



# Visual Language: A Literature Review for Bridging Linguistics and Visual Communication Design

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**Abstract.** This study traces the extent to which visual language has been studied in research in order to provide a new concept of how visual language is studied and how the new concept is applied to research for future researchers who want to investigate further about visual language. The data was collected through research articles on visual language published from 1997 to 2022. The results showed that visual language has been studied in media such as, images, comics, books & magazines, videos & animations, posters & info graphics, motifs, logos & brands, packaging designs, and writing. Studies that have been carried out have not revealed how visual language is used in video thumbnails on YouTube. In addition, most previously conducted studies on visual language discuss the language using only one scientific approach so as to potentially inhibit the possibility of new findings that can bring benefits globally. Therefore, the researchers suggested to subsequent researchers to uncover how visual language is used in YouTube video thumbnails and examine the signifier and signified contained in them so as to integrate the disciplinary approaches of Visual Communication Design and Linguistics, especially Semiotics.

**Keywords:** Visual Language · Linguistics · Communication Visual Design

## 1 Introduction

Non-verbal language is language that does not use words. The language can be conveyed through actions and forms of form. A child who has not been able to speak will usually pull his parents' hands or arms to convey that he wants something. Parents also often stroke and kiss their young child's forehead to express feelings of affection when the child does not yet understand what the parent is saying. Both of the examples above are non-verbal language conveyed through action and can be captured using the sense of touch. In addition to using the sense of touch, non-verbal language conveyed through action can also be captured using other senses. The students in the class can know that they have to be quiet when they see a teacher putting an index finger in front of his lips even though the teacher does not say a word. Likewise, parents will immediately go over and check on their child when they hear the child suddenly crying.

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Unlike language conveyed through action, visual language is a non-verbal language that is conveyed through visual forms. When we are on the highway, we can know that we will find a restaurant or place to eat if we continue to drive in the same lane when we see a signpost with a picture of a spoon and fork. Then in a public place, we will not be mistaken when entering into a separate toilet between men and women just by looking at the picture pasted on the door of the toilet. The two examples are visual language conveyed using images. In addition to images, visual language can also be conveyed using other media. For example, we will reduce the speed of our vehicles or drive more carefully when we see a monument displaying a vehicle damaged by an accident on the road. We also know that we can see elephants when we come to an area because in that area there is an elephant statue which position is in a strategic place. The two examples above are visual languages that are conveyed using three-dimensional forms.

Visual language is a topic that is usually studied by researchers in the field of visual communication design. Although not a popular topic among researchers in the field of linguistics, visual language as one of the ways humans communicate should be able to be studied using a linguistic approach. To be able to bridge the field of visual communication design and linguistics, it is necessary to review the extent to which visual language has been researched so that we can propose a new concept and how the new concept is applied in research. Therefore, the questions of this study are formulated as follows.

1. To what extent has visual language been studied in previous research?
2. What new concepts can be proposed in the study of visual language?
3. How is the new concept implemented in the research?

## **2 Research Method**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This research was a literature review that aimed at tracing the extent to which visual language had been investigated in research so that it could provide a recommendation for a new concept about how visual language was studied and how the new concept was applied to research. To be able to answer the objectives of the study, data were collected from research articles that discussed visual language. The data which had been collected were then summarized to give an idea of the extent to which the research had been carried out. Then, a new concept of how visual language was studied and how the new concept was applied was proposed based on the collected data.

### **2.2 Data Source**

The research data were sourced from research articles on visual language. The research articles were published from 1997–2022. All articles which were included as data in this study were indexed by Google scholars. The index was chosen because of the small amount of research that already existed on visual language. Then, the articles which could be fully accessed by the researchers were selected as research data.

### 2.3 Data Collecting Technique

The research research data were collected by using Publish & Perish application, Researchgate, and Academia search engine. Through this application and search engines, the researcher could get a list of articles that discussed visual language, as well as links that could be accessed to read the articles. Then, researchers downloaded the articles which discussed visual language so that they could be analyzed.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The research data which had been collected were put in a table to make it easier for readers to find the titles, years of publication, methods which were used, and findings from research articles discussing visual language. In addition to summarizing the research articles in the table, the researchers also briefly explained the results of the research findings. Furthermore, the researchers provided recommendations for a new concept about how visual language was studied and how the new concept was implemented in the research so that it could bridge the disciplines of linguistics and visual communication design.

## 3 Result and Discussion

### 3.1 Visual Language Which has been Investigated in the Previous Research

After tracing research articles on visual language that have been carried out, the researchers can summarize the findings of the research articles. The Table 1 summarizes the findings of previous studies on visual language.

Discussing the visual language contained in conventional images, in a study entitled "Visual Language – The Ideal Language of Communication in the 21st Century", it is found that visual language is easier to understand by various groups even though it is not as consistent as written language [1]. Then, still discussing the visual language contained in conventional images, in a study entitled "The Visual Language of Consumerism in Contemporary Artworks", it is found that the visual language in the works studied has the characteristics of Pop Art style, witty, satirical and sarcastic, and trigger ethical and aesthetic problems [2]. Furthermore, discussing the visual language contained in digital images, in a study entitled "Visual Language of Comics, Memes, and Emojis" it is found that to create healthy communication, verbal and visual elements complement each other and do not compete one another [3]. Furthermore, still about the visual language contained in digital images, in a study entitled "Emojis as a New Visual Language in Advertising Creativity", it is found that emojis foster a positive reaction from consumers so that they can increase consumer engagement with advertising [4].

Still about visual language in digital images, in a study entitled "Visual Communication on Social Media Advertisement that Influence Consumer Buying Behaviour on Skin-Whitening Product", it is found that the main factor that most influenced respondents' attention was the visual form consisting of the product image itself and the image of talent as the second important factor in maintaining the attention of the audience for the long-term attachment of information in memory. Captions on photos and hashtags also

**Table 1.** Studies on visual language

No	Year	Researcher	Title	Method	Media	Finding
01	1997	Erwig	Semantics of Visual Languages	Content Analysis	Image	Constructing a general framework for visual language semantics through symbols
02	2004	Tanudjaja	Punakawan sebagai Media Komunikasi Visual	Content Analysis	Image	Punakawan has the value of virtue because of balancing the world of idealism and the real world.
03	2008	Wang	Visual Language in Visual Communication	Content Analysis	Image	Visual language is design art that can be developed.
04	2009	Ahmad & Lee	Telling Stories using Children's Visual Language: A Unique Approach in Picture Books with Case Study from Indonesia and Korea	Content Analysis	Book	Children's ability to convey ideas and stories through images inspires adults so that it appears in the work of several book illustrators in Indonesia and Korea.

*(continued)*

Table 1. (continued)

No	Year	Researcher	Title	Method	Media	Finding
05	2010	Franzia	Bahasa Visual dalam Perwajahan Majalah Femina	Content Analysis	The Front Cover of Femina Magazine	The ideal female figure is a woman who can do various things.
06	2012	F. Bramlett (Ed.)	Linguistics and the Study of Comics	Content Analysis	Comic	Comics can take the form of a combination between images and writing, including: single images, sequential, without writing, and dominated by writing. These forms allow visual language to be used outside of comics.
07	2012	Ibrahim, et al.	Bahasa Komunikasi Visual dan Pengantaran Produk: Satu Analisis Semiotik	Content Analysis	Logo/ Brand	The Starbuck logo uses an image of a mermaid that has the meaning of attracting, alluring, convincing, and mastering the audience.
08	2013	Cohn, Neil	Beyond word balloons and thought bubbles: The integration of text and image	Content Analysis	Comic	Text and images are connected in 4 ways: inherent, emergent, adjoined, and independent.
09	2013	Smurdyahwati	Shadow Puppets Performance of Yogyakarta through its Visual Language	Content Analysis	Shadow	Every movement of the character has a message conveyed through body language.

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

No	Year	Researcher	Title	Method	Media	Finding
10	2014	Adi	Memaknai Bahasa Visual pada Ilustrasi Bergambar Soeharto di Sampul Muka Majalah Tempo	Content Analysis	The Front Cover of Magazine	The cover of Tempo magazine, which had many limitations, has transformed into a medium to explore creativity through visual language.
11	2015	Adi	Ilustrasi Kritik Sosial dalam Bahasa Visual <i>Metaphore</i> pada Karya Mahasiswa Mata Kuliah Ilustrasi Desain sebagai Studi Kasus	Case Study	Illustrative Image	The visual language of metaphors is an important tool in the delivery of social criticism because it is able to attract attention and influence opinions.
12	2015	Zeeshan	Visual Metaphors in Language of Advertising	Eksperiment	Image	The best way to attract customers is to use pictorial elements.
13	2016	Cohn, Neil, and Sean, Ehly	The vocabulary of manga: Visual morphology in dialects of Japanese Visual Language	Content Analysis	Comic	Shonen and Shoyo manga have different patterns and they are dialects of the Japanese visual language.
14	2016	Salah & Dolah	Penilaian Bahasa Visual terhadap Faktor Penglibatan Pembaca Komik Melayu	Eksperiment & Content Analysis	Comic	Comics use text and images like any other medium. Meanwhile, the dialogues, as well as the interaction of the reader and the comic influence how the reader understands the content of the comic.

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

No	Year	Researcher	Title	Method	Media	Finding
15	2016	Ulita & Setyawan	Strategi Ilustrasi sebagai Bahasa Visual pada Kemasan Bedak Lawas: Tinjauan Semiotika	Content Analysis	Packaging Design	The visual language in the design of the old powder packaging has a message conveyed through visual signs on the illustrations of the women who are there.
16	2017	Ardianti & Pebrian	Expressi Modalitas Bahasa Jepang dalam Bahasa Visual	Content Analysis	Comic	The eye model and speech balloon model are graphic markers that follow the character's expression.
17	2017	Cang, Yan, & Yang	Analysis of Visual Language for Clay Animations	Content Analysis	3D Animation	The visual language in clay animation has become more lively and diverse along with the development of technology.
18	2017	Setyowati	Bahasa Visual dalam Sinetron Indonesia	Content Analysis	TV Soap Opera	There are ineffectivenesses in the use of visual language in Indonesian soap operas, such as strengthening actions and conveying the thoughts of characters which still use a lot of verbal language.

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

No	Year	Researcher	Title	Method	Media	Finding
19	2018	Cohn, Neil	Combinatorial Morphology in Visual Languages	Content Analysis	Comic	The combination aspects of visual-lexical items include affixation, substitution, dan reduplication.
20	2018	Cohn, Neil	In defense of a grammar in the visual language of comics	Content Analysis	Comic	Bateman & Wildfeuer's claim needs to be supported by data or at least empirically testable hypotheses.
21	2018	Hanisha, Djalari, & Hutama	Bahasa Visual, Gambar Anak, dan ilustrasi pada Cergam Anak	Content Analysis	Book & Image	The visual language similarities between contemporary child images and the illustrations in the book " <i>Kertip Bintang di Langit</i> " include distinctive looks, space identification, sequence of a setting, and composition.
22	2018	Haryanti & Nurlatifah	Visual Language in Japanese Animation	Content Analysis	Image	To show something important, the size of the wimba in Japanese animation is enlarged or reduced according to the level of importance.

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Table 1. (continued)

No	Year	Researcher	Title	Method	Media	Finding
23	2018	In Wildfeuer, Janina, Alexander Dunst, Jochen Laubrock (Ed.)	Empirical Comics Research: Digital, Multimodal, and Cognitive Methods	Empirical Study	Comic	The interaction of visual language and written language in comics is different from the interaction of the two languages in other constructions such as pictorial stories, magazines, and books.
24	2019	Drumeva	Metaphor – The Visual Language of Poster Art	Content Analysis	Poster	Posters as a form of visual communication have a strong expression and impact on mass culture.
25	2019	Simakova	Infographic as a Visual Language	Content Analysis	Infographic	As a visual language, infographics have great expressive information potential and can be classified into single & multi-compound interactive infographics, as well as static infographics.
26	2019	Wicaksono & Juwariyah	The Visual Language of Consumerism in Contemporary Artworks	Content Analysis	Image	The works studied have a tendency to (a) be Pop Art-style, (b) witty, satirical and sarcastic, and (c) trigger ethical and aesthetic issues.

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

No	Year	Researcher	Title	Method	Media	Finding
27	2020	Ismurdiyahwati & Nasor	Motifs in East Java Traditional Batiks: Cultural Visual Language	Content Analysis	Batik Motifs	Bandeng Loh, Singo Mengkok, Lockan, Gedog, Sekarjati, and Jongorooan motifs are popular motifs among young people.
28	2020	Kujur & Singh	Visual Communication and Consumer-Brand Relationship on Social Networking Sites	Experiment	Logo/ Brand	Visual forms have a positive impact on consumer engagement and entertaining content is the most influential factor in consumer engagement.
29	2020	Mahsan, et al.	Visual Communication on Social Media Advertisement that Influence Consumer Buying Behavior on Skin-Whitening Product	Eksperiment	Image Ads on Social Media	Visual form is the main factor that most influences respondents' attention.
30	2020	Minnan, Yizhe, & Shenglu	Analysis of Visual Language for Stop-motion Animations	Content Analysis	Stop Motion Animation	The visual language in stop motion animation is more vivid and varied when collaborated with digital technology.

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

No	Year	Researcher	Title	Method	Media	Finding
31	2021	Candra	Pelatihan Menggambar untuk Anak Usia SD Demi Meningkatkan Kreativitas Melalui Bahasa Visual	Eksperiment	Image	Drawing techniques such as using crayons, making lines, and using colors have been mastered by children, but they are still not able to develop ideas well.
32	2021	Feng	Multimodal Analysis of Visual Language Based on Artificial Intelligence	Content Analysis	Digital Image	The multimodal form of visual language has the characteristics of intelligence, virtualization, interaction, as well as diversification.
33	2021	Mehta	Visual Language - The Ideal Language of Communication in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	Eksperiment	Image	Although visual language is not as consistent as written language, visual language can be understood quickly by all people.
34	2021	Pratama	Kajian Bahasa Rupa Budaya Mesatua Bali dalam Cerita Bergambar	Content Analysis	Illustrated Story	Visual language has a very important role because in addition to displaying compelling visual forms, visual language also presents an interesting story.

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

No	Year	Researcher	Title	Method	Media	Finding
35	2021	Purnomo, dkk.	Visual Language of Javanese Script on Shoe Design as Cultural Identity	Content Analysis	Writing	Cultural features in product design can be a differentiator that gives rise to local pride in the creative industry.
36	2021	Ratnadewi, Pandanwangi, & Priyono	Bahasa Rupa Motif Batik Ciamis Melalui Program Lindenmayer Systems	Eksperiment	Batik Motifs	The Lindenmayer Systems program can be used to create batik motifs in digital form efficiently and with good quality for the creative industry.
37	2021	Whybray	Objectifying Visual Language in Autobiographical Comics	Content Analysis	Comic	Any autobiographical comic creator is able to reject the objectivity of others by expanding the approach they use to represent something.

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

No	Year	Researcher	Title	Method	Media	Finding
38	2021	Yassin	Emojis as a New Visual Language in Advertising Creativity	Eksperiment	Digital Image	Emojis increase consumer engagement with ads because they foster a positive reaction from consumers.
39	2021	Zhao	Brief Analysis of the Visual Language of Digital Animation	Content Analysis	Digital Animation	Digital animation is a visual language trend that integrates science, technology, and art, and is able to create more opportunities to create artistic works.
40	2022	Chaudhary	Visual Language of Communication: Comics, Memes, and Emojis	Eksperiment	Digital Image	Verbal and visual elements do not compete each other but they complement each other in creating healthy communication.

added a convincing story to attract the attention of potential buyers of these whitening products. Then, respondents also paid great attention to the arrangement of image backgrounds that were considered to increase the reputation of the product. Therefore, plain or overly complicated image backgrounds were avoided by most respondents because the product did not look amazing and was less convincing to them. In addition, most of the ads also featured beautiful and perfect-looking women as part of the advertisement to convey the message of how the whitening product made its users have white skin and stunning appearance [5]. There are many other researchers who discussed about the visual language contained in the image [6–14].

Discussing visual language, in a study entitled “Penilaian Bahasa Visual terhadap Faktor Penglibatan Pembaca Komik Melayu”, comics were analyzed. The comics were analyzed through the visual language elements contained in them, the factors of visual reader involvement, and the influence of comics on social cognitive. Firstly seen from the visual language contained in them, the comics used text and images like other media. The use of text and images in comics had two forms: a combination of text and images, as well as separate text and images. Secondly seen from the visual reader engagement factor, the main factor that influences how readers understood the content of comics was not only through existing images and dialogues, but also the interaction of readers and comics: Readers who had followed serialized comics would better understand the content of a comic series than those who had just read the series. Thirdly seen from the influence of comics on social cognitive, the comics functioned as media to boost issues in society so that they became the focus of attention, thoughts, action triggers, and also shapers of public opinion. Comics were also sources of collecting information and ideas before individuals made a decision [15].

Next, in a study entitled “Beyond word balloons and thought bubbles: The integration of text and image”, the visual language in comics was analyzed and it was found that there were 4 ways to connect text and images. The first was inherent or a condition in which text and images were in one structure. For example, Text that appeared in a fictional world or blended with the characters in the panel. The second was emergent or a condition in which text and images were directly interconnected. For example, the words conveyed by the characters were inside the speech balloons. The third was adjoined or a condition in which the text and images were not directly connected. For example, text was conveyed as a caption or notes. The fourth was independent or a condition in which the text and images were completely separate. For example, the conveyed text was not accompanied by an image or an image created in the absence of text describing the action being performed by the character [16].

Still about visual language in comics, in a study entitled “Expresi Modalitas Bahasa Jepang dalam Bahasa Visual”, it was found that comics had graphic markers that followed the expressions of characters. The graphic markers were eye models and speech balloon models. In the eye model, two thin curved lines and dots were graphic markers to show a feeling of surprise. In the speech balloon model, there was content loaded in the carrier and without the carrier. The content contained in the carrier included the private carrier, that was, the information was known only by the root as the character who created it, public carrier, that was, information known by the root and other characters around, satellite carrier, that was, information unknown by the root and other characters around,

and non-sentient carrier, that was, information unknown by the root but fully known to people around. Meanwhile, in content without a carrier, the information delivered was only either private or public [17]. Visual language in comics were discussed by other researchers [18–23].

Discussing visual language on the front cover of the magazine, in a study entitled “Bahasa Visual dalam Perwajahan Majalah *Femina*”, it was found that based on the visual form on the cover of *Femina* magazine from the beginning of publication to the present, the ideal female figure was a woman who could do various things, ranging from domestic, professional, to social tasks even though in reality the domestic role of women was left to many other support personnel. Therefore, in the visual language appeared the figure of a woman who had many hands. The cover of *Femina* magazine also conveyed the existence of the magazine as the sources of ideas and inspiration, as well as presenting through visual language the form of an image that was considered a representation of an ideal female figure for readers. In addition, the visualized speech contained on the cover of *Femina* magazine stated unequivocally that *Femina* magazine as a printed mass media played a role in nation building through empowering Indonesian women while sticking to socio-cultural values [24].

Still about visual language in printed media, in a study entitled “Bahasa Visual, Gambar Anak, dan ilustrasi pada Cergam Anak”, it was found that there were several visual language similarities between contemporary children’s images and illustrations in the illustrated storybook “Kerlip Bintang di Langit”. The similarities in visual language included: a distinctive look, that was, using directions, shapes, or colors that could be easily recognized for important things, identification of space, that was, using objects related to location to express the space in an image, the order of a setting, that was, telling the background of the story sequentially, and composition, that was, objects were made in such a way that an important impression of the object could appear. In addition to visual language, there were also similarities in the visual system used. The similarities in the visual system were the RWD system which included the distinctive appearance, the size of the object enlarged, the identification of space, outer space, as well as the sequence of a background and the NPM system which included dynamic form, combined scale, composition, and importance in the middle [25]. Visual language in books and magazines were also discussed by other researchers [26–28].

Discussing the visual language contained in video and animation, in a study entitled “Brief Analysis of the Visual Language of Digital Animation”, it was found that as a visual language trend, digital animation integrated science, technology, and art, and was able to create more opportunities to create artistic works [29]. Furthermore, in a study entitled “Analysis of Visual Language for Stop-motion Animations”, it was found that when collaborated with digital technology, the visual language in stop motion animation was more vivid and varied [30]. In line with other findings, in a study entitled “Analysis of Visual Language for Clay Animations”, it was found that along with the development of technology, the visual language in clay animation became more lively and diverse [31]. Then, in a study entitled “Bahasa Visual dalam Sinetron Indonesia”, it was found ineffectiveness in the use of visual language in Indonesian soap operas, such as strengthening actions and conveying the thoughts of characters which were still dominated by verbal language [32].

Discussing visual language in a logo, in a study entitled "Bahasa Komunikasi Visual dan Pengantar Produk: Satu Analisis Semiotik" the Starbuck logo was analyzed. The logo was analyzed using a logo taxonomy that included shapes, colors, images, as well as writing and images. Seen from the shape, the Starbuck logo which form was a circle meant that Starbuck as a café was able to create an innovation in the sale and serving of coffee. Seen from the colors, the Starbuck logo consisted of green, black, and white. The green color had a natural, young, cool, fresh, relaxed, calm, stable, and lively meaning. Then, the color black had the meaning of elegant, quality, and mysterious. Then, the color of white had the meaning of holy, pure, clean, perfection, and wisdom. Seen from the image, the Starbuck logo used the image of a mermaid which was an ancient myth and folklore. The logo had the meaning of attracting, alluring, convincing, and mastering the audience. Seen from the writing and message, the Starbuck logo used a simple font with a star between two words. Implicitly, the inscription on the Starbuck logo was an affirmation that Starbuck was a professional café in the field of serving coffee with good quality. Explicitly, the letter typography on the Starbuck logo had a firm and clear meaning to show the audience that Starbuck was the best café in its field [33].

Furthermore, in a study entitled "Visual Communication and Consumer-Brand Relationship on Social Networking Sites-Uses & Gratifications Theory Perspective", it was found that visual aspects had a positive impact on consumer engagement and helped in building consumer and brand relationships. Through the carried out analysis, it was found that entertaining content was the most influential factor in consumer engagement because the content was considered fun, interesting, cool, and striking. Contents with creative arts quickly attracted attention, encouraged users to view, and shared the contents. In addition, entertaining contents accompanied by light conversation also fostered trust and triggered one's emotions [34]. Research on visual language was also studied in posters and infographics [35, 36]. Then, visual language had also been studied using the medium of batik motifs [37, 38], in packaging design [39], and in Javanese writing contained in shoe design [40] (Table 2).

The visual communication media that have been studied are divided into four categories: images, comics, books & magazines, videos & animations, logos / brands, posters & infographics, motifs, packaging design, and writing. Images are the most researched media. There are fourteen articles that examine the visual language in the images so that the percentage of the image as a visual language medium is 35%. Then, comics occupy the second position with a total of nine articles so that the percentage of comics as a visual language medium is 22.5%. The third position was achieved by books & magazines with a total of five articles so that they reach a percentage of 12.5%. Then, the fourth position is achieved by video and animation reach with a total of four articles so that they reach a percentage of 10%. Logos & brands, posters & infographics, and motifs each consist of two articles so that the percentage achieved by each category is 5%. Meanwhile, packaging and writing design occupy the last position with the number of one article so that the percentage achieved by each category is 2.5%.

### **3.2 A New Concept Offered to Study Visual Language**

After reviewing previous studies on visual language, it is revealed that the visual language contained in images, comics, books & magazines, videos & animations, logos/



**Table 2.** Media of visual language

No	Media	Year	Author	Title	%
1	Image	1997	Erwig	Semantics of Visual Languages	35
		2004	Tanudjaja	Punakawan sebagai Media Komunikasi Visual	
		2008	Wang	Visual Language in Visual Communication	
		2013	Smurdyahwati	Shadow Puppets Performance of Yogyakarta through its Visual Language	
		2015	Adi	Ilustrasi Kritik Sosial dalam Bahasa <i>Visual Metaphore</i> pada Karya Mahasiswa Mata Kuliah Ilustrasi Desain sebagai Studi Kasus	
		2015	Zeeshan	Visual Metaphors in Language of Advertising	
		2018	Haryanti & Nurlatifah	Visual Language in Japanese Animation	
		2019	Wicaksono & Juwariyah	The Visual Language of Consumerism in Contemporary Artworks	
		2020	Mahsan, et al.	Visual Communication on Social Media Advertisement that Influence Consumer Buying Behavior on Skin-Whitening Product	
		2021	Candra	Pelatihan Menggambar untuk Anak Usia SD Demi Meningkatkan Kreativitas Melalui Bahasa Visual	
2021	Feng	Multimodal Analysis of Visual Language Based on Artificial Intelligence			

(continued)

**Table 2.** (continued)

No	Media	Year	Author	Title	%
		2021	Mehta	Visual Language - The Ideal Language of Communication in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	
		2021	Yassin	Emojis as a new Visual Language in Advertising Creativity	
		2022	Chaudhary	Visual Language of Communication: Comics, Memes, and Emojis	
2	Comic	2012	F. Bramlett (Ed.)	Linguistics and the Study of Comics	22.5
		2013	Cohn, Neil	Beyond word balloons and thought bubbles: The integration of text and image	
		2016	Cohn & Sean	The vocabulary of manga: Visual morphology in dialects of Japanese Visual Language	
		2016	Saleh & Dolah	Penilaian Bahasa Visual terhadap Faktor Penglibatan Pembaca Komik Melayu	
		2017	Ardianti & Pebrian	Expresi Modalitas Bahasa Jepang dalam Bahasa Visual	
		2018	Cohn, Neil	Combinatorial Morphology in Visual Languages	
		2018	Cohn, Neil	In defense of a grammar in the visual language of comics	
		2018	In Wildfeuer, Janina, Alexander Dunst, Jochen Laubrock (Ed.)	Empirical Comics Research: Digital, Multimodal, and Cognitive Methods	

(continued)

**Table 2.** (continued)

No	Media	Year	Author	Title	%
		2021	Whybray	Objectifying Visual Language in Autobiographical Comics	
3	Book & Magazine	2009	Ahmad & Lee	Telling Stories using Children's Visual Language: A Unique Approach in Picture Books with Case Study from Indonesia and Korea	12.5
		2010	Franzia	Bahasa Visual dalam Perwajahan Majalah Femina	
		2014	Adi	Memaknai Bahasa Visual pada Ilustrasi Bergambar Soeharto di Sampul Muka Majalah Tempo	
		2018	Hanisha, Djalari, & Utama	Bahasa Visual, Gambar Anak, dan ilustrasi pada Cergam Anak	
		2021	Pratama	Kajian Bahasa Rupa Budaya Mesatua Bali dalam Cerita Bergambar	
4	Video & Animation	2017	Cang, Yan, & Yang	Analysis of Visual Language for Clay Animations	10
		2017	Setyowati	Bahasa Visual dalam Sinetron Indonesia	
		2020	Minnan, Yizhe, & Shenglu	Analysis of Visual Language for Stop-motion Animations	
		2021	Zhao	Brief Analysis of the Visual Language of Digital Animation	

(continued)

**Table 2.** (continued)

No	Media	Year	Author	Title	%
5	Logo & Merk	2012	Ibrahim, et al.	Bahasa Komunikasi Visual dan Pengantaran Produk: Satu Analisis Semiotik	5
		2020	Kujur & Singh	Visual Communication and Consumer-Brand Relationship on Social Networking Sites	
6	Poster & Infographic	2019	Drumeva	Metaphor – The Visual Language of Poster Art	5
		2019	Simakova	Infographic as a Visual Language	
7	Motif	2020	Ismurdiyahwati & Nasor	Motifs in East Java Traditional Batiks: Cultural Visual Language	5
		2021	Ratnadewi, Pandanwangi, & Prijono	Bahasa Rupa Motif Batik Ciamis Melalui Program Lindenmayer Systems	
8	Packaging Design	2016	Ulita & Setyawan	Strategi Ilustrasi sebagai Bahasa Visual pada Kemasan Bedak Lawas: Tinjauan Semiotika	2.5
9	Writing	2021	Purnomo, dkk.	Visual Language of Javanese Script on Shoe Design as Cultural Identity	2.5

marks, posters & infographics, Batik motifs, packaging designs, and Javanese scripts have been studied by previous researchers. However, the researchers have not discussed the visual language contained in YouTube video thumbnails. In addition to not discussing the visual language contained in YouTube video thumbnails, most studies also explore visual language using only one discipline, namely the discipline of Visual Communication Design even though research involving multidisciplinary sciences is needed to solve complex problems that are global in nature. Thus, research on the visual language contained in YouTube video thumbnails, as well as involving more than one discipline, needs to be carried out. Therefore, the new concept proposed for future study is “Visual Language as a signifier and signified on YouTube video thumbnails”.

Researching visual language as a signifier and signified on YouTube video thumbnails will integrate the two disciplines. The two disciplines are Visual Communication

Design as a discipline that is able to explain visual language and Linguistics as a discipline that is able to explain signs. The visual aspects contained in YouTube video thumbnails can be studied using theories about visual language. Meanwhile, the signifiers and signs signified in YouTube video thumbnails can be studied using the dyadic theory of signs popularized by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). Through the existing multidisciplinary approach, research findings with this new concept are expected to help in solving problems that cannot be overcome by using only one disciplinary approach. The research findings are also expected to open up new insights that we have not achieved when pursuing only one discipline. In addition, research with this new concept also integrates knowledge from the disciplines of Visual Communication Design and the discipline of Linguistics so that the findings of this research will have advantages from each of these disciplines that we can absorb so that we become more empowered in facing global problems that are increasingly complex.

### 3.3 The Implementation of the New Concept in Research

Research on visual language with the new concept which is offered aims to reveal how visual language is used as a signifier and signified on video thumbnails on YouTube. In order to answer the purpose of the study, the research can be carried out qualitatively. Researchers need to observe the research subject, analyze the collected data by using relevant theories, and conclude the results of the study. The data in the research derive from videos that can be accessed freely on YouTube. The videos with the criteria of having thumbnails are selected. Later, the videos which are selected as the subjects of the research can be analyzed using the theory of visual language in the field of Visual Communication Design and the theory of dyadic signs popularized by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) in the field of Linguistics. After that, the results of the analysis must be presented in a comprehensive way so that the findings of the research in the new concept can bring benefits as expected.

The source of research data come from videos on YouTube. Because not all videos on YouTube have thumbnails, only those which have thumbnails are selected as the data. The length of the videos doesn't determine whether or not a video will be selected as the data. Therefore, the videos which become the source of research data can be short or long in duration. Then, the contents in the videos which are used as the data should not be limited so that the contents obtained will vary. However, the videos which contents are not suitable for all ages to watch, the videos containing elements of violence such as physical violence and verbal violence, and the videos that have the potential to harm certain parties must not be the source of data in this research. On YouTube there are also commercialized videos that are usually accompanied by advertisements when played and non-commercial videos that can usually be played without ads. Both commercialized and non-commercial videos can be the source of data in the research.

In collecting the research data that will be analyzed to answer the objectives of this research, the researchers can take the following steps.

- The first step that the researchers take is to limit the scope of the video to be taken. The videos that the researchers choose can be the videos uploaded in 2022 and in a span of 1 month. For example, the researchers take only the videos uploaded in June

2022 because the number of videos on YouTube is very large and will continue to grow as many people continue to upload new videos.

- The second step that the researchers need to do is to select the videos on YouTube based on the presence or absence of thumbnails in the videos. Then, the links of the videos that have thumbnails are collected by the researcher so that the researcher can play the videos when needed.
- When the collected videos are more than enough to be used as the source of data in the research, the researchers need to re-examine the videos based on the content in them. The videos that are not suitably watched by all people, the videos that contain the elements of violence both verbal and physical, as well as the videos that can harm certain parties must be eliminated or not be used as the source of data in this research.
- After the videos that the researchers collect previously pass through the two stages of screening: having thumbnails and suitable for consumption, as described in the research steps above, the researchers can get the videos that fit as the source of data to be processed to answer research questions.

The research data can be analyzed by using the approach of Visual Communication Design and Linguistics disciplines. The thumbnails of the collected videos need to be analyzed by using visual language theory where the language is defined as a non-verbal language that is conveyed through visual forms, both images and three-dimensional forms. Meanwhile, the signifier and signified present on the thumbnails need to be analyzed by using dyadic signs popularized by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) in which he defines the signifier as signs, can be in the form of images, sounds, and other forms, which represent an object and the signified as concepts or images that appear in a person's mind when the person captures a sign. By integrating the two disciplines to answer the research objectives, the findings of the research with the new concept are expected to be more comprehensive, complete, and useful for overcoming global problems.

### 3.4 Discussion

Research on visual language both conveyed through images and three-dimensional forms can actually be analyzed by using a linguistic approach. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), one of the leading experts in the field of semiotics, popularized a dyadic about signs. According to Saussure, signs can be divided into two parts: signifier and signified. A signifier is something that marks an object. For example, when someone says the word “elephant”, in our minds, it will appear an animal of large size that has a long proboscis, wide ears and a pair of pointed tusks. Likewise, when someone says the word “coffee”, we will imagine in our minds a glass filled with warm water that is brownish black with a distinctive aroma and delicious taste, or green grains when they are young and red if they are ripe which are used as raw materials to make coffee drink powder. The words “elephant” and “coffee” in the example above are signifiers or signs used to represent objects. Unlike signifiers, signified is a picture or concept that comes to mind when we catch a sign around us. For example, when someone hears the sound of a door opening by itself in the middle of the night while he is at home alone, that person may imagine scary things such as a stranger entering the house or there is a supernatural force moving

the door. Likewise, when a person sees an advertisement about a tourism object and he wants to go there, it may be that in his mind he imagines the fun activities he will do in the tourism object, such as swimming, enjoying good food and drinks, seeing beautiful scenery, and so on. Both the eerie and the pleasant images in the examples above are signified or concepts that come to the mind when we capture a sign.

If analyzed by using a dyadic about signs according to Saussure, the visual language on the front cover of a magazine also has signs that represent something and concepts that appear in the mind of the person who sees the cover of the magazine as a result of the signs attached to it. For example, we will find the front covers of automotive magazines displaying images of the latest vehicles at the time the magazines are published. Likewise, we will find the front covers of culinary magazines featuring images of delicious foods. It would be very rare or even possible that there are no front covers of automotive magazines that feature images of delicious food as the main object in the front covers and vice versa, the front covers of culinary magazines do not display images of the latest vehicles as the main object in the covers. This is because the front cover of a magazine is a signifier so that people who see the cover of the magazine can get a concept in their minds about the contents of the magazine. Meanwhile, the image or concept that emerges as a result of seeing the front cover of the magazine is signified. For example, when a woman sees the cover of a culinary magazine, it comes to her mind that she makes the same cake as that in the picture on the front cover of the magazine and she imagines her children enjoying the delicious taste of the cake or a man who imagines himself being able to repair his broken down vehicle after seeing the front cover of an electronic magazine. The cover of the magazine, which is made as beautiful as possible, brings out a beautiful picture and encourages people who see it to buy the magazine.

Charles Sanders Peirce (1939–1914), another well-known expert in the field of semiotics, explains that there are three ways signs represent objects. The three ways are through symbols, icons, and indexes. A symbol is an agreed sign to represent an object. The sign bears no resemblance to the actual object. For example, when we are in an area, we know that we must not park our vehicles there because there is a signpost with the letter “P” that is slashed in that area. Then when we are on the highway, we will stop when the traffic light is red because we know the vehicles from other directions are about to pass. Signposts with the letter “P” that are given slashes and red on traffic lights like the example above are symbols. Unlike a symbol, an icon is a sign that has a similarity with the object it represents. For example, in the WhatsApp application on our phones, there are various kinds of emojis that look similar to objects in the real world, such as emojis in the form of humans, animals, and vehicles. We can also see signs that resemble the original object in statues on the highway, such as the statues in the form of humans and the statues in the form of animals. Emojis on the WhatsApp application and statues that we can find on the highway in the example above are icons. The third is an index or sign that has a relationship or attachment to the object it represents. For example, a fingerprint is an identity attached to a person so that by using the fingerprint, the police can find the perpetrator of the crime. Then, smoke is a sign of fire because smoke will not exist without fire. The fingerprints and smoke in the example above are indexes.

If analyzed by using the way signs represent objects according to Peirce, the visual language in comics can be divided into several signs. The first sign is symbol. Texts in the comics can be symbols that represent objects in the real world through words. For example, if in a comic there are words that refer to types of animals such as tigers, cats, snakes, and others or types of motor vehicles such as cars and motorcycles, these words are signs that have been agreed to represent objects in the real world for types of animals and motor vehicles so that they can be categorized as symbols. Then, the second sign is the icon. The images in the comics can be icons that resemble the represented objects. For example, if in a comic there is a picture of a man or a woman with a similar appearance to the object it represents, the image is an icon. Likewise, when in the comics there are images of airplanes, ships, or other vehicles that look similar to objects in the world, the images are also icons. Then, the third is index. The lines contained in the comic can be indexes or signs that have a connection with the object it represents. For example, the lines that exist around a character in a comic when the character is depicted doing something, such as running and there are lines behind his back, are the signs of movements made by the character. Therefore, the lines in the example above are indexes.

In addition to the three ways in which signs represent objects initiated by Charles Sanders Peirce, in semiotics we also know the three levels of meaning initiated by Roland Barthes (1915–1980). The first level of the level of meaning is the denotative meaning or the meaning of dictionaries. While the second level of meaning is the connotative meaning or meaning that arises as a result of an individual's interpretation of an object so that the meaning of the object can be different when interpreted by the others. Meanwhile, the third level of meaning is a myth or assumption about an object that has been considered the truth even though its truth has not been proven to exist. For example, when we see a cigarette advertisement that features a handsome and burly man driving a motor vehicle while smoking, the denotation meaning of what is shown from the cigarette advertisement is that someone who is on a trip while smoking. However, when an individual sees the ad, the individual may interpret what he or she sees in the ad as interesting things to be imitated for some reasons. For example, if he smokes like the man in the advertisement, he will appear more manly and respectable. The meaning that arises as a result of the individual interpretation is what is meant by the connotative meaning. Later, when the assumption arises that smoking can make a man more manly and respectable among adolescents or a community as a result of the accumulation of similar individual interpretations and the meaning of connotations that were previously individually correct but are now considered to be generally correct, the meaning of the connotations that emerges from the advertisement of cigarettes has risen to the third level, that is, myth.

If analyzed by using the three levels of meaning according to Barthes, the visual language in skin whitening advertisements on social media can also be divided into three levels of meaning. For example, there is an advertisement about a beauty product that offers a lipstick. The ad shows a beautiful woman applying a lipstick in a room and then as the woman walks out of the room, the men who see her can't take their eyes away. The denotative meaning conveyed in the beauty product advertisement is a woman who makes up herself before going out of a room and because the woman is beautiful, the men who see her feel fascinated. Meanwhile, the connotative meaning



conveyed in the beauty product advertisement is that when a woman uses the lipstick in the advertisement, the woman will be able to attract the attention of men who see her or maybe also an individual interprets that using the lipstick in the beauty product advertisement can make her more beautiful and attractive. When the connotative meaning as a result of the interpretation of individuals who see the advertisement accumulates and is considered a truth, for example, the assumption arises that using the lipstick in the advertisement of beauty products will make a woman more classy because the price of the lipstick is so expensive that not everyone can afford it or the lipstick is considered to have a better quality than other lipsticks because of its more expensive price, the meaning of the connotation in the advertisement has risen to the third level of meaning, namely myth.

Based on the explanation presented above, we find that visual language can be analyzed through linguistic approaches, one of which is to use semiotic theories. The visual language in the front cover of magazine has signifier and signified elements that can be analyzed by using the dyadic sign popularized by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). Then, the visual language in the comics has elements of symbols, icons, and indexes that can be analyzed by using triadic signs by Charles Sanders Peirce (1939–1914). Furthermore, the visual language in the beauty advertisements on social media has the elements of denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings that can be analyzed by using the level of meaning by Roland Barthes (1915–1980). Although visual language can be studied by using linguistic point of view, not many researchers have raised topics involving the disciplines of Visual Communication Design and Linguistics. In fact, conducting research with a multidisciplinary approach provides many benefits. We will not be able to solve various problems in life using only one discipline. We need a variety of disciplines to solve complex problems at hand. In addition, using a multidisciplinary approach will broaden our horizons and allow us to discover new things that we have not encountered in the disciplines we are engaged in. Furthermore, through a multidisciplinary approach, we will be able to integrate knowledge from disciplines that have their own advantages so that we can become more empowered in overcoming global problems.

A thumbnail or front view of a video is an image that appears when a video has not been played. When we search for videos on YouTube, we will find the videos with unique thumbnails. Because we are curious about the image that appeared in one of the videos, we then play the video in the hope that we will get the information we want. After waiting for the ad on the video to end which takes mostly 5 s, we start watching the content of the video. Unfortunately after watching the video from beginning to the end, we feel disappointed that we do not get the expected information. Maybe some of us even play back the video in search of the information that we might have accidentally missed. Even so, we still don't get the information we are looking for because the information is not in the video we play. From the illustration above, we find that there is a mismatch between the signifier and the signified that is visually communicated through video thumbnails on YouTube. Researching visual language as the signifier and the signified in video thumbnails on YouTube involves the discipline of Visual Communication Design and the discipline of Linguistics which can support the implementation of multidisciplinary research. In addition to this research has not been carried out by other researchers, the

findings of this kind of studies can be important information for content creators about how the signifier and the signified should be communicated visually so as to increase the number of viewers and subscribers. Therefore, research on visual language as the signifier and the signified on YouTube video thumbnails needs to be carried out.

## 4 Conclusion and Suggestion

### 4.1 Conclusion

After conducting a review of studies discussing visual language, the researchers find that the studies have revealed visual language in various media, such as images, comics, books & magazines, videos & animations, logos/brands, posters & infographics, Batik motifs, packaging designs, and writings. However, studies on visual language have not revealed the visual language contained in the video thumbnails on YouTube. Then, the studies also only focus on studying visual language using one disciplinary approach. In fact, visual language not only can be analyzed by using the approach of the visual communication design discipline, but also can be analyzed by using the approach of linguistic disciplines, one of which is Semiotics. Thus, it is necessary to conduct research on visual language in the YouTube video thumbnails which are analyzed by using a multidisciplinary approach, including the approach of the disciplines of Visual Communication Design and Linguistics.

### 4.2 Suggestion

Research on visual language has not revealed how the language is used in the video thumbnails on YouTube. In addition, visual language can be analyzed by using the approach of the discipline of Visual Communication Design and the approach of the Linguistic discipline, one of which is Semiotics. Furthermore, most studies on visual language have so far only been analyzed by using one discipline, thus hindering the possibility of new findings that can bring benefits globally. Therefore, the researchers suggest that subsequent researchers investigate the visual language used in video and other media in order to further enrich the media in which the visual language has been studied. In addition, the researchers also suggest that the subsequent researchers use a multidisciplinary approach by integrating disciplines, such as Visual Communication Design and Linguistics or other disciplines so that the research findings can make readers more empowered in facing global problems that are increasingly complicated.

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