

The ideational meaning of Covid-19 health promotion posters: Multimodal discourse

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian Government has used online posters to deliver the information regarding Covid-19 which is known as the new variant of virus spreading in the world. Covid-19 posters as multimodality discourse coming with two different semiotic modes that explains ideas and information related to Covid-19. The problem of this study was how the posters deliver and represent the idea of Covid-19 discourse through two semiotic modes. This study aims to describe the ideational and representational meaning of two semiotic modes, verbal and visual. This study used qualitative descriptive method. Verbal data was clauses and visual data was images on the poster of Covid-19. The source of data was the poster downloaded from a website <https://promkes.kemkes.go.id/>. This study used Systemic Functional Linguistics Theory of Halliday (2004) to analyze ideational meaning of the verbal text and Visual Grammar Theory of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2021) to identify representational meaning of the images on the poster. Based on the analysis, verbal text represents the dominance of material process while the images describe the symbolic process. The dominance of material process means the strong intention that the messages deliver to encourage the readers to carry out the activities. Then, conceptual symbolic process and narrative act process represents meaning and experience of the verbal text.

Keywords: multimodality, poster, sfl, visual grammar

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INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. This is a new variant virus that was discovered in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (Wu et al., 2020). Covid-19 is a global pandemic that is experienced in all countries around the world. Indonesian government through the Ministry of Health conveyed all information related to Covid-19 as a means of education, information, appeals, orders, etc. Various kinds of information have been created and published, one of which is in the form of posters. The government has distributed information related to Covid-19 via online because the majority of Indonesians are able to access the internet. This is based on the study results by the *Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII)* which said that the number of internet users in Indonesia in 2020 reached 196.7 million out of total population in Indonesia 274.9 million. Covid-19 posters uploaded on <https://promkes.kemkes.go.id/> webpage was republished on social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *Twitter*, so it can be access to social media users.

In order to support the interests of social media users to read information related to Covid-19, the government created a poster containing two different semiotic modes, namely verbal mode and visual mode. Posters are written communication tools which aims to send messages and influence people. Posters also offer information by using multimodality. Multimodality refers to how the speakers communicate using different modes at the same time. Multimodality can be used as an 'analytical procedure' that combines tools and steps of linguistic analysis such as the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics to understand a text (Hermawan, 2013). Halliday in the book *Language as Social Semiotics* mentioned that language reflects social reality or semiotic construction

composed of interaction and communication (Kurnianta & Maharani, 2020). Semiotic constructions featuring language can be used as a tool for reflecting something (ideational). It is expected that this study can prove that language as a reflection tool in posters. Thus, this study used the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) to analyze verbal mode and Visual Grammar theory (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020) to analyze visual modes.



Figure 1. Poster Sample

Figure 1 shows an example of a poster displays two different semiotic sources, verbal mode and visual mode. This study discussed the function of verbal and visual language using the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The three metafunctions of language in SFL theory are ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function, but this study only addresses one function of verbal mode: ideational function. The ideational function is also known as meaning or experience which has clauses level of analysis. Ideational function is analyzed with a transitivity system in which clauses serve as exchanges (Eggins, 2006). The transitivity system identifies process elements, participant elements, and circumstance elements in clauses. Halliday (2004) mentioned the transitivity system consists of 6 processes, namely, (1) material process is the process of doing something, (2) verbal processes is a process that shows language activities, (3) relational process is a process that connects experiences to other things, (4) mental process is a process related to mental process (cognition, affection, perception), (5) behavioral process that shows responses, (6) the existential process of proclaiming the experience of existence.

This study also discussed the second semiotic source which is visual mode. Visual mode provides additional information and as a revelatory of verbal text. Visual mode or image in the education of an information proved that it has a positive effect on the motivation of readers (Hidayatullah, 2018). Adapting the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics, Kress & Van Leeuwen (2020) developed a theory of Visual Grammar that addresses three metafunctions of language for visual mode. The metafunction of visual language is a representational, interactive, and compositional function. The research focused on the representational function of the visual image of the poster. In understanding the message of visual imagery, representational function analysis narrows down on process or event components, participant components and circumstance components. The component of participants is a representative participant who refers to inanimate or living objects such as people, objects, animals, and so on. The components of the process are categorized into two narrative and conceptual representations. Narrative representation involves vectors that connect between the selected participants. The selected participants are represented doing one. Kress & Van Leeuwen (2020) distinguishes narrative representation into four types of processes: action processes, reaction processes, mental processes, and verbal processes. Conceptual representation does not involve vectors. Conceptual representations describe participants in a more stable and not adjust to the time (Mahmudah, 2021). Conceptual representations are divided into 3 types of processes namely analytical, symbolic, and classification processes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020).

There are multiple various researches related to posters. One of them is the research of HIV/AIDS campaign posters in Indonesia (Hasannudin, 2019). Hasannudin (2019) in his research

discussed the interpersonal meaning of verbal text and verbal-visual relationships in the poster. The results showed that HIV/AIDS posters in Indonesia predominantly use declarative mode aimed at providing information. Moreover, there is research related to posters on environmental protection from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (Dallyono & Sukyadi, 2019). The focus of the study was on the interactive meaning of posters using a multimodality perspective. His research shows that posters significantly represent and convey environmentally related messages through multimodal sources. In addition, research about Covid-19 posters has been discussed on how messages were conveyed through posters with verbal and visual signs (Nugraha & Haq, 2021). Nugraha & Haq (2021) used Covid-19 posters issued by the World Health Organization with the semiotic theory of Roland Barthes. However, this study limited regarding poster Covid-19 with SFL theory. Therefore, this study initiated to conduct the research on posters that discuss the message conveyed through the Covid-19 poster issued by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia by using the SFL theory (Halliday, 2004) to expand the previous research.

This research focused to the ideational meaning of verbal text and visual image of Covid-19 posters. The study was conducted to answer the question "how messages related to Covid-19 in posters are represented through verbal text and visual imagery". Thus, the objective of this study is to explain the ideational meaning and relevance of the message conveyed from two semiotic sources which are verbal text and visual imagery. The novelty of this research is in the form of Covid-19 posters that have not been studied before related to ideational or representational meanings. Thus, it is expected that this research could provide advantages in enriching multimodality studies in Indonesia and contribute in providing an explanation regarding how to read the ideational meaning of a poster containing verbal text and visual imagery in the discourse of the Covid-19 pandemic.

METHOD

This study applied a qualitative approach in data collection and analysis. Qualitative research describes research problems that can be understood by investigating a concept or phenomenon (Cresswell, 2009). This approach is also one of the methods used to understand the meaning of a social problem. Research data in the form of clauses from verbal text and images in the Covid-19 poster. Data was taken from Covid-19 posters downloaded from *the <https://promkes.kemkes.go.id/>* website. The Covid-19 poster was published from January 2020 to September 2021 and was selected according to the month that issued the most posters related to the Covid -19 issue that took place at that time. Data was collected through documentation and observing recording. Documentation was in the form of digital downloads of posters related to Covid-19 from the DitPromkes website. Observing method (Muhammad, 2011) is carry out by observing the language and images which applied in Covid-19 posters. Then, the data were recorded to be further classified. The classification of verbal mode is done at the clause level while in the verbal mode on the image icon in the poster. The last step is to analyze the data and discuss the results of the analysis.

There were several steps in analyzed the data. First, categorizing data on verbal and visual modes contained in 14 Covid-19 posters on the website of the Directorate of Health Promotion. After that, verbal data that has been classified into several clauses was analyzed using the transitivity system of the Systemic Functional Linguistics theory (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Then, observe the clause including: participants, processes, and circumstance. Visual icons were identified with the Visual Grammar Theory (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020) by observing as a narrative or conceptual component. Finally, presenting the analysis results with the words description as an informal presentation method. The results of the first analysis addressed the dominance of the process on the verbal mode and the visual mode component of the poster. Second, the discussion related to the relevance between verbal and visual modes in representing messages/experiences with multimodal theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The data is fourteen Covid-19 posters downloaded from *Direktorat Promosi Kesehatan* website. The results of the study was initiated by presenting the results of the transitivity system analysis of verbal mode by using the Systemic Functional Linguistics theory (Halliday &

Matthiessen, 2014). Then, continued with the analysis of representation component of visual mode based on the concept of Visual Grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020).

Discussion

Types of Processes in Verbal Mode

Based on the analysis, the first finding is verbal mode process obtained from analysis using Halliday's transitivity system.

Table 1. Processes in verbal mode

Verbal Process	Total
Material Process	62
Behavioral Processes	-
Mental Process	9
Verbal Process	1
Relational Process	10
Existential Process	4
Total process	86

The transitivity analysis of verbal mode in posters is in the form of captions (captions in posters). Based on the results of the analysis, there were five processes found in the posters, namely material process, relational process, mental process, existential process, and verbal process. The most found process was material process. The material process shows messages or instructions of health activities and protocols to avoid Covid-19 infection. Relational process relates to the definition and identification about Covid-19. Mental process relates to experiences that describe thinking and feeling towards the Covid-19 pandemic. The existential process is related to the presence of the Covid-19 virus. Here is an example of the four processes found on the poster.

Material Process

Clause 1 identified material process is a verbal mode on poster 1. In material processes, the actor is the primary participant and goal as the objective of the process in the clause. In contrast, the material process displayed in clause 1 does not list the actor as the main participant. There is only the purpose of clause which is a 'masker'. This means that the actor is understood implicitly by the reader as an actor (the main participant). Clause 1 indicates that verbal mode is used to give commands for Covid-19 prevention instructions. Instead of displaying actors in verbal mode, the clause focus more on goals and actions. The action that must be done by the actor (reader) is 'pakai' with a 'masker' as the goal that is targeted for the action. The first and third circumstance as accompanying markers of the words 'tidak hanya' and 'hanya'. The second circumstance as a marker of the condition that describes a person, is represented by the nominal form of 'yang sakit'.

Clause 1

<i>Pakai</i>	<i>masker</i>	<i>bukan hanya</i>	<i>yang sakit</i>	<i>saja</i>
Process: material	Partisipant: goal	circumtance: accompaniment	Sirkumtansi: condition	Sirkumtansi: accompaniment

The ideational meaning of clause 1 indicates the Indonesian Government provides instructions on the actions that poster readers should take for the prevention of Covid-19. The experience shared by the Indonesian Government is the use of mask for everyone either healthy or sick people. The virus can still be spread though sick people have worn masks. The material process on other posters is similar to poster 1 which contains instructions for Covid-19 preventive health protocols.

Relational Process

Verbal mode on poster 1 contains examples of clauses that show relational process. Clause 2 'Diluar banyak orang tanpa gejala yang memiliki potensi untuk menularkan' describes the third

icon which is a man and the corona virus. Clause 2 uses a relational process indicated the identification of the word 'memiliki'. Identified participant (token) is 'banyak orang tanpa gejala' with the identifier (value) 'potensi untuk menularkan'. The circumstance in clause 2 indicates the location marker by using the word 'diluar'.

Clause 2

<i>Diluar</i>	<i>banyak orang tanpa gejala</i>	<i>yang memiliki</i>	<i>potensi untuk menularkan</i>
Circumstance: location	Participant: token	Process: relational	Participant: value

The relational process in clause 2 shows the identification of something related to Covid-19. The relational process is a process that connects experience to other things (Halliday, 2004). In the clause 'Diluar banyak orang tanpa gejala yang memiliki potensi untuk menularkan', the relational process interprets the identification of a potential spread of the Covid-19 virus from people who are infected but do not show symptoms of the disease. It shows the focus of identification is not leaving a house because it can be infected by Covid-19 virus. Thus, the relational process in clause 2 is clearly used by poster makers to provide education regarding asymptomatic people.

Existential Process

The verbal mode on poster 1 also features examples of existential proces. Clause 3 contains the verbal mode of 'waspadalah, virus Corona masih ada di sekitar kita' which correlates with the first icon in the form of an image of 'virus Covid-19'. The existential process in clause 3 tells the existence of a specific entity. The existential process is indicated by the word 'masih ada' and the one that becomes existent is 'Virus Corona'. Circumtance in clause 3 as a marker of the location 'di sekitar kita' and a state marker of 'waspadalah'. Therefore, the existential process in clause 3 explains the existence of Corona Virus around us.

Clause 3

<i>Waspadalah</i>	<i>Virus Corona</i>	<i>masih ada</i>	<i>di sekitar kita</i>
	Participants: existent	Process: Existential	Circumtance: location

The ideational meaning of clause 3 with the use of existential processes indicates the existence of something. The creator of poster 1 uses clause 3 to provide experience of the existence of an entity. It is corona virus that is still widely spread outside. This means that the poster creator (Indonesian Government) wants to remind readers or the public to keep alert of the Corona Virus.

Mental Process

Clause 4 is a verbal mode found in poster 3. Clause 4 contains the verbal mode 'Video Call aja, kangen bisa lewat sini' which correlates with an image of grandparents looking at a mobile phone screen. Clause 4 is identified as a mental process by representing a feeling. The mental process in clause 4 is indicated by the word 'miss', which is the participant involved (phenomenon) i.e. 'Video call'. Participants were not involved (cause) namely Covid-19 which makes parents unable to gather with their children, there is a ban on gathering to avoid the elderly affected by Covid-19. The circumstance of clause 4 is as a accompaniment in word 'aja' and a means in the word of 'lewat sini'.

Clause 4

Video call	aja	kangen	Bisa	lewat sini
Participant: phenomenon	Circumtance: accompaniment	Process: Mental	Modal	Circumtance: means

Clause 4 uses a mental process. It represents the participants (senser) give their experiences to feelings. The experience referred to in poster 3 relates to parents who feel longing for their children because of the ban on returning home. The Indonesian Government through poster 3 invites its citizen to conduct online meetings between family members via mobile phone. Moreover, the verbal mode on poster 3 contains an appeal aims to suppress the spread of the Corona Virus.

Types of Processes in Visual Mode

The second finding is the process of visual mode from the results of analysis using the theory of Visual Grammar (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021).

Table 2. Process in visual mode

Visual process	total	
Narrative Representation	Action	6
	Reaction	4
	Mental	-
	Verbal	-
Conceptual Representation	Analytical	-
	Symbolic	8
	Classificational	-
Total	18	

Visual mode analysis in the form of image icons and attributes in posters. Based on the results of the analysis, there are three processes found in the posters, namely symbolic conceptual process, action narrative process, and reaction narrative process. The symbolic conceptual process is the most widely found process of visual representation. This indicates that the visual mode on the posters represents the verbal mode conceptually. The narrative process of action is a process of visual representation that interprets between representative participants (in visual mode) doing a joint activity. The narrative process of a reaction is a process of visual representation that marks the presence of reactions between representative participants. Here is an example of a process discussion on visual mode.

Table 3. Visual mode analysis poster 1


Poster 1	Participants	Process/event	Attribute	Circumtance
	1.	Covid-19 virus	Process: Conceptual – symbolic atributif	The background color uses green color and white alfabets.
	2.	A house		The background of the participant icon is yellow.
	3.	A man with the C-19 virus attached		
	4.	A man and woman wear masks.		
	5.	A man and woman who are far apart		
	6.	Hands with soap foam		

Analysis of the visual mode of poster 1 shows the conceptual process of symbolic attributes. The conceptual process of interpreting a meaning or structure (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). Poster

1 provides the meaning of a concept and displays a structure of the Covid-19 virus prevention protocol. Based on the analysis of visual modes, the symbolic attributed process displays meaningful poses to the reader. In symbolic conceptual process, participants does not do any activities and react each other. The symbolic attributed process on poster 1 is characterized by participants representing an explanation of the theme of each sentence. Each participant is not involved in an event or activity, but provides additional information from each image. In Poster 1, participants could not be interpreted as a narrative, they represent the idea of each instruction on the poster.

Poster 1 used several colors i.e. green, white and yellow as part of a representation of visual meaning. Green color that covers the entire base color of the poster. This color symbolizes the health and safety (Hasyim, 2015). It is also supported by the use of white in verbal writing that means cleanliness and the yellow background of the participant's icon which means passion to support the healthyness. In other words, verbal and visual mode elaborates each other providing an appropriate meaning to each other.


Table 4. Visual mode analysis of poster 2

Poster 2	Participants	Process/event	Attribute	Circumtance
	A man carrying a bag containing lunch box.	Process: conceptual – symbolically suggestive	Image of the Covid-19 virus Background color: white	Outdoor

The visual mode analysis of poster 2 identifies a symbolic suggestive conceptual process. Kress & Van Leeuwen (2020) mentions the conceptual process representing the terms of the most important classes, structure and meaning. Poster 2 represents a concept of young people who work in the company often lunch outside/restaurant. Kress & Van Leeuwen (2020) states that the symbolic suggestive process only has one participant, namely Carrier. Poster 2 features a symbolic suggestive process is marked by one participant, a man. This process represents the meaning and identity of the Carrier that young people have a habit of having lunch together in restaurants.

The characteristic of poster 2 visual mode is a participant becoming the main focus. It proves by a contrast of participant representative background to a whole poster background. Blue color means a calmness effect while white symbolizes cleanliness (Zuhriah, 2018) . This colors attracts readers to stay calm and clean related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The implicit purpose of poster 2 is a persuasion to change the habit of young people to bring a lunch box rather than having lunch at restaurants during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is also supported by a circumstance of location ‘outdoor’ in which there is a flying virus icon as an attribute. Thus, the visual mode on poster 2 means a representation of the youngster identity.

Table 5. Moda visual analysis poster 3

Poster 3	Participants	Process/event	Attribute	Circumtance
	Actor: Grandparents staring phone screen Goal: A couple on mobile phone screens	Process: narrative-action-transactional reaction	signal image muted color	Outdoor

Visual mode analysis in poster 3 uses the narrative process of transactional action. Kress & Van Leeuwen (2020: 59) mentions participants are represented to do something together when participants are connected by vectors. Poster 3 delivers messages through actions that have been done by the representative participants. The transactional action process is represented by the grandparents making a video call with their child. An action process is depicted by calling with a smart phone and transactional process is represented by their child responding to calls on the telephone screen. Thus, first participant is grandparents as actors while second participants is their children as goals.

Poster 3 also shows the reaction process. This is characterized by a response between representative participants and reactions from representative participants with others. The circumstance contains in poster 3 is in outdoors to help people get a signal in video calls. The attributes used are signal icons to support circumstance, process, and participants. The use of muted colors such as light gray, light green, and pink indicates a less assertive message. It is also characterized by the color of the alphabets which are gray and yellow.

Relevance of Verbal and Visual Modes in Representing Messages on Posters

The result analyses of both verbal and visual modes show that verbal mode limits and clarifies the meaning/message conveyed in visual mode. Kress & Van Leeuwen (2020) mentions that visual images has several meanings, verbal text acts as a pewatas of the diversity of meaning of visual images. The verbal text on posters clarifies the activities and events of the visual images. As Kress & Van Leeuwen (2020) stated that visual images can expand and limit verbal text meanings. The elaboration of verbal and visual mode on the posters represent the message of health promotion and share the experiences toward preventing Covid-19 virus to the reader.

The verbal text of poster 1 conveys the health protocol to prevent Covid-19. It is clarified by visualizing the images in explaining the verbal text. Furthermore, the visual mode of poster 2 and 3 dominate the composition of the poster. The verbal mode presents as a barrier of the visual mode meaning. Therefore, verbal and visual mode of posters are identified constructing the meaning of health promotion toward Covid-19 pandemic as educational strategies to the Indonesian society.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis in verbal mode, it can be concluded that there are four processes, for instance material process, relational process, existential process and mental process. The material process is the most frequent appeared in posters. This means the posters instruct to obey the health protocols and command the actions to prevent Covid-19 infection. This result corresponds the study conducted by (Attar, 2014) that material processes interpret a dynamic activity of an action and material processes are basically related to the depiction of an action (Zhang, 2017). The ideational meaning of the verbal mode is to educate and share scientific experiences related to Covid-19. The application of various material processes aims to facilitate the reader to completely understand the actions that must be obeyed, such as wear a mask, wash hands, keep a social distance, etc.

Based on the results of visual mode analysis, there are 3 processes displayed. They are symbolic conceptual process, action narratives process, and reaction narratives process. The representational meaning of the visual mode signifies symbolically from each icon on the poster. The narrative process of visual mode presents a story through actions that exemplified by representative participants. These processes provide meanings of a concept and narration to design social constructs that has been understood in society. It is supported by the evidence in poster 2 that represents the identity of young people in Indonesia. Another evidence can be seen in poster 3 that illustrates and encourages the elderly to have a virtual meeting by mobile phone with their family.

Contemporary multimodal literacy shows that the development of metalanguage Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) facilitated the relationship of images with text (Hermawan & Sukyadi, 2017). These studies mentioned that the text comes with image illustration can be understood more easily (Hermawan & Rahyono, 2019). Moreover, some posters only have one semiotic source such as a visual mode (Bedi, 2019), but the combination of images creates the interaction of various semiotic sources to produce meaning that is aimed at different levels. The results of this study proved that the multimodality study is not only intended to increase literacy (Torr, 2004), but also to educate people extensively with new information. The main message of the Covid-19 posters is to share information related to the promotion of Covid-19 health prevention. Accordingly, the novelty of this

research is to reveal the messages and experiences through verbal and visual modes of Covid-19 posters published by Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia on the website <https://promkes.kemkes.go.id/>.

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