

Visual and Linguistic Strategy: A Multimodal Analysis of PSI's Political Posters

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on two PSI's political posters. It aims to analyze some political posters made for the campaign of the election. The posters were chosen randomly. The visual devices are analyzed using Kress and van Leeuwen's model. A political discourse approach by van Leeuwen is adopted to identify the main discourse strategies to persuade people, especially young people, to vote in a specific way. The result shows that the posters use visual and linguistic strategies to convey a political discourse and to persuade the young audience to vote—the background of the posters, colors, body language, and facial expressions. The written text used in the poster is also effectively structured to represent the party's ideologies and the candidate.

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INTRODUCTION

It is undeniably true that language has been the most potent weapon of political leaders to defend themselves, attack their opponents, and, most importantly, persuade their audiences. Politicians use language in the form of rhetoric and specific verbal strategies to influence political action and beliefs by addressing people directly. (Jamil & Al Tameemi, 2022). The use of language can produce the effects of authority, legitimacy, consensus, and so forth that are recognized as intrinsic to politics. However politics is defined, there is a linguistic, discursive, and communicative dimension, generally only partially acknowledged by practitioners and theorists. (Chilton, 2004).

However, language is not the only semiotic mode used in communication in this advanced world of technology, science, and media. Communication has shifted from monomodal to multimodal. Multimodal refers to how people communicate using other modes, such as visual semiotic resources, colors, images, pictures, graphics, gestures, hairstyles, or videos, together with language, to form meanings (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Furthermore, it becomes fundamental in shaping and influencing audiences' ideologies. (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Borchers, as cited in Jamil, agrees that images are symbols that are the building blocks of persuasive images. They communicate in a way words cannot. (Jamil & Al Tameemi, 2022). Paltridge states that to read, understand, and analyse a text, we adhere to not only words, phrases, or sentences but also other modalities, such as pictures, films, video images, and sounds. If effective and inspiring, these modalities involve people and immerse them in any action or situation. (Paltridge, 2012).

Political posters as a communication medium have become one of many tools for political leaders to communicate, represent themselves, and influence voters. The linguistic and visual construction of the poster is fundamental in highlighting the connection between how

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posters communicate and convey messages. Political posters can be considered a powerful tool used in election campaigns to persuade the audience to vote for the candidate represented. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the different linguistic and visual elements to observe their meanings in context and their effects on the audience's ideology. This will also signify how political power persuades audiences to vote for certain people over others. (Lirola, 2016). Political posters become an influential medium in propaganda as Gbadegesin and Onanuga suggest: "Depth and extent of the use of multiple modes in party logos/emblems, in political print adverts and party slogans, etc. to encode party ideals and ideologies." (Gbadegesin & Onanuga, 2018).

Due to the general elections, all parties have installed posters or banners everywhere in public places, including the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI). The party installed posters and banners with specific characteristics and uniqueness. They devised slogans like Politik Adalah Jalan Ninja Kita, Politik Santun dan Santuy, Politik Riang Gembira, etc, to differentiate themselves from other parties. According to Nur Rohman, PSI has succeeded in attracting the attention of novice voters with a fresh political platform, especially on social, environmental, and digitalization issues. The party effectively uses social media and communications to reach young voters. (Rohman, 2023). Few studies have been conducted on analyzing posters through the multimodal lens. A study conducted by Lirola on Multimodal analysis of Ireland's political posters concluded that politicians are represented positively on the posters. People see them as trusted leaders, so they are persuaded to vote for the party they represent. (Lirola, 2016). Another study by Siboro and Sinar on the Multimodal Analysis of Presidential Election 2024 online posters claimed that the posters share some characteristics while distinguishing themselves from others and reflecting parties' ideologies. Some characteristics highlight quotation, repetition, and uplifting language as the value people see from the parties. (Siboro & Sinar, 2023).

This paper intends to analyze two PSI posters using multimodal tools by Kress and van Leeuwen. Some of PSI's posters were analyzed using different lenses, for example, semiotic meaning. (Hilmi Naufal et al., 2024). The posters were chosen randomly and featured Kaesang Pengarep, the newly elected chairman of PSI. Furthermore, the paper delves into how PSI intentionally uses visual and linguistic strategies to persuade young voters in a specific direction.

The model has three main elements, see Figure 1: information value, salience, and framing. The information value refers to the placement of elements (participants and syntagms that relate them to each other and the viewer). It endows them with the specific informational values attached to the various 'zones' of the image: left and right, top and bottom, centre and margin. Salience is either maximum salience or minimum salience. Salience is the degree to which an element draws attention due to its size, place in the foreground or its overlapping of other elements, colour, tonal values, sharpness or definition, and other features. Framing is also subdivided into maximum disconnection and maximum connection. According to Kress and Leeuwen, disconnection is the degree to which an element is visually separated from other elements through frame lines, pictorial framing devices, empty space between

elements, discontinuities of colour and shape, and other features. Meanwhile, connection refers to the degree to which an element is visually joined to another element through the absence of framing devices, vectors, and continuities or similarities of colour, visual shape, etc. (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006)

As for the political discourse, van Leeuwen claimed it is important to know someone's social distance, relation, and interaction to understand their interpersonal relationships. The categories are role allocation as agents or patients, nominations, functionalism, and identification. Role allocation as agents can be observed in political posters when politicians are the agents who speak their political plan and agenda. Nomination refers to the unique identity of the social actors represented when the names of the politicians are mentioned several times in the posters. Functionalism appears as the politician's function to represent their ideology and persuade people to vote. Finally, identification, which references social actors in terms of what they do or what they are, is evident when the political leader is connected to the political party.

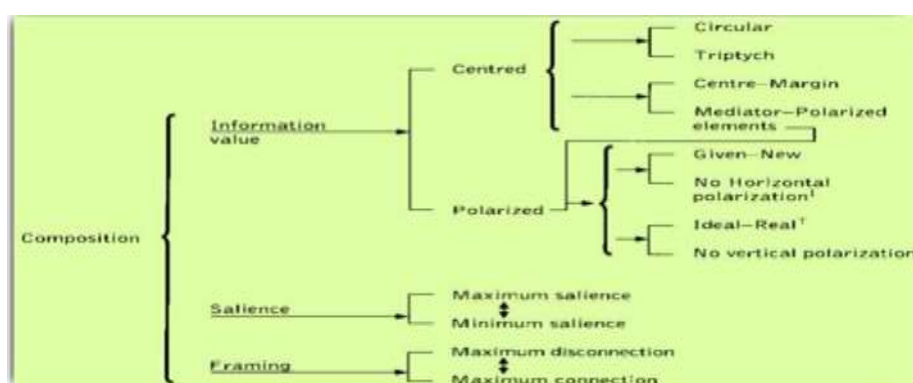


Figure 1: Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) model

METHOD

The research was conducted using qualitative methodology, especially the descriptive approach. According to Mohajan, qualitative research describes and interprets problems or phenomena for the individual or population being studied and generates fresh concepts and theories. (Mohajan, 2018). Regarding data collection, this study uses two PSI posters installed on the streets and in public places. The poster is then observed and analyzed using a multimodal model by Kress and van Leeuwen's model. The visual and linguistic features are observed, followed by text analysis using the political discourse analysis approach.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The analysis of each data point will start by providing an overview of each poster, describing its visual and linguistic features using Kress and van Leeuwen's model (2006), and then analyzing political factors to determine the interaction between visual and linguistic cues.

Poster 1

Figure 2 is a PSI poster featuring Kaesang (the party leader). For the poster's information value, Kaesang appears in the center of the poster (Centered according to Kress and van

Leeuwen's model) with the text in the upper and bottom parts. According to the salience feature, Kaesang occupies the poster's large or maximum salience, emphasizing that he is the most outstanding social actor and, thus, the most salient element in the composition. The photograph is black and white with a black background and placed in the centre to catch viewers' attention. The strongly saturated color of black contrasts with the soft color of white. The visual weight of the photo makes the photo more important and outstanding. Since the photo occupies an ample space in the poster, people on the street can easily spot him.



Figure 2. PSI Political Poster (Poster 1)

The light source is from outside the upper frame of the poster, and the area of the face (half) and head is shaded as if the light is coming from high up or sun above, leaving the surrounding area darker. The metaphoric range of light signifies "new hope." The person can be the new hope for people. Kaesang faces the right side with a smile of confidence, hope, and bravery. The smile indicates self-confidence, which signifies a "visual invitation" (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). He wears a plaid white shirt. The style is identical to Jokowi's and has become his characteristic, symbolizing a down-to-earth, simple style that unites everyone, regardless of their social class. The party is determined to show that it gets Jokowi's full support for Kaesang's political career, although Jokowi is still under another competitor party (PDI Perjuangan). It shows the public that Kaesang, with the privilege of being the President's son, has joined politics to get more votes from Gen-Z.

Regarding the linguistic feature, the text on the upper side is written in white, bold, and capital letters, with the letter "POLITIK MOVE ON" contrasting with the black background color. It is the second most salient in the composition. It is eye-catching. The letter "O" in the word ON is replaced with a red symbol of the rose, representing the party's symbol. The phrase is popular among youth and means coming forward from heartbreak. In this case, to move on is to come forward to achieve something more significant. "POLITIK MOVE ON" emphasizes the party's ideology, which targets young voters who want to move on from the old-style political atmosphere.

Below the face, covering the collar, is the PSI logo, a combination of red as the background, white for the party's name, a picture of a fist holding a white flower, and black for the word "solidarity." Red and white colors are also compatible with the Indonesian flag. The logo is placed right below Kaesang's face, which covers the neck. Red symbolizes bravery and

courage, white represents purity and honesty, and black means faith, solidarity, and strength. Red, as a background, shows that PSI is always brave in every political movement, without ever being afraid of anyone who tries to hinder the ideals of the Indonesian nation. White hand fist symbolizes sacred determination, optimism, never giving up, and always firmly holding the principles and ideals of the country. (Putri, 2023).

According to (the framing) feature, Kaesang is portrayed at a “close personal distance,” creating an “imaginary” relationship between the viewer and the candidate, allowing the viewer to “imaginarily come as close to public figures as if they were...friends” (Kress & van Leeuwen, p. 125-126). ‘Close personal distance’ is the distance at which ‘one can hold or grasp the other person’ and, therefore, the distance between people in an intimate relationship. (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). It shows the person's nearness, so the viewers feel close to the person. Even though Kaesang does not face the viewers directly, the relationship between the viewers and Kaesang here is considered close; he is portrayed as a friend, not a stranger. Since he faces the left side, he does not have eye contact with the audience. When there is no eye contact between the represented participant and the audience, it is considered an image offer since he does not interact with the audience by directly looking at them. He looks confident and fresh, showing his undercut hairstyle, which is very popular among young people. He puts on a warm smile and looks confident and positive. PSI shows that the leader is a good representation of young people.

From a political analysis point of view, Kaesang is not only the agent representing PSI's political program but also the leader of PSI. He is represented as a social actor. Social actors can be represented either by their unique identity, by being nominated, or in terms of identities and functions they share with others (categorisation). It is, again, always of interest to investigate which social actors are, in a given discourse, categorised and which nominated. (Leeuwen, 2008). As for the nomination feature, the candidate's name, Kaesang Pengarep, was mentioned once. It appears at the bottom of the poster, and the position of the leader is placed under the name. Functionalization occurs when social actors are referred to in terms of an activity, something they do, such as an occupation or role. Regarding the functional feature, Kaesang represents young people by the party, which focuses on women's rights, pluralism, and Indonesian youth. Meanwhile, for the identification feature, he is the leader of the party and the son of Jokowi at the same time. The privilege of being Jokowi's son enables him to be in this position and attract more younger voters.

Poster 2

In the Figure 3, the social actor stands in the center. It is Centered (Centered, according to Kress and Leeuwen) for informational value. The picture of Kaesang is black and white with a white background, making it the most salient element in the poster. Unlike the first poster, which only consists of one candidate's picture, in the second poster, there is another picture under the candidate's picture. The picture is the crowd of the party's officials cheering him for being the party's new leader. He is bowing down and holding a folder. The color of the second picture is dominated by red since they are wearing the party's uniform (red). In regards to the framing feature, the color of the background contrasts with the second picture. Both in the big picture and small picture, Kaesang wears the same shirt, a plaid shirt. He

doesn't wear the uniform because he wants to keep the image of his father's influence on the political arena. He looks somewhere outside of the poster with a friendly and cheerful smile. Kress & Leeuwen (2006) consider this as an offer image, as he does not interact with the audience by not looking at them.



Figure 3. PSI poster (Poster 2)

Similar to the previous picture, the candidate uses direct quotations in the text to interact with the viewers. He uses the slogan "Politik Santuy & Santun," which looks catchy and effectively attracts viewers. It can be considered the second most salient element in the picture. Even though it is at the bottom of the poster, people easily catch and read the slogan immediately because of its size. The slogan is written in red, in bold capital letters for "Politik," and an even bigger size for "Santuy & Santun" with white bold capital letters. Red and white are the colors representing the party. Politik Santuy & Santun is an imperative phrase to give the people a new impression of the importance of creating an atmosphere of manner and chillness in political matters. The party wants to change the view about politics, which is seen as dirty, manipulative, and tricky. PSI positions itself as a new movement in Indonesia's political landscape, a party of the young and those whose traditional Indonesian politics have not yet been corrupted. Thus, it continues to bring innovations to the political landscape by providing more avenues for young people to get involved in politics and strive to become a refreshing wave for change. "Politik Santuy & Santun" is the representation of the youth spirit. The party's logo is placed at the top of the frame to show the candidate's affiliation.

The candidate does not appear alone in the poster for the political analysis. The other smaller image in the lower part shows that there is more than one social actor, but the main actor is Kaesang. The candidate is chosen officially and fits the ideals of the party. It also emphasizes the party slogan that young people can be encouraged to be involved in politics by setting an example with the party leader, Kaesang. According to the nomination, Kaesang's complete name appears at the bottom, and he is identified as the party leader. Again, the party wants to establish Kaesang's position as an ideal representative and build a positive image as an example of a young politician in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The use of a centered type characterizes the visual features in the posters to emphasize the picture of Kaesang as the party leader, which qualifies as the ideal of the party, a party for young people. The written language shows linguistic strategies to convey a political discourse. Positive, short, and effective phrases characterize the language in both posters. The party's words in the posters relate to the popular phrases young people use. Some of the texts are written in capital letters to highlight what is important in the poster, that Kaesang is an ideal party leader who fits the party's visions. It focuses on encouraging young voters to be involved in politics.

The posters' distinctive visual and linguistic characteristics show that the posters are an example of a multimodal text in political discourse. It is a powerful tool used in election campaigns to point out the political power that a party or certain people may have. The poster communicates with the audience through visual and linguistic choices that appear in them. Both of these purposes are served by the text type known as the persuasive essay. Consequently, as a subgenre of political discourse, the poster is characterized in terms of its structure, the multimodal elements that construct it, and the political context that sets it. This is because posters tend to be used in political campaigns. Political messages presented in the posters are explicit because the slogans are very catchy and unique in persuading the audience to vote for this party. The analysis offered in this writing is a contribution to discourse studies, especially multimodal studies, political science, and, in a broader sense, the social sciences.

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