
**A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF FREE PALESTINE POSTERS BY ACTIVISTS ON
INSTAGRAM**

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze how verbal and visual elements construct meaning in *Free Palestine* digital posters shared by activists on Instagram. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using multimodal discourse analysis. The theoretical framework refers to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday to examine interpersonal meaning in the verbal elements, and Visual Grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen to analyze interactive meaning in the visual elements. The data consist of 20 *Free Palestine*-themed digital posters collected from Instagram posts shared by pro-Palestinian activists. The data were collected through observation and documentation, and the analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that: (1) the verbal elements are dominated by declarative and imperative clauses that function to deliver messages and encourage action; (2) the visual elements display features such as high modality, direct gaze, close social distance, and particular angles to build emotional engagement with the audience. The conclusion of this study is that *Free Palestine* posters on Instagram function as multimodal texts that combine linguistic and visual strategies to communicate resistance, foster solidarity, and raise public awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Palestine.

Keyword: Multimodality, Posters, Free Palestine

INTRODUCTION

The Palestinian conflict represents an ongoing global issue of justice, human rights, and sovereignty that has increasingly been voiced through digital platforms. Social media, particularly Instagram, has become a strategic medium for activists to disseminate solidarity

messages, combining visuals and texts to reach and emotionally engage global audiences. With over 170 million active users in Indonesia (Lathifa Nizarisda et al., n.d.) and more than one billion worldwide, Instagram enables advocacy messages to spread widely and influence public opinion.

Digital activism demonstrates that resistance is no longer limited to physical spaces but extends to online spaces where multimodal elements—images, texts, symbols, and visual design—collaborate to construct meaning. Free Palestine-themed posters often employ powerful symbols such as the Palestinian flag, Al-Aqsa Mosque, and depictions of women and children, evoking empathy and mobilizing solidarity. These posters not only inform but also function as emotional appeals, strengthening global awareness of humanitarian crises.

Previous studies (Mulyadi, 2021; Faaizati & Aprilia, 2025; Lulu et al., n.d.) have explored multimodal approaches in humanitarian campaigns; however, Free Palestine posters on Instagram remain underexplored. Therefore, this study employs Halliday's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Kress & van Leeuwen's (2021) Visual Grammar to analyze how interpersonal meaning in texts and interactive meaning in visuals work together to construct solidarity, resistance, and emotional engagement within the discourse of the Free Palestine movement.

The present study aims to analyze the verbal and visual meanings in Free Palestine posters shared by activists on Instagram. The purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze the verbal elements of Free Palestine posters shared by activists on Instagram using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), focusing on the interpersonal metafunction. This analysis aims to uncover how mood types—such as declarative, interrogative, and imperative clauses—are used to convey attitudes, assert information, and build engagement between the poster creator and the audience.
2. To analyze the visual elements of the posters using Kress and van Leeuwen's framework of interactive meaning, which includes gaze, distance, angle, and modality. This analysis explores how visual strategies are employed to generate emotional responses and shape the audience's relationship with the represented participants and the overall message.

In accordance with these objectives, the research addresses the following questions:

1. What are the mood systems constructed in the Free Palestine posters by activists on Instagram?
2. How do the interactive meanings contribute to the mood systems in the Free Palestine posters by activists on Instagram?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design, which allows for an in-depth exploration of how meaning is constructed through verbal and visual elements in digital posters (Lexy, 2011; Prastowo, 2011). The focus was on analyzing Free Palestine-themed posters shared by activists on Instagram, as these posters combine language and images to convey advocacy messages.

The data source consisted of 40 digital posters collected from Instagram accounts of activists over the past two years. The data included both verbal text and visual elements. Verbal components were analyzed through Halliday's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics, focusing on the mood system (declarative, interrogative, imperative). Visual elements were examined using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) Visual Grammar, particularly gaze, distance, angle, and modality. Data were collected through indirect observation and documentation, by systematically compiling and reviewing posters relevant to the Free Palestine campaign.

The analysis applied Miles & Huberman's (2014) interactive model, which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion/verification. Data reduction was conducted by selecting relevant verbal and visual features; data were then organized into descriptive narratives and tables; and conclusions were drawn to interpret how multimodal strategies construct solidarity, resistance, and emotional engagement.

To ensure validity, the study employed the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Confirmability was strengthened by maintaining a systematic audit trail and consulting with an expert in multimodal analysis, ensuring that the findings were grounded in data rather than researcher bias.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

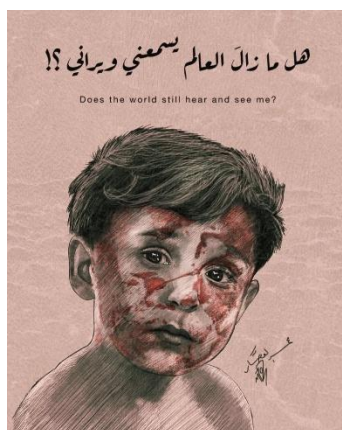
FINDINGS

Poster 1 Declarative Mood



The analysis of the first poster reveals how verbal and visual elements work together to construct persuasive humanitarian messages. The verbal clause “*Gaza is being starved to death*” is a declarative sentence that presents the crisis as an ongoing reality. Its use of the present continuous passive emphasizes urgency and immediacy, positioning Gaza’s suffering as a current humanitarian issue rather than a past event. This aligns with Halliday’s (2014) concept of interpersonal meaning, where declarative forms communicate factual claims with strong evaluative stance, intensifying the emotional impact.

Poster 2 Yes/No Interrogative Mood



The second poster illustrates how interrogative mood and visual strategies combine to construct emotional appeals. The verbal text *“Does the world still hear and see me?”* is a yes/no interrogative clause, functioning less as a request for information and more as an emotional provocation (Halliday, 2014). The use of the finite *“does”* signals doubt and neglect, positioning the speaker—implicitly Palestinian children—as unseen by the global community. This interrogative form evokes empathy and moral guilt, urging the audience to reflect on their awareness and responsibility.

Poster 3 Imperative Mood



The third poster employs imperative mood to construct a direct call to action. The verbal text *“Don’t be silent”* is an imperative clause that commands the audience to reject passivity. The negation *“don’t”* strengthens the force of the appeal, transforming silence into a symbol of indifference. In Halliday’s (2014) framework, the imperative mood functions as an explicit demand, urging the audience to take moral responsibility by speaking out and resisting injustice.

DISCUSSION

Poster 1

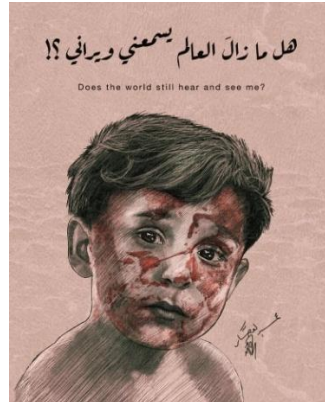


Visually, the poster depicts a young boy holding an empty pot and gazing directly at the audience. This demand gaze (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) invites viewers' emotional involvement and prompts moral reflection. The close-up shot creates intimacy, while the high angle positions the child as vulnerable, evoking empathy and highlighting the power imbalance between victims and global audiences. Despite being an illustration, the poster employs high modality through full color, contrast, and expressive detail, enhancing its sense of realism.

The interplay of text and image produces a multimodal synergy: the declarative verbal message asserts the fact of starvation, while the visual elements intensify its emotional resonance. Together, they construct a narrative of suffering and injustice that mobilizes solidarity. This finding supports previous research (Mulyadi, 2021) which emphasizes how activists strategically employ declarative mood and visual demands to strengthen humanitarian campaigns.

Overall, the poster exemplifies how multimodal strategies in digital activism extend beyond linguistic representation, using semiotic resources such as gaze, distance, angle, and modality to reinforce persuasive meanings.

Poster 2



Visually, the poster depicts a wounded boy with a solemn expression. The demand gaze establishes direct engagement with viewers, while the close-up shot emphasizes his injuries and sorrow, intensifying emotional impact. The eye-level angle situates the viewer on equal ground with the child, symbolizing shared humanity, while the high modality of the image—visible wounds, blood, and realistic details—enhances its credibility and persuasive force (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021).

The interplay between the interrogative verbal form and the emotive visual design creates a powerful appeal to empathy and solidarity. The verbal component demands moral accountability, while the visual personalizes the suffering by focusing on an individual child. Compared to broader depictions in other posters, this individualized portrayal deepens the sense of vulnerability and injustice, strengthening the poster’s persuasive potential in mobilizing solidarity.

Poster 3



Visually, the poster depicts a child wearing a kaffiyeh and holding a flag inscribed with the same command. The demand gaze establishes direct interaction with viewers, while the close-up shot emphasizes the child's expressive eyes, intensifying the emotional connection. The eye-level angle situates the viewer as equal to the subject, highlighting shared responsibility, while the medium modality (dark tones and sharp contrast) conveys seriousness and urgency (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021).

The interplay between verbal and visual elements enhances the persuasive power of the poster. The verbal component provides a clear directive, while the visual personalizes the appeal through the innocence of a child.

This combination evokes empathy, guilt, and a sense of obligation to act. Compared to broader collective depictions in other posters, this individualized portrayal makes the call to action more immediate and personally compelling.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze how verbal and visual elements construct meaning in Free Palestine posters shared by activists on Instagram. The research applied Halliday's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics to explore interpersonal meanings in verbal texts and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2021) Visual Grammar to examine interactive meanings in visuals. Based on the findings, the research objectives have been successfully achieved, and the research questions are answered as follows.

First, regarding the mood systems constructed in the posters, the analysis revealed that the verbal elements predominantly employ declarative, interrogative, and imperative clauses to perform different communicative functions. Declarative clauses express factual realities and highlight the ongoing suffering of Palestinians; interrogative clauses provoke reflection and moral awareness; and imperative clauses function as direct appeals for action and solidarity.

Second, in relation to how interactive meanings contribute to the mood systems, the visual elements—through gaze, distance, angle, and modality—enhance the interpersonal force of the verbal messages. The use of demand gaze, close-up framing, and high modality creates emotional proximity and realism, reinforcing empathy and urgency. Each visual strategy supports the verbal mood type: declaratives are supported by factual imagery, interrogatives by emotional portrayal, and imperatives by motivational visuals that invite audience participation.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the verbal and visual modes in Free Palestine digital posters work collaboratively to construct persuasive and affective meanings. The posters are not merely informational texts but multimodal instruments of activism that transform humanitarian messages into emotional and moral appeals. Through multimodal discourse, these posters effectively communicate resistance, foster solidarity, and raise global awareness about the Palestinian humanitarian crisis.

The findings confirm that the aim of the research—to uncover how verbal and visual elements in Free Palestine posters construct meaning and engage audiences—has been successfully achieved. This study demonstrates the crucial role of multimodal analysis in revealing how linguistic and visual semiotics can be used to advocate for justice and contribute to solving global humanitarian issues through digital activism.

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