

Representation of Femininity in French Perfume Advertisements: *An Analysis of Multimodal Discourse*

Tri Indri Hardini, Beli Gustiawan
Department of France Language Education
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
Bandung, Indonesia
tihardini@upi.edu

Abstract—An advertisement can be built and represented through multimodal text. Multimodality refers to the use of more than one mode at the same time. This study aims to explain how the verbal and visual modes of French perfume advertisements represent femininity and to express the meaning of the representations built on these advertisements. This study uses a theory of visual ideational metafunction and verbal ideational metafunction, then this research looks for the meaning of femininity representation in these advertisements. The data in this study are advertisements from three French perfume brands (*Lancôme, Yves Saint Lauren, and Dior*). The analysis found that visually French perfume advertisements represent femininity through the use of action process and reaction process, and verbally through the material process, mental process and relational process.

Keywords: *advertising, discourse analysis, French perfume, multimodal discourse analysis, representation*

I. INTRODUCTION

An advertising poster can be made using more than one semiotic mode. Moda itself is understood as a socially-formed resource for communicating meaning (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Hermawan, 2013). These various modes are known as multimodality. Multimodality can be interpreted as a way of people communicating using different modes at the same time (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Hermawan (2013) said that multimodality itself understood as analytical procedures that combined the tools and steps of analytical linguistic and picture if the text is analyzed using to modes, verbal and visual.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) as cited in Baykal (2016) has said Critical discourse analysis so far has only focused on verbal texts. Whereas with visual design grammar theory, the theory can propose to expand the approach suggested by CDA, to include the structure and use of images. The important role of images in newspapers, magazines, public-relations material, advertisements and other types of books can be noted.

Baldry and Thibault (2006) suggest that the attention of multimodal discourse analysis focuses on how various semiotic resources combined together in a certain social context for a specific communicative purpose. The representation of femininity in french perfume advertisements in this study is

seen using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). Multimodal discourse approach sees different kind of mode that is combined together to build the meaning of multimodality text (Ansori & Taopan, 2019). This study is based on Halliday's theory of functional grammar that has three metafunctions in constructing meaning. These functions have a role in every interaction that is created by language users. Spokesperson usually uses language to explain and encoding experience (ideational metafunction), to exchange experience (interpersonal metafunction) and organized experiences (textual metafunction) (Christie & Unsworth, 2000). Halliday's functional grammar theory adopted by Kress and van Leeuwen, (2006) in a picture through visual grammar. Kress and van Leeuwen sees that a visual can be treated as a language that has three metafunctions.

The meaning of femininity itself is a set of attributes, behavior, and role that generally associated with women. That matter can be defined in a social manner and created in a biological manner (Wijngaard, 1997). Thereafter, Brownmiller (2013) said that femininity can be seen from some categories such as body, hair, clothing, voice, skin, movement, emotion and ambition. This study focused on ideational metafunctions to look at femininity representations in french perfume advertisement in which there are verbal and visual components. Therefore, SFL theory (functional grammar) Halliday (1994, 2004) and visual grammar theory Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) used to analyzed two modes, verbal and visual.

Verbally, the function of the experiential in metafunction ideational occur at the level of the clause as a representation of human experiences, both the reality of the outcome and the reality depths of human dignity itself, in this case, means a function clause is as a representation of the experience of the two realities, namely the reality of outputs and from within someone (Sinaga, 2016). The transitivity clause as a grammatical unit has three components, namely (1) process (2) participants and (3) circumference. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) divide the processes that are happening 'divided into various processes namely (1) material (2) behavioral (3) mental (4) verbal (5) relational (6) existential.

The viewers have to see where the vector comes from and where it moves towards when they analyzed. Vector is

something that connects elements inside images through action, reaction, justification, speech process, and mental process. Action process is composed of 'transactional', 'non-transactional', 'bi-directional' or conversion. Reaction process divided in two, there are transactional (when the participants are having the eye contact) when the first participant called reactor and the second participant called the phenomenon, also non-transactional act (when one of the two participants does not have the eye contact) that is when the participant is called a reactor. According to Unsworth as cited in Hermawan (2013) leaning to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) 'when vector built by a line or by one and/or more participants so that they see, so then the process that happened seems more like a reaction rather than action. And the participant called a reactor, not an actor.' Justification (circumstances) can be called the second participant when eliminated, it can alleviate information on the image. Speech processes and mental processes are processes that can be seen in a comic through a speech bubble and mind balloon. There are two participants in the speech process, speaker and hearer. Meanwhile, the participant in the mental process called thinker.

Previous studies relating to this study include Baykal (2016) who examined the construction of women's appearance in mascara advertisements using multimodal discourse analysis. Then, Chen and Gao (2014) examined the interpretation of the meaning of representation of film posters from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis. This study aims to explain how the verbal and visual modes of French perfume advertisements represent femininity and to express the meaning of the representations built on these advertisements.

II. METHOD

The qualitative approach has been used in this study, using a descriptive method. This method is usually used to explain the phenomenon of the state of society (Sugiyono, 2011). Data collection in this study using documentation technique in which the results were tabulated into data cards. This study took 3 French perfume brands (*Lancôme*, *Yves Saint Laurent*, and *Dior*) for them to research, then they randomly took two advertisements from each brand from the search engine google. The analysis will begin with verbal, visual, then the meaning of the representation that is built.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher will analyze the ads one by one. The analysis begins with verbal, visual, then the meaning of the representation that is built.

The following Figure 1 is an advertisement poster from *Yves Saint Laurent*. On this perfume advertisement, there are two semiotic modes, verbal and visual. A verbal mode is built by clause *Paris je t'aime* [Paris I love you]. The clause is a clause with a mental process that involves perspectives, cognitions, desiderative, and emotional participant. The participant in this process called *senser* and phenomenon (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004). The *senser* in this clause is *je* [I] and then *t'* [you] as a phenomenon that refers to the perfume's name companion circumstances that is Paris.

Visually, Figure 1 is an image with a reaction process. That matter can be seen from a woman with short hair's reaction that in this process called a reactor. The woman reacted to the phenomenon scent of the *Yves Saint Laurent* perfume itself. So in this matter, the flower bucket and the perfume be the phenomenon. Other than that, there are circumstances in the image that is Eiffel tower illusion. This reaction process is non-transactional because the participants don't have eye contact.

Thoughtfully, this perfume advertisement represented femininity. This matter can be seen from verbal and visual modes that bring participants emotion towards the typical french perfume and rose scent. The participants also can bring up themselves with feminine outlooks such as outfits and earrings. So it can be said that when a woman using this perfume, they will feel bedazzled and graceful.



Fig.1. Advertisement from Yves Saint Laurent "Paris".

The following Figure 2 is a poster of a French perfume ad from Yves Saint Laurent. *Rive Gauche* is the name of the perfume. Verbally, the *RIVE GAUCHE N'EST PAS UN PARFUM POUR LE FEMMES EFFACEES* clause [*Rive Gauche* is not a perfume for weak women] is a clause with a relational process. Clauses with the relational process function to characterize and identify. The relational process has no meaning that indicates action but basically refers to the state of existence, condition or quality of something (Eggs, 2004). In the relational process, participant I being called as the carrier and participant II being called as attribute and value. The carrier in that clause is Perfume itself, *Rive Gauche*. In addition, there is an attribute that is *Un Perfume pour le femmes effacées* [a perfume for weak women].

Visually, Figure 2 shows the reaction process. The process can be seen from the reaction of two men who are distracted by women who use *Rive Gauche* perfume. The two men in the picture are called reactors and the woman is a phenomenon of the process. This process is non-transactional because the participants do not look at each other.

Femininity representation that can be seen in this advertisement is the string character of the woman who is using the perfume. According to the slogan that this perfume is not meant for a weak woman. The strength of the perfume scent drawing the attention to the people surrounding. So it is

required the strength of the woman's character to be the center of attention.



Fig. 2. Advertisement from Yves Saint Laurent "Rive Gauche".

Figure 3 is an image from a french perfume advertisement Dior with the name *Hypnotic Poison*. Verbally, the clause *Dior est mon poison* [Dior is my poison.] in the advertisement represented by the relational process that connects two entities, carrier and attribute. The carrier in the clause is the name of the brand of the perfume itself. The attribute in the clause is *Mon Poison* [my poison].

Visually, the action process is more stands out in this advertisement. This matter can be seen from the eyes of the woman in the image that staring at the viewers with half prone body posture. The gaze is not directed to the participant (goal) that makes this image non-transactional because there is only one participant, the actor. Actors in this advertisement using the snake attribute that is shown.

Femininity representation in this advertisement is the body posture of the woman. Visually and verbally this advertisement means that this perfume contains a poison that attracts people to inhale it. The strength of the perfume hypnotized people who smell it. That can be seen from the word *mon poison* [my poison] and the picture of a snake known as deathly.

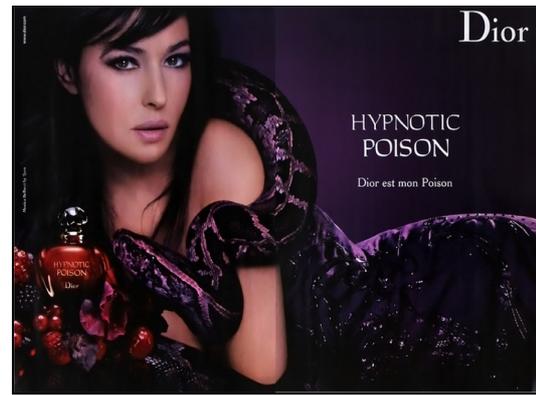


Fig. 3. Advertisement from Dior "Hypnotic Poison".

Figure 4 is an image from a french perfume advertisement brand Dior with the name *J'adore*. Verbally, the clause from the name *j'adore l'absolu* [I like something absolute.] is a mental process clause. *J'* [me] is a senser and *l'absolu* [absolute] is the phenomenon that can be felt by the senser

Visually, this image is an image with an action process. Woman's hand as a vector in this advertisement holding participant attribute (outfits and earrings). Outfits and earrings are the goals of the participant action. So if it coded, there would be a woman action that holding her attributes (goal).

Femininity representation in this advertisement can be seen clearly as visual. With standout woman's attribute and earring that she holds with both of her hands. This matter represented femininity. Verbally meaning, there's an absolute word meaning it can't be doubted if the woman using this perfume can be a woman completely.

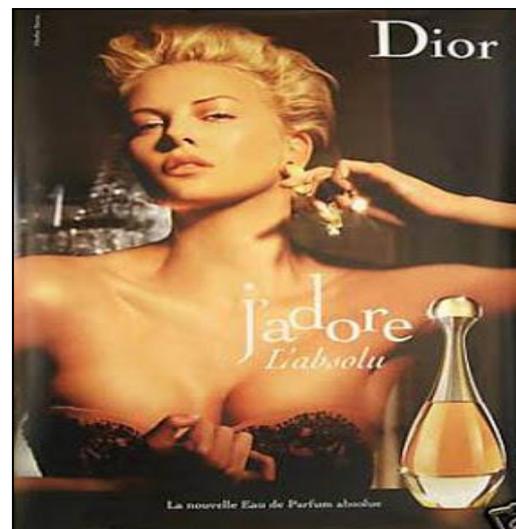


Fig. 4. Advertisement Dior "J'adore".

Figure 5 is a perfume ad with a different brand called *Lancôme* under the name *La vie est belle*. Verbally, the *la vie est belle* clause, *écrivez la vôtre* [Life is beautiful, write down yours.] is a clause with a material process. 'material' clauses interpret quantum changes in the flow of events that occur through a number of energy inputs, these energies usually bring about changes in the participants (actors). Material processes can be observed empirically and are real. In the material

process, there can be two participants, participant I being called as an actor and participant II being called as a goal (action target) (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004). But in this clause, there is only a goal namely *la votre* [yours]. What is meant by this clause is *la vie est belle* [beautiful life] who is the brand of this perfume.

Visually, this perfume ad is an advertisement with a process of action. This is evidenced by the woman's gaze vector (actor) that leads to the viewer. Because the gaze is directed at the viewer, this image is non-transactional. In addition, there is a circumference of the lights behind the actor which adds to the impression of glamor.

Representation of femininity in this perfume advertisement is beauty that is displayed visually and verbally. This woman looks so beautiful with her feminist appearance and attributes, then, the circumferences which make a beautiful, radiant and glamorous impression. Posture and gesture in participants who have the impression of elegance that adds a representation of the meaning of femininity to this perfume.



Fig.5. Lancôme ad poster "La vie est belle".

Figure 6 is a perfume advertisement from Lancôme under the name *Magnifique*. Verbally, *vous êtes unique* clause, *vous êtes magnifique* [you are unique, you are beautiful.] are two clauses with a relational process. *Vous* [you] is a carrier in this clause. The words *unique* and *magnifique* are values that function to characterize the carrier.

Visually, this image is built and represented by the action process. The hand vector that holds the perfume is the reason why this process is a process of action. The gaze vector is also directed at the viewer rather than the goal (perfume). This process is more transactional because the hand vector is more prominent than the gaze vector.

The representation of femininity that is built is unique to the woman herself. This can be seen from the way women hold unusual perfume. Then, the sensuality of the woman is highlighted through very feminist postures, gestures and attributes.

Visually, in the six perfumes studied there were no symbolic and analytical processes. According to Kress and van

Leeuwen (2006) Symbolic processes are about what a participant means or is. while the Analytical processes relate participants in terms of a part-whole structure. They involve two kinds of participants: one Carrier (the whole) and any number of Possessive Attributes (the parts). The picture shows that perfume advertising manufacturers do not want to make buyers think too long. Thus, the advertisers put forward the actions and reactions of participants as something real.

Verbally, no existential processes were found in the advertisements studied. An existential process is a form of process that shows the existence of one entity (Halliday, 2014). the speech process was also not found in these six advertisements. The process of speaking visually is usually proven with a comic balloon or verbally it is usually proven with spoken words like 'stated', 'said', etc.



Fig. 6. Poster of the Lancôme advertisement "Magnifique".

IV. CONCLUSION

In the modern era, people are accustomed to reading not only verbally, but also visually. In reading visual language, it is the same as reading verbal. Visual language and verbal language can mutually reinforce meaning. Therefore, multimodal discourse analysis is so relevant at this time to read the discourses in pictures and writing that are used simultaneously. This study found that verbally, the femininity of these 6 perfume advertisements was built and represented through the use of material processes, mental processes, and relational processes. Then, visually femininity is built and represented through the use of action and reaction processes. Based on the interpretation of the meaning of representation that is built, the entire advertisement studied build represents the image of fragrance through (1) Participant emotions; (2) strength of feminist participant characters; (3) Postures and gestures that look feminist; (4) Beauty and elegance of

participants; (5) Circumstance circuits that support the femininity of advertising.

The implications of this research are beneficial for perfume producers who will advertise their perfume and advertisers. Perfume manufacturers and ad makers must recognize that in making advertisements it does not only display the product. However, further than that the makers must bring discourse about the benefits of perfume and the compatibility of perfume with buyers. Appropriate selection of characters (participants) in advertising can also affect buyers. By gender, perfume manufacturers can also choose advertisement figures that fit the perfume specifications. Word play on attractive ad slogans will also make buyers interested in seeing and buying the perfume. The coloring saturation represented and the circumferences displayed if selected correctly will make perfume ads more attractive. Of course, the planned verbal and visual attachment will make it easier for the reader or buyer to accept the meaning of the perfume advertisement itself. Basically, producers and advertisers must realize that perfume can only be smelled by humans. Therefore, producers and advertisers must display fragrance with other representations, so that the general can smell the perfume through the use of verbal and visual language that is commonly found in advertisements. It is expected that this research can also add to the treasury of multimodal semiotic studies and discourse analysis.

REFERENCES

- Ansori, M., & Taopan, L. L. (2019). A multimodal discourse of promotional video wonderful Indonesia. *English and Literature Journal*, 6(1), 1-18.
- Baldry, A., & Thibault, P. J. (2006). *Multimodal transcription and text analysis: A multimedia toolkit and course book*. Equinox Pub.
- Baykal, N. (2016). Multimodal construction of female looks: An analysis of mascara Advertisements. *Dilbilim Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, 27(2), 39-59.
- Bezemer, J., & Kress, G. (2008). Writing in multimodal texts: A social semiotic account of designs for learning. *Written communication*, 25(2), 166-195.
- Brownmiller, S. (2013). *Femininity*. Open Road Media.
- Chen, Y., & Gao, X. (2014). Interpretation of the representational meaning of movie posters from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis. In *International Conference on Education, Language, Art and Intercultural Communication (ICELAIC-14)*. Atlantis Press.
- Christie, F., & Unsworth, L. (2000). Developing socially responsible language research. *Researching Language in Schools and Communities: Functional Linguistic Perspectives*, 1-26.
- Eggins, S. (2004). *Introduction to systemic functional linguistics* (2nd Edn.). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Halliday, M. A. K. & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *Introduction to functional grammar*. Oxon: Arnold
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *Introduction to functional grammar*. London, New York: Arnold.
- Hermawan, B. (2013). Multimodality: Menafsir verbal, membaca gambar, dan memahami teks. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra*, 13(1), 19-28.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge
- Sinaga, A. P. S. (2016). *Analisis Teks Multimodal Tangis Berru Sijahe Dalam Masyarakat Pakpak*. (Master's thesis).
- Sugiyono (2014). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta
- Wijngaard, Marianne van den. (1997). *Reinventing the sexes: The biomedical construction of femininity and masculinity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.