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## Graphic and Textual Elements of Selected Political Campaign Posters: A Stylistic Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

This study described and analyzed the selected political campaign posters using the stylistic approach. The sources of data are the 13 political campaign posters of the 13 competing candidates for councillors in one of the municipalities of Ilocos Norte, Philippines, during the 2019 National and Local Elections. The selection was based on accessibility and availability of the campaign posters which means that the posters were selected based on the case by which the posters were obtained and not by any political ideology or affiliation. The stylistic features of the political campaign posters were analyzed using adapted models from various researchers. The model is centered on describing and analyzing the graphic and textual elements used in the selected posters. The analysis was carried out in order to identify and discuss the stylistic features of the images and words in the selected political campaign posters. The study revealed that the political campaign posters are essential visual communication means that the political candidates use in canvassing for votes. Graphetically, the political campaign posters used varied colors, images, tools/figures that convey meanings. They are designed purposely to entice the electorates to vote for the candidates. Textually, the syntax is simple. At the lexical level, the campaign posters used descriptive and emotive words to make the texts more appealing. Semantically, most of the posters used clear language to ensure clarity of message. Overall, the political campaign posters have positive portrayals of the competing candidates.

### INTRODUCTION

Communication as a means transmission of ideas, thoughts or feelings can be categorized into two – the verbal and non-verbal communication. Considerably, non-verbal is commonly used for interaction and communication in human societies.

Interestingly, poster has been considered as one of the leading and most effective non-verbal means of communication in the society. Technically and artistically put, poster is a very essential form of visual communication since it conveys images and other important graphic and textual details with meaning lying behind it. Noticeably, political campaign posters are visible during elections because these are the most economical and easiest means of communication between the election candidates and the voters, especially if the former could not reach out the latter physically or personally.

As a voter, I also usually observe that during election campaigns, different political campaign posters with different styles are posted. These posters are specially designed with the intentions and purposes of the candidates to the public especially on persuading the electorates to vote for them. It is, therefore, worth to note that every political campaign poster is language. The power of posters in the political election campaigns is used by politicians to promote candidates and influence the audience's thoughts and opinions to consider their programs and reject those of their opponents. Aside from the candidate's background, I also consider other factors such as his/her poster because it offers a resemblance of the candidate's characteristics. Consequently, I became

interested in conducting this study since there are only limited studies focusing on political campaign posters' graphic and textual elements in the Philippines.

To carry out the analysis of the political campaign posters, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the graphic elements in the political campaign posters as to:

- 1.1. images;
- 1.2. colors used;
- 1.3. letters and punctuations; and
- 1.4. facial expressions?

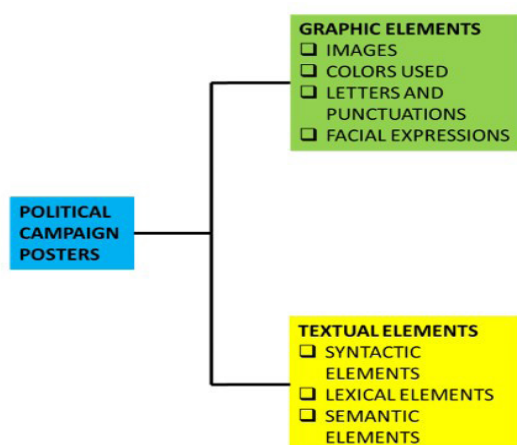
2. What are the textual elements in the political campaign posters as to:

- 1.1. syntactic elements;
- 1.2. lexical elements; and
- 1.3. semantic elements?

This study used a model adapted from the models of Crystal and Davy (1969), Gosling (1999) and Seidman (2008). The necessary elements of these three models have been selected and adapted to make them more suitable for the purpose and objective of the study, and its nature. Figure 1 illustrates how political campaign posters could be analyzed through the stylistic approach. Political campaign posters are specially designed to familiarize candidates and their ideologies to the electorates. Thus, politicians make sure that pictures or graphics in their posters are attractive and the texts are appealing and emotive. As the diagram shows, the selected campaign posters could be examined through their graphic and textual elements and how each of the elements functions in the posters. Thus, this study focused on analyzing

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**Figure 1.** Research Paradigm

stylistically the selected political campaign posters through their graphic and textual elements.

Significantly, this study is beneficial to political candidates since the results of the study could provide them information on the frequent graphic and textual elements used in political campaign posters for campaigning. This could guide them to carefully select the elements to be included in their campaign posters if they have plans to run for any political positions. Also, this study may also be of great help to the electorates to consider also the elements of the political campaign posters in choosing the candidates to vote since a candidate's poster may be a reflection of his/her personality and characteristics.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Political Campaign Posters

Sharndama and Mohammed (2013) define poster as a type of written monologue like (spoken or written) anecdote, proclamation, and testimonial which exemplify the modality distinction. Likewise, Sontag (1999) asserted that posters are commonly thought to convey and communicate messages having different themes, but some scholars go beyond this general function. He also indicated that the function of a poster is not merely to inform or command but to enforce or change the addressees' attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors by seducing, exhorting, educating, convincing, appealing them to do what the poster focuses on.

During election campaign periods all over the world, posters are cast-off to acquaint candidates to the electorates and induce them to vote for candidates. It is a custom in politics during election campaigns for politicians to cartel images with words in order to coax the electorates to accept their political ideologies, thereby winning their votes (Sharndama & Mohammed, 2013). In consonance, Janulienė and Cibulskiene (2014) stated that nowadays, election is a means of gaining and handling power especially in democratic countries. This requires adopting a political discourse in which politics is metaphorically viewed as a war and the opponent is considered an enemy who must be argued by certain political weapons among which is poster. The argument

entails using a language for giving information about the main issues which concern the public. The linguistic content of the poster (textual elements/slogans) is skillfully designed to persuade people to promote one's candidacy.

In election campaigns, political advertising take the form of campaign speeches, broadcast advertising, walkabouts, online media messages and campaign materials such as election posters, banners, flyers and fishtails. Despite the increase in the use of social media for election campaign, election banner is still an important form of political advertising to influence voters (Patruș, M. & Madalina, 2013). Likewise, election posters and banners convey the party's general campaign messages and allow the party to send unmediated messages directly to the voters (Russmann, 2012). Moreover, Dumitrescu (2009) claimed that the use of election posters during campaigns is costly but it is often seen as the only means to reach voters when access to media is restricted.

Sharndamma and Mohammmd (2013) posited that a poster consists of two important correlated elements. First is the pictorial/visual element that must be sticking enough to attract the passer's-by attention to what is intended to be promoted. Second is the verbal message which is used to follow up and support the visual theme.

Gosling (1999) and Seidman (2008) also distinguished between two groups of elements: textual and graphic. The textual elements (ideograms) include the verbal aspects consisting of one or more words which are sometimes integrated with numbers referring to specific dates or things. On the other hand, the graphic elements (ideographs) are the visual aspects represented in the considerable and professional use of significant colors, symbols, pictures or illustrations. Relatedly, by studying election posters, one can better understand how propaganda has been used to influence public opinion and how messages are designed for audiences (Seidman, 2008).

Based on these literatures, the graphic and textual elements of political posters could have an effect to the electorates in choosing the candidates they vote. Considerably, in the Philippines, there are only limited studies which endeavored to explore the graphic and textual elements of political campaign posters in the lens of stylistic analysis. Thus, this prompted me to conduct this study.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used the descriptive research design which described and analyzed the selected political campaign posters in terms of their graphic and textual elements. The sources of data are the 13 political campaign posters of the 13 competing candidates for councillors in one of the municipalities of Ilocos Norte, Philippines. The selection was based on the accessibility and availability of the campaign posters. This means that the posters were selected based on the case by which the posters were obtained and not by any political ideology or affiliation.

The stylistic features of the political campaign posters were analyzed using the adapted model based on the models of Crystal and Davy (1969), Gosling (1999) and Seidman (2008). The model is centered on describing and analyzing the graphic and textual elements used in the selected posters. The analysis was carried out in order to classify and discuss the stylistic features of the images and words in the selected political campaign posters.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Analysis of the Political Campaign Posters

This study endeavored to determine the graphic and textual elements of the selected political campaign

posters. Analyses and interpretations were based on my perspective inspired by stylistic analysis.

### Graphic Elements

Graphetically, campaign posters are in different sizes and shapes. They are beautifully and artistically designed to attract the attention of the electorates or any passers-by. The graphic elements of these campaign posters convey meanings that could influence the people's ideas and opinions. Likewise, every detail that is put in the poster can be noticed by voters which can persuade them to vote the candidates or not. The discussion in this section focuses on the analysis of the selected campaign posters based on their graphic elements. Table 1 shows

**Table 1:** Graphic elements of the selected political campaign posters

Elements	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Images</b>		
Use of candidate's image	13	100.00
Use of tools/figures	8	61.54
Use of logo	2	15.38
<b>Colors</b>		
Use of patriotic colors	6	46.15
Use of colors with gender implications	1	7.69
Use of colors symbolizing democratic and republic parties	1	7.69
<b>Letters and Punctuations</b>		
Capitalization	13	100.00
Punctuation	13	100.00
<b>Facial Expressions</b>		
Gaze directed to the audience	13	100.00
Gaze not directed to the audience	0	0

the graphic elements of the selected election campaign posters.

It could be gleaned from the table that all (100%) included the candidates' photographs in their political campaign posters. A candidate's image is the main tool of winning the votes of the electorates. Putting the image of the candidate in his/her poster is one way of making him/her be recognized more easily by the public. Since all of the candidates aspire to win, their images become the main element of their campaign posters. Their images could create impact to the public which could be a source of reactions of people. It can also be gleaned from the same table that 8 (61.54%) of the posters show tools/figures. These posters manifest tools/figures such as the Philippine flag, rays of the sun and smiley. In one of the posters, the Philippine flag was included to show the candidate's deep loyalty to his country. At the same time, it is an attempt to invest the loyalty of the voters to the Philippines. Using the Philippine flag as a background in this poster could attract the voters that the candidate shows care for his country and his fellow countrymen. On the other hand, one poster used the image of the sun's rays as a background. The poster presents a sun which emanates rays in all directions. The rays represent inspiration and hope. Thus, this object could be a powerful tool, too, to attract the electorate. The figure implies that the candidate can be the hope of the people and that he is of big help in creating a progressive community. Interestingly, one of the posters included. The smiley

which manifests "okay" was used since its sounds like the candidate's nickname "OKA." The presence of the said smiley may add an emotional appeal to the poster. The poster also implies that the candidate is okay to vote and that he is okay to serve the people. It can also be noted from the same table that 6 (46.15%) of the posters show patriotic colors. One of the distinctive features of these posters is the presence of the colors of the Philippine flag. In one poster, it included only the colors reflective of the Philippine flag (blue, red, yellow and white). These colors were used to symbolize the Philippines as a whole by reflecting a patriotic edge influencing Filipinos' minds and feelings. It can also be noticed that the candidate's t-shirt is white. The candidate's choice of wearing white t-shirt may have a great influence to the electorates. White symbolizes purity, thus, this may imply that the candidate has a clean and pure heart in serving the people and his country. Another poster used only the colors of the Philippine flag which are reflected in his clothing. Wearing a shirt with a combination of blue and red, indicates that the candidate shows dignity and love for his country. Interestingly, it is manifested in the table that only 1 (7.69%) of the posters manifests gender implications. One poster's dominant color is pink. The choice of this color can be attributed to the candidate's gender. Since, she is the only female candidate, it may be an effective strategy to use a feminine color which is not reflected in the other 12 posters which present male candidates. Thus, the choice of that color could make her more recognizable



than the others aside from being the only female candidate. Likewise, the poster attempts to empower women, thus, the candidate wants to show that women can have the power to be great leaders in the society. Considerably, 1 (7.69%) of the campaign posters used colors symbolizing democratic and republic parties. In this poster, the colors of a certain party or group were used. This shows that the candidate used the colors of the group he is affiliated to. This strategy can be effective since a political group may have a great impact on persuading the voters to vote for the candidate. From the same table, it can be noted that all the posters used capitalization and punctuation. Capitalization is evident in the names of the candidates. This was used for emphasis and to make the names be remembered by the voters, especially if they are not well-known yet in a particular community. The last name of the candidates is commonly emphasized since their last name appears first in the ballot.

It is also interesting to note that the use of punctuations is also visible in all the posters. Punctuation marks like exclamation point, comma and quotation marks were used. Exclamation points are used in expressions and statements to persuade the voters like “Ilayontayo!” and “Ibotostayo!!!” which both mean “vote!” Meanwhile, quotation marks were used to quote the candidates’ nicknames. Some politicians include their nicknames in their posters because they are popularly known with these nicknames especially so if the voters are not familiar with their given names. It is also manifested in the table that all (100%) posters used the candidates’ photographs which gaze is directed to the viewers. The candidates’ expressions reflect positivity. This implies that they are optimistic in carrying out their responsibilities as leaders in the society. Also, most of the candidates’ photographs are friendly and approachable. During election campaigns, candidates show friendly and approachable personality. This is one way of enticing the electorates just to win their votes.

### Textual Elements

This section sheds light on the way the linguistic elements are used in the candidates’ campaign. This part of the stylistic analysis involves- an analysis of textual choices which encompass syntactic, lexical and semantic features.

### Syntactic Elements

The word syntax describes the grammatical relations that exist between words and other units within the sentence. Syntax looks at how words are combined to form larger grammatical units such as phrases and clauses. The study of the texts in the posters reveals that campaign slogans accompanying campaign posters are embodiments of the candidates’ political mission or ideologies. It can be deduced from Table 2 that all the slogans are in phrasal forms. This can be attributed to the limited space of the posters and the insufficient time to read the slogans if they are lengthy. Likewise, campaign posters are put in public places and that people do not engage too much time reading what are written in them. Therefore, the use of phrases can be more effective. Typical examples are the following:

“NAPUDNO NG A AGSERBI!”	(SERVES GENUINELY!)
“NASAYAAAT, NAANUS	(KIND, PATIENT)
BARO A RUPA,	(NEW FACE,)
BARO A NAMNAMA,	(NEW HOPE,)
SANGGIR DAGITI UMILI”	(ONE WHO CAN LEAN ON)
“Mannakikadwa	(Friendly)
Iti siasinoman	(To anybody)
Kabinnulig ken	(A big hel and)
Ebemplo ti kaadwan”	(A good example to many)

The given examples are emotive words that appeal to the emotion of the electorates. This is one of the ways in which the language of politics is similar to the language of advertisement and propaganda. Just in the way advertisers select language carefully to convince the people to go in for their products, the politicians carefully select and structure their campaign slogans to persuade and convince the electorates buy their ideologies and campaign missions, thus, they prefer to use catchy and striking phrases rather than lengthy sentences. Moreover, short powerful phrases are easier to remember, therefore, they have better and greater impact to the electorates. Therefore, the analysis

**Table 2:** Graphic elements of the selected political campaign posters

Elements	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Syntactic</b>		
Phrasal	13	100.00
Full Sentence	8	0
<b>Lexical</b>		
Use of descriptive and emotive words	13	100.00
Repetition	1	7.69
Parallelism	1	7.69
<b>Semantic</b>		
Clear	11	84.62
Connotative	2	13.82

carried out on the syntactic features has uncovered that the syntax of political campaign slogans are generally simple. There is no instance of complex clauses noted. This implies that the slogans are intentionally made short, concise or precise so that the electorates can easily understand, memorize or retain them at a glance unlike in reading lengthy sentences. The concise nature of the syntax also enables the electorates to easily analyze the sensitive ideologies and campaign missions of the candidates with ease.

### Lexical Elements

Lexis in linguistics refers to the entire vocabulary of a given language. In stylistic analysis, how the words are selected from the language user’s linguistic repertoire to meet communication ends is the major concern. The lexis of political language generally are subject specific and abstract nouns are quite common since decisions are often theoretical even though they may be directly linked

to a proposed plan of action (Thorne, 1997).

The analysis of the texts in the posters reveals that the posters' slogans are descriptive and emotive as shown in Table 2. All of them are presented in metaphors which embody the political mission of the candidates. They are carefully and sensibly selected to entice the electorates abandon their opinion and hold on to the candidate's.

The word "Boses" (Voice) in one of the posters, is a single but powerful and striking metaphor. It carries the main aim of doing political campaign, since the aim of every political campaign is to influence the opinions of the electorates and the public, make them accept the ideas and thoughts of the candidate and invalidate the ideologies of other candidates. If these happen, the candidate wins the votes of the electorates. Since the candidate is the only woman, she wants to be the voice of women as stated in her poster "Boses dagiti BABBAI" (Voice of WOMEN) and that she aspires to empower women. Electorates vote for candidates who can defend other people. By using the word "booses" (voice), it is hoped that the candidate can take actions that can empower the rights of women in the society. The slogan "Nasubuken ti kabaellanna" (His capability has already been tested) in one poster is also strong and powerful. By using the word "nasubuken" (tested), the electorates may be enticed to vote the candidate. This word obviously presents a candidate who is already tested through his good performance and accomplishments in the public service. The word is likely to remind the electorates that the candidate has already done great things and that he will continue doing such, thus, this may convince the electorates to vote for him. Based on the overall analysis in the posters, the slogans used everyday words but are descriptive, emotive and metaphorical. Interestingly, 1 (7.69%) of the posters shows repetition. In one poster, the word "baro" (new) is repeated to emphasize that the candidate is a newbie in the world of politics. Sometimes, the electorates prefer a new face, hoping that he/she can make a change in the society. With the use of the word "baro" (new) electorates may be enticed to vote for this candidate, especially if the past and present politicians do not perform well or do not satisfy the public. It can be noted in the table that 1 (7.69%) of the poster employed parallelism. Parallelism in one of the posters was used "BARO A RUPA, (NEW FACE,) BARO A NAMNAMA," (NEW HOPE,) to present descriptions about the candidate as reflected below:

The phrases above are parallel in structure. They are both adjective phrases. The use of this parallelism made the slogan compelling and rhythmic, thus, added appeal to the totality of the campaign posters' slogan.

#### Semantic Elements

The last aspect of the textual analysis is the semantic analysis which took account of clear versus connotative meanings in messages on the political campaign posters. It can be noted from the table that 11 (%) of the political posters used clear words. This means that the candidates

do not want to confuse the electorates and that they just want them to easily grasp the message conveyed in their political posters. The clear messages of the political posters directed the voters to vote for the candidates. To ensure that the meaning is captured by the voters, the candidates chose to have clear messages on the political posters. On the other hand, 2 (13.82%) of the political posters show words that have connotative meanings. Political campaign posters convey meaning beyond the conceptual and denotation level. Connotation in political context refers to feelings, attitudes, moods, implied by a term or phrase employed by political candidates to help them achieve their goals. There lies behind the literal meaning, implied value judgment or feeling which the political candidates hope to be considered. The words "booses" (voice) in one poster and "sanggir" (one can lean on) in another poster are examples of connotations. "Boses" was used to convey that the candidate is capable of defending other people especially the women. Thus, this could motivate and entice the electorates to vote for the candidate. In another perspective, the word "sanggir" does not convey its literal meaning. The word is used to show that the candidate is someone who can lean on. The association of the word "sanggir" to the candidate implies that he is capable of helping other people. Presenting the slogan that way made it more appealing and convincing. Therefore, this could help win the votes of the voters.

Overall, in terms of the graphic and textual elements of all the campaign posters, the candidates are portrayed positively. This is expected since the goal of the candidates is to win the votes of the electorates. Thus, they are like products that the voters need to buy so they can gain their votes. This finding corroborates the study of Lirola (2015) which revealed that politicians are represented in a consistently positive way, with status and formal appearance so that people are persuaded to vote for the party they represent because they trust them as political leaders. The study, thus, pointed out that posters are a powerful tool used in election campaigns to highlight the power of political parties.

#### CONCLUSION

Political candidates, with their purpose of winning, carefully select every detail that is put in their campaign posters because every single aspect has an impact to the public, especially to the voters. With the analysis made in this study, it can be concluded that the political campaign posters included varied graphic and textual elements. The study revealed that the political campaign posters are essential visual communication means that the political candidates use in canvassing for votes. Graphetically, the political campaign posters used varied colors, images, tools/figure that are based on their gender, political affiliation and personal characteristics. They are designed purposely to entice the electorates to vote for the candidates. Textually, the syntax is simple. The simplicity of the syntax makes it possible for the majority of the literate audience to read and interpret the slogans. At

the lexical level, the campaign posters used descriptive and emotive words to make the texts more appealing. Semantically, most of the posters used clear language to ensure clarity of message. Overall, the political campaign posters portrayed all the candidates positively. It can be, therefore, deduced from the analysis carried out on the different linguistic components that campaign posters are very important means of communicating to the electorates.

With the scope and limitations of the study, several recommendations are offered for future investigation. To add to the findings deduced from a stylistic analysis of political campaign posters, a survey on voters' reactions and perceptions about the elements need to be studied to determine the effects of the campaign posters on their voting patterns and preferences. Likewise, a large collection of campaign posters should be developed to have greater generalizability and validity on studying the textual elements of political campaign posters. Moreover, a comparative analysis of campaign posters from different contexts can be studied to explore how do they compare or vary. Lastly, other researchers are encouraged to conduct related studies, exploring other elements of political campaign posters like propaganda techniques and genre moves.

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