The Multimodal Analysis of Mask Images of COVID-19 Comics on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to find images related to masks from social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data were gathered by collecting comic pictures from three Instagram accounts: Evacomics, Ahviavia, and Weimankow. The samples of the data contained 18 (Eighteen) mask pictures. This research used Kress and Leeuwen's social semiotic approach, and the data were analyzed using Kress and Leeuwen's Multimodal analysis and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL): ideational, interpersonal and textual forms. The findings showed that verbal and visual interpretation of mask images contains messages of health protocols for preventing COVID-19. In conclusion, people, including comic makers, can support the government program in promoting health protocols in the pandemic era.

Keywords: Comics, multimodality, SFL, social media

ABSTRAK


Kata Kunci: Komik, multimodalitas, Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik, media sosial
INTRODUCTION

In this globalization era, social media changes how people represent themselves (Enverga, 2019). They try to give their best impression while interacting with others through their photos and statement on social media. Moreover, social media posts can be a place to express power relations and injustices, showing how language greatly influences conveying knowledge regarding inequalities (Parson, 2018). It proves that existing posts, images, videos, and text can describe the relationship between the author and the audience, knowing the meaning behind the post. In addition, Khosravinik in (Bouvier, 2018) also said the main purpose of social media is to increase people's consumption in cyberspace, which means that many people prefer to surf the internet online through social media rather than meet offline. Therefore, the fast dissemination of information is available on social media. This information can be presented in the form of comics.

Now, comics are widely communicated through social media networks. The use of comics is increasingly widespread in various circles through social media. People use their imaginations and creativity to share and express cultural information in comics. Flecha et al. (2020) stated that comics are a pattern of infectious cultural information transferred from mind to thought, which directly shapes and transmits a social group's main actions and mentalities of a social group. So, comics are formed because they are influenced by culture occasionally. Comics are also used to share aesthetic images with deeper messages. According to McCloud (2002, p. 9) in (Anshari, 2021), comics are a collection of images that convey information or produce an aesthetic response to the audience.

Comics are the process of expressing visual and verbal meaning. It can be analyzed using a multimodal study by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2004). Oyebode (2013) said the concept of communicative action is not only related to representation but also deliberately uses all modes of communication to signify something. In revealing the meaning of an image or comic, a representation of the image is indeed needed, but it usually includes other ways of communication for more details. This other communication is also said to be closely related to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) contained in Semiotics (Eggins, 2004, p. 147; Halliday, 1978) in Shanty (2014), which classifies semiotic techniques are grouped into ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. The three things represent the image and get the meaning behind the visual and verbal. Besides that, Van Leeuwen also defines "semiotic resources are actions, materials and artifacts that we use for communication purposes, whether they are produced physiologically, for example: with our vocal apparatus, muscles used to perform facial expressions and gestures or technology. Semiotic resources also have significant potential, however, depending on their past use and the range of affordability depending on their possible use and which resources will be realized in a particular social context in which their use is subject to some form of semiotic regime." (Van Leeuwen, 2004, p. 285).

It is clear that observing the image may require the identification of three multimodality metafunctions. In visual communication, ideational meaning refers to an experience that is currently happening. The relationship of an event that shapes the experience and is represented through this comic depiction. Meanwhile, interpersonal meaning manifests in the lexicogram by selecting the "mood" system. It refers to constructing the relationship between the speaker and the listener through language. It can be used to understand the meaning formed from social relationships, and textual meaning refers to a coherent organization of meaning as a text. It shows that a text contained in a visual can form a message as an intermediary mode for the audience. It is used to develop meaning in the comic to provide clear information.
In this article, comic observations that focus on the use of masks, such as in this pandemic era, use multimodality semiotic social analysis whose analysis is through the representation of meaning formed from Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) techniques, namely identification in ideational, interpersonal, and textual forms that can help people understand what the author is saying. Besides that, it also makes it easier for the public to explore and understand the meaning behind using masks for health during the pandemic era.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study used a social semiotic approach whose analysis is based on descriptions interpreted through visual meanings represented using linguistic modes in the form of ideational, interpersonal, and textual comics. It is to find out the classification of information based on the representation of the use of masks through this comic. The data obtained was taken through social media, namely Instagram. To analyze the implied meaning behind using masks on the environment during the pandemic era.

Samples are 18 (Eighteen) images obtained from 3 accounts in this comic that convey recommendations for using masks; all levels of society must prevent various things from one another. This data is taken and focused on using masks for health, represented through visuals and text in comic depictions.

**FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

**Finding**

This finding was expressed by researchers through cartoonists to generate perceptions of using masks for health through semiotics which presents comics in various ways to convey the meaning behind the recommendation to wear masks, how to use them when taking them off outside, and the importance of masks. Below is an explanation of visual and textual representation through linguistic mode to understand the meaning of information.

*Evacomics’s Account*

In Figure 1, there are three male participants. They wear masks in the crowd. The label "embarrassing mask moment" symbolizes that everyone must wear it in this era, even though it feels strange. The possessive attributes of the middle actor are glasses, a face mask, a black bag, a red shirt, and black pants. The actor tries to hold his sneeze in public with both hands; it can be seen from the visual that there is the sentence "uncontrollable sneezing due to sinuses in crowded places," which represents that the actor is experiencing uncontrollable
sneezing due to his nose has sinuses that he can't hold. To keep people around him away. Looked like the other two participants, who wore brown shirts, blue pants and green shirts with brown pants with cynical eyes glancing sharply at the actor sneezing with his eyes closed as if their expressions did not like people sneezing, afraid of droplets splattered towards them. In this case, emphasizing the use of masks is very important to protect yourself and others.

In Figure 2, there is a male participant. In this picture, a man who is considered an actor is drinking a drink. His possessive attributes are using glasses, a mask, and a short-sleeved green shirt, and this man's eyes are closed, which shows that he cannot contain his tiredness and thirst. It can be seen from the beads of sweat that wet the head with the hair that looks disheveled on the actor. He showed this thirst reaction through a can of drink that he held in his left hand, and without further ado, he immediately lifted the can and drank it. And he didn't remember that he was still wearing the mask; he immediately got soaked when the brown water came out and soaked his mask and clothes.

A verbal text selection is driven by the label "drink but forgets you're still wearing a mask" This sentence indicates that he wants to drink but completely forgot to remove the mask he was wearing.

Then at the moment of wearing a face mask, it can also be seen in Figure 3. A female participant is standing alone. The actor wears a short-sleeved red shirt, long black pants, and a black backpack in her possessive attributes. She is seen reaching into an open bag and
slinging it in front of her chest using both hands. As a form of reaction, the look in her eyes and the shape of the lip lines on her face looked anxiously at the inside of her bag, which seemed unclear in looking at the various contents of the goods in the bag. So that in this visual depiction, it is emphasized the use of masks, namely how the reactions are formed from the expressions formed on the face of the actor.

Verbally, the expression, "Gasp, where's my mask!" It represents how the actor looks when she seems confused, looking for her mask. Besides that, there is also a label "walking away after eating and forgetting to put on a mask again" This sentence describes most people who finish eating; usually, they often forget the new habit of this era, namely wearing masks. They tend to just walk away without remembering what to wear after eating.

Ahviavia's Account

Figure 4 shows four participants, namely two women and two men. Each wears a mask when they want to eat at a restaurant. There was a round dining table with three chairs nearby. The first male participant is on the right side of the table; he wears possessive attributes such as round glasses, a black hat, a short-sleeved gray shirt, and plaid pants. He could see his hands under the table where his left hand was holding a fork, and his head was looking down, whether his gaze was not clearly on the food or something. Then a man with curly hair was in the middle of the table, and he was also wearing round glasses and a white shirt. His eyes were also not directed at the food in front of him. But visually, his eyebrows are furrowed together. It represents that he cannot wait for his friends to eat together.

On the left chair, a female participant with long hair, a purple short-sleeved shirt, black pants, and square glasses. Visually looks like she is about to pull a chair, and her gaze is not clear on whom. Finally, one female participant was running to these three participants; she seemed in a great hurry to attend the meal together. This long t curly haired woman wearing a pink short sleeve shirt, long blue pants, and round glasses looks like she is running with her hands raised, holding a bowl. Her gaze also looks very worried, with eyebrows that look sad. She expressed this to apologize for the delay.

In this comic, a question contains, "How to keep a mask when eating out?" This question refers to how most people store their masks to keep them clean.
In picture 5, there is one female participant. In this picture is a simple woman with curly hair with visual possessive attributes wearing a pink outfit and round glasses. She is seen standing and not wearing a mask covering her mouth. But visually, her body is leaning to the right; her head is facing downwards with the actor's gaze fixed on the item she is carrying, and his mouth is smiling as if she is happy with what she is doing. Then the position of this woman's left hand is shown holding the plastic, and her right hand is also raised, holding the mask strap. It is supported by the phrase "keep the mask in a clear bag," which indicates that the perpetrators provide tips and ways to maintain proper mask storage so that cleanliness can be maintained properly.

In Figure 6, there is also one male participant. He possesses attributes that are seen in him wearing a black hat, glasses, a short-sleeved gray shirt, and short pants. He is depicted with a slightly leaning forward position, and his right-hand holds a mask and seems to put it in his right trouser pocket. However, the look in his eyes was not depicted as referring to what he saw. Verbally this comic also has the sentence "keep the mask in your pocket" This expression leads to another tip that people can do in storing masks to be safe. Besides that, it is also an anticipation that can make it easier for the person so they don't have to bother putting and saving it.
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In Figure 7, there is a male participant. This curly-haired man has possessive attributes such as wearing round glasses, short purple sleeves, and a mask. The man, who can be called an actor, is seen standing leaning towards the left, with his face facing forward. His right hand is bent upwards, with his left hand holding his right arm, which has a mask on the strap on his arm. As if this picture shows that he is that strong when wearing a mask. Then you can see the facial expressions formed by the actor, and his mouth looks wide open with round eyes staring straight ahead. It shows that the facial expressions of these participants are very happy in conveying something related to masks. The label "wearing it like a warrior band" indicates that the actor is persuading people who do not wear them to wear them for their safety and those around them. And with these words, it seems as if the person who wears it will look dashing even though he has to wear a mouth mask.

The use of mask is seen in Figure 8. This picture shows a female participant with long hair, possessive attributes, a short-sleeved purple shirt and square glasses. The position is leaning to the left with the head looking up and wearing a mask, but the object is cut in half as if it can be used to eat directly without taking it off first. It can be seen from her left hand holding a spoon filled with food which is about to be directly fed into his mouth, who is wearing the cut mask. Her mouth looks open as if she can not wait to eat it. Then her gaze was not so clear in seeing. From the verbal expression in this comic, "Don't even bother to take it off. Just cut the mask in half and eat like a duck". This sentence is not good to imitate because this wrong suggestion can create an example of bad habits for others who see it. Even
if you are eating, people must still pay attention to cleanliness and the proper use of masks. Because if it's wrong like this, it looks like you don't have etiquette when eating when you're still wearing a mask, cut into two. Other than that, eating like a duck represents impoliteness because humans should not eat like this even though they are hungry.

*Weimankow's account*

![Figure 9](image)

This comic contains how the use of masks greatly contributes to the health of each other and that of others. In Figure 9, you can see visuals of people and masks. People here are described very much because they are in a crowded place. There is also a large mask labeled with the large words "mask" represented so that the public, both alone and in gathering, are expected not to forget to wear a mask, and the mask also has a symbol as a tool used to protect others. And in this comic, there is a green bubble represented as a form of a virus that is ready to infect people. This comic also states, "Who should wear a mask to stop the spread of the coronavirus?" It is a question that represents that the surrounding community is aware of the dangers that occur if they are infected with the virus if they do not comply with the current rules; because of that, their use is also not indiscriminate; everyone is trying to wear it because this is very important for us to fight and avoid this coronavirus together.

![Figure 10](image)

Figure 10 shows four participants (two men and two women). On the left, a male participant wears a hospital coat, mask and carries a stethoscope. Next, a female participant
wears a hospital coat, mask, and nurse's hat. Both have the label "a doctor or nurse in a clinic or hospital" This sentence implies that they are the ones who can be said to be people who are close to the infected person. So they should wear masks so they are not easily infected with diseases other people suffer from. Their eyes also looked like they were wary of what was nearby. Then drawn to the right, a bald man is sick and leaning on the pillow he is wearing. His eyes seemed to be closed, and his lips formed an O shape because it represented that he was feeling the pain he was suffering. The other participant, a woman with brown hair wearing pigtails, a mask, and a long pink shirt, her position was seen squatting and her left hand outstretched like arranging a blanket worn by a sick person. Her gaze turned to that person. The expression that formed on this woman from her gaze was one of pity and sadness at seeing this sick condition. Labeled "a person who takes care of the sick at home" represents that even though caring for the sick, we are not required to be trivial and do not care about our health, we still have to wear a mask to protect ourselves from contracting the disease. And in this comic, the phrase "there are many people who need to wear masks to protect themselves because they are in very close contact with sick people all day long" represents not only when caring for sick people wearing masks but trying even though they are not taking care must wear a mask. The goal is to be protected from various diseases that attack our bodies at any time.

Figure 11

The use of masks can also be seen in Figure 11. This comic contains two male participants (one healthy and one sick participant). Here, healthy brown-haired participants are seen wearing masks and short-sleeved white shirts. His position looks hoisted, and he is leaning forward; his gaze is also unclear in his direction. Visually, this participant is described as someone who obeys to protect himself by still wearing a maker even though this condition should be better for users who are sick. In addition, some male participants are described as having hot, runny noses and coughs. It is if this man is not fit. Then verbally, "But wearing a mask in public, even though you are a healthy person, is a very less effective way to avoid catching the virus" This reveals that the effectiveness in maintaining and protecting yourself is more to sick people. Because even though wearing a mask is for healthy people but not for sick people, it is certainly possible that healthy people can still be infected through droplets or anything that can stick to their clothes. On the other hand, if a sick person wears it, it allows a small amount of transmission for healthy people.
In Figure 12, the author makes a parable that occurs in the previous picture. There are ten people depicted on a train. Labeled "Why? Imagine this..." here, the author invites the reader to imagine the meaning behind the importance of using masks. Then there is the phrase, "There are ten people on the train, and one of them is sick" This represents that if the people on the train are not always healthy, there must be someone sick. One of the sick on this train is depicted with a closed-eye expression which indicates he is enduring his pain, and there is a temperature controller explaining that he is sick.

The same as picture 12, which tells of the crowds of people. In Figure 13, ten people are visually depicted wearing masks. But one was not wearing a mask, had a green body, and was gaping wide. It visually represents a person not wearing a mask, sneezes, and the released droplets squirt toward others around him. The sentence "if everyone is healthy wears a mask, except for sick people... droplets of infection from sick people spread everywhere" is represented if it is more effective for sick people to wear masks because the droplets that come out of their mouths will infect healthy people. And healthy people are also fairly correct because they still wear masks even though they are fine. It is useful to reduce the possibility of contracting when exposed to the virus.
In Figure 14, there is a male participant. Possessive attributes include curly hair, a mask, a white shirt with white sleeves, carrying a bag, and a cell phone. His gaze was seriously fixed on the mobile phone screen held in his left hand and heedless of his surroundings. Visually, this image represents that all objects carried or used will still have the virus attached even though they look normal. The same as the image of a hand holding an iron pole, this looks normal, but inside, it holds a lot of germs that can infect the body of the holder. Then there is the phrase "to everyone and even on the train too," representing that germs or viruses can spread everywhere, both on people and objects such as trains. Therefore, caution is needed in handling something that is not necessarily clean from the virus.

In picture 15, there are three pictures (a man, a person taking off his shirt and a handshake). Visually the image of a curly-haired man holding up the phone with his left hand. He also looks like he is not wearing a mask, and his gaze is straight but looks happy in his eyes. Labeled "touching objects to their faces after taking off their masks," explains that every time they take off the mask, they should clean themselves first before touching objects because it doesn't mean that the virus doesn't stick to objects or our faces. Then there is a picture of a person taking off their clothes, and the phrase "when inhaling droplets when removing clothes" is represented if as much as possible when removing clothes from the outside, do not inhale the droplets because they still don't know whether the droplets contain
the virus from a sick person or not. Even a picture of a handshake can be avoided. Because from one hand to another, it is not necessarily clean from the attached virus, it could be that the hand represents where the virus gathers and sometimes makes people forget to wash it first before doing anything. Verbally “too easy for nine people to get infected after that....and for passion”. This sentence describes the remaining nine healthy people who will also be infected even if they wear masks for personal protection, but not necessarily when they need to remember to touch objects or their faces with dirty hands; they are easily infected with the virus.

In Figure 16, a large crowd is on the train. One of them is in the middle. The man's green body is described as a sick person. He also wears a mask to protect himself and those around him. Verbally "However, if one sick person wears a mask, infectious droplets are contained, and everyone is safe" This sentence symbolizes the use of masks is very important for sick people. Because if the sick person wears it, it will greatly affect the healthy person, and the droplets are less likely to spread. In its effectiveness, this mask can accommodate the droplets that come out of this sick person so as not to infect the surrounding people.

Picture 17, there are many people and a superhero. In the visual, it is depicted that they are hiding behind the superhero's body and covered in blue bubbles as if representing the bubble as an immune system that can fight the virus droplets released by the sick person. From their round gaze, they look very happy. Then stands a person who is said to be a
superhero with possessive attributes wearing a robe and carrying a mask. Both hands outstretched, with his right hand holding a mask. This picture seems to give the mask to the sick and scare the virus droplets so they don't infect healthy people around them.

Verbally “So don't waste masks! Become a superhero by giving them to sick people instead. You will save a lot of people that way.” This sentence invites people around always to wear a mask even if they are not outside because this is a form of self-protection. Besides that, if healthy people care and want to give personal protective equipment such as masks to people who look sick, it is a noble way and makes other people around them feel safe and not worried about contracting the virus droplets.

Figure 18

In Figure 18, there is a picture of a train and a picture of a lamp. Possessive attributes include wearing a mask, carrying a bag, and carrying a plastic bag. The man's position was seen standing while his left hand was carrying plastic, and his right hand was raised, holding the handle of the carriage hanger he was riding. The color of his body is also green, which can be said he is sick while traveling. His eyes were closed as if he was holding back the pain in his body. Behind the sick person, a shadow is represented as another passenger who lives with him. The expression "and if you are sick, but have to go out in public, wear a mask." states that there are no obstacles if you want to go out even when you are sick. Still, to prevent unwanted things, Wear a mask as a personal protective device for yourself and others when in direct contact. Many wearing masks when sick can make these healthy people feel happy and protected. Besides that, there is a visual of glowing lights. It symbolizes a brilliant idea and should be imitated like a tip. He said, "It helps reduce the spread of other viruses too, and not just for COVID-19!” this mask is not only a protector against the COVID-19 virus but can be used for all diseases. Therefore, wear a mask even if you are in good condition or sick.

The rise of COVID-19 outbreaks in various worlds, especially Indonesia, often creates new variants that cause health protocol rules to be enforced and planted in themselves so that they know the virus's rapid spread. Many people from various walks of life seem to have the idea of this disaster, so many are competing in making memes that are by the trend, one of which is the use of masks that will be posted on social media such as Instagram. From this analysis found, 18 images that represent the use of masks. By using women and men as a form of object representation of the use of suitable masks and following the current pandemic era. 6 of the images did not mention gender, and the remaining 12 used male and female objects. The use of male and female representatives in this meme shows that there is no view that everyone is wearing a mask which is currently a trend. As we all know, using masks at this time is very important and needed, considering that the spread of the COVID-19 virus is
continuing and has not subsided. The image of the mask itself is represented as a means of protecting health from being infected by the virus that attacks it, which is a form of reference to the community, especially now that it is intensively giving important appeals to the wider or global community to wear masks wherever they go or carry out activities outside the home. For example, icons depicting people in public places such as riding vehicles or other activities, the use of masks in the current situation is very important because they act as a barrier so as not to be infected by viruses that we do not know exist. All the use of masks here are also examples for those around them to be imitated in anticipating themselves.

In addition to the above interpretation, the use of mask images also has an important role in preventing transmission, so it represents some of the objects, such as healthy people coming into direct contact with sick people, droplets of people sneezing accidentally on us, and people's indifference to people. Cleanliness even though it looks normal and the recommendation to use masks in life. Even so, the depiction of the use of masks and the visualization of the mask pictures is also important in conveying its meaning. As stated by Beineke (2011) in Zhong (2021), comic adaptation can attract readers' attention to various images by visualizing appearance, actions, behavior, and thoughts. It is emphasized to the author to provide an overview of comics that can be relevant to what he wants to convey through various aspects of their depiction so that readers will feel interested in the appearance of the content presented by the creator. It appears that an image is used as a representation to create interest in the reader and provides a text whose purpose is to provide a view to understand the meaning tucked away in the context of the text so. That with this, many connoisseurs and makers feel satisfied with the work of comic masks that looks relevant to life as well as a reminder of the prevention of the current pandemic era.

In other words, the visual appearance of comics in social media is expected to improve the quality of the relationship between verbal and visual linkages that construct the mask meme. As the interpretation of Ariyoga (2020) says that text-image relations often grow into a solid and complex network that connects one or two text streams, namely mainstream texts and text sequences that comment on images and series of images and develop complex texts into visual narratives. The use of masks in visual comics is considered capable of protecting oneself when sick or healthy to prevent transmission of both the COVID-19 virus and other viruses. It explains the multimodal theory used for analysis in clarifying the context of the meaning and intent of the message through the images made by the comic makers.

CONCLUSION

The era of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic provides a great opportunity for writers. Many of them are competing to express their imagination in making works, one of which is making comics about COVID-19. Trend comics, including the Instagram platform, are often found and uploaded on social media. With this technology, making these comics can quickly provoke many people who know and like the COVID-19 comic content. Visual and verbal depictions formed by the maker can give their meaning to the reader. The meaning is formed from a multimodal analysis based on Kress and van Leeuwen using interpersonal, ideational, and textual identification. With these three forms, they can form meanings that can bring up messages obtained from the strong relationship between images and text to construct comics that are easy for readers to understand.

REFERENCES


