

Anti-Americanism in Nike Dream Crazy Campaign Advertisement: A Multimodal Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore on anti-Americanism portrayed in Nike *Dream Crazy* advertising, which features the controversial athlete Colin Kaepernick. Using a descriptive qualitative method and systemic-functional approach, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design, which is based on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), was applied to uncover the matter projected through the non-verbal elements. The verbal elements were explained with Searle's speech act. Moreover, Chiozza's formulation of anti-Americanism was applied to bring the analysis to a grand conclusion. The datum for the current study comprises the printed advertisement of Nike *Dream Crazy* advertising featuring Colin Kaepernick in the form of a digital picture. The finding shows that anti-Americanism in the advertisement is projected by the non-verbal modes and its interplay with the verbal mode through the three metafunctions of SFL.

Keywords: anti-Americanism, grammar of visual design, multimodal discourse analysis, printed advertisement, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi anti-Amerikanisme yang digambarkan dalam iklan Nike Dream Crazy yang menampilkan atlet kontroversial Colin Kaepernick. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dan pendekatan sistemik-fungsional, tata bahasa desain visual Kress dan van Leeuwen (2006), yang didasarkan pada Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik Hallidayan (SFL), diterapkan untuk mengungkap materi yang diproyeksikan melalui elemen non-verbal. Unsur verbal dijelaskan dengan tindak tutur Searle. Selain itu, formulasi anti-Amerikanisme Chiozza diterapkan untuk membawa analisis ke kesimpulan besar. Datum untuk penelitian ini terdiri dari iklan cetak iklan Nike Dream Crazy yang menampilkan Colin Kaepernick dalam bentuk gambar digital. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa anti-Amerikanisme dalam iklan diproyeksikan oleh mode non-verbal dan interaksinya dengan mode verbal melalui tiga metafungsi SFL.

Kata kunci: anti-Amerikanisme, tata bahasa desain visual, analisis wacana multimodal, iklan cetak, Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik (LFS)

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a marketing communication that utilizes a non-personal message to promote a product, service, or idea (Stanton, 1984). Today, advertisements or commercials are being thrown at the consumers in all directions, whether they want them or not. The world has become a global marketplace, and advertisers are keen to attract as many customers as possible. Traditional media (television, radio, and newspaper) alongside new media (Internet, Social media) are full of different advertisements for products and services to promote (Bovee & Arens, 1992). These advertisements mostly serve a purpose: promote a certain product and service or raise public awareness.

A famous American sports brand, Nike, is an example of a corporation that uses advertising to promote its products and ideas or to raise public awareness regarding certain issues. Nike is no stranger to utilizing its advertisement to promote its ideas on social justice issues, with racial injustice as one example. In celebrating the 30th anniversary of its famous slogan *Just Do It* in 2018, Nike released a new Dream Crazy campaign consisting of several advertisements with different stars and slogans (Margalina & Lavín, 2020). One particular advertisement deemed controversial is the one featuring American civil rights activist and former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick with the slogan: "*Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything. Just do it*" (Council on Business and Society, 2018). The slogan *per se* is not something that raises concerns. However, it is juxtaposed with a close-up picture of an activist who started the '*taking a knee*' movement during the U.S National Anthem in an NFL game in 2016 to protest racial injustice against African-Americans and even inspired others to do the same now; the advertisement becomes problematic. Thus, the Creative Arts Emmy award-winning advertisement was deemed an "anti-American" business and called to be boycotted by some who hated the advertisement on social media (Parker & Nordyke, 2019).

As stated earlier, the advertisement's star, Colin Kaepernick, is the first athlete to kneel during the U.S National Anthem. The gesture, named *taking a knee* which gained various reactions, would eventually be followed by various athletes and even become a common sight at *Black Lives Matter* demonstrations, the most recent being George Floyd's death protest in 2020 (BBC, 2020). Based on this, putting his face alongside the said caption has gained Nike two major polarized arguments. One side believes that Nike did anti-racism, especially to black and people of color, as Nike approved Colin's protest as a noble sacrifice (O'Connor, 2018). Sports figures, such as LeBron James and Serena Williams, and even a former CIA director, John Brennan, approved the campaign (Kelner, 2018).

On the other hand, the opposing side seems to believe that Nike is anti-American rather than anti-racism (Hayman, 2018) by supporting Colin Kaepernick's unpatriotic protest that was deemed disrespectful to the flag and country by Donald Trump (Abad-Santos, 2018). People who did not approve of what Nike was doing boycotted and burned Nike products after the controversial advertisement was released (Abad-Santos, 2018). Therefore, it is significant to analyze whether the Nike *Dream Crazy* campaign advertisement featuring the controversial athlete Colin Kaepernick is anti-American or merely anti-racism. According to Chiozza (2009), anti-Americanism is a sentiment that supports the disfavor of the American government and its policies or the American people and the United States. Based on the explanation above, this paper would like to analyze what makes the advertisement deemed anti-American using a systemic functional approach of multimodal discourse analysis.

In this context, a mode is defined as culturally shaped resources to make meaning (Kress, 2010). The mode can be called semiotic resource and modality (O'Halloran, 2013).

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 183), discourse is multimodal if its meaning is realized across more than one semiotic mode, not only through verbal or language. Therefore, the multimodal analysis extends the analysis to both verbal and non-verbal modes. *Partiality of language* needs to be recognized as language is only a partial bearer in a multimodal text; if the analysis focuses only on the language, the meaning of a semiotic/textual whole will only be partial (Kress, 2012). There are three approaches to analyzing multimodal discourse: semiological, pragmatic, and systemic-functional. Using a systemic-functional approach, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design will be applied in analyzing the advertisement. This approach uses three Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (2004) metafunctions: creativity, interpersonal, and textual metafunction. Moreover, analyzing the verbal modes was done by applying Searle's (1976) speech act theory.

Under ideational metafunction or meaning, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) propose two processes to analyze an image: narrative and conceptual. *Narrative* process deals with three different processes: *actional* process, which deals with the participants, actor and goal, who are involved in the action; *reactional* process, which explains the reactor as a participant conducting the looking behavior and the phenomena as a participant at whom or which the reactor is looking at (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 67); and *circumstances*, which deals with the setting, tools, and participants who have no relation with the presented participants. *Conceptual* process acknowledges that images can be visually classified, analyzed, or symbolized. As described by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 108), symbolic type is about 'what a participant *means* or *is*.'

Interpersonal metafunction enacts a relationship between the sender, the addressee, and the message. It deals with distance, camera angle, gaze, and modality. Distance is the level of intimacy between the viewers and the viewed based on the literal distance of the shot taken. The camera angle is the point-of-view and angle from which the viewer is made to see the image to show power. *Gaze* is how the subject gazes at the viewers; 'demand' is when the subject gazes directly, and 'offer' is when the subject's gaze does not meet the viewers' eyes. Lastly, modality is about choices to construct the meanings that relate to the factuality of the message; a photograph would have a higher modality than a painting of the same object.

The last metafunction of SFL is textual. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) proposes that the placement of elements in different parts of the visual fields gives them an information value. There are three divisions, namely left/right, where left is given information, and right is new information; top/bottom, where top presents the 'ideal' and bottom presents the 'real'; and center/margin, where center contains the informational nucleus and margin is the subordinate to center. There are also *salience* and *framing*. *Salience* deals with the visual 'weight' of different elements in a composition. While *framing* deals with the boundaries marking.

Three previous studies on multimodal discourse analysis are related to the current study. The first one is the work of Wati (2018), entitled *Multimodality in Indomie Advertisement*, who analyzed Indomie advertisements with the slogan 'Jagonya Soto.' The author applied Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) social semiotics theories. The result of the study explains that the map of Indonesia, the slogan "Jagonya Soto," the picture of Soto, and the Indomie logo are the representational metafunction; visual demand, frontal angle, and medium horizontal angle are the interpersonal metafunction used to gain the attention of the audience; and the size and the dominating blue color of the advertisement mark the compositional metafunction.

The second related study is titled *Revealing Racial Hegemony in Nike Advertisement Campaign on YouTube: A Systemic Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis* (Firmansyah, Tallapessy, & Wahyuningsih, 2019). The study explained how Nike uses its video

advertisements to represent racial hegemony. Firmansyah *et al.* (2019) applied Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis framework, Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiesen, 2004), Grammar of Visual Design (Kress & van Leeuwen, Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design, 2006), and Gramsci's theory of hegemony (1999). The finding reveals that Nike's language choice constructs the minorities' positive image in the selected video advertisements.

The third related study is titled *Exploring Gender Stereotypes in Media Adverts: A Multimodal Analysis* (Tehseem, Sibtain, & Obaid, 2019). The study explained how women are portrayed by gender stereotype-propagating media advertisements in Pakistan using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) approach. The data used comprised randomly collected print media. The result showed that the adverts depicted women as sex-facilitating objects.

The current research shares similarities with the mentioned previous studies. The current study applies Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design based on SFL's metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiesen, 2004) and qualitative method, just as the previous studies applied. The advertisement being analyzed in this paper is a printed picture, which shares similarities with Wati (2018) and Tehseem *et al.* (2019). The current study analyzes Nike advertisement, which is the same brand analyzed by (Firmansyah, Tallapessy, & Wahyuningsih, 2019). There are also some gaps between the previous studies and the current study. Firmansyah *et al.* (2019) analyzed video advertisements rather than image advertisements, while the present study analyzed image advertisements. All the previous studies mentioned share similarities in using Kress and van Leeuwen's (Kress & van Leeuwen, Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design, 2006) functional approach to visual grammar design.

Moreover, the problems or topics analyzed in the previous, and current studies differ. The present study tried to explain the problem regarding anti-American discourse inside the advertisement. Meanwhile, Wati (2018) explained how Indomie tried to gain the audience's attention through its advertisement. Firmansyah *et al.* (2019) explained how racial hegemony is represented in Nike video advertisements. Lastly, Tehseem *et al.* (2019) explored gender stereotypes in selected advertisements in Pakistan. Of all three previous studies, no research still explores the anti-Americanism depicted in advertisements. Therefore, this paper hopes to uncover the matter and expands the discussion of multimodal discourse analysis upon anti-Americanism.

METHOD

The present study applied the qualitative approach as it tried to gain a deeper understanding of the image of the advertisement. Dornyei (2007) stated that images are included as data that can be approached qualitatively. The data source of this research, the image of the Nike Dream Crazy advertisement featuring Colin Kaepernick, was retrieved directly from the Business Insider website. Then, the data source was downloaded in an 1136 x 852 aspect ratio and JPG. Format, and later would be copied to this paper for further analysis. Using content analysis for the data collection technique, the data collected were the non-verbal and verbal elements present in the image. Furthermore, since the paper uses a systemic functional approach (Halliday & Matthiesen, 2004), Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design is applied to analyze the image, which uses the three SFL's metafunctions: ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction as the guiding principle. After analyzing the data using the mentioned approach, the result of the analysis will be

analyzed further to determine whether or not the data or the advertisement is anti-American, in accordance with the definition of anti-Americanism proposed by Chiozza (2009).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



Figure 1. Advertisement for *Nike Dream Crazy* campaign

The above picture, shown in Figure 1, is a debated advertisement. The apparent overall color of the advertisement is black and white. The close-up face is the face of former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick. Moreover, the slogan at the centre says: "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything", and the slogan at the margin says the usual iconic slogan: "Just Do It." This section of the paper will try to analyze the three metafunctions of the advertisement based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) grammar of visual design.

IDEATIONAL METAFUNCTION

Through this metafunction, the advertisement will be analyzed using narrative and conceptual processes. An image is *narrative* if the image's function is to encapsulate the story or event that moment is part of (Kress & van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, 2006). In the *narrative* process, an actional process analyzes the *actor* and the *goal*. In the advertisement, the *actor*, the most salient participant, is the athlete Colin Kaepernick. Colin acts as the main actor as he is the only person present and the main focus of the advertisement. Colin, in the advertisement, does the act of looking toward the viewers, looking straight into their eyes. Thus, the *goal*, which is something or someone receiving the act, is the viewers. Then, there is *reactional* process, which analyzes the *reactor* and the *phenomena*. The *reactor*, the participant who conducts the looking behavior, is Colin Kaepernick. Colin is looking straight into the viewers' eyes, apparent by the straightness and seriousness of his eyes. The *viewers of the advertisement themselves are the phenomena, at whom or at which the reactor is looking*. In the advertisement, Colin is trying to address something to the viewers.

Finally, there are *circumstances*. The circumstances are *setting*, *tools*, and unrelated participants. The advertisement's setting, or locative circumstances, is not presented, as it is a close-up photo of Colin. There is no space from which the viewers can see the surroundings, making Colin the sole focus of the advertisement. The tools and circumstances of means are the actor's eyes. Colin uses his eyes to see straight to the viewers, making his eyes the tools. Colin is the sole actor in the advertisement as there are no other participants. Therefore, there

are no unrelated participants in the advertisement since the actor looks straight toward the viewers.

Conceptual process acknowledges that images can be visually classified, analyzed, or symbolized (Kress & van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, 2006). There are no classificatory or analytic types since both include maps, timelines, diagrams, graphs, flowcharts, and plans. At the same time, the symbolic type is concerned with 'what a participant means or is' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 108). What is symbolic about the actor's staring with a straight face is that the actor, Colin, tries to address the viewers about something serious. He urges the viewers, by staring, to follow what the slogan says, which also shows who he is, as someone who believes in something, in racial justice, even if it means sacrificing everything, being hated for disrespecting the U.S National Anthem. The mood and atmosphere are also suggestive as they are made to look gloomy in black and white.

INTERPERSONAL METAFUNCTION

In interpersonal metafunction, there are five things to be analyzed: distance, camera angle, gaze, and modality. Distance is the level of intimacy between the viewers and the viewed based on the literal distance of the shot taken. In the advertisement, the actor is very close to the camera, making it a close-up shot of his face. This means that the advertisement produces an impression of intimacy, that the actor, Colin Kaepernick, is not socially distant from the viewers. In this sense, the message would be easier to be delivered to the viewers.

The camera angle is the point-of-view and angle from which the viewer is made to see the image. In analyzing the angle, there are two dimensions to be discussed: the vertical and the horizontal. In the advertisement, through the vertical axis, the view is equal to the viewers' height, and, horizontally, it is a frontal view. The vertical dimension suggests that the viewers are of equal state and power as Colin. In contrast, the horizontal dimension suggests a personal connection between the viewers and the viewed (Kress & van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, 2006). Based on these, Nike is trying to portray that there is no power difference between the viewers and the viewed and to establish a personal connection between the two. Nike is trying to build an impression that Colin is just like the viewers, as there is no power difference between the two. He is trying to tell them something since he is made to have a personal connection with the viewers with the presence of the verbal modes interplaying with the angle of the camera employed to shoot him.

Gaze is how the participant in an image engages the viewer's gaze. In the advertisement, the subject, Colin, gazes directly into the viewers' eyes. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), when a subject gazes directly at the viewers, it is called 'demand.' In this sense, the viewers are made to be the direct addressees of the advertisement. The advertisement demands the viewers' attention so that the message that is trying to be forwarded to the viewers can be directly delivered.

Finally, modality is about choices to construct the meanings that relate to the factuality of the message (Kress & van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, 2006). A photograph, for instance, would have a higher modality than a painting of the same object. There are five elements to analyze visual modality: color, *representation*, *contextualization*, *illumination*, and *depth* (Kress & van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, 2006). The color of the advertisement is black and white. Therefore, it has a high modality since stark black and white has the highest modality in scientific diagrams. The *representation* in the advertisement is concretely detailed, as Colin is represented as he is. The *contextualization* of the advertisement uses very little background

since it is a close-up image of the actor. *Illumination* deals with how light and shade are used. The advertisement uses natural light and shade. Although presented in black and white, the lighting and shading appear natural as it is used minimally. Finally, *depth* deals with perspective. The advertisement places the actor at the center of the frame, making it easier to determine the focus of the image, not to mention that the actor is the sole focus. Considering all the elements analyzed above, the image can be said to have a high modality since the image is naturally portrayed to construct its factuality of it.

TEXTUAL METAFUNCTION

Textual metafunction describes the overall coherence of the image. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) proposes that the placement of elements in different parts of the visual fields gives them an information value. Based on this, the advertisement uses a center/margin layout. The slogan "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything." is located at the center, making it the informational nucleus of the most important information in the advertisement. Nike seems to make the two sentences the central information of the advertisement, hoping it to be grasped first by the viewers. The iconic slogan "Just do it" takes the subordinate role as it is located at the margin, specifically at the bottom. The margin depends on the center, making the slogan "Just do it" as iconic as it is, complementing the center. It makes the impression to do what the central message says.

Other than that, textual metafunction has two elements: *salience* and *framing*. In visual communication, salience is the weight of the elements provided. The center slogan has the highest salience since it is the foreground of the advertisement. The actor's face also has high salience but falls short of the slogan because it is the background for the central message. The slogan "Just do it" has the least salience as it is the least focused aspect of the advertisement.

Finally, *framing* deals with the marking of boundaries. In the advertisement, the verbal slogan blends with the actor's face. The iconic slogan and the Nike logo blend perfectly with the image. It can be inferred that the slogan and the image, which includes the actor, Colin, and what he has ever done, specifically *taking a knee*, and Nike blend into one. The whole image strongly correlates with Colin as the actor and the said central slogan, which makes it controversial since the caption, made by Nike, is trying to justify the actor's actions in the past.

SPEECH ACT

The central message contains two sentences. The first one is "Believe in something." And it is immediately followed by "Even if it means sacrificing everything." The first sentence can be categorized as a directive speech act, which is a kind of speech in which the listener, in this the readers, is expected to do something (Searle, 1976). Syntactically, the sentence is in active voice, and no participants are presented in it. However, both participants, the actor and the recipient/goal are presented by the non-verbal clause, which is the activity of gazing by Colin, the actor, to the readers, the recipient. The sentence ends with a period followed by the next, which is problematic. What makes the second sentence problematic is that this sentence is barely a sentence. The sentence starts with *even if*, indicating that this sentence should be a subordinate clause of the first sentence. The second sentence has the same speech act as the first sentence since it should have been a subordinate clause. It tells the readers the consequences of doing the main clause by using the thing. However, it urges the readers to keep going despite the consequences.

ANTI-AMERICANISM

Based on the above multimodal analysis, the paper tries to analyze further whether the advertisement falls under the accusation of anti-American. In the *ideational* metafunction, he is portrayed as the actor who is addressing directly to the viewers. The symbolic type of conceptual process yields what he is trying to address by looking straight to the viewers, following what the slogan says, and following what he did. Referencing his *taking a knee* action, he is someone who believes in something, in racial justice, even if it means sacrificing everything or being hated for disrespecting the U.S National Anthem.

Through interpersonal metafunction, Colin, the actor, is someone who is not socially distant from the viewers. The camera angle tells that Colin is equal to the viewers, and he is trying to tell them something since he is made to have a personal connection with the viewers. He also demands the viewers' attention to the advertisement, specifically the slogan. Also, the advertisement has high modality since the image is naturally portrayed to construct its factuality. Based on that, Nike is trying to establish a sense that the viewers are the same as Colin. Therefore, they would *listen* to him in the advertisement. He demands the viewers to believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything.

In textual metafunction, the main slogan is located at the center, making it the main focus and the most salience. The iconic slogan "Just do it" is made to be subordinate, meaning that it serves the purpose of telling the viewers to do what the central message says. There is also the face of Colin as the actor to juxtapose the central message, which makes the main slogan blend into one with the actor, along with his actions and public frame. The iconic slogan in the margin.

Based on Chiozza's (2009) definition of anti-Americanism, the advertisement can be deemed anti-American. The advertisement tries to justify the kneeling done by Colin Kaepernick, which is disrespectful to the U.S flag, though indirectly. In other words, the slogan is saying that viewers should believe in something, just like Colin Kaepernick, even if it means disrespecting your country and being hated. If Nike were to use another athlete or person as the actor, the slogan's meaning would be totally different.

CONCLUSION

The paper has concluded that the advertisement is not merely as anti-racist as Nike initially intended. The finding shows that factors indicate this advertisement against The United States. Although indirectly, the main message is clear enough for the public to understand and either support it or be against it. The message Nike intended to bring to the public by releasing this advertisement for *Just Do It* 30th anniversary is good, as Nike tried to tackle the racism issue in The United States. The message could have been understood better by the public if some parts of the advertisement which are indicated as anti-American are changed. And, changing the actor should be a good start. The present study is hoped to fill in the gap in the literature regarding multimodal analysis of advertisement in the form of image. Further studies would be needed regarding this area of study in discourse analysis, especially advertisements, specifically using critical discourse analysis in analyzing multimodal texts and analyzing other advertisements with different topics of social injustice.

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