order signification therefore associates the child with fear, exposure, reduced spatial security, and increasing restriction of physical agency, all produced through the progression of the linguistic relations in the passage.

4.6.2 Gaza Excerpt (5)

“I'm so scared, please come,” were some of the last words five-year-old Hind Rajab said in a telephone call to rescuers after her family's car came under fire in Gaza City. Trapped in the vehicle and surrounded by her dead relatives, for three hours she pleaded with the Red Crescent to save her. (Sinmaz, 2024, paras. 1–2)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: Within the RSA framework, the utterance “I’m so scared, please come” combines a direct statement of condition with a direct directive in one compact linguistic unit. “I’m so scared” specifies the speaker’s state, while “please come” specifies the requested action. The subsequent reduced constructions “Trapped in the vehicle” and “surrounded by her dead relatives” progressively restrict the circumstances of the same referent without introducing a new participant or event frame. The temporal phrase “for three hours” and the verb “pleaded” extend the same communicative situation. The wording therefore maintains one interpretive path from the child’s stated condition to her request, spatial confinement, surrounding participants, and continued appeal.

Speaker’s Choice of Utterance: The formulation “I’m so scared, please come” represents a selection from Alternatives such as “I am frightened, help me” or “Please rescue me.” The selected adjective “scared” directly encodes the child’s condition, while “please come” selects a simple directive that specifies the desired movement of the addressee. The later verb “pleaded” is more specific than alternatives such as “said” or “asked”, because it characterises the verbal action as sustained and urgent. The reduced constructions “Trapped in the vehicle” and “surrounded by her dead relatives” provide spatial and relational information without expanding the structure into full clauses. The choices therefore maintain a high degree of lexical and structural specificity while keeping the utterance compact.

Prior Probability: The expression “five-year-old Hind Rajab” establishes the initial participant frame by specifying both the child’s identity and age. The phrase “a telephone call to rescuers” then establishes the communicative context within which the direct quotation is interpreted. The later “trapped in the vehicle” does not create a separate frame but restricts the already established situation spatially, while “surrounded by her dead relatives” adds a relational

restriction to the same frame. The listener therefore processes the later “she pleaded” as referring to the already identified five-year-old child and to the same continuing communicative situation.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The listener first receives the direct linguistic evidence “I’m so scared, please come”, which identifies the child’s condition and requested action. “Trapped in the vehicle” then narrows the physical state, while “surrounded by her dead relatives” specifies the immediate relational environment. The temporal expression “for three hours” extends the duration, and “she pleaded with the Red Crescent to save her” identifies the continuing verbal action and its recipient. The pronouns “she” and “her” are interpreted through the previously established referent, Hind Rajab. The listener consequently updates the true state progressively, moving from a frightened child requesting assistance to a child remaining in spatial confinement and continuing to appeal for rescue over an extended period.

From the perspective of presupposition, the existential pattern is found in the phrases “five-year-old Hind Rajab,” “her family’s car,” “the vehicle,” and “her dead relatives,” which refer to recognisable entities that are left unproblematic in the discourse, and the pronoun “she” maintains reference to this referent throughout the sequence without any further introduction, ensuring continuity. This continuity is especially noticeable in the change from the proper name to “she pleaded,” where the referent stays the same but is not repeated lexically, implying that the discourse does not reset the referential frame. In parallel, the lexical configuration is realised in “came under fire,” “trapped,” “surrounded,” and “pleaded,” each of which represents a change of state that presupposes a prior state. “Came under fire” presupposes a previous state of relative safety, “trapped” presupposes a previous state of mobility, and “surrounded” presupposes a previous state of the presence of others whose relation is specified in the utterance. The verb “pleaded” implies that there was a continuous communicative exchange, and not just a single

statement, thus increasing the temporal range of the event. The temporal extension is further restricted to “for three hours,” where it is assumed that the situation remains the same over a period of time rather than occurring only at one moment. Furthermore, the structural framing is realised in “were some of the last words . . . said in a telephone call to rescuers,” where the reporting clause embeds the quoted verb in the already existing communicative act, presupposing a previous act of speaking and interaction and so preventing the quoted verb from being understood independently. In these presuppositional resources, the passage retains a single configuration, and the elements of speaker, place, surrounding participants, and duration are all tied together in a single bounded frame.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: “I’m so scared, please come” functions as the central Sign because the passage organises the representation around the child’s voice within a restricted spatial and communicative situation. The utterance establishes the child as the speaking referent, while “trapped in the vehicle” and “surrounded by her dead relatives” progressively specify the conditions surrounding that voice. The expression “for three hours she pleaded with the Red Crescent to save her” maintains the same referent and extends the communicative action temporally. The sign is therefore constructed through the relationship between the child’s speech and the progressively restricted circumstances in which that speech occurs.

Denotation: “I’m so scared” directly represents the child’s expressed emotional state, while “please come” directly represents her request for the addressee to approach. “Five-year-old Hind Rajab” identifies the participant and specifies her age, while “a telephone call to rescuers” establishes the communicative setting. “Her family’s car came under fire” directly represents the event affecting the vehicle. “Trapped in the vehicle” specifies the child’s spatial condition, while

“surrounded by her dead relatives” directly establishes the relation between her and the other occupants. “For three hours” specifies duration, and “she pleaded with the Red Crescent to save her” directly represents the continuing verbal action and its intended recipient. The direct representation therefore follows the same participant through speech, emotional state, spatial restriction, relational circumstance, duration, and continued appeal.

Connotation: The second-order meaning develops from the relationship between the child's expressed fear and the progressively restricted conditions surrounding her speech. “I'm so scared” associates the speaking voice with an explicitly stated state of fear, while “please come” connects that state with an immediate request for intervention. The reduced construction “Trapped in the vehicle” restricts the child spatially, and “surrounded by her dead relatives” further changes the relational configuration around her by placing her within a setting defined through the loss of the other occupants. The temporal phrase “for three hours” extends this restricted condition, while “she pleaded” maintains the child's verbal action throughout the duration. The resulting second-order signification therefore associates the child with fear, confinement, isolation, and sustained dependence on external assistance. These meanings arise from the progression and interaction of the linguistic constructions rather than from the literal meaning of any single expression.

4.7 Loss of Parents and Orphanhood

This section introduces how the absence of parents is represented in relation to child participants in the selected texts. The use of kinship expressions and references to family members in the utterance is described, with a consistent pattern of reference in the sequence without change in the roles of the participants.

4.7.1 Karbala Excerpt (6)

أن نساء أهل بيت النبوة أخفين على الأطفال شهادة آبائهم ويقبلن لهم إن آباءكم قد سافروا إلى كذا وكذا، وكان الحال على ذلك المنوال حتى أمر يزيد بأن يدخلن داره، وكان للحسين عليه السلام بنت صغيرة لها أربع سنين قامت ليلة من منامها وقالت: أين أبي الحسين عليه السلام فإني رأيته الساعة في المنام مضطرباً شديداً . فلما سمعن النسوة ذلك بكين وبكى معهن سائر الأطفال وارتفع العويل، فانتبه يزيد من نومه وقال: ما الخبر؟ ففحصوا عن الواقعة وقصوها عليه، فأمر بأن يذهبوا برأس أبيها إليها فأتوا بالرأس الشريف وجعلوه في حجرها، فقالت: ما هذا؟ قالوا: رأس أبيك. ففزعت الصبية وصاحت فمرضت وتوفيت في أيامها بالشام. (القمي، 1992، ص. 415-416)

The family of Prophethood had concealed from the children regarding the martyrdom of their fathers. They told them that their fathers had been on a journey, until Yazid called them to his house. A four-year-old daughter of Imam Husayn (a.s.) one day awoke from her dream saying, “Where has my father been? Just now I saw him in a dream that he was uneasy and distressed”. Hearing this, the women as well as the other children started weeping, while the voices of their lamenting arose. Yazid arose from his sleep and asked, “What has happened?” They found out the matter and informed him and the accursed ordered that the head of her father (Imam Husayn) be sent for her. The head was brought and kept in her lap. The girl asked, “What is this?” and they answered, “It is the head of your father”. Hearing this, the child was alarmed and started yelling, she took to ill and died in Damascus. (Qummi, 2001, p. 459)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: Within the Rational Speech Act framework, the opening sequence “أخفين على الأطفال شهادة آبائهم . . . إن آباءكم قد سافروا” and “The family of Prophethood had concealed from the children regarding the martyrdom of their fathers . . . They told them that their fathers had been on a journey” represents the fathers through a deliberately indirect formulation. Instead of explicitly presenting the fathers as dead, the utterance selects “had been on a journey”, thereby

maintaining the same referents while assigning them a different linguistic representation. The subsequent sequence “وكان الحال على ذلك المنوال” and “the situation continued in this manner” maintains the same representation rather than introducing a new one. Later, the child's question “أين أبي الحسين عليه السلام” and “Where has my father been?” establishes the father as the continuing referential centre, while the subsequent identification “رأس أبيك” and “the head of your father” progressively specifies the referent. The final sequence “ففزعت الصبية وصاحت فمرضت وتوفيت” and “the child was alarmed and started yelling, she took to ill and died” continues the same referential configuration through successive states and outcomes. Thus, the linguistic choices progressively restrict the representation of the father and the child rather than creating competing interpretive frames.

Speaker's Choice of Utterance: The speaker's selection is particularly evident in the contrast between “قد سافروا إلى كذا وكذا” and a more direct formulation of death. The expression “had been on a journey” is selected instead of explicitly stating that the fathers had been martyred. This choice maintains the referent while changing the way his absence is linguistically presented. Later, the interrogative “أين أبي الحسين عليه السلام” and “Where has my father been?” is selected instead of a general statement such as “My father is absent.” The interrogative directly requests the location of the father and therefore keeps the child's search linguistically explicit. Similarly, “فإني رأيته الساعة” and “Just now I saw him in a dream that he was uneasy and distressed” selects a perceptual formulation that gives additional specification to the father's appearance without changing the referent. The linguistic choices consequently maintain a restricted set of alternatives around concealment, search, dream perception, and eventual identification.

Prior Probability: The initial expression “أخفين على الأطفال شهادة آبائهم” and “had concealed from the children regarding the martyrdom of their fathers” establishes the interpretive frame

before the child's speech occurs. The fathers are introduced as absent participants whose actual condition has been concealed from the children. This prior frame influences how the later question "Where has my father been?" is interpreted: the father is already established within the discourse as the relevant absent referent. The subsequent "رأيتُه الساعة في المنام" and "Just now I saw him in a dream" remains connected to the same participant rather than establishing another referential frame. Thus, the prior probability is constructed through kinship, concealment, and absence before the subsequent expressions progressively reveal the father's condition.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The listener's interpretation develops through successive linguistic restrictions. First, "قد سافروا" and "had been on a journey" presents the fathers as absent without directly identifying the reason for their absence. The child then asks "ما هذا؟" and "What is this?", which establishes an initially indeterminate referent. The answer "رأس أبيك" and "It is the head of your father" resolves this indeterminacy by linking the physical object directly to the already established paternal referent. The subsequent "ففرغت الصبية وصاحت" and "the child was alarmed and cried out", followed by "فمرضت وتوفيت" and "she took to ill and died", continues the same mapping without introducing another outcome. The listener therefore moves from concealed absence, to search, to dream perception, to physical identification, and finally to the child's reaction and death.

In terms of presupposition, the existential pattern is realised in "آبائهم" and "their fathers" within "أن نساء أهل بيت النبوة أخفين على الأطفال شهادة آبائهم" and "The family of Prophethood had concealed from the children regarding the martyrdom of their fathers", where the Arabic possessive suffix and the English possessive determiner presuppose the existence of the fathers and their relationship to the children. This relationship is maintained in "إن آباءكم قد سافروا" and "their

fathers had been on a journey”, where the Arabic suffix in “آباءكم” and the English determiner “their” retrieve the participants without introducing new referents. “قالوا: رأس أبيك” and “they answered, ‘It is the head of your father’” presuppose the existence of the father and his relationship to the child through “أبيك” and “your father”. The sequence “آبائهم، أبي، وأبيك” and “their fathers”, “my father”, and “your father” forms a possessive chain in which the person changes according to the speaker and addressee, while the paternal relationship remains presupposed. The non-factive expression appears in “فإنني رأيته الساعة في المنام” and “just now I saw him in a dream”. The expressions “في المنام” and “in a dream” mark the reported perception as occurring within a dream rather than as an event asserted to have occurred in the external world. The lexical value occurs in “وكان الحال” and “على ذلك المنوال” and “the situation continued in this manner”. The English verb “continued” presupposes that the situation existed before the time and remained in progress, while the Arabic construction “كان الحال على ذلك المنوال” presents the same situation as persisting in the described manner. The structural form is realised in “أين أبي الحسين عليه السلام” and “Where has my father been?”, where the interrogative requests the location of an existing referent rather than questioning his existence. It is also realised in “ما هذا؟” and “What is this?”, where the interrogative pronouns “ما” and “What” request the identity of an object whose existence is treated as given.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: The father constitutes the central sign in this excerpt because the linguistic sequence continually reorganises the representation of the same referent. He is first represented through “آبائهم” and “their fathers”, then through “سافروا” and “had been on a journey”, later through “أبي” and “my father”, and finally through “رأس أبيك” and “the head of your father.” The referent remains constant while its linguistic representation changes through concealment, absence, dream perception, and physical identification.

Denotation: The expression “آبائهم” and “their fathers” directly identifies the fathers within a defined familial relation. The expression “قد سافروا” and “had been on a journey” continues to refer to the same participants without changing their identity. Similarly, “أبيك” and “your father” maintains the same individual as the referent, while “الرأس” and “the head” denotes a physical part associated with that individual rather than introducing a new person. The pronoun in “رأيتـه” and “I saw him” also maintains the same referential identity, while “أين أبي” and “Where has my father been?” recalls the already established father rather than introducing a new entity. Denotatively, therefore, the referential identity remains stable across the different linguistic forms.

Connotation: The second-order meaning develops through the progressive transformation of the father's representation. “قد سافروا” and “had been on a journey” represents absence indirectly through movement, placing the father outside the child's immediate presence without changing his identity. “رأس أبيك” and “the head of your father” then reduces the representation from the whole person to a physical part, creating a marked shift from presence to partial physical representation. “رأيتـه . . . في المنام” and “I saw him . . . in a dream” moves the established referent into a perceptual space mediated by the child's dream. Finally, “أين أبي” and “Where has my father been?” represents the father through absence and continued searching. The connotative structure therefore associates the father with absence, concealment, partial physical representation, and mediated remembrance, while his referential identity remains stable.

4.7.2 Gaza Excerpt (6)

The boy keeps asking for his parents, and he wants to get up and walk, but his parents are dead and his legs have been amputated. That is the plight of Ahmed Shabat, a four-year-old boy whose parents were killed when their home in the town of Beit Hanoun in the northeastern corner of the Gaza Strip was hit by an Israeli air strike. “The child asks every

day. 'Where is my father? Where is my mother? Every single day. But we try very hard to make him forget, and adjust to the situation he is currently in,' said Ahmed's uncle, Ibrahim Abu Amsha, who has become his guardian. Abu Amsha said the force of the blast threw the boy into a neighbouring house and killed 17 family members in total. The only other survivor was Ahmed's two-year-old brother. (Al-Mughrabi, 2023, paras. 1–4)

1. Pragmatic Analysis

Speaker Rationality: From the perspective of RSA, the opening sequence “The boy keeps asking for his parents, and he wants to get up and walk, but his parents are dead and his legs have been amputated” is constructed through cumulative restriction of one referent. “Keeps asking” presents repeated behaviour rather than a single act, while “his parents are dead” establishes a fixed condition. The subsequent “his legs have been amputated” adds a further physical restriction to the same child. These selections therefore do not create competing representations but progressively specify the condition of one participant. The sequence then moves from the general category “the boy” to the specific identification “Ahmed Shabat”, and finally maintains the same referent through “the child,” “him,” and “the boy.” The linguistic organisation consequently keeps the child as the central participant while accumulating parental loss, bodily loss, age, location, and survival information around him.

Speaker's Choice of Utterance: The repeated interrogatives “Where is my father? Where is my mother?” are particularly significant because the speaker could have used a general expression such as “He asks about his parents.” Instead, the text reproduces the child's direct questions and therefore preserves the precise linguistic form of the search. The repetition “every day . . . Every single day” is also selected rather than a single temporal expression, emphasising continuity without introducing a different event. The phrase “we try very hard to make him forget”

explicitly represents the uncle's response rather than leaving it implicit. The verb "has become" in "who has become his guardian" also selects a change-of-state construction that specifies the uncle's new relational role. These choices keep the discourse centred on the same child and the same parental referents while progressively restricting the available interpretation.

Prior Probability: The expression "a four-year-old boy whose parents were killed" establishes a strong interpretive frame before the later questions are processed. The child is initially categorised by age and parental loss, and this information shapes the interpretation of the subsequent "keeps asking", "every day", and "Where is my father? Where is my mother?" The repeated questioning does not establish a new condition but reinforces the previously activated condition of a parentless child. Likewise, the continuation of the same nominal referent across "the boy," "the child," and "him" prevents the interpretive field from expanding to another central participant.

Bayesian Listener Inference: The final sequence progressively narrows the listener's interpretation: "the force of the blast threw the boy into a neighbouring house" first establishes the event affecting the child; "killed 17 family members in total" specifies the resulting loss within the family group; and "The only other survivor was Ahmed's two-year-old brother" further restricts the distribution of survival. The phrase "the only other survivor" excludes alternative interpretations of who survived within the immediate family context. The listener therefore moves from a general account of an affected child to a specific configuration involving parental death, the death of numerous family members, and the survival of only Ahmed and his younger brother.

From the perspective of presupposition as presented by Yule (1996), the existential pattern is realised in "his parents" within "The boy keeps asking for his parents . . . but his parents are dead", where the possessive determiner "his" presupposes the existence of the parents and their

relationship to the boy. The same referential relation is maintained in “my father” and “my mother”, where the possessive determiner “my” identifies both parents through their relationship to the child. The expression “Ahmed’s uncle” presupposes the existence of Ahmed and the kinship relation encoded by the genitive construction. Similarly, “Ahmed’s two-year-old brother” presupposes the existence of a brother related to Ahmed, although the brother is introduced as a participant. The lexical value occurs in “keeps asking”, where “keeps” presupposes that the act of asking began before then and continues. The construction “has become his guardian” also presupposes an earlier state in which the uncle was not the child’s guardian, while asserting the resulting change in his status. The structural form is realised in “Where is my father? Where is my mother?”, where the interrogative “Where” requests the location of each parent while presupposing the existence of the referents. The possessive phrases within both questions retrieve the parents established in the discourse, and the repeated interrogative structure preserves the same presupposed existence. The requested information therefore concerns location, whereas the existence of the father and mother remains embedded in both questions.

2. Semiotic Analysis

Sign: The parents constitute the central sign around which the sequence is organised. “His parents” initially establishes the referential centre, and the direct questions “Where is my father? Where is my mother?” return explicitly to the same referents. The clause “we try very hard to make him forget” remains connected to this parental configuration rather than establishing another central referent. Thus, the sign is maintained through establishment, repeated interrogation, and continued orientation towards the absent parents.

Denotation: “His parents” directly identifies the parental roles within a fixed familial relationship, and “his parents are dead” preserves the same referential identity while specifying

their condition. The expressions “my father” and “my mother” maintain those same parental referents from the child’s perspective. The later “Ahmed’s uncle” and “Ahmed’s two-year-old brother” add further familial participants while keeping the parental relationship as the central referential structure. The text therefore maintains the same parental referents across designation, death, questioning, and subsequent family description.

Connotation: The second-order meaning emerges through the repeated representation of the parents as absent referents. The expression “his parents are dead” establishes absence as a fixed condition, while “Where is my father? Where is my mother?” reintroduces the same absent referents through repeated questioning. The repetition “every day . . . Every single day” converts the search into an ongoing linguistic pattern, while “we try very hard to make him forget” introduces an explicit attempt to suppress or redirect the child’s continued orientation towards his parents. The referents are therefore sustained not through direct presence but through persistence, absence, repeated questioning, and attempted suppression.

4.8 Findings and Discussion

This section gives a very brief overview of the findings obtained from the pragma-semiotic study. Three tables are utilised to represent the outcomes of the analysis, each of which is followed by a discussion of the patterns identified across the two contexts. The first table outlines the pragmatic analysis that took place in Frank and Goodman’s (2012) RSA framework. The second table shows the pragmatic analysis organised according to the presupposition theory proposed by Yule (1996). The third table shows the semiotic analysis based on Barthes’ (1968) semiotic theory.

Table 4.1

Pragmatic Analysis Based on the Rational Speech Act Framework

Comparative Theme	Analytical Principle	Karbala	Gaza
1. Weaponised Deprivation of Water	Speaker Rationality	Cumulative verbs narrow the referent's space and agency	Thirst is aligned with killing as an instrument and result.
	Speaker's Choice of Utterance	Simile and parallel negation present helplessness through comparison and dual denial	Deprivation is recast as a lethal bomb killing children and babies.
	Prior Probability	Captivity schema sets up an interpretation of deprivation as imposed control.	Basic needs backdrop shows water denial as life-threatening.
	Bayesian Listener Inference	Contrastive water access reveals the severity of children's exclusion	Causal chain links water deprivation to children's deaths.
2. Targeted Killing of Children	Speaker Rationality	Sequential actions keep the named child as the central referent	Repeating and naming keep the child as the only referent before death.
	Speaker's Choice of Utterance	The marked verb depicts the killing of the child with precision.	Precise age and instant death present the abrupt killing of the infant.
	Prior Probability	Naming and proximity representation frame the child's vulnerability before the attack.	Kinship and age representation prepare the child's vulnerability within the family.
	Bayesian Listener Inference	Steps from injury to blood to prayer present the child's death as irreversible.	Shift from named child to body and visual detail presents death progressively.
3. Child Agency Amid Extreme Violence	Speaker Rationality	Refusal and purposeful movement present the child's agency.	Helpful child behaviour is mapped directly to a death sentence.
	Speaker's Choice of Utterance	Child's question compresses addressee, accusation, and kinship into one utterance.	Causal verbs introduce children who were killed for normal acts of care.
	Prior Probability	Bare arm as sole defence frames the child's physical limitation.	The water collection activity context situates the children's death within a survival activity.
	Bayesian Listener Inference	Mother's identity is determined by previous kinship reference.	Absent referent recovered through contextual linkage rather than lexical repetition.
4. Destruction of Shelter and Spaces of Safety	Speaker Rationality	Enclosure and occupants jointly targeted.	Each clause restricts the event to a defined spatial frame.
	Speaker's Choice of Utterance	Explicit instruments and verbs present a threat to the inhabited shelter.	Indefinite source and repeated predicate present the children's bewilderment.
	Prior Probability	An inhabited shelter setting shows the children as residents who are in danger.	Sleeping occupants establish the shelters as inhabited spaces.

Comparative Theme	Analytical Principle	Karbala	Gaza
	Bayesian Listener Inference	Demonstrative reference links fire to children within the same target.	Burning conditions extend from locations to charred children.
5. Child Terror and Extreme Vulnerability	Speaker Rationality	Successive physical details maintain one stable mapping of the child.	Spatial and temporal constraints maintain the child's confined state.
	Speaker's Choice of Utterance	Precise fear and movement reveal the child as visible and exposed.	Precise verbs and reduced clauses present the child's sustained plea.
	Prior Probability	Relational categorisation presents the child as youthful within a recognisable group.	Child speaker profile further interpretation.
	Bayesian Listener Inference	Approach steps resolve in a fatal strike against the frightened child.	Progressive restriction answers the child's plea as unanswered and sustained.
6. Loss of Parents and Orphanhood	Speaker Rationality	Concealment replaces death with a false story to the children.	The cumulative constraints keep the orphaned child within a fixed referential and experiential frame
	Speaker's Choice of Utterance	Child's question and dream present the unknowing search for the dead father.	Daily interrogatives present the child's ongoing search for dead parents.
	Prior Probability	The concealment premise keeps the children ignorant of the father's martyrdom.	Parentless condition controls later expressions.
	Bayesian Listener Inference	Stepwise revelation ends in the child's fatal encounter with the father's head.	Three steps lead the listener from the blast to the child as one of two survivors.

Table 4.1 above shows the RSA analysis of the twelve selected texts, six of which are based on the Karbala context and six based on the Gaza context, across four principles. In terms of Speaker Rationality, the Karbala texts are structured by cumulative, sequential verbal constructions that gradually reduce the referent's space and agency, whereas the Gaza texts are more inclined to make direct correspondences between condition and outcome in tight clausal structures. Turning to Speaker's Choice of Utterance, grammatical choices and structurally constrained constructions define the Karbala texts, whereas metaphorical reformulations and

nominalised constructions are more evident in the Gaza texts, with compressed interrogatives being used in particular comparative pairs in each. In relation to Prior Probability, both contexts develop an interpretive frame preceding the main event, but in different ways: the Karbala texts develop this frame by means of kinship, naming, and spatial positioning, whereas the Gaza texts use activity context, basic needs, developmental specification, and spatial location to position the child as a vulnerable referent before suffering is presented. As for Bayesian Listener Inference, stepwise inferential chains are found in both contexts, but their resolutions are different: in the Karbala texts, inference resolves in bodily harm, fatal disclosure, or kinship rupture, whilst in the Gaza texts, inference develops through causal links, bodily specification, referential recovery, spatial confinement, or successive stages leading to family loss.

Table 4.2**Pragmatic Analysis Based on Presupposition Theory**

Comparative Theme	Analytical Principle	Karbala	Gaza
1. Weaponised Deprivation of Water	Existential	Possessive and definite constructions presuppose identifiable participants and the water source.	Definite and possessive constructions presuppose an established water threshold and identifiable participants.
	Lexical	"No longer" presupposes an earlier ability.	"Cutting off" and "continues" presuppose prior availability and ongoing suffering.
	Structural	—	The interrogative presents the continuation of suffering as given.
2. Targeted Killing of Children	Existential	Possessive and relational constructions presuppose identifiable participants and bodily parts.	Kinship and possessive constructions present the child and his body as identifiable.
	Lexical	"Vengeance" presupposes a preceding offence or harm.	—
	Structural	—	The interrogative presupposes an alleged action requiring explanation.

Comparative Theme	Analytical Principle	Karbala	Gaza
3. Child Agency Amid Extreme Violence	Existential	Definite expressions indicate named participants as already identified.	Definite naming introduces the children as definite participants.
	Lexical	" <i>Refused</i> " presupposes a prior attempt to restrain the boy.	" <i>Fetch</i> " presupposes a prior lack of or need for water.
	Structural	Interrogative functions on a contextually available proposition.	—
4. Destruction of Shelter and Spaces of Safety	Existential	Definite expressions indicate named participants as already identified.	Definite expressions identify shelters and children as definite entities.
	Lexical	" <i>Struck</i> ," " <i>burn</i> ," and " <i>rushed out</i> " presuppose a previously existing structure and containment.	" <i>Charred</i> " presupposes a previous unmodified bodily state.
	Structural	Interrogative operates on an already available proposition.	—
5. Child Terror and Extreme Vulnerability	Existential	Relational and possessive constructions present the child as identifiable within a known social frame.	Naming and possessive expressions introduce the child and the setting as already presented.
	Lexical	" <i>Came out</i> ," " <i>was close to him</i> ," and " <i>leaned down</i> " presuppose prior containment, distance, and elevation.	" <i>Came under fire</i> ," " <i>trapped</i> ," and " <i>surrounded</i> " presuppose prior safety, mobility, and absence of surrounding participants.
	Structural	Sequential framing presents events as already linked within one unfolding frame.	The reporting clause embeds the quoted utterance within an already established communicative event.
6. Loss of Parents and Orphanhood	Existential	Possessive constructions present the fathers as identifiable participants.	Possessive constructions present the parents and brother as identifiable referents.
	Non-factive	The dream report presents the father's appearance as non-factual.	—
	Lexical	" <i>Continued</i> " presupposes a previous situation in progress.	" <i>Keeps asking</i> " and " <i>has become</i> " presuppose prior questioning and an earlier state.
	Structural	The interrogatives treat the referents' existence as given.	The interrogatives presuppose the parents' existence and request their locations.

Table 4.2 presents the presuppositional analysis of the twelve selected texts, comprising six Karbala texts and six Gaza texts, according to the categories proposed by Yule (1996). Existential presupposition is the most consistently occurring type, as it appears in all six comparative pairs in both contexts. In the Karbala texts, possessive, definite, and relational constructions establish participants, bodily parts, resources, and settings as identifiable within the discourse. In the Gaza texts, the same function is performed mainly by possessive constructions, definite noun phrases, personal names, and kinship expressions. Factive presupposition does not occur in any of the twelve texts because none of the identified constructions contains a factive expression that presupposes the truth of its complement. Non-factive presupposition occurs only in the sixth Karbala text, where the dream report presents the father's appearance within a non-actual dream world instead of asserting his physical presence before the child. Lexical presupposition has a broad distribution, occurring in all six Karbala texts and five Gaza texts. Its indicators presuppose earlier abilities, attempts, conditions, positions, actions, or situations that remain backgrounded rather than explicitly asserted. Structural presupposition occurs in four Karbala texts and four Gaza texts. In both contexts, it is primarily realised through *wh*-interrogatives that treat the existence of particular referents or embedded propositions as given. Sequential framing additionally presents events as connected within an established structure in one Karbala text, while a reporting clause embeds an established communicative event in one Gaza text. Counterfactual presupposition does not occur in any of the twelve texts because none of the identified constructions presupposes a condition contrary to fact. The distribution therefore demonstrates that existential, lexical, and structural forms constitute the principal presuppositional resources in both contexts, while non-factive presupposition is confined to one Karbala text and factive and counterfactual presuppositions are absent. The texts generally construct children's

suffering by treating participants and relationships as identifiable, backgrounding earlier states through lexical indicators, and embedding information within interrogative or sequential structures.

Table 4.3**Semiotic Analysis Based on Barthes' Semiotic Theory**

Comparative Theme	Analytical Principle	Karbala	Gaza
1. Weaponised Deprivation of Water	Sign	A linguistically specified resource is kept, and access to it is limited within the same clause.	A necessary resource is specified while access to it is denied within the same prepositional construction.
	Denotation	Resource, participants, restriction, and contrastive access are coded in a single verbal structure.	Condition, resource, restriction, and outcome are all contained in a single linguistic frame.
	Connotation	Water continues to exist in discourse but is not distributed equally among the groups of participants.	Thirst is continued as the main sign by the continuity between condition, restriction and consequence.
2. Targeted Killing of Children	Sign	The child is the fixed referent, and the object of successive directed actions within one cohesive structure.	Repeated reference to a single child extends through successive formulations of death and bodily aftermath.
	Denotation	One referent is maintained across introduction, identification, spatial placement, directed action, and consequence.	One referent is maintained across interrogation, identification, action, age restriction, and bodily reference.
	Connotation	The referent is gradually fixed by sequential restriction, spatial fixation, and material continuation.	Meaning is organised through repeated reference, progressive restriction, and sustained referential linkage.
3. Child Agency Amid Extreme Violence	Sign	The same child is linked to both directed movement and bodily injury within one continuous frame.	The same children are linked to both supportive action and fatal outcome within one stable frame.
	Denotation	Wilful movement, direct address, physical defence, and maternal invocation are encoded as sequential acts upon the same referent.	Purposeful acts of care and their fatal outcome are encoded as causally connected rather than coincidental.

Comparative Theme	Analytical Principle	Karbala	Gaza
	Connotation	The wound becomes the consequence of a conscious act of loyalty and measures the cost of kinship defence.	Innocence becomes the condition of vulnerability, and ordinariness becomes the measure of the violence directed at the children.
4. Destruction of Shelter and Spaces of Safety	Sign	A defined inhabited place is targeted for burning, and occupants are kept in the same frame.	Shelters are presented in a continuous state of burning, with the same condition extended to all locations.
	Denotation	Directed action, commanded burning, and occupants' displacement are encoded through verbal, nominal, and directional constructions.	Disruption, burning shelters and bodily effects are coded in a progression from event to location to human referent.
	Connotation	The fire lexicon is repeated in both the nominal and verbal domains, spreading destruction in the enclosure and among the occupants.	The destructive condition is shifted from the spatial to human referents via an attributive adjective in the prenominal position.
5. Child Terror and Extreme Vulnerability	Sign	The child is the central referent towards which all actions are directed without another centre introduced.	The child serves as a speaking referent in a closed situation, without a shift in referents.
	Denotation	A single referent is maintained across description, movement, approach, and fatal action without substitution.	A single child speaker is kept throughout emotional state, directive, spatial confinement, and temporal extension.
	Connotation	Bodily detail, restricted movement, and incoming action constitute the child as a visible and unshielded presence.	Speech, enclosure, surrounding stillness, and duration constitute the child as a continuing voice within a confined condition.
6. Loss of Parents and Orphanhood	Sign	The father is the central referent, which is organised by establishment, interrogation, and a fatal identification.	Parents serve as the key referents in the process of establishment, repeated interrogation and sustained orientation.
	Denotation	Referential identity remains fixed across concealment, substitution, dream perception, and identificational disclosure.	Referential identity remains fixed across parental designation, death statement, and interrogative location.

Comparative Theme	Analytical Principle	Karbala	Gaza
	Connotation	The referent moves between absence, reduction to a physical part, and perceptual mediation while identity remains constant.	The referents are sustained through persistence, absence, and attempted suppression rather than direct presence.

In Table 4.3 above, the semiotic analysis of the twelve selected texts, half from the Karbala context and half from the Gaza context, is presented in terms of three aspects of Barthes' semiotic theory. With regard to sign, both contexts organise the sign around a single stable referential centre that remains unchanged throughout the sequence. In the Karbala texts, the centre is established by a fixed participant and the successive actions directed towards him, or by a linguistically specified resource held within a field of restriction. In the Gaza texts, it is established through repeated reference to a child across successive formulations of death or condition, through shelters maintained in a continuous state of burning, or through parents and children sustained as central referents throughout the sequence. Turning to denotation, both contexts encode the central referent through a sequence of explicit linguistic elements, but in different ways: the Karbala texts sequence elements of introduction, identification, spatial placement, directed action, and physical consequence; the Gaza texts sequence elements of interrogation, causal connection, age restriction, and bodily or locative extension. In terms of connotation, both contexts produce second-order meaning through the sustained organisation of the sign. The Karbala texts do this through sequential restriction, spatial fixation, material continuation of the sign, repetition of the fire lexicon in nominal and verbal positions, and the encoding of wounds or absence as sites of relational meaning; the Gaza texts do this through repeated reference, the transfer of the destructive condition from spatial to human referents, and the encoding of innocence, ordinary acts, and sustained absence as sites of harm or loss.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the conclusions drawn from the data analysis in Chapter Four and organises them around the three research questions formulated in Chapter One:

1. What are the pragmatic strategies used to represent children's suffering in the selected Karbala and Gaza texts?
2. What are the semiotic aspects of children's suffering in the selected Karbala and Gaza texts?
3. What are the points of convergence and divergence in the representation of children's suffering between the Karbala and Gaza texts?

Each question will be discussed separately to draw several general conclusions. This chapter also highlights the contribution of the study and concludes with recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

5.2 Concluding Remarks on Research Question 1

In this section, the current study introduces the concluding remarks regarding the pragmatic strategies used to depict the suffering of children in the selected texts from Karbala and Gaza in terms of the RSA framework and presupposition theory.

Based on the findings of the RSA analysis, the researcher has determined that all four principles are active in both contexts. Firstly, as far as Speaker Rationality is concerned, the Karbala texts rely on a series of verbal clauses to build up meaning, with the referent's space and agency being progressively reduced, while the Gaza texts tend to map condition onto outcome in single compact clauses. Secondly, in terms of Speaker's Choice of Utterance, the Karbala texts are

characterised by accurate lexical choice and carefully formulated utterances, whereas the Gaza texts are more likely to employ metaphorical and nominal constructions. Thirdly, regarding Prior Probability, both contexts create an interpretive frame prior to the central event: the Karbala texts do this by means of kinship, naming, and spatial placement, and the Gaza texts do this by means of activity context, basic needs, and the developmental stage of the child. Fourthly, when it comes to Bayesian Listener Inference, both contexts construct inferences, but these inferences operate differently: in the Karbala texts, inference results in actual bodily harm or in disruption of the family; in the Gaza texts, inference develops through causal links, bodily specification, referential recovery, spatial confinement, or successive stages leading to family loss.

The application of presupposition theory has led to the conclusion that existential presupposition is the most consistent type, occurring in all six comparative pairs in both contexts and presenting participants and their relationships as identifiable before suffering is introduced. Factive presupposition does not occur in any of the twelve selected texts. Non-factive presupposition occurs only in the sixth Karbala text, where the dream report presents the father's appearance within a non-actual dream world rather than asserting his physical presence before the child. Lexical presupposition occurs in all six Karbala texts and five Gaza texts, as its indicators presuppose earlier states, abilities, attempts, conditions, or actions that are not explicitly restated. Structural presupposition occurs in four Karbala texts and four Gaza texts, mainly through interrogative and sequential constructions that present particular referents or propositions as given information. Counterfactual presupposition does not occur in any of the twelve selected texts.

To sum up, the pragmatic analysis has revealed clear differences between the two contexts: the Karbala texts more often present children speaking, moving, or resisting within specific events,

whereas the Gaza texts more often present them in conditions of deprivation, confinement, and loss.

5.3 Concluding Remarks on Research Question 2

This section presents the concluding remarks on the semiotic dimension of children's suffering in the chosen texts from Karbala and Gaza.

Based on the findings of the semiotic analysis, the researcher has determined that in both contexts, all three elements of the semiotic system are functioning. As regards sign, both contexts organise the sign around a single stable referential centre, one that remains unchanged throughout the sequence without being displaced by other referential centres: the Karbala texts establish this centre through a fixed participant and the successive actions directed towards him; the Gaza texts establish this centre through repeated reference to a child, a denied resource, or an absent parent across successive formulations of harm or condition. Turning to denotation, both contexts have a sequential progression of explicit linguistic elements that encode the central referent, but they do so in different ways: the Karbala texts rely on introduction, identification, spatial placement, directed action, and physical consequence, whereas the Gaza texts use interrogation, causal connection, age restriction, and bodily or locative extension. Regarding connotation, both contexts create a second-order meaning through the extended organisation of the sign: the Karbala texts do so through sequential restriction, spatial fixation, and the encoding of kinship and bodily harm as the locus of relational meaning, whereas the Gaza texts do so through repeated reference, the progressive narrowing of the child's condition, and the encoding of innocence and ordinary acts of care as the precise site of harm or loss.

Overall, the semiotic analysis has revealed that literal descriptions of harm also convey broader meanings, representing the child in terms of bodily suffering, innocence, and family loss.

5.4 Concluding Remarks on Research Question 3

This section distinguishes the points of convergence and divergence in the depiction of children's suffering between the Karbala and Gaza texts.

1. Points of Convergence

The analysis has shown that there is a common representational strategy in both contexts, in which the child is not presented as an anonymous or undifferentiated victim but is consistently individualised prior to the occurrence of the victimisation. In all six comparative pairs, the child's identity is established by a prior naming, kinship, age specification, or spatial placement before the harm occurs, and the child is always a very specific human presence and not a general category of victim.

Moreover, both contexts extend the representation of children's suffering beyond the child's body to the figures surrounding him or her. The harm done to the child is not recorded as a standalone experience but as an experience whose consequences are conveyed through the actions and reactions of the named adults in the text, either through physical contact with the child's body or through the subsequent grief and displacement of surviving family members.

Furthermore, the two contexts focus on meaning at the level of specific bodily detail rather than at the level of generalised or abstract description. The specificity of suffering is always coded into the precise physical states attributed to the child's body, and the specificity is consistent across all six comparative pairs, without exception.

2. Points of Divergence

The most important distinction lies in the representation of the child as an acting subject or as the focus of a defined condition. In the texts of Karbala, the child's agency is maintained at the moment of greatest danger; in several of the texts, this agency is recorded through directed

movement, direct speech, or physical resistance, even when the child is unable to prevail. In the texts in Gaza, the representational mode does not code action but condition as the main feature of the child's presence in the text; the child is coded in terms of entrapment, deprivation, repeated questioning, or physical containment.

Furthermore, there are significant differences between the two contexts in terms of the witness's relation to the time of harm. The Karbala texts represent suffering through witnessing that takes place within the event itself; named individuals are present at the time of suffering, and react to it by direct physical and verbal intervention. Suffering in the Gaza texts is frequently reported from a distance, from a position outside the event, where the witness records and reports what has happened to an audience, which is also set outside the event. This difference in the position of the witnesses influences the whole representational mode of each context, rather than being limited to individual instances.

Lastly, there are differences in the distribution of harm over time between the two contexts. The Karbala texts encode children's suffering as a bounded event, with a well-defined transition from the previous state to the moment of suffering, such that the action of violence breaks an established condition. In the Gaza texts, suffering is generally described as an ongoing and recurring state, rather than as a discrete event that takes place at a specific moment, with deprivation, confinement, and loss being described as conditions that last through time.

Overall, the researcher has concluded that both contexts share certain representational features by individualising the child, representing suffering through specific bodily detail, and extending that suffering to the surrounding figures. The differences lie in the encoding of the child as an acting subject or as a place of suffering; in the way violence is seen as a rupture contained within the child or the way it is passed from outside to inside; in the way violence is seen as a

rupture in time or a sustained state. The convergences demonstrate that children's suffering in both tragedies lies on a common linguistic and semiotic ground in which the child is always a named, embodied, relationally situated presence. The differences show that this common base is achieved by different structural means in both contexts, revealing the various textual and historical positions from which each tragedy speaks. The juxtaposition of the common ground and the structural differences provides analytical depth to the comparative analysis.

5.5 Contribution of the Study

While numerous studies have examined children's suffering in the tragedies of Karbala and Gaza from historical, religious, and humanitarian perspectives, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous study has conducted a comparative pragma-semiotic examination of how that suffering is represented across the two contexts. The current study offers broader insights into the representation of children's experiences of extreme violence and deprivation in narrative and documentary texts. In brief, the study makes four contributions, as listed below:

1. The study contributes to the pragma-semiotic field by providing the first comparative analysis of children's suffering in the contexts of Karbala and Gaza, thereby addressing a gap in existing scholarship, as these two tragedies have not previously been analysed from this perspective.
2. The study provides pragmatic knowledge by showing that children's suffering in both contexts is created by discernible pragmatic strategies that are embedded in the linguistic structures of the selected Karbala and Gaza texts.
3. The study has identified three layers of meaning in the semiotic construction of children's suffering: the sign, denotation, and connotation, demonstrating that the selected texts create layers of meaning beyond their literal content.

4. The study has revealed common representational bases and structural differences in the pragma-semiotic construction of children's suffering in two tragedies that are separated by fourteen centuries.

5.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to other researchers based on the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data, which may be useful to them:

1. Linguistic researchers are encouraged to apply pragma-semiotic analysis to other conflict-related texts concerning children in different historical and cultural contexts, in order to extend the analytical framework adapted in the present research.
2. Pedagogically, it is suggested that educators in English language departments incorporate this kind of analysis into their teaching materials since texts from the humanitarian field contain rich linguistic information that can be used to study pragmatic strategies and semiotic construction.
3. The pragma-semiotic analysis of historical and documentary texts is suggested as a promising research field for graduate students in English language departments.
4. All those who are concerned with the documentation of children's suffering in conflict situations, including those who study Islamic education or humanitarian studies, are urged to also examine the linguistic representation of children's suffering in conflict situations in addition to the historical and humanitarian dimensions.
5. Researchers of comparative studies are encouraged to address other historical and contemporary tragedies in this manner, with a view to gaining useful analytical insights into the linguistic constructions of human suffering across different historical periods and cultures.

5.7 Suggestions for Further Research

The present pragma-semiotic study, which has investigated the tragedies of Karbala and Gaza in relation to children's suffering, suggests the following research titles for other researchers who might be interested in the same line of research:

1. A Cognitive-Pragmatic Analysis of Children's Suffering in the Tragedies of Karbala and Gaza.
2. A Critical Discourse Analysis of Children's Suffering in Selected Texts from Karbala and Gaza.
3. A Pragma-Semiotic Study of Women's Suffering in the Tragedies of Karbala and Gaza.
4. A Pragma-Semiotic Study of Children's Suffering in Modern Conflict Texts.
5. A Socio-Pragmatic Study of Children's Suffering in Selected Conflict Texts.
6. A Pragma-Semiotic Analysis of Children's Suffering in Selected Audiovisual Texts on the Tragedies of Karbala and Gaza.

References

- Abū Mikhnaf. (1988). *Waq'at al-Ṭaff* [The event of Taff] (M. H. al-Yūsufī al-Gharawī, Ed.). Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī al-Tābi'ah li-Jamā'at al-Mudarrisīn.
- Abu Mikhnaf. (2012). *The event of Taff: The earliest historical account of the tragedy of Karbala* (M. H. Yusufi Gharawi, Rev.; 'U. Kumo, Trans.). ABWA Publishing and Printing Center.
- Aghaie, K. S. (2004). *The martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i symbols and rituals in modern Iran*. University of Washington Press.
- Alkhaldi, M., Akilan, B., Hoteit, M., Elhadidy, M., & Morrison, S. (2024). Suboptimal attainment of global goals of human rights, universal health coverage and sustainable development goals in Gaza during 2023–2024. *Risk Management and Healthcare Policy*, 17, 3207–3216. <https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S488944>
- Al-Mufīd, M. ibn M. (1981). *Kitāb al-irshād: The book of guidance into the lives of the twelve imams* (I. K. A. Howard, Trans.). Balagha Books; Muhammadi Trust.
- Al-Mughrabi, N. (2023, November 15). Bombarded twice in Gaza, 4-year-old Ahmed loses parents, then legs. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/bombarded-twice-gaza-4-year-old-ahmed-loses-parents-then-legs-2023-11-15/>
- Al-Mughrabi, N., & Abu Alkas, D. (2025, April 23). Israeli strikes kill 10 at Gaza shelter, Israel says targeted militants. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-airstrikes-kill-10-school-housing-displaced-families-hit-childrens-2025-04-23/>
- Al-Qummī, 'A. (1992). *Nafas al-mahmūm fī muṣībat sayyidinā al-Ḥusayn al-maẓlūm* [The sorrowful sigh concerning the tragedy of our master al-Ḥusayn, the oppressed]. Dār al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍā'.

- Al-Ṭabarī, M. ibn J. (1966). *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī: Tārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk* [History of the messengers and kings] (Vol. 5). Dār al-Ma'ārif.
- Al-Ṭabarī. (1990). *The history of al-Ṭabarī: The caliphate of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah, A.D. 680–683/A.H. 60–64* (I. K. A. Howard, Trans.; Vol. 19). State University of New York Press.
- Amnesty International. (2024, December 2). *Israel/OPT: Amnesty International's research into Hamas-led attacks of 7 October 2023 and treatment of hostages* (Public Statement No. MDE 15/8803/2024). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/8803/2024/en/>
- Andersen, T. C., Fylkes Knag, G., & Sapiezynska, E. (2024). *Stop the war on children: Pathways to peace*. Save the Children International. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/SWOC_report_2024_compressed.pdf
- Ashour, S. A., Migdad, M., & Buheji, M. (2025). The impact of war on Gaza on children's malnutrition since 2023. *Public Health Research*, 15(1), 1–9. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389600943_The_Impact_of_War_on_Gaza_on_Children%27s_Malnutrition_Since_2023
- Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2021). What is qualitative in research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 44(4), 599–608. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-021-09497-w>
- Bacchini, S. C. (2012). *Telling pain: A study of the linguistic encoding of the experiences of chronic pain and illness through the lexicogrammar of Italian* [Doctoral dissertation, Queen Mary University of London]. Queen Mary Research Online. <http://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/jspui/handle/123456789/8312>
- Barthes, R. (1968). *Elements of semiology* (A. Lavers & C. Smith, Trans.). Hill and Wang. (Original work published 1964)

- Beebe, B. (2004). The semiotic analysis of trademark law. *UCLA Law Review*, 51(3), 621–704.
<https://www.uclalawreview.org/the-semiotic-analysis-of-trademark-law/>
- Beiraghdar, F., Momeni, J., Hosseini, E., Panahi, Y., & Sahab Negah, S. (2023). Health crisis in Gaza: The urgent need for international action. *Iranian Journal of Public Health*, 52(12), 2478–2483. <https://doi.org/10.18502/ijph.v52i12.14309>
- Bergen, L., Levy, R., & Goodman, N. D. (2016). Pragmatic reasoning through semantic inference. *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 9, Article 20. <https://doi.org/10.3765/sp.9.20>
- Betancourt, T. S., & Khan, K. T. (2008). The mental health of children affected by armed conflict: Protective processes and pathways to resilience. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 20(3), 317–328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540260802090363>
- Bhat, F. A. (2003). *Tragedy of Karbala: An analytical study of Urdu historical writings during the 19th–20th century* [Doctoral dissertation, Aligarh Muslim University]. CORE. <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/52383>
- Boothby, N., Strang, A., & Wessells, M. (Eds.). (2006). *A world turned upside down: Social ecological approaches to children in war zones*. Kumarian Press.
- Boukari, Y., Kadir, A., Waterston, T., Jarrett, P., Harkensee, C., Dexter, E., Cinar, E. N., Blackett, K., Nacer, H., Stevens, A., & Devakumar, D. (2024). Gaza, armed conflict and child health. *BMJ Paediatrics Open*, 8(1), Article e002407. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjpo-2023-002407>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>

- Breheny, R., Katsos, N., & Williams, J. (2006). Are generalised scalar implicatures generated by default? An on-line investigation into the role of context in generating pragmatic inferences. *Cognition*, 100(3), 434–463. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2005.07.003>
- Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Chandler, D. (2007). *Semiotics: The basics* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Chandler, D. (2017). *Semiotics: The basics* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Cobley, P., & Jansz, L. (1999). *Introducing semiotics*. Icon Books.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Allen & Unwin.
- Crystal, D. (2008). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics* (6th ed.). Blackwell Publishing.
- Cummings, E. M., Merrilees, C. E., Taylor, L. K., & Mondì, C. F. (2017). Developmental and social–ecological perspectives on children, political violence, and armed conflict. *Development and Psychopathology*, 29(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579416001061>
- Deacon, E. L. (2021). *Retelling Karbala: A literary analysis of key plays of the Iranian ta'ziyeh repertoire* [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Edinburgh]. Edinburgh Research Archive. <https://doi.org/10.7488/era/2239>

- Degen, J. (2023). The rational speech act framework. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 9, 519–540.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-031220-010811>
- Eco, U. (1976). *A theory of semiotics*. Indiana University Press.
- Fakhr-Rohani, M.-R. (2023). *The Shi'i Islamic martyrdom narratives of Imam al-Husayn: An introduction*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Frank, M. C., & Goodman, N. D. (2012). Predicting pragmatic reasoning in language games. *Science*, 336(6084), 998. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1218633>
- Freh, F. M. (2015). Psychological effects of war and violence on children. *Journal of Psychological Abnormalities in Children*, 4(4), Article e106. <https://doi.org/10.4172/2329-9525.1000e106>
- Galofaro, F. (2011). Pragmatics, pain and forms of life: Philosophical investigations on chronic pain. *Esercizi Filosofici*, 6, 266–280. <https://sites.units.it/eserfilo/art611/galofaro611.pdf>
- Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. W. (2012). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (10th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Gaza Community Mental Health Programme. (2025, October). *Mental health crisis: Two years living through the genocide: A special report on the state of mental health after two years of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip*. <https://www.gazamentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Mental-Health-Crisis-Report-2025-2.pdf>
- Goodman, N. D., & Frank, M. C. (2016). Pragmatic language interpretation as probabilistic inference. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 20(11), 818–829.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2016.08.005>

- Goodman, N. D., & Stuhlmüller, A. (2013). Knowledge and implicature: Modeling language understanding as social cognition. *Topics in Cognitive Science*, 5(1), 173–184.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/tops.12007>
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics: Vol. 3. Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). Academic Press.
- Grice, H. P. (1989). *Studies in the way of words*. Harvard University Press.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1998). On the grammar of pain. *Functions of Language*, 5(1), 1–32.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/fol.5.1.02hal>
- Hamamra, B., Mahamid, F., Bdier, D., & Atiya, M. (2025). War-related trauma in narratives of Gazans: Challenges, difficulties and survival coping. *Cambridge Prisms: Global Mental Health*, 12, Article e34. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2025.23>
- Hana, A. K., & Shurafa, W. (2024, July 16). A Gaza father mourns his baby boy, killed in bed by an Israeli airstrike. *Associated Press*. <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-gaza-father-child-killed-airstrike-81c6480635f860c485b66d5454e948ef>
- Hawting, G. R. (2000). *The first dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad caliphate AD 661–750* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Horn, L. R. (2004). Implicature. In L. R. Horn & G. Ward (Eds.), *The handbook of pragmatics* (pp. 3–28). Blackwell Publishing.
- Huang, Y. (2014). *Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

- Human Rights Watch. (2025). Israel and Palestine. In *World report 2025*.
<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/israel-and-palestine>
- Humphreys, R. S. (1991). *Islamic history: A framework for inquiry*. Princeton University Press.
- Hylén, T. (2007). *Husayn, the mediator: A structural analysis of the Karbala drama according to Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310/923)* [Doctoral dissertation, Uppsala University]. <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-7457>
- Jafri, S. H. M. (1979). *The origins and early development of Shi'a Islam*. Longman.
- Jamindang, M. D. O. (2022). Sakit: A preliminary linguistic analysis of Tagalog pain concept and language. *UP Working Papers in Linguistics*, 1(1), 64–105.
<https://linguistics.upd.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/12-Sakit-A-Preliminary-Linguistic-Analysis-of-Tagalog-Pain-Concept-and-Language.pdf>
- Jawad, R., Dawani, S., Shehadeh, S., & Nateel, B. (2025). Against frames of trauma and testimony: Palestinian children's narratives from within a contemporary genocide. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 54(3), 71–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0377919X.2025.2560304>
- Kennedy, H. (2004). *The prophet and the age of the caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the sixth to the eleventh century* (2nd ed.). Pearson/Longman.
- Laila, U., Kanwal, M., & Saba, K. (2025). Tongues of war: Deconstructing the lexical narratology of children in conflicted regions. *Wah Academia Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 933–955. <https://doi.org/10.63954/WAJSS.4.1.48.2025>
- Lapan, S. D., Quartaroli, M. J., & Riemer, F. J. (Eds.). (2012). *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs*. Jossey-Bass.

- Lardo, M. A. (2020). The occupying power according to the international humanitarian law: Case study in Gaza Strip. *Padjadjaran Journal of International Law*, 4(2), 170–191. <https://doi.org/10.23920/pjil.v4i2.410>
- Lascaratou, C. (2007). *The language of pain: Expression or description?* John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Lascaratou, C., & Hatzidaki, O. (2002). Pain as process in Modern Greek. *Journal of Greek Linguistics*, 3(1), 53–82. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jgl.3.04las>
- Latif, S., Muaileq, E. A. A., Chaabo, H., Rashid, F., Kelly, M., Khatri, N., King, H. A., & Fournier, N. M. (2025). Cases of trauma due to war and violence among children in Gaza. *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 31(4), 210–215. <https://doi.org/10.26719/2025.31.4.210>
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2010). *Practical research: Planning and design* (9th ed.). Pearson.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Levinson, S. C. (2000). *Presumptive meanings: The theory of generalized conversational implicature*. MIT Press.
- Long, T. L. (2019). Pain as sign and symptom: A semiotic analysis of nursing clinical practice and research. *Recherches sémiotiques/Semiotic Inquiry*, 39(1–2), 171–182. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1076231ar>
- Macksoud, M. S., & Aber, J. L. (1996). The war experiences and psychosocial development of children in Lebanon. *Child Development*, 67(1), 70–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1996.tb01720.x>
- Madelung, W. (1997). *The succession to Muhammad: A study of the early caliphate*. Cambridge University Press.

- Manzanero, A. L., Aroztegui, J., Fernández, J., Guarch-Rubio, M., Álvarez, M. Á., El-Astal, S., & Hemaïd, F. (2024). War, torture and trauma in preadolescents from Gaza Strip: Two different modalities of PTSD. *Anuario de Psicología Jurídica*, 34, 1–12.
<https://doi.org/10.5093/apj2024a6>
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Maxwell, J. A., & Reybold, L. E. (2015). Qualitative research. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences* (2nd ed., Vol. 19, pp. 685–689). Elsevier.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.10558-6>
- The meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (A. Y. Ali, Trans.; 10th ed.). (2004). Amana Publications.
- Momen, M. (1985). *An introduction to Shi'i Islam: The history and doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*. Yale University Press.
- Morris, C. W. (1938). *Foundations of the theory of signs* (*International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, Vol. 1, No. 2). University of Chicago Press.
- Nakhilawi, H. A. M. (2016). *Ethnosemantic, pragmatic, and textual analysis of kinship terms in Arabic and English discourse* [Doctoral dissertation, Universiti Sains Malaysia]. EPrints USM.
https://eprints.usm.my/32160/1/HASHIM_ALIWY_MOHAMMED_NAKHILAWI_24%28NN%29.pdf
- Nöth, W. (1995). *Handbook of semiotics*. Indiana University Press.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2025, July 29). *Thirst as a weapon: UN experts condemn Israel's deliberate dehydration and starvation of the*

- Palestinian people*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/07/thirst-weapon-un-experts-condemn-israels-deliberate-dehydration-and>
- Paltridge, B. (2006). *Discourse analysis: An introduction*. Continuum.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Peirce, C. S. (1991). *Peirce on signs: Writings on semiotic* (J. Hoopes, Ed.). University of North Carolina Press.
- Pinault, D. (2001). *Horse of Karbala: Muslim devotional life in India*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Qarmout, T., & Béland, D. (2012). The politics of international aid to the Gaza Strip. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 41(4), 32–47. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2012.XLI.4.32>
- Qummi, A. (2001). *Nafasul Mahmoom: Relating to the heart rending tragedy of Karbala* (A. A. T. Bhujwala, Trans.). Baqirul Uloom Islamic Library & Research Centre.
- Rubab, I., Syed, S. B., & Lodhi, M. A. (2021). Post Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) sermons: A critical discourse study of counter oppression verbal strategies. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 5(2), 260–274. [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021\(5-II\)1.21](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2021(5-II)1.21)
- Salim, S., & Syed Ismail, S. H. (2025). Decoding innocence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Semiotics of Palestinian children's cartoons on Twitter. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, 16(1), 19–37. <https://doi.org/10.22055/RALS.2024.46172.3240>
- Sauerland, U. (2008). Implicated presuppositions. In A. Steube (Ed.), *The discourse potential of underspecified structures* (pp. 581–600). Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110209303.4.581>
- Saussure, F. de. (1959). *Course in general linguistics* (W. Baskin, Trans.). Philosophical Library. (Original work published 1916).

- Scontras, G., Tessler, M. H., & Franke, M. (2021). *A practical introduction to the Rational Speech Act modeling framework* [Preprint]. arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2105.09867>
- Sebeok, T. A. (2001). *Signs: An introduction to semiotics* (2nd ed.). University of Toronto Press.
- Siddiqui, A. (2018). The principle features of English pragmatics in applied linguistics. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 9(2), 77–80. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.9n.2p.77>
- Sinmaz, E. (2024, February 10). 'I'm so scared, please come': Hind Rajab, five, found dead in Gaza 12 days after cry for help. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/10/im-so-scared-please-come-hind-rajab-six-found-dead-in-gaza-12-days-after-cry-for-help>
- Smith, C. D. (2017). *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict: A history with documents* (9th ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Szanto, E. (2020). Gender and the Karbala paradigm: On studying contemporary Shi'i women. In J. Howe (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of Islam and gender* (pp. 183–202). Routledge.
- Taherdoost, H. (2021). Data collection methods and tools for research: A step-by-step guide to choose data collection technique for academic and business research projects. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, 10(1), 10–38. <https://elvedit.com/journals/IJARM/wp-content/uploads/Data-Collection-Methods-and-Tools-for-Research.pdf>
- Tantesh, M. A., & Graham-Harrison, E. (2025, July 19). Killing of young siblings at Gaza water point shows seeking life's essentials now a deadly peril. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jul/19/killing-of-young-siblings-at-gaza-water-point-shows-seeking-lifes-essentials-now-a-deadly-peril>

UNICEF. (2024). *A year of tears: 12 months of war on children.*

<https://www.unicef.org/sop/reports/year-tears>

United Nations. (2023). *Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/895-*

S/2023/363). <https://docs.un.org/en/A/77/895>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 20, 1989,

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

Vaglieri, L. V. (1971). Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. In B. Lewis, V. L. Ménage, C. Pellat, & J.

Schacht (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 607–615). Brill.

van Dijk, T. A. (1991). *Racism and the press*. Routledge.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.

المستخلص

حظيت مأساتا كربلاء وغزة باهتمام أكاديمي بسبب ما ارتبط بهما من معاناة وعنف. وعلى الرغم من أن قروناً تفصل بينهما، فقد أنتجت كلتاها مجموعة من النصوص التي يؤدي فيها الأطفال دوراً محورياً. تبحث الدراسة في معاناة الأطفال في مأساتي كربلاء وغزة من منظور تداولي-سيمياي، وتهدف إلى استكشاف الآليات التي تُبنى من خلالها هذه المعاناة، وتحديد أوجه التقارب والاختلاف بين السياقين. تناولت الدراسات السابقة كربلاء وغزة من منظورات تاريخية ودينية وسياسية وإنسانية، غير أن البحوث المقارنة المتعلقة بتمثيل الطفل في هذين السياقين ما تزال محدودة. تتبع هذه الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً، وتعتمد إطاراً تحليلياً انتقائياً يجمع بين إطار الفعل الكلامي العقلاني لفرانك وغودمان (2012)، ونظرية الافتراض المسبق ليول (1996)، والنظرية السيميائية لبارت (1968). تتكون بيانات الدراسة من اثني عشر نصاً مختاراً، وقد نُظِّمت هذه النصوص في ستة أزواج للمقارنة. ويقتصر التحليل على المادة اللغوية المكتوبة، ولا يتناول البيانات البصرية. تكشف النتائج عن فروق تداولية؛ إذ يظهر الأطفال في نصوص كربلاء غالباً وهم يتكلمون أو يتحركون أو يقاومون ضمن أحداث محددة، بينما يظهرون في نصوص غزة غالباً في حالات من الحرمان والاحتجاز والفقْدان. وفي كلا السياقين، يُقدَّم كل طفل بوصفه فرداً قائماً بذاته من خلال اسمه أو صلة قرابته أو عمره أو تموضعه المكاني، وتُرمَّز معاناته من خلال التفاصيل الجسدية. ويُظهر التحليل السيميائي أن الأوصاف المباشرة للأذى تنقل أيضاً معاني أوسع، بحيث يُمثَّل الطفل من حيث معاناته الجسدية وبرأته وفقدانه لأسرته. وإجمالاً، تبيِّن المقارنة أن الأنماط المشتركة في تمثيل الطفل تتخذ شكلاً تحدده الظروف الخاصة بكل مأساة.



جمهورية العراق
وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي
جامعة واسط
كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية
قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

دراسة تداولية سيميائية مقارنة لمعاناة الأطفال في مأساتي كربلاء وغزة

رسالة مقدمة

إلى مجلس كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة واسط
كجزء من متطلبات نيل درجة الماجستير في اللغة الإنكليزية وعلم اللغة

تقدمت بها

رانيه فيصل حمزه

بإشراف

أ.د. مازن جاسم محمد الحلو