

Representational meanings in the poster of Mahsa Amini's death: A multimodal discourse analysis

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ABSTRACT

The death of Mahsa Amini in Iran garnered international attention through protests, rallies, and online movements that spread across various regions in Iran and social media platforms. Throughout the demonstration, numerous visual representations in the form of posters were created to elicit sympathy on an international scale. This article aims to uncover the representational meanings conveyed by these posters, employing a multimodal discourse perspective as introduced by Kress and Leeuwen (2021). The posters were sourced from different Instagram accounts and recommended websites like theguradian.com and dezeen.com. The findings reveal that the analyzed posters effectively communicate representational meanings through their constituent elements, including the process, participants, and circumstances. The researcher concludes that the semiotic system employed in the posters successfully establishes a connection with the issue or event being discussed. The posters depict Iranian women as individuals who courageously resist tyranny and advocate for the freedom to express themselves. The presence of distinct actions like trimming hair, clenching fists, and joining hands among women authentically portrays the protest's reality. Hence, in this instance, the creators of the posters have conscientiously considered the crucial components, reflecting the existing reality to convey the message to the viewers accurately. Communicating meaning or delivering a message to the audience holds significant implications for the success of garnering international community support and raising awareness about the ongoing issue.

Keywords: mahsa amini, multimodal analysis, representational meanings

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social phenomena in today's society triggers various reactions from a pluralistic society. Social phenomena are understood as psychic inter stimulation, which is a reflective response to a situation different from what existed before. The current social problems are the reaction toward unwanted situations the young generation faces who feel undepressed by the ideology applied to them. Contemporary topics that are intensively discussed revolve around the basis of gender equality, gender pronouns, accessibility for minority groups, the existence of non-binary groups in society, and the reconstruction of the concepts of feminism and masculinism. Crucial questions remain open, "Why do women earn less than men?" (Foley & Cooper, 2021) or the debate about women's rights to express themselves, in which several women's movements have raised subjectivist objections to universalist approaches to gender equality (Kurzman et al., 2019) so that questions arise such as "Can wearing the headscarf be considered as being oppressed or freedom to dress?" Differences of opinion among social groups eventually create a gap. These gaps occur because of differences in opinion or ideology among community members. These differences eventually lead to conflict due to the need for a common perception among community members regarding the concept of equality in various domains of life, especially regarding the position of women in society. According to Rees (1998), equality can be measured by three parameters: Define and treat equality as a resemblance; disadvantaged groups get the same access to privileges as the dominant group. Equal rights to get equal opportunities require the distribution of benefits that cannot be owned by everyone who wants them (Sreenivasan, 2014); Equal assessment of different contributions means that minority groups are valued; and Transformation involves a new standard of equality that has been transformed and goes beyond existing social practices.

Despite considering these three factors (Rees, 1998), the attainment of complete parity regarding equal rights has not been fully accomplished in various sectors of society. Instances of inequity towards specific genders are still readily apparent in certain population segments. On September 16, 2022, widespread indignation erupted on social media following reports of the passing of Mahsa Amini, an Iranian woman. Aged 22, Amini traveled from her place of birth, Saqqez, in the province of Kurdistan, to Tehran with her family. However, she was apprehended by a unit known as the morality police, responsible for enforcing a compulsory veiling regulation for women following the Islamic revolution of 1979. Protests swiftly ensued after her funeral, with throngs of individuals congregating on the streets of Iran and passionately chanting the slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom" in opposition to the authoritarianism exhibited by the ruling Islamic clergy (Devi, 2022). Amini, along with several other women, was detained for a period of three days by the Tehran police, who subsequently announced her demise (Khatam, 2023).

Moreover, this movement was carried out to demand several essential things, namely calls for the youth's rights to better life chances and demands for freedom and representation for ethnoreligious communities. In addition, the objective of the ongoing protests appears to be the overthrow of the Iranian government and the dissolution of the conservative religious establishment, which has been a cause of turmoil in Iran for an extended period (Sharmaa, 2022). Quoting from theguardian.com website (2022), a human rights organization (International Amnesty) said, "The circumstances leading to the suspicious death in custody of a 22-year-old young woman, Mahsa Amini, which includes allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in detention, must be criminally investigated." Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has no problem with women not following the official dress code. However, hardliners in Iran have called for harsh punishments and flogging, arguing that letting women show their hair causes moral decay and division within families. Courts have, in recent years, urged people to inform about women not wearing the headscarf. The mandatory obligation of the hijab, nevertheless, came from the decree instigated by Ruhollah Khomeini that directed all female officials to wear the hijab in July 1980. Hence, the Islamic Shura enacted a statute in 1984, which still prevails, compelling all women to conform to Islamic attire. This attire is mandatory for employees and all women in every communal setting throughout the country (Uygun, 2022).

Khatam delves further into the demonstrations amidst the humanitarian catastrophe and gender inequality in Iran. He sheds light on how the imposition of radical Islamic doctrine oppresses women, resulting in a backlash from activists, particularly feminists within Iran, and garnering support from the international community. This movement has entered its fourth month and is unparalleled in global unity. The Iranian diaspora has organized large-scale protests in key metropolises like Washington DC, London, and Berlin, evoking empathy and passionate engagement from individuals outside Iran (Molana et al., 2023). Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, women have been progressively limited within legal and cultural boundaries prioritizing family and motherhood with minimal independence to determine their way of life. Iranian women may have more opportunities for education and specific job prospects than women in neighboring countries. However, only a few hold high-ranking educational positions (Devi, 2022).

The situation mentioned above faced by Mahsa Amini indicates that there are different viewpoints regarding the role of the headscarf for Muslim women in the Middle East. While the headscarf represents religious identity, the different ways of wearing it can also act as visual symbols of the wearer's cultural background, illuminating the impact of cultural norms on headscarf practices (Pasha-Zaidi, 2015). Those who do not wear the headscarf are more likely to view it as a custom that predates Islam and is closely connected to politics and culture (Bartkowski & Read, 2002). However, this perspective contradicts the regulations imposed by the Iranian government, which considers the headscarf obligatory and provides specific guidelines on how to wear it under Islamic teachings. In response to the Iranian government's hesitation and alignment with these extremist groups, various reactions have been expressed through campaigns and large gatherings either directly or via social media platforms, and even before the tragic death of Mahsa Amini, activist groups, particularly Iranian feminists, had already utilized social networking platforms to voice their demands (Ahmadi, 2023). The importance of social media platforms has become increasingly apparent in recent months, starting in September 2022. Iranian youth have organized protests and demonstrations to demand equality and autonomy in women's clothing choices in Iran. Additionally, the use of social media platforms to amplify the #beourvoice and #MahsaAmini

hashtags has been intensified to garner support from the international community. This has been done to exert pressure on the Iranian government to address the ongoing social injustice in the country. Various posters featuring influential Iranian women who advocated for justice and freedom have been prominently displayed alongside the hashtags mentioned earlier.

From a linguistic perspective, the emergence of different kinds of posters demonstrates how methods of communication that combine language and visual elements can impact and garner support from their audience. According to Girdhar (2021), a poster is a platform for promoting an idea, product, or event displayed publicly for shared consumption. Lamb (1997) defines efforts to raise awareness as initiatives that target specific groups of individuals to enhance their understanding of a particular phenomenon and emphasize urgent issues that necessitate immediate action. Coffman (2003) categorizes campaigns into two groups based on their intended audience, specifically those aimed at bringing about institutional changes and those focused on advocating for policy reforms. The aim behind the campaign's launch by the Iranian population is to advocate for more robust policies addressing specific concerns.

This study aims to observe the semiotic mode involved in the posters against the Iranian government and uncover their significance. Several previous studies relevant to this research are those conducted by Belgrimet and Rabab'ah (2021) examined posters in English about campaigns raising awareness against violence towards women. This research explores the semiotic modes combined with language and constructs significance. For this purpose, three English posters were chosen from various electronic sources and analyzed. The qualitative analysis was conducted within the framework of Kress and Van Leeuwen's Reading FigureImages (2021). The findings indicate that most of the poster samples are conceptual. Such visual representation demonstrates that English posters tend to be stationary and do not move. Another study on the portrayal of women was also carried out by Terres et al. (2020), which focuses on posters for the Netflix series "Grace and Frankie", Widayanti (2016) regarding the portrayal of women in magazines, and Lazar (2006) regarding the portrayal of women in advertisements.

No studies have been conducted on the death of Mahsa Amini, explicitly focusing on the use of language in the media to incite the audience. Thus, this study aims to examine the semiotic system, and the meaning conveyed in the posters that serve as a means of seeking justice for Mahsa Amini's death by emphasizing representational meaning in Kress and Leeuwen's (2021) multimodal analysis. Using theoretical frameworks guides empirical observations and lends them significance (Fuhse, 2022). When studying current social issues, it is essential to employ the appropriate theory. This study employs several complementary approaches to explore the representational meaning conveyed in the posters related to the protest against Mahsa Amini's death. Previous studies have stressed the need to consider various other approaches, such as Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics theory and Semiotic Systems, as supporting frameworks. Semiotics generally refers to examining signs, symbols, and their meanings and uses (Nöth, 1990). Thus, semiotics encompasses multiple modes or domains of expression, including language, images, music, sounds, and actions (O'Halloran, 2023). The meanings of selecting these modes are integrated into semiotic phenomena, such as texts, interactions, and events. However, it is essential to distinguish the study of semiotics from semantics, which pertains specifically to meaning created through language (Halliday, 2007). Semiotics, particularly societal semiotics, is intrigued by examining politics, ideology, social values, the role of power, and identity in the real world (Forceville, 2021).

More recently, the study of meaning has formed the foundation for various approaches to multimodal studies (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021) based on Halliday's social semiotic theory (Halliday, 1978; Van Leeuwen, 2005). The central principle of Systemic Functional Linguistics is to view language as a social semiotic and to analyze language concerning its social contexts. SFL is applied to interpret the grammar of semiotic modes such as visuals, sounds, and actions (Eggins, 2004). Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) demonstrate that language is understood as a system of meaning realized through forms within functional grammar. Therefore, SFL focuses on the functions of language. According to Halliday's framework, language and human communication have three meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. These three meta-functions have been adopted by Kress and Leeuwen (2021) in their analysis of visuals.

Kress and Leeuwen (2021) present a descriptive framework for generating semiotic significance in visual communication media. Both view representation as a sign-producing process to convey socially

and culturally situated significances. Sign for both is perceived not as something random but as motivated or intentional. Both argue that signs are "combinations of the signifier (forms) and signified (meanings)", which is a sequence of forms and meanings. Sign-makers employ forms they deem appropriate to convey their intention in any medium where they can create signs. Kress and Leeuwen challenge Barthes' claim that images are open to diverse meanings. Barthes & Heath (1977) posits that the substance in images is always linked to and reliant on verbal text. According to Barthes, visual meaning is indefinite, so language must be present to disclose a definite meaning within it. Conversely, Kress and Leeuwen contend that the visual component in the pictorial text is an autonomously organized and structured message connected to the verbal text but not reliant on it. Multimodality examines the amalgamation of semiotic modes: the assortment of language and visual communication media. Multimodal texts convey information through multiple means, such as graphic images, written language, design elements, and other semiotic sources, which are more intricate than written texts. Meaning in the written text arises from its position in a temporal sequence while meaning in visual images encompasses spatial or grammatical relationships (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). The critical point is that meaning in written text is constructed based on the order of words. In contrast, the position, size, and composition of the images' contents play a vital role in determining the meaning of the visual images.



Figure 1. Example of the poster with a combination of semiotic modes: Verbal and Image

Kress and Leeuwen contemplated how the three meta-function interpretations initiated by Halliday could be applied to visual communication media. Kress and Leeuwen (2021) posit that visual modes such as images, colors, music, typography, and others can concurrently fulfill and embody three extensive communicative meta-functions, just like language. Based on Halliday's theory, Kress and Leeuwen use marginally distinct terminology to discuss visuals' meaning in visual communication: representational as ideational, interactive as interpersonal, and compositional as textual. Representational purpose signifies that the semiotic system must be capable of representing objects and relationships with the world outside the representative system. Interactive meaning implies that the semiotic system must demonstrate the relationship between the sign maker (producer) and the receiver (receiver). Compositional meaning, namely the semiotic approach, must be able to shape text, visual and verbal elements in multimodal discourse to construct a comprehensive composition. This research centers on interpreting the representational meaning of the posters used during the campaign for freedom over the death of Mahsa Amini last September 2022.

Representational meaning can be synonymous with ideational meaning in SFL. Ideational function refers to the language used to depict, contemplate or construe the world around. These individual experiences are encountered, both what is occurring, what is being accomplished, and what is sensed. Representational meaning comprises three components, specifically process, participants, and

circumstances. Firstly, process elements distinguish between narrative visuals and conceptual visuals. Narration is evident in visuals that illustrate the action, while conceptual tends to be present in visuals that lack action. Narration encompasses four processes: movement, reactional, speech and mental, and conversion.

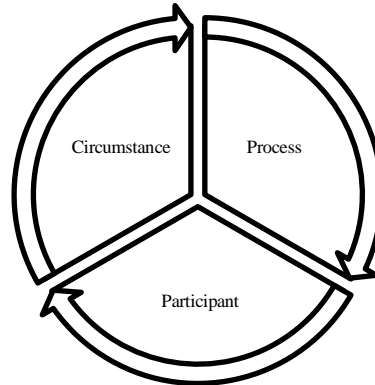


Diagram 1. Elements of representational meaning (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2021)

In the meantime, conceptual entails three procedures, specifically the classification process, the analytical process, and the representational process. Secondly, Kress and Leeuwen present two categories of participants, participants who are visible in the image or depicted individuals and interactive participants, which include the creator and the viewers. Thirdly, circumstance pertains to locational situations, categorized into two types: locative circumstance and circumstance of means. Locative circumstance relates to how data is positioned in the written content, forefront, or background. Meanwhile, the circumstance of means is connected to the criteria employed to execute the operation procedure.

METHOD

Several stages are taken in data collection in this investigation. The accessibility of vast amounts of data, also known as big data, can be obtained through social networks like social media, which provide valuable information about concerning phenomena. In this research, poster data was acquired and chosen through social networks and online news channels (Vazquez, 2022). The criterion for selecting posters is based on their popularity or the intensity of their appearance on social media platforms. The social media platform used to measure these criteria is Instagram. The initial step was to utilize the search engine function on the social media platform and note down the popular tags related to the observed phenomenon, specifically #MahsaAmini and #beourvoice. Posters with the highest number of comments and likes are chosen and examined. Alongside these techniques, another step implemented is to observe the news regarding Mahsa Amini's death on various international news social media platforms such as BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera English (2022), VOA, guardian.com, and dezeen.com. In the report, several protesters employ posters to express their aspirations. Posters recognized and aligned with the findings from the technique above are selected. The final stage is to utilize the Google search function to determine if the chosen poster is well-known among the general public, mainly social media users. The posters discovered on the social media platform underwent a screening process. Ultimately, eight posters that fulfilled the popularity criteria were chosen, with the number of likes and comments serving as the evaluation parameters.

An extensive qualitative examination was utilized by scrutinizing each poster using Kress and Leeuwen's multimodal analysis theory concentrating on representational meaning. The decision to prioritize representational meaning is grounded on the evaluation that this form of significance can depict the poster's substance and connection to the occurrences.

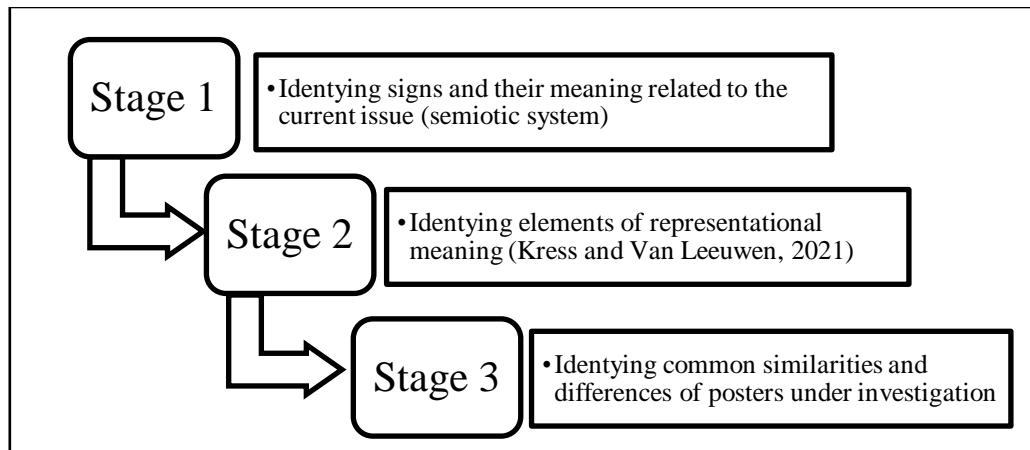


Diagram 2. Stage of data analysis

As depicted in the illustration, the first step required is recognizing each symbol on the poster. The objective is to comprehend its significance and connection to the problem under investigation. Each object featured on the poster has been deliberately chosen as a distinct symbol to represent a specific meaning. Once the meaning of the symbols has been understood, the subsequent step involves identifying which ones are part of the components of representational meaning, all of which exhibit a mutually sustainable relationship, as illustrated in diagram 1. The final step entails identifying the commonalities and disparities typically depicted on the posters. These three steps are simultaneously elaborated upon based on the three components of representational meaning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The combination of elements in the poster contributes to the meaning-making. Factors related to the event of Mahsa Amin's death are presented in the poster, including the actions taken by the actor in the poster. Visual images accompanied by narration give the audience an understanding of what the poster creator wants to communicate. In this study, the visual images in question are Iranian female figures who are the focal point, along with the characteristics that define their actions during the protest, such as hijabs that do not fully cover their heads and scissors which symbolize direct acts of resistance by cutting hair in public. Aside from the female figure, the morality police are also depicted as an opposing group which is not prominently highlighted in the poster by comparing its size scale. This emphasizes that the figure is not the main focus and is portrayed as something that needs to be eliminated. The Iranian women in the posters distributed during the protests over Mahsa Amini's death were described as a group that dared to fight oppression for their rights and freedom. Several actions, such as cutting hair, clenching and holding hands among women, and crying faces, accurately describe what happened during this protest. This means there is a harmonious resemblance between the visuals on the poster and the world it represents.

On the other hand, the narrative in the text is connected to women's liberation in Iran, which directly supports the visual images in conveying messages. According to the theory of multimodality, these elements, particularly representational meaning, are crucial in creating a sense in two modes of media. The following provides a more detailed explanation of identifying the elements in the poster acquired in this analysis.

Discussion

The establishment of significance in visual images can be demonstrated by the establishment of significance in written content. The crucial constituents shaping the visual images reinforce one another to shape a significant entirety. The position or location of the elements, size, and composition of the contents of the poster plays a vital role in determining the making of meaning in a visual image (Kress & Leeuwen, 2021). Different items are organized and put in the visual images, interact and synchronize with other components, and link objects and participants in the poster (Liu, 2013).

Representational Meaning

Representational meaning interrogates the depiction of entities and their connection to the external reality beyond the illustrative framework (Liu, 2019). Representational meaning encompasses three components: process, participant, and circumstance elements.

Process Elements

Several posters displayed on the pages www.dezeen.com/ and www.theguardian.com/ show the narrative process that participants wish to express in the posters. What is meant by the narrative process is that the participants in the poster are involved in specific actions (Opoola et al., 2019, p. 894). Narration tends to emerge on posters that show action. The types of narrative methods contained in these posters are action and reaction. The reaction process is reflected in the participants in the poster who do not wear the hijab as a form of response by Iranian women who have the freedom to choose how to wear their version of the hijab. The action process can be seen in Figure 1, a poster created by @ahmad_raf showing a female figure pointing forward. This can be interpreted that something is to be communicated, wanting to invite or involve people who see the poster to take a role in demanding the death of Mahsa Amini, which is also supported by the written text on the poster.



Figure 2. Woman pointing out the audience indicating the action process

Several posters were displayed in protest of the death of Mahsa Amini, featuring women prominently in the center. These posters also included narratives intended to provoke slogans against opposing groups. The example shown in Figure 2 illustrates the representational meaning, representing the connection to the real world. The women depicted in the poster, who do not wear hijab and have exposed arms, portray Iranian feminists advocating for their right to freedom of expression. The pointing hand toward the audience emphasizes the text on the poster, aiming to garner support from any party that this issue may move. The presence of an action that accurately reflects the ongoing phenomenon is why this poster was chosen as an example of the action process, even though most of the posters, in this case, focus on encouraging the audience to take action and become involved in the issue.

Other noticeable action processes are also discovered in Figure 3, which illustrates female figures engaging in activities related to their hair. The posters serve as illustrations of posters depicting women actively participating in action processes to resist and oppose the morality police. Morality is consistently depicted as a nuisance that must be combated, and its comprehension is questioned as it often seeks to enforce limitations on freedom of speech.

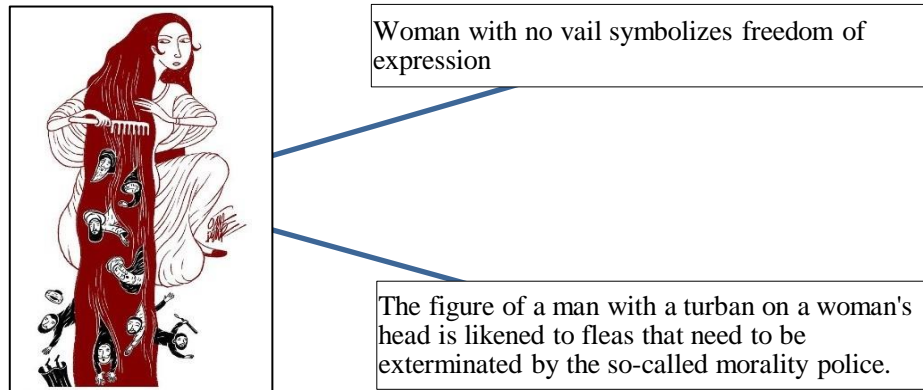


Figure 3. A poster created by @oudemir shows a woman combing her hair indicating the reaction process

A poster posted by @m_melgrati on his personal Instagram site depicts the same thing too.



Figure 4. Poster of a woman cutting her hair characterizing the action process (created by @m_melgrati)

Posters depicting Iranian women trimming their hair emerge during these demonstrations. With a fusion of text and image, it will prove difficult to effectively communicate the message on the poster, as illustrated in Figure 4. Even though the significance is completely encompassed in the visual images, written texts are sometimes required to convey extra details that enhance the level of significance conveyed in the image (Forceville, 2021).



Figure 5. The poster depicted a woman cutting her hair interpreted as an action process

The images in a poster are presented within a specific circumstance or setting. They hold

significance within this context, and the principles linked to these scenarios often constitute a fundamental component of overall communication. Consequently, a skilled and genuine communicator must consider the awareness and responsiveness of the targeted recipients of the information (Forceville, 2022, p. 11). The context in Figure 5 appears unclear without text so multiple interpretations can arise. However, if it is related to the issue of Mahsa Amini's death, the audience can then easily infer the intentions and goals to be achieved by the poster creator. As this poster is part of the action process, a specific action is prominently displayed on the poster: a woman in the Queen of Hearts card trims her hair with a sorrowful expression. Figures 4 and 5 both depict a woman cutting their hair. This demonstrates the protests by Iranian feminists by cutting their hair to support freedom of expression and resisting the Islamic Republic of Iran's tendency to dictate fashion choices for Iranian women.

Another type of process depicted on the posters is the conceptual process. The audience must interpret the meaning conveyed by the combination of elements in the poster. The type of conceptual process illustrated is in the form of an analytical process. It is referred to as an analytical process because it necessitates thorough reasoning to interpret the meaning derived from the combination of elements in the poster. The type of analytical process can be observed in Figure 6; with extensive background knowledge and interpretation, it will be straightforward to ascertain the aims and objectives to be achieved.

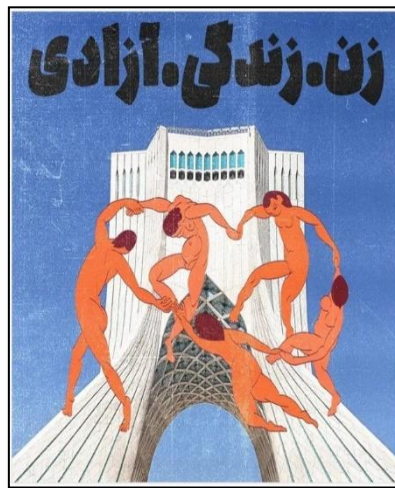


Figure 6. Type of analytical process found in a poster created by Jalz

Not all images on the poster are portrayed in a manner that mirrors the authenticity. Objects that bear a resemblance to the genuine form aid the comprehension of significance by the spectators. The intended spectators must be acquainted with the allusion and emerging message genre and enlist the suitable connections elicited by the authority, which are deeply ingrained in the culture. To effectively convey, the message's sender must appeal to the understanding, convictions, and attitudes suitable to the audience's envisioned cognitive milieu (Forceville, 2022, p. 9). According to a report from www.theguardian.com, Figure 6 is a fusion of two artworks by different artists. It combines Henri Matisse's *Dancers*, which portrays five individuals of unidentified gender joyfully dancing, with *The Azadi Tower* in Tehran, Iran, where Mahsa Amini's death occurred. Jalz merged these two pieces to represent the idea of freedom for women and to support the protest against Mahsa Amini's death, using the slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom." Iranian feminist groups have revived the original Kurdish slogan, "Zan, Zindagi, Azadi" (Molana et al., 2023). A similar slogan can also be seen in Figure 1, created by Ghazal Foroutan, a graphic designer based in the United States. Foroutan adapted the iconic 1940s *Figure of Rosie the Riveter*, featuring a woman with a headscarf, proudly displaying tattoos that read "No hijab required." These posters can be interpreted as both a conceptual and active process. However, the elements portrayed in the posters appear unconventional, making it challenging to discern the actions performed by the figures. Consequently, there is a tendency to emphasize the conceptual processes depicted within them.



Figure 7. The conceptual and active processes found in the same poster

In Figure 7, a lady is positioned in the middle of the poster, lifting one hand with a peace symbol and the other holding a flaming headscarf as though grasping the circle from the hiddenness surrounding her. The incineration of the headscarves endeavored to reproduce the genuine protests at public gatherings. The movement to burn the headscarf represents their anti-authoritarian objection against state regulations that criminalize women for not wearing the hijab (Khatam, 2023). Touraj Saberivand acquired the elements encircling the women from his Persian book painting masterpiece to merge the significance of Iranian history with current events. This symbolizes the younger generations in Iran who raise their voices amid the road and the feeling of equal destiny as reflected in the slogan, "If one member suffers from the illness, the other members will remain restless".

Participant Elements

From the numerous posters utilized as samples for examination in this research, the crucial aspect that must be presented is a female figure representing a group that feels wrong in the context of Iranian society. The posters depict the ongoing demonstrations following the death of Mahsa Amini. Many female activists in Iran and even some sympathizers worldwide cut their hair as a form of solidarity and denounce the actions that extremist factions in Iran have undertaken. The participant elements in the chosen posters have two categories: depicted participants (i.e., participants who appear in the poster) and interactive participants (i.e., the designer and the viewers). Depicted participants are figures presented in visual communication. Predominantly, the specified participants who consistently appear on the posters are female figures symbolizing Iran's current challenges. Women have become focal points or the focal point in Iran after the emergence of the issue of freedom of expression for Muslim women regarding the hijab under their desires. Aside from the predominant female figures, several posters, like posters 3, 4, and 7, also feature other depicted participants, particularly male figures representing the morality police of the Iranian capital. Figure 3 displays numerous faces positioned on the female figure's hair. These faces can be identified as opposition groups (extremists), also called dictators in the protestors' chants (i.e., death to all dictators). Based on their placement in the poster, these depicted participants can be likened to fleas being blown away when a woman brushes her hair. Thus, the dictator is interpreted as a plague that must not be allowed to thrive in this modern era, especially in Iran.

Moreover, there is not much disparity between the depicted participants in Figure 3; Figure 4 shows a man who resembles a police officer holding on while pulling a woman's hair. The man in uniform in this context can be interpreted as what the media describes as 'armed police' or armed police officers. If connected to the context of Mahsa Amini's death, the party allegedly responsible for Mahsa Amini's death is "Gasht-e Ershad" referred to as the Islamic Guidance Patrol or, as the media labels it, the Morality Police. The morality police have the primary duty of monitoring women's headscarves and apprehending women on the streets if their headscarf does not conform to state regulations.

Meanwhile, in Figure 7 there are many figures around the woman. As mentioned earlier, Touraj

Saberivand adopted the image from a masterpiece of a Persian book painting, then combined it with a female figure standing in the center. If carefully paying attention to the context currently happening in Iran, these demon-like figures can be likened to extremist groups or dictators that need to be opposed. This can be seen from the female figure standing in the center and holding fire in her left hand to create boundaries. This means that individual freedom should not get interference from any party, including how to wear the headscarf for Muslim women in Iran. Figure 8 is one of the many posters featuring represented participants. The Muslim women in the poster come in various characteristics from different races. In other ways of wearing the headscarf, However, they have the same mission: freedom of expression.

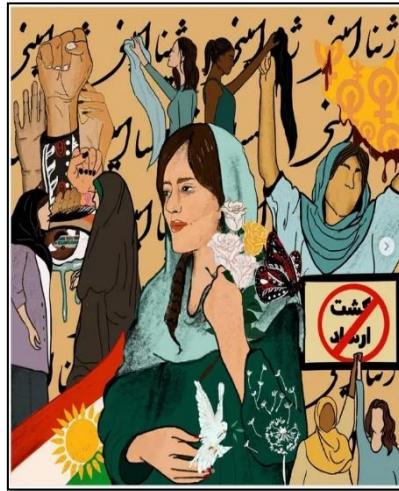


Figure 8. Represented participants, women as the center of attention

Besides represented participants, the interactive participants are also included in the poster. The meaning of representation refers to objects and connections with the world outside the representative system. A poster does not merely exist but must be conveyed to the audience or individuals who observe it. The interactive participants consist of the poster's creator, who intends to convey the message (producer), and the individual who views the poster (audience). A female figure pointing with her pointer finger indicates the involvement of interactive participants, precisely the audience observing the posters.

Meanwhile, the presence of a process of action and written narrative text in the poster indicates the presence of the poster creator (producer), who aims to communicate the intended message. Overall, the posters in this analysis aim to raise awareness about ongoing issues in Iran. Consequently, a feeling of empathy will arise by providing humanitarian support, such as large-scale campaigns in several other countries to demonstrate solidarity. The graphic designers also expressed their support through posters and widely spread hashtags on social media. As mentioned in www.theguardian.com/, in the days following the start of the protests, the government blocked access to WhatsApp and Instagram and continued to limit internet access (Kabir, 2022). Some individuals in Iran can still access Instagram using a VPN connection or the Tor anonymity network (Sharmaa, 2022). It is the responsibility of Iranians living abroad to keep the message of the women's freedom and rights movement alive on Instagram. Artists of Iranian descent promptly began responding to and supporting the campaign. Many seek established symbols of protest and freedom to express their solidarity. This demonstrates the presence of interactive participants (i.e., graphic designers) who play a crucial role in disseminating information on women's freedom of expression in Iran through posters on social media. Besides represented participants, the interactive participants are also included in the poster. The meaning of representation refers to objects and connections with the world outside the representative system. A poster does not merely exist but must be conveyed to the audience or individuals who observe it. The interactive participants consist of the poster's creator, who intends to convey the message (producer), and the individual who views the poster (audience). A female figure pointing with her pointer finger

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Meanwhile, the presence of a process of action and written narrative text in the poster indicates the presence of the poster creator (producer), who aims to communicate the intended message. Overall, the posters in this analysis aim to raise awareness about ongoing issues in Iran. Consequently, a feeling of empathy will arise by providing humanitarian support, such as large-scale campaigns in several other countries to demonstrate solidarity. The graphic designers also expressed their support through posters and widely spread hashtags on social media. As mentioned in www.theguardian.com/, in the days following the start of the protests, the government blocked access to WhatsApp and Instagram and continued to limit internet access (Kabir, 2022). Some individuals in Iran can still access Instagram using a VPN connection or the Tor anonymity network (Sharmaa, 2022). It is the responsibility of Iranians living abroad to keep the message of the women's freedom and rights movement alive on Instagram. Artists of Iranian descent promptly began responding to and supporting the campaign. Many seek established symbols of protest and freedom to express their solidarity. This demonstrates the presence of interactive participants (i.e., graphic designers) who play a crucial role in disseminating information on women's freedom of expression in Iran through posters on social media.

Elements of Circumstances

Narrative images may feature secondary participants closely associated with the primary participant (Kress et al., 2021; Halliday, 1985). Kress and Leeuwen (2021, p. 72) categorize circumstance into the locative, circumstance of means, and accompaniment. Locative circumstance establishes a connection between certain participants and other participants, known as the backdrop, thereby contrasting the foreground and background. Locative circumstance can be expressed in various ways, as outlined by Kress and Leeuwen (2021, p.72): (1) participants in the foreground overlap and partially obscure the background; (2) settings are depicted with less intricate details (have a softer focus); (3) the settings are dimmer and desaturated in color, with all colors leaning towards the same hue; and (4) settings that are darker or lighter than the foreground, resulting in an 'overexposed' and subtle appearance. The participants in the posters are consistently positioned evenly but occupy the entire frame. Female figures, in particular, are predominantly placed in a central position in almost all the analyzed visuals. This element is situated in the foreground (foregrounded), while the backdrop, in the form of a background color, is part of the background (backgrounded). Written textual information consistently appears in Figures 1 and 4, positioned at the top and bottom of the poster on the visual representation. The use of location settings can be observed in Figures 4 and 6. In Figure 4, a woman is depicted sitting on the edge of a cliff, while in Figure 6, the location setting of the Azadi Tower is in Tehran. These two types of settings aid in providing the audience with context regarding the events in Iran. Such settings can be an integral part of the analytical process.

The tools used in the action process are frequently portrayed as conditions of resources. Alongside the tools, participants' utilization of body parts likewise includes instances of concessions since it involves a process of action. Instruments such as brushes, shears, singed headscarves, tulips, pigeons, and moths are a small fraction of the instruments engaged with the poster. All instruments like brushes, shears, and charred headscarves are connected to the type of demonstration that female activists worldwide are undertaking to demand freedom of expression for women in Iran. Meanwhile, the tulip blossom, as detailed on www.theguardian.com/, symbolizes the blood of the martyrs. These specific individuals are willing to endure or die rather than surrender in defending their religion or belief. Pigeons and moths represent women who possess gentle and pure souls. The motion of pointing in Figure 2, clasping hands in Figure 6, the movement of the peace symbol in Figure 7, and the gesture of raising clenched hands in Figure 8 are encompassed within the conditions of the resources.

The circumstance of accompaniment is a participant in a narrative structure that lacks a directional connection with other participants and cannot be construed as a representational characteristic. Supplement pertains to posters with more than one participant, as seen in Figures 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8. These three posters encompass a narrative progression and simultaneously involve more than one participant. No directional lines separate the participants in the Figure. Participants are depicted as distinct constituents but directly linked; as in Figure 8, participants facing each other, back-to-back, or facing forward while raising their hands demonstrate that they represent diverse Iranian women but share the same stance in advocating for their liberty. Therefore, the components of the representational

significance can be effectively comprehended in the seven posters analyzed in this research. Progression, participant, and condition components constitute the entirety of the representational significance. Poster creators amalgamate written text and images to convey a significance representing a phenomenon occurring in Iran. The text's narrative and the Figure of women in the poster serve as a form of opposition against extremist factions in Iran who restrict women's freedom to don the hijab of their preference.

CONCLUSION

All the semiotic systems on the poster represent events occurring in Iran since September 2022. The signs on these posters directly refer to the real world. Process elements appear in two forms: narrative process and conceptual process. The narrative approach is achieved through the actions and reactions carried out by the participants in the poster. A gesture indicating an action taken by a figure in the poster is crucial in provoking the audience and making the meaning more evident. The message or intention to be conveyed is achieved through gestures such as pointing, trimming hair, and so on to elicit empathy from the international community toward the issues in Iran. However, posters that prioritize conceptual processes are also unavoidable. The conceptual process requires the audience to analyze and decipher the meaning of the combination of elements in the poster. As a result, multiple interpretations may arise unless the audience has prior knowledge about the issues that have arisen in Iran. The participants are representatives of women as the focal point. Apart from that, other participants, such as poster creators and poster enthusiasts, were also involved to show solidarity with the international community in responding to this issue. The two opposing groups, Iranian feminists and the morality police have become the prominent participants in the posters that emerged during the protests and were highlighted as two crucial components.

Meanwhile, the context is closely connected to the arrangement of elements in the poster. The Azadi Tower in poster 6 is a type of location setting analyzed as an analytical process. At the same time, tools such as scissors and combs are instruments (means) to carry out narrative processes in the form of actions. Thus, the signs on these posters have successfully depicted their relationship with the issue that is the focus of the discussion. Combining the three visual components of the image and the written text on the poster is crucial in conveying the message to the viewers. The absence of any element can lead to confusion or multiple interpretations, so a basic understanding of Mahsa Amin's death in Iran is urgently required. Studies on multimodality are open to more than representational meanings, specifically exploring the relationship between elements in two visual modes, such as posters and the world they represent. They also examine the relationship between the poster creator and the audience (interactive meaning) and compositional meaning. Therefore, further observations need to be conducted on the other two meanings or delve deeper into the study of representational meaning on the same issue to explore different perspectives or outcomes.

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