Interactive Meanings in Movie Posters: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis

[1]Dr. Nazia Anwar, [2]Tauba Zia

Article Details	ABSTRACT

Dr. Nazia Anwar
Lecturer, Department of English, University of Gujrat. nazia.anwa@uog.edu.pk
Tauba Zia
MPhil Schloar, Department of English, University of Gujrat, taubazia189@gmail.com

Movie posters are based on the variety of visual and verbal signs that have their own meanings (Dewi, 2022). The present study is based on multimodal analysis of movie posters. Based on the theory of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics SFL (1960), this research takes Visual Grammar (2006) by Kress and Van Leeuwen as a theoretical framework. Among the three meanings mentioned by Kress &Van Leeuwen in their theory namely, representational meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning. This research only focuses on analyzing the interactive meaning by the interplay of verbal and visual elements used in the movie posters. The current research aims to identify the cultural elements and promotional strategies used by movie makers in the movie posters. Five western (American) movie posters from five different genres (action, thriller, comedy, romance, horror) released in 2024 and 2025 have been purposely selected for the data. Analysis has been done by using qualitative descriptive method. The analysis reveals that the relation between the participants and viewers have been established through the four main components of interactive meaning: visual contact, social distance, modality and perspective. The results indicate that there are many cultural elements used in the movie posters which help to target the specific audience. The results also point to the fact that promotional strategies used in the movie posters by movie makers help to grab audience's attention.

INTRODUCTION

Multimodality is studied and adopted in various disciplines such as advertisement, film, education, mass media, health communication and political discourse as stated by Van Leeuwen (2015). Advertisement, a form of mass communication, typically promotes the products and services and is primarily used to persuade the public to purchase these goods and services by promoting them. In advertisement communication, language plays a crucial role so does the images and colors. The image typically shows gestures, props, background positions, layout, text, composition, and perspectives. Similarly, Hemphill (1996) stated that colors have different associations, as black or dark colors are associated with bad luck or negative things, while white or bright colors are often associated with positive thing. That is the way communication works in advertisement to convey the message to the audience.

Dewi (2022) states that the term advertisement comes from the Greek language, meaning "to lead people to ideas". Variety of visual and verbal signs are used in advertisements that have their own meanings. Modality refers to the attitude of speaker or author to something, as stated by Richard Nordquist (2025). To express state of mind, expectations, motivations, needs and qualities, speaker or author can use written words and expressions (Ahmed et al., 2024). Verbal elements in advertising are often the most attention grabbing and memorable. Visual elements that are used for visualization in advertising are images, colors, gestures and others. The use of semiotic elements including verbal and visual signs in advertisement makes it more interesting. Any form of rest or moving artwork including pictures, art, illustrations (consisting of two or more images), floor plans, animated cartoons are visual media, as suggested by Richard E.Mayer (2009). A poster functions as a medium of mass communication that serves the purpose of promotion and entertainment. Posters are placards or announcements posted in public or unexclusive places, as defined by Hornby (1974). To promote a movie is one of the widest spread application of posters today. Shadily (1980 p.1007) stated that movie is a series of pictures taken from moving objects that show a series of events that happen continuously, which serves the purpose of entertainment, education and information. Movie posters are also a form of advertisement and an example of visual illustrations. Movie posters are based on both verbal and visual elements and will be a major part of this research (Khurshid et al., 2025). As explained by Kress & Van Leeuwen (1990), to convey the nature of language function, visuals often demand verbal support. Limantoro (2013) stated that in visual communication processes and commercial functions, an effective medium is movie posters.

While designing poster visualization, images as visual language including lines, colors and compositions with verbal language must be used in captivating, simple and accurate way. Visual and Verbal cues and the approach that is used in delivering the message of a poster are quite essential elements so that the message can be well received and fascinating. Typically, informal language, simple and short sentences, interactive words are used in the poster language, as suggested by Dyer (1982). The purpose of poster is closely related to the purpose of advertising as to persuade others to do something and to make it easier for the audience to catch the message. Study about how we naturally talk has been done for over half a century. It started with focusing on phonetics (sounds of words), moved to phonemic (how sounds make up words) and then to sentence-level grammar (how we put words together to form sentences). With the prosperity of multi-media, the world has entered into post-modern era since the late 1960s, and people have started realizing that meaning is rarely expressed by the language alone. Lim (2004:52) stated that in this multimodal society, meaning is created through the co-operation of multiple semiotic resources. Hence, there is a dire need to study and understand the meaning of semiotics in multimodal discourse. Before the mid-twentieth century, linguistic studies only focus on language alone, ignoring the contribution of other meaning-making semiotic modalities.

The study that focuses on connections and patterning beyond the sentence level is discourse, as first defined by Zellig Harris (1952). Therefore, a shift to meaning-making practices had been made in linguistic studies. Multimodal discourse by the co-operation of two or more semiotic modes of communication such as language, sound, images, video and architecture etc. creates an integrative meaning. Linguistics, semiotics, and media studies are involved in the study of multimodal discourse as it is interdisciplinary (Pirini, 2017). The researcher takes movie posters as a database of this research and attempt to dedicate more to the development of multimodal analysis. Jewitt (2009) states that studying multimodal texts like movie posters is important as full repertoire of meaning- making resources is described and analyzed through multimodal research which people used to represent, communicate, and maintain relation and help to understand how these resources are organized to make meaning. From a multimodal point of view, it means that language is just one mode among many modes of multimodal organization, as suggested by O'Halloran (2004), Kress & Leeuwen (2001), Martin & Rose (2003). Studying movie posters through multimodal analysis is important as it considers many aspects of communication such as color, text, layout, gesture and composition in the process of meaning making, instead of just focusing on analyzing language.

To decode a movie poster is to decode a more complex multimodal discourse as they are composed of variety of semiotic resources including image, color and language (Huafang, 2019). It requires the researcher to do a deep study on how meanings are made in a multimodal way (Liu, 2019). Multimodal discourses exist widely and a lot of researches have been done on interpreting multimodal discourses (Ahmed et al., 2024). Among these studies, multimodal discourse analysis uses a framework called "Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as its theoretical basis and offers fresh ways, new research ideas, and perspectives for discourse analysis. Multimodal discourse analysis as a new research method of discourse analysis has become a research focus of western scholars especially in the field of linguistics and social semiotics in recent years. There are many scholars such as Kress and Van Leeuwen, Lemke, Royce, O'Halloran and Baldry who made positive and significant contributions to MDA. There is another theory which has been applied in the study of Multimodal Discourse analysis in the 1990s, that is Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Kress and Van Leeuwen are among those scholars who applied SFL to multimodal discourse analysis. They also put forward the theory of Visual Grammar (VG) to analyze visual images that became the prevailing choice in the field of research. However, discourse analysis has attracted wide attention from scholars and researchers globally since 1950s. Systemic Functional Linguistics (1960) developed by Halliday provides an effective theoretical tool for Multimodal Discourse analysis. By using Kress and Van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design (2006), this research will have a comprehensive illustration for interactive meaning by analyzing five movie posters with distinctive features.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze how the interactive meaning is understood by the combination of both verbal and visual modes used in the movie posters.
- To uncover the cultural elements used in the movie posters for audience engagement.
- To uncover the promotional tactics used in the movie posters by movie makers.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How the interactive meaning used in the movies posters is interpreted by the combination of verbal and visual elements?
2. What are the specific cultural elements used in the movie posters for construction of meaning and engagement of audience?
3. What are the promotional strategies used by movie makers in the movie posters?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researches conducted in the field of Multimodal Discourse analysis are mostly based on social semiotics which refers to the Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) in its narrow sense. To regard language as a kind of social semiotics is the tenet of SFG. To study language from the perspective of its interaction with the social context is another tenet of Systemic Functional Grammar. Eggins (2004) stated that the grammar of other semiotic modes such as visuals, sound, and actions has been interpreted by applying SFG. As Halliday (1960) suggested, in functional grammar, language works as a system where everything is about meaning. Words, sentences and grammar (forms) are the forms through which meanings can be realized.

There are three meta-functions in language structure and human communication as described by Halliday in his framework. These three meta-functions are ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The use of language for describing, reflecting and interpreting the world around us is ideational function. In ideational function, language is used for the individual experience of over selves, consisting of goings-on, happening, being, and becoming (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). When language is used for having communication and interaction, establishing and maintaining relations with people, then it is called interpersonal meta-function. In interpersonal function, language is used to express our own viewpoints of the things in the world (Ahmad et al., 2024). To use language for eliciting and changing other people's viewpoints, also comes under interpersonal function (Bakuuro, 2017). In this way, language is used to enable people to take part in communication, to express their own views, enable them to change other people's opinion, and to understand other's feelings, attitude and judgements. Using language for relating what is said or written to the real-world events or other linguistic events is textual function (Bukuuro, 2017).

The idea of Halliday of social semiotics inspired Kress and Van Leeuwen, they proposed and developed a method in which they look at visual communication as a social thing, and established a descriptive framework to describe how different elements such as color, composition, and perspective in an image work together to create meaning. This theory of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) executed for reading images and is called Visual Grammar (VG). Based on Halliday's three meta-functions of language, they put forward three meta-functions of images. Halliday's three meta-functions are ideational, interpersonal, and textual, while Kress and Van Leeuwen's three meta-functions are representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning. The corresponding relation between SFL and VG's meta-functions is

shown in the given table 1.

SFL	VG
Ideational	Representational
Interpersonal	Interactive
Textual	Compositional

FIGURE 1: RELATION BETWEEN THREE META-FUNCTIONS OF SFL & VG

1. **Representational meaning:** A system of signs must be able to represent objects, in a referential or pseudo-referential sense, and their relationships in the real world outside its particular system of signs (Liu, 2019). According to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), language shapes our understanding of reality through "goings-on" or processes, involving participants like actors, goals, receivers, sensors, attributes. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) divided representational meaning into narrative and conceptual processes for analyzing images.

2. **Interactive meaning:** Any semiotic system needs to be able to show social relation between the person creating the sign, and the receiver/the person looking at that sign, and the object (what the sign is about) (Liu, 2019).

3. **Compositional meaning:** A semiotic system needs to be able to form texts, which are groups of signs that make sense together and fit within the context they were made for. The elements in multimodal discourses, both visual and verbal work together to create a cohesive whole (Liu, 2019). When focusing on the textual meta-function, the structure of visual information can be seen in terms of how it presents information as either horizontal structure (Given or New) and as either vertical structure (Ideal or Real).
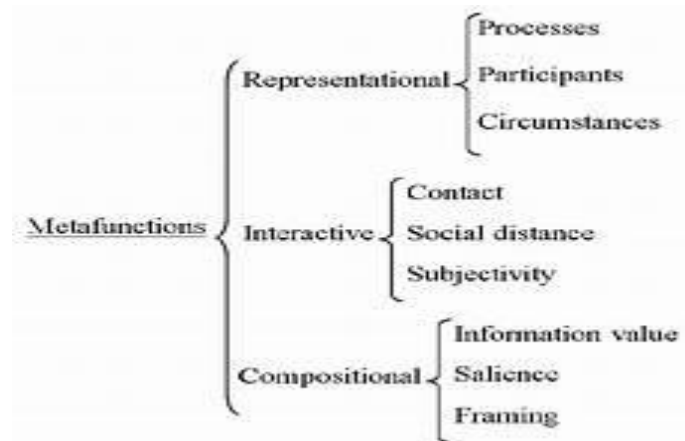
FIGURE 2: KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN'S (2006) METAFUNCTIONS OF VISUAL GRAMMAR (VG)

Kress and Van Leeuwen in their theory Visual Grammar (2006) stated that represented participants and interactive participants are the two kinds of participants involved in an image. Represented participants are the people, places and things depicted in an image and interactive participants are the people namely the producer and the viewers, who communicate with each other through images (Liu, 2019). There are three kinds of relations between these participants. The first relation is between represented participants, the second is between the attitude of represented participants toward interactive participants and the third is between interactive participants. When the producer and the viewers of the image appreciate the image by expressing their own views and ideas on the ways of images interpretation then the interaction happens (Seymour, 2023). Direct and immediate interaction are some of the kinds of interaction in which conversations happen face to face from both parties. Some of these interactions are neither direct nor immediate due to the absence of both parties. There are four factors that should be carefully considered while examining an interaction. These four factors are visual contact, social distance, perspective, and modality.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

There are many researchers who have done work using Visual Grammar (VG) by Kress and Van Leeuwen as a theoretical framework for analyzing images. Some of them are mentioned in following pages.

Shuting Liu (2019) conducted research on Public Service Advertisement using Kress & Van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar theory. The purpose of the study is to analyze interactive meaning in three Public Service advertisements. The other purpose of his study is to analyze that

Visual grammar theory can be applied on Multimodal discourses. The analysis reveal that VG can be applied to the Multimodal discourses in a feasible and operational manner.

Additionally, Jingjing Deng (2023) conducted research on the official posters of 19th Asian games Hangzhou. The theory of Visual Grammar by Kress and Van Leeuwen was the basis for the multimodal discourse analysis of posters. The analysis reveals that to convey the information effectively they require interconnection of multiple meanings. The result indicates that the posters construct meanings and convey information through representational, interactional and compositional perspective. Tauba Zia, Nazia Anwar, and Isha Razzaq (2024) conducted research on Pakistani Punjabi Movie posters. Multimodal Discourse analysis (2006) by Kress and Van Leewen has been used as a theoretical framework to analyze fourteen movie posters. The purpose of their research is to analyze how cultural elements depicted through the visual and verbal elements used in the poster. Their research also analyzes how visual and verbal elements used in the poster help to establish the meaning. The results indicate that color, picture, and other societal and cultural elements collectively create meaning.

In addition, Jiamin Zhao (2023) conducted research on the Chinese movie poster "No More Bets". Visual Grammar by Kress and Van Leeuwen has been used as a theoretical framework for analyzing the modes of language and image used in the poster. The aim of the study is to uncover the social phenomenon embedded within the movie poster, get the promotional significance by highlighting the promotional strategies used in poster, and provide more comprehensive analysis for the audience to better understand the movie poster. The microscopic analysis of the movie poster reveals that there are some crucial elements that play their role in constructing meaning of the movie poster. These crucial elements are the language and the visual symbols. Moreover, movie poster suggests broader societal concerns with ethics and morality and may impart a sense of social responsibility.

Moreover, Thi Hanh Pham and Quynh Chi Le (2024) conducted research on the movie poster "Hospital Playlist 2" by using Visual Grammar (1996) as a theoretical framework. The purpose of the research is to analyze the poster from the three perspectives; representational, interactional, and compositional as the previous studies only focus on one perspective. Recent researches only focus on analyzing the single poster of the movie. Their research will fill the gap and analyze more than one poster of the movie. The analysis reveals certain things about creating effective movie poster. The results indicate that for better audience engagement visual promotion should be carefully analyzed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative descriptive method has been applied in this study by using Visual Grammar (2006) by Kress and Van Leeuwen as a theoretical framework. Based on three meta-functions of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Kress and Van Leeuwen proposed and developed a theory of Visual Grammar, in which they introduced three meanings based on Halliday's three meta-functions (1960) namely representative, interactive and compositional. This study only focuses on studying the interactive meaning. This framework is suitable for studying the combination of verbal and visual modes used in movie posters for meaning making. This research further delves into analyzing the cultural elements and promotional strategies used in the movie posters for audience attention and engagement. Five American movie posters of five different genres (action, romance, comedy, horror, thriller) have been chosen as a data for the study. The movie posters selected for the data were taken from recently published and produced movies in different countries specifically in 2024 and 2025. These movie posters were selected through purposive sampling technique. The selected posters have been downloaded from official movie websites of Google such as IMBd, Wikipedia, and Cosmopolitan. For the originality of the data, posters were double checked from various websites.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory of Visual Grammar (2006) has been selected as a theoretical framework for analyzing 5 distinct movie posters. These purposely selected western (American) movie posters are from five different genres. The selected movie posters are visually and verbally rich for the analysis. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) introduced three meanings in their theory. These meanings are representative meaning, interactive meaning and compositional meaning. This research centers on analyzing interactive meaning in the movie posters. The four elements of interactive meaning namely visual contact, social distance, perspective, and modality are taken in consideration while analyzing the movie posters. The visual and verbal elements used in the movie posters will be analyzed for interpreting the interactive meaning. As movie posters convey the meaning or message by using various semiotic modes, so this framework is best appropriate for this study as the theory of Visual Grammar is based on reading images. Then the study will focus on analyzing cultural elements and promotional strategies used in movie posters for audience engagement.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The current study has adopted Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory of Visual Grammar (2006) for

microscopic analysis of movie posters. There are three meanings namely representative, interactive, and compositional introduced by Kress and Van Leeuwen in their theory. The study will only focus on interpreting the interactive meaning in movie posters. In this regard, this study is highly significant in understanding the way movie posters communicate. The significance of the study relies on the Multimodal Discourse analysis of movie posters as it helps to examine how multiple modes of communication such as text, images, color, composition and layout work together to convey meaning. As movie posters are designed to attract the viewer's attention, so the analysis of interactive meaning in movie posters will help to uncover the persuasive tactics used to influence audiences' perception and decisions. The aim of the study is to analyze the cultural elements used in the posters for audience engagement. The significance of studying these cultural elements will help to understand how these elements are strategically used in poster to target the specific audience and how different cultures are represented in media. Lastly, the significance of analyzing promotional strategies used in movie posters helps us to understand marketing techniques, media influence and advertising effectiveness.

DATA ANALYSIS

This section of research is based on the analysis of five American Movie posters. These five movie posters belong to five different genres (action, comedy, horror, romantic, thriller). These movie posters are rich in visual and verbal representation. The analysis is based on analyzing the interactive meaning in movie posters.

1. THE RITUAL (HORROR MOVIE POSTER)

The Ritual is an American horror movie released in 2025. The theme of horror is perfectly conveyed through the verbal and visual elements used in the poster.

INTERACTIVE MEANING

Interactive meaning refers to the relation between the viewer and the participant (Lafta, 2025). Interactive meaning refers to how the text connects the viewer and the represented participant by focusing on gaze, perspective and composition. The four crucial elements of interactive meaning are visual contact, social distance, modality and perspective (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006).

Visual Contact: Visual contact is notably absent between the viewer and the character. The central figure (woman) is sitting on hospital bed with her head hanging down, her face is not visible and she is not making the direct eye contact with the viewer. This image is counted as an "offer image" as the represented participant, the woman in the image is not directly looking at the viewer (Jung, 2010). This will make the viewers feel a sense of distance and helplessness. This lack of eye contact makes the central figure look like a victim and the viewers feel uncomfortable and curious.

Social distance: The image is framed in a medium long shot, so the viewers see the woman from the slight distance (Lannom, 2025). The image is framed as both the character and the viewer are standing in a room but not too close. This kind of framing suggests a more observational role for the viewers and making them feel like an outsider, which deepens the eerie detachment, feeling of fear and mystery.

Modality: Modality refers to how real the image feels (Boren, 2024). The modality or realism is quite high. The use of dark and shadowy lightning, dull and serious colors, and realistic textures with a hospital bed, cracked walls, and cross on the wall, creating a sense of authenticity, making it looks more real, believable and terrifying.

Perspective: Perspective is at the eye level (Zhang, 2022), which means it looks like the viewer is observing the woman by standing in front of her. This angle representing the witness or participant in the ritual, and making the viewers feel like they are personally involved in the scene. These visual elements used in "The Ritual" movie poster create a scary, emotional atmosphere, which makes the viewers feel as they are personally involved in the story and want them to know more about the story by evoking fear, tension, and curiosity.

USE OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS

There are many cultural elements used in "The Ritual" movie poster. Firstly, the use of Christian symbol hanged on the wall is noticeable element in the poster. By using the Christian symbol, the movie makers targeted the Christian community. The phrase "You must have faith" and the cross on the wall directly refer to the Christian tradition, beliefs and fears, such as fear of sin, fear of punishment and fear of losing faith. The woman is portrayed in a weak and helpless position. This portrayal of woman is common in horror movie where they are usually shown in danger and helpless condition (Goodman, 2025). This visual element makes the audience feel sympathy and fear for them. The words "Based on true events" shown below are used to show that the story is based on real events which makes the story feel more real. This is also another agenda for getting audience attention as many people find true stories scarier. All these cultural elements used in the poster will help to get more audience's attention and make the poster more powerful by evoking fear and curiosity (Luo Wen, Wang Jingjing, Wang Chen, Sun Luyu, 2022)

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES:

Promotional strategies are used in the poster to get audience's attention and make them interested in watching the movie (Oliver, 2025). There are many promotional strategies used in the poster. Firstly, the use of well-known actor's name on the top like "Al Pacino" will help to get audience attention as it will build trust and interest. Releasing date of the movie "In Theaters June 6" is also mentioned in the poster so that the audience know when to go watch the movie. Fear is created through dark lightning, shadows and scary atmosphere by using simple but powerful horror imagery, instead of using blood or monsters. This kind of imagery will make them think and feel uneasy. The poster does not reveal much by using visual ambiguity, which

make them curious to find out what will happen next.

2. THE UNDERDOGGS (COMEDY MOVIE POSTER)

The Underdoggs is an American comedy movie released in 2024. The theme of comedy is perfectly conveyed through the verbal and visual elements used in the poster.
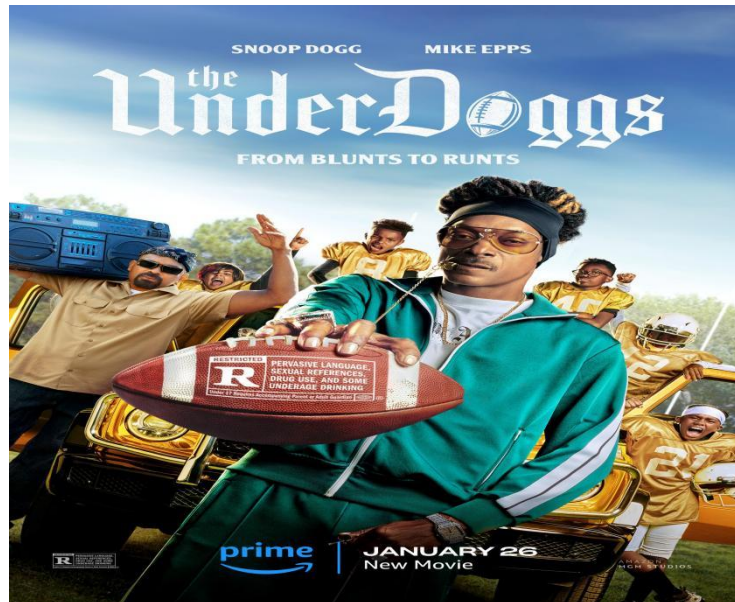
INTERACTIVE MEANING

Visual contact: The central figure (Snoop Dogg) is directly looking at viewers by pointing the football towards them. This image is counted as "Demand image" as there is direct eye contact between the viewer and the participants (Stoian, 2015). A sense of interaction and involvement is created through this direct eye contact and gesture. This demand image making the viewers feel personally addressed.

Social Distance: The characters in the poster is shown in a medium close-up shot, as the social distance in the image is relatively close (Lannom, 2025). This image is framed as the viewer is standing right in front of the characters. A friendly, informal and welcoming atmosphere is created through this closeness.

Modality: The image's modality is quite high (Boren, 2024). The image looks real and believable with the natural and realistic setting based on football field, characters are wearing uniforms, holding props and cars, use of bright colors and detailed facial expressions also add to a sense of authenticity and fun

Perspective: The eye level between the viewer and the participant is perspective (Zhang,2022). There is an equal positioning between the characters and the viewer which suggests a sense of

unity and inclusion. This equality invites the viewers to join the players in their journey.

The poster feels more engaging, energetic, and relatable, when these elements work together in the poster.

USE OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS

The appearance of Snoop dog in gold chains, stylish tracksuit, sunglasses and the large blue boombox represents hip-hop culture. Fans of 1990s and 2000s hip-hop music will quickly recognize and resonate with these elements and enjoy. Urban culture is highlighted through the tagline "From Blunts to Runts" which is used as an urban slang and humor, especially common in Black communities. The movie focuses on teamwork, community, and giving youth guidance and support by showing children in sport uniform and school field setting. This theme will be appreciated by American viewers, as it represents mentorship and the second chance. The star image of Snoop Dogg is cultural symbol on its own. The mixture of music, sports and comedy is represented through his personality, background and style. All these cultural elements work together in the poster and help to grab a wide audience (Harrison, 2022).

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

There are many promotional strategies used in the poster for grabbing audience's attention. The name of well-known actors "Snoop Dogg and Mike Epps" are mentioned on the top. This strategy will instantly grab viewers' attention from hip-hop and comedy community, who recognize and trusted these celebrities (Harrison, 2022). Fun and energetic vibe is created through the playful imagery such as shiny gold car, kids wearing football uniform, Snoop Doggs confident pose and appearance and the use of bright colors also add to it. Mentioning the catchy tagline "From Blunts to Runts" is another tactic. This short, funny and easy tagline makes people curious about the plot. Platform and release date "Prime January 26" is clearly shown on the poster for the audience to know where and when to watch. All these promotional tactics work together to grab viewers' attention and make the movie look more exciting, modern and entertaining (Oliver, 2025).

3. DAMSEL (ACTION MOVIE POSTER)

Damsel is an American action movie released in 2024. The theme of action is perfectly conveyed through the verbal and visual elements used in the poster.

INTERACTIVE MEANING

Visual contact: The central image of Millie Bobby Brown is directly looking at viewers. Her intense and focused gaze making direct contact with the viewers. This image is counted as "Demand image", where the participant is making direct eye contact with the viewers and making them feel like they are part of it (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). A sense of seriousness and determination is created through this eye contact and making the viewers feel like they are personally involved in her struggle.

Social Distance: The social distance in the image is close (Bi, 2019). The character of Millie Bobby Brown has shown in tight, close-up shot. The image is framed as the viewer is stranding right in front of the character or participant. This kind of shot adds to the intensity and brings the viewers emotionally closer to her character.

Modality: The realism of the image is quite high (Hodge & Kress, 1988). The dirt on his face and arms, fiery glowing fumes in the background, the sword, sweat on his face and body, her facial expression and the realistic texture of her clothes adds to the authenticity of the image. All these visual elements make the scene feel gritty and believable.

Perspective: The eye level of character or participant and the viewer in the image is perspective which places them on equal ground. The perspective in this poster also places both viewer and

the character on equal ground which reinforces the idea that the character is not above or below the viewers but rather someone with whom viewers can relate. The character is portrayed as an ordinary girl facing extra ordinary challenges.

USE OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS

There are many cultural elements used in the poster that connect the modern viewers to the story (Marshall, 2020). Usually, damsel is shown as weak girl in old fairy tales who needs a hero to save and protect her (Reynolds, 2020). But here in this poster, damsel is shown as strong, brave, determined and powerful girl who is ready to fight. The idea is flipped from weak helpless damsel to strong and powerful girl. This story reflects current cultural conversation about female empowerment and gender roles. This movie will be appreciated by the viewers who value strong female leads. The tagline "This is not a fairy tale" suggests that this story will be different from magical princess story and highlights the authenticity of the movie. Millie Bobby Brown in the poster is holding a sword with a strong and determined face fits to the theme of action and fantasy movies.

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

There are many promotional strategies used in the poster for grabbing audience's attention (Oliver, 2025). The name of central character "Millie Bobby Brown" is purposely mentioned above the title of the movie. This tactic will garb audience's attention from her previous major project namely "Stranger things". Another promotional strategy is mentioning the platform of the movie "A Netflix Film" will help to attract more audience as this platform is well known for famous and worthy movies. The platform and the release date "Only on Netflix and March 8" is clearly shown on the poster. This information will make it easy for the viewers to know where and when to watch the movie. The other promotional strategies such as tagline "This is not a fairy tale", overall tone, colors, dark and intense design, tool (sword) reflect the action genre of movie and help to attract audience who enjoy action packed serious stories with powerful female leads.

4. THE IDEA OF YOU (ROMANTIC MOVIE POSTER)
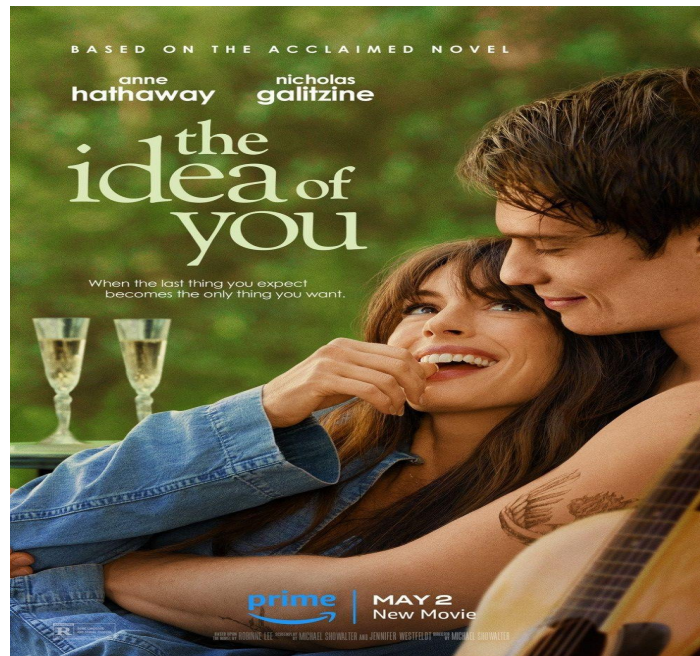
The Idea of You is an American romantic movie released in 2024. The theme of love and romance is perfectly conveyed through the verbal and visual elements used in the movie poster.

INTERACTIVE MEANING

Visual contact: Visual contact is established through the direct or indirect gaze between the participants and the viewers (Rose, 2016). In this poster, both the characters Anne Hathaway and Nicholas Galitzine are not directly looking at viewers, rather they are looking at each other. This image is counted as "Offer image" where the participants are not making direct eye contact with the viewers (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Anne Hathaway looks slightly away with contemplative expressions, creating a sense of intimacy, which makes her seem lost in her thoughts. This gaze invites the viewers into her emotional world. Nicholas Galitzine is looking at her instead of audience. This offer image makes their connection real and pulls the audience to observe their love story.

Social Distance: The two participants in the poster are sitting closely to each other. Their bodies are almost touching each other. This social distance suggests familiarity, intimate, exciting, and romantic tension between them. The closeness between the characters makes the poster warm and engaging.

Modality: The degree of realism of the image is quite high (Bi, 2019). Actors in the poster look real not cartoonist or fake and detailed natural lightning reinforces the movie's grounding in a

believable and contemporary romance. The use of soft lightning and warm colors add to the realism by creating dreamy but still believable environment.

Perspective: Mid-range shot has been taken from the camera angle. The image is framed as placing audience near enough to make them feel like they are part of it but not too close that it is awkward.

USE OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS

Cultural elements used in the poster targeted the specific audience (Marshall, 2020). The poster stars Anne Hathaway and Nicholas Galitzine, well-known actors of popular romantic movies like "The Princess Dairies, The Devil Wears Prada, and Red, White & Royal blue". Casting famous actors of romantic movies will bring young audience who enjoy modern love stories. Anne Hathaway's appearance reflects bohemian (free-spirited) style while Nicholas's appearance refers to trendy boyfriend image. The hot topic of the movie is age-gap romance. Age-gap romance is popular current theme of most of the movies, which make it more relatable and current. The title of the movie "The Idea of You" suggests that the movie is based on fantasy love story. This draws a wide audience into the movie as it is universal idea where people imagine their perfect partner.

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

The poster incorporates several promotional strategies to grab wide audience (Hopper, 2024). Mentioning the cast names "Anne Hathaway" and "Nicholas Galitzine" on the top of poster help to draw their established fanbase. Casting well-known actors of romantic movies will also help to attract the audience from their previous popular projects. The platform and the release date "Prime and May 2" is prominently mentioned at the bottom of the poster. This information will make it easy for the viewers to know when and where to watch the movie. To make the poster more appealing to the audience, movie makers have used warm and inviting color scheme. The tagline "When the first thing you expect becomes the last thing you want" suggests compelling love story. This tagline hints at the unexpected love, surprising romance, relatable fantasy, emotional pull, and modern twist. These visual and verbal elements used in the movie poster fit to the theme of love and romance.

5. BLACK BAG (THRILLER MOVIE POSTER)

Black bag is an American thriller movie released in 2025. The theme of thrill, fear, suspense is perfectly conveyed through the verbal and visual elements used in the movie poster.

INTERACTIVE MEANING

Visual contact: Visual contact is established through the direct or indirect gaze of the participants of the image. All the participants in the poster are not directly looking at the viewers. This image is counted as "Offer image" as the characters are not making eye contact with their viewers. This offer image makes the viewers observer rather than acknowledged participants. This indirect gaze creates tension, unease and intensity. All the participants in the poster are avoiding eye contact from each other, hitting at the hidden agenda or distrust.

Social Distance: All the participants in the poster are standing close to each other, so the social distance is close and impersonal. All the participants or characters in the poster are framed in medium-to-close distance. They are standing close to each other physically but mentally or emotionally they are detached.

Modality: The degree of realism of the image is hyper high. All the characters in the poster are in real dress code, obscuring details, natural skin tones, high contrast, desaturated palette and textual details heighten realism and evoke a cold dangerous world theme.

Perspective: Low-shot angle of characters makes them dominant participants. The image is visually framed as participants are dominant and viewers are vulnerable.

USE OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS

Cultural elements are used in the poster to target the specific audience. Dark colors, serious mood and smart tension highlight the classic spy story. This kind of story is appreciated by the adults who like slow burning thriller instead of flashy actions. By mentioning the names and casting famous actors like Michael Fassbender and Cate Blanchett will help to draw fans from their previous work.

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

Promotional strategies are used by movie makers in the poster to attract the audience. Cast's names, producer's and director's names are mentioned on the poster. This promotional tactic will help to grab audience from their established fanbase. The platform with release date "In Cinema and March 13" is prominently shown on the poster. This information will make it easy for the viewers to know where and when to watch the movie. To make the poster appealing to the audience, movie makers used intricate design, warm colors and subtle appearance.

CONCLUSION

The current study has adopted Visual Grammar (2006) by Kress and Van Leeuwen as a theoretical framework. This framework has been used to analyze the movie posters. Five American movie posters from five different genres (action, comedy, horror, romantic and thriller) have been chosen as dataset for the study. But there is limited focus on movie posters from genre perspective. The framework, Visual Grammar is based on three meanings namely, representative, interactive, and compositional. This current research only focuses on analyzing the interactive meaning in movie posters instead of focusing on all the three meanings. Further researches will fill the gap by studying all the three meanings in Movie posters. Four main components of interactive meaning have been analyzed. These four main components are visual contact, social distance, modality and perspective (Bi, 2019). The aim of the research is to uncover the cultural elements used in the poster for audience engagement. Promotional strategies have also been analyzed through analysis. On the basis of the data and analysis conducted in this study, it is apparent that visual contact is very important in the construction of interactional meaning, as in some posters participants are directly looking at viewers making the "Demand image" while in other posters, participants are avoiding the direct eye contact making the "Offer image" (Yan & Hassan, 2021). Moreover, the social distance, where the characters or participants are highlighted in medium-long shot, medium-close shot and medium-to-close distance. This distance has highlighted the relation between the participants shown in the posters and between

the participants and the viewers. In addition, modality, where the degree of realism of the image is told. Modality is quite high in all the posters as realistic textures, designs, colors and settings have been used in the posters (Boren, 2024). Furthermore, the perspective, is at eye level. In all the posters participants and viewers angle is framed at equal level, not above and below the viewers. This placement makes the viewers feel like they are part of the story. There are many cultural elements used in the posters to target the specific audience. Studying these cultural elements will help the viewers to understand that how these elements are strategically used in posters to target the specific audience and how American culture is represented on media. Promotional strategies such as the name of well-known actors, directors and producers, release date with platform are mentioned on the posters. To make the posters look appealing, warm colors, realistic textures and settings have been used to attract the audience. Studying and understanding these promotional tactics will help the movie makers to make effective and appealing posters. Further researches may focus on analyzing movie posters from Eastern cinema. Movie posters might be studied from different genres by focusing on their common designs, and what makes them different from each other. Lastly, there is a need to compare western and non-western movie posters for analyzing how social issues such as gender, power, and inequality is represented is both.

REFERENCES

Abdulhaleem, R. S. O. (2023). A Multimodal Analysis of Some Selected American Coronavirus Awareness Posters. *CDELT Occasional Papers in the Development of English Education, 83*(1), 237-256.

Ahmad, R. W., Khan, R. A., & Iqbal, Z. (2024). (De) Escalatory Framing Analysis of Photographs of Terrorist Organisation in the Press of Pakistan. *Journal of Peace, Development and Communication*, 08(02), 401–419. https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V08-I02-30

Ahmed, D., Ahmad, I., & Abbas, Q. (2024). Political Discourses on Ukraine-Russia Conflict: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected Press Conference at G20 Summit, 2023. *Journal of Peace, Development and Communication, 8*(03).

Anggraheni[1], D., Widodo, S. T., Wijaya, M., & Ardianto4D, D. T. (2025, June). A Multimodal Discourse Analysis on Female Representations in Indonesian Horror Film Posters. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Cultural Studies (ICCUS) 2024* (Vol. 930, p. 250). Springer Nature.

Anwar, N., Butt, I. R., & Shahzadi, A. (2024). Portrayal Of The Hidden Agenda: A Critical

Discourse Analysis Of Political-War Statements Of Israeli Officials. *The Journal of Research Review, 1*(04), 256-265.

Bedi, N. K. (2019). Analysing the Poster of The Reader: A Multimodal Perspective. *Language in India, 19*(3).

Bezerra, F. (2011). Multimodality in the EFL classroom. *BELT-Brazilian English Language Teaching Journal, 2*(2).

Bo, X. (2018). Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Movie" Argo". *English Language Teaching, 11*(4), 132-137.

Boysan, H. C., & Kızıltan, N. (2023). A semiotic landscape analysis of the film posters: Parasite, Mother and Whiplash. *The Literacy Trek, 9*(3), 85-114.

Chen, L. (2025). Feminist Perspectives in Multi-Modal Discourse Analysis: The Case of the Barbie

Film Poster. *Open Access Library Journal, 12*(4), 1-10.

Chen, Y., & He, W. (2015, April). Interpretation of the compositional meaning of movie posters from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis. In *International Symposium on College Foreign Languages Education Reform and Innovation* (Vol. 56, No. 24, pp. 32-3263).

Dewi, S. P. (2022). Verbal and Visual Signs of Interactive Participants in Spider-Man Movie Posters. *PARAFRASE: Jurnal Kajian Kebahasaan & Kesastraan, 22*(2), 171-185.

Hu, H. (2019). Meta-function analysis of movie posters from the perspective of visual grammar. In *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Information and Social Science (ICISS 2019)* (pp. 118-191).

INTAN, P. U. (2023). *VISUAL METAFUNCTION IN MOVIE POSTERS "THE KING'S SPEECH" AND "THE FIRST GRADER"* (Doctoral dissertation, UIN RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG).

Khurshid, A., Ahmad, R. W., & Ahmed, D. (2025). News Media, and Victim Blaming: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Motorway Rape Coverage. *Annual Methodological Archive Research Review, 3*(7), 16-36.

Liu, S. (2019). A multimodal discourse analysis of the interactive meaning in public service advertisement. *Journal of Advances in Linguistics, 10*, 1523-1534.

Navarro, A. L. N., & Adriano, T. Q. (2024). A Multimodal Discourse Analysis on Female Representations in Film Posters. *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature, 4*(1),

25-46.

Nguyen, T. T. (2025). Visual communication in car advertising posters in Vietnam from a sociosemiotic perspective. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal, 7*(7), 2025346-2025346.

O'Halloran, K. L., & Tan, S. (2023). Discourse Analysis and Semiotics. *Bloomsbury Semiotics, 4,* 231-252.

Silviana, Z. J. (2018). *Visual Grammar Analysis on Indonesian Senior High School English Textbook's Covers* (Doctoral dissertation, IAIN Kediri).

Yin, L., & Hassan, H. (2021). Multimodal discourse analysis of the movie poster Little Big Soldier. *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics, 7*(3), 101-105.

Zia, T., Anwar, N., & Butt, I. R. (2024). Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Punjabi Movie Posters: Exploring Visual and Cultural Narratives. *Competitive Research Journal Archive, 2*(04), 203-221.