The Depiction of Putin's Power and Dominance in Political Cartoons about Russia-Ukraine War

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Abstract

Purpose
This study aimed to investigate the depiction of Vladimir Putin's Power and Dominance in political cartoons collected from usnews.com, and identified the social contexts underlying the creation of those political cartoons.

Method
This research used qualitative methods which engaged in discovering and uncovering the meaning of a particular phenomenon. The sample data was three political cartoons related to the Russia-Ukraine War taken from usnews.com. It employed Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) approach of Visual Grammar from Kress & Leeuwen (2006) to examine the visual mode, and Systemic Functional Grammar theory from Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) to analyze the verbal modes.

Results/findings
The findings showed that Vladimir Putin in political cartoons was represented as a negative powerful figure through the dominant use of the narrative process. Whilst the images of Putin as a ruthless and dictator figure were revealed in the verbal modes through the use of material, relational, and mental process. Each political cartoon's social context connects the visual and verbal modes while providing clearer information about the reason for cartoonists created these political cartoons. The partiality of the American cartoonists to the United States and Western countries also revealed through the political cartoons that worked as a medium to convey the cartoonists' thoughts, showing that they fought against the invasion.

Conclusion
Through visual and verbal analysis, the cartoonist constructed a negative portrayal of Vladimir Putin as a dictatorial leader. However, this study has limitations in its scope since it does not deeply address potential variations in viewer or audience's interpretation based on individual backgrounds and experiences. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to expand upon this study by exploring the production and consumption of similar texts, which may offer diverse or multiple perspectives on the subject.

Keywords
Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), Political cartoons, Russia-Ukraine War, Systemic Functional Grammar, Visual Grammar

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Abstrak

Tujuan
Penelitian ini membahas gambaran tentang Vladimir Putin sebagai pemimpin yang berkuasa dan dominan dalam kartun politik usnews.com, serta mengidentifikasi konteks sosial yang mendasari pembuatan kartun politik tersebut.

Metode
Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan mengungkap makna dari suatu peristiwa. Data penelitian berupa kartun politik tentang perang Russia-Ukraina yang diambil dari usnews.com. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan Analisis Wacana Multimodal (MDA) dengan teori Gramatika Visual dari Kress & Leeuwen (2006) untuk mengkaji mode visual, serta teori Gramatika Fungsional Sistemik Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) untuk mengkaji mode verbal.

Hasil/temuan
Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Vladimir Putin direpresentasikan secara negatif sebagai sosok yang berkuasa melalui penggunaan proses naratif yang dominan dalam kartun politik. Sementara itu, citra Putin sebagai sosok yang kejam dan diktator ditunjukkan dengan mode verbal melalui penggunaan proses material, relasional, dan mental. Konteks sosial dari masing-masing kartun politik menghubungkan modus visual dan verbal sekaligus memberikan informasi yang lebih jelas mengenai alasan kartunis membuat kartun politik tersebut. Keberpihakan kartunis Amerika terhadap Amerika Serikat dan negara-negara Barat juga terungkap melalui kartun politik yang berfungsi sebagai media untuk menyampaikan pemikiran kartunis yang menentang invasi.

Kesimpulan
Melalui proses analisis visual dan verbal, kartunis membangun citra negatif Vladimir Putin sebagasosok yang kejam dan diktator. Namun demikian, penelitian ini memiliki keterbatasan dalam cakupannya karena tidak secara mendalam membahas variasi potensi dalam interpretasi konsumen teks berdasarkan latar belakang dan pengalaman individu. Oleh karena itu, peneliti selanjutnya disarankan untuk memperluas studi ini dengan mengeksplorasi produksi dan konsumsi teks serupa, sehingga dapat memberikan perspektif yang beragam pada objek penelitian.

Kata kunci
Analisis Wacana Multimodal;Gramatika Fungsional Sistemik, Gramatika Visual; Kartun politik; Perang Russia-Ukraina; Gramatika Fungsional Sistemik, Gramatika Visual.

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الملخص

الهدف
تدرس هذه الدراسة تصوير فلاديمير بوتن كزعيم قوي ومسيطر في الرسوم الكاريكاتورية السياسية التي ينشرها موقع usnews.com، وتحدد السياق الاجتماعي الكامن وراء إنشاء هذه الرسوم الكاريكاتورية السياسية.

الطريقة
يعتمد هذا البحث على المنهج الكيفي الذي يهدف إلى معرفة معنى حدث ما والكشف عنه. وتأتي بيانات البحث في شكل رسوم كاريكاتورية سياسية حول الحرب بين روسيا وأوكرانيا مأخوذة من موقع usnews.com. تستخدم هذه الدراسة نهج تحليل الخطاب المتعدد الوسائط **(MDA)** مع نظرية القواعد النحوية البصرية لكريس وليوين (2006) لدراسة الوضع البصري، بالإضافة إلى نظرية القواعد النحوية الوظيفية النظامية لهاليداي وماثيسن (2014) لدراسة الوضع اللفظي.

النتائج
وتظهر نتائج هذه الدراسة أن فلاديمير بوتن يتم تصويره بشكل سلبي كشخصية قوية من خلال استخدام العمليات السردية السائدة في الرسوم الكاريكاتورية السياسية. وفي الوقت نفسه، يتم عرض صورة بوتن كشخصية قاسية وديكتاتورية في النمط اللفظي من خلال استخدام العمليات المادية والعلائقية والعقلية. يربط السياق الاجتماعي لكل رسم كاريكاتوري سياسي بين الأنماط البصرية واللفظية مع توفير معلومات أكثر وضوحًا حول أسباب رسام الكاريكاتير لإنشاء الكاريكاتير السياسي. كما تم الكشف عن تحيز رسامي الكاريكاتير الأمريكيين تجاه الولايات المتحدة والدول الغربية من خلال الرسوم الكاريكاتورية السياسية التي كانت بمثابة وسيلة لنقل أفكار رسامي الكاريكاتير الذين عارضوا الغزو.

الخلاصة
ومن خلال عملية التحليل البصري واللفظي، يبني رسام الكاريكاتير صورة سلبية لفلاديمير بوتن باعتباره شخصية قاسية وديكتاتورية. ومع ذلك، فإن نطاق هذه الدراسة محدود لأنها لا تناقش بعمق الاختلافات المحتملة في تفسير المستهلكين للنصوص على أساس الخلفية والتجارب الفردية. لذلك، يُنصح الباحثون بتوسيع هذه الدراسة من خلال استكشاف إنتاج واستهلاك نصوص مماثلة، من أجل توفير وجهات نظر متنوعة حول موضوع البحث.

الكلمات الرئيسية
تحليل الخطاب المتعدد الوسائط؛ القواعد الوظيفية النظامية، القواعد البصرية؛ الرسوم الكاريكاتورية السياسية؛ الحرب الروسية الأوكرانية؛ القواعد الوظيفية النظامية، القواعد البصرية

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INTRODUCTION

The war that occurred between Ukraine and Russia has garnered significant global attention in early 2022. Russia's decision to attack Ukraine on 24th February 2022, was widely criticized as a blatant violation of international law. Varaki (2022) stated that Russia has violated the *jus ad bellum* regime, the principle governing when states may resort to war or the use of armed force. Political cartoons emerged as a medium for responding to this incident, with American cartoonists, such as Michael Ramirez, Drew Sheneman, and David Horsey creating satirical works.

The emergence of the political cartoons during wartime represents a form of unarmed resistance that can influence state officials and the wider community. Vladimir Kazanevskys, a Ukrainian political cartoonist who also addressed the invasion, stated that political cartoons were active weapons feared by authoritarian rulers (Cavna, 2022). An American cartoonist, Nick Anderson, emphasized the role of his political cartoons in drawing attention to major global events, such as the war in Ukraine. This is important to him as he wants to use his cartoons to bring attention to the Ukrainian crisis, feeling that Ukraine symbolizes Western democratic principles against totalitarianism. (Mucchetti, 2022). Anderson's aim is to shed light on the Ukrainian crisis, which he sees as a symbol of Western democratic principles confronting totalitarianism (Mucchetti, 2022). Given the prominent presence of Vladimir Putin in these cartoons and the ongoing complex political relationship between the United States and Russia, this research seeks to explore how American cartoonists depict Vladimir Putin in their political cartoons related to the Russia-Ukraine war, aiming to uncover potential biases and symbolisms.

Political cartoons are a unique medium with two essential modes: visual and verbal. Therefore, this study employs multimodal discourse analysis to unravel the hidden meanings conveyed in political cartoons by examining both the visual and verbal elements. Multimodal discourse analysis is a critical approach that highlights the significance of combining visual images and verbal discourse concepts (El-Falaky, 2019). This analysis utilized Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's theory of visual grammar, which originates from the systemic functional grammar theory by M.A.K Halliday. In visual grammar theory, Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006) have three components of multimodality, representational, interactive, and compositional meaning components. These three components of multimodality are correlated to three meta-function in systemic functional grammar by Halliday, ideational, interpersonal, and textual (El-Falaky, 2019).

Previous research on similar topics has been conducted. Hussein (2019) explored political cartoons related to the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital by Donald Trump, emphasizing the need to interpret three aspects of meaning to grasp their intended message. Wardini (2020) analyzed visual and verbal signs in political cartoons presenting Donald Trump, by employing Roland Barthes's denotation and connotation theory and Kress & van Leeuwen's visual grammar. These studies revealed two main types of political cartoon depictions: visual and verbal depictions. In the Russia-Ukraine conflict, some prior research has been conducted by Zhabotynska & Ryzhova (2022), and Semotiuk (2019), who found that each individual text involved interactions of visual and verbal modes and contained the discursive aspects of the conflict. However, these previous studies have left certain aspects unexplored. They did not analyze the verbal mode using Systemic Functional Grammar (SFL) from Halliday & Matthiessen that will make this research more comprehensive.

Conceptually, Kress and Van Leeuwen's multimodality framework focuses on social semiotics, a concept centered on the meaning-making process (Oechsler & Borba, 2020). Social semiotics perceives multimodality from a perspective where all semiotic resources, not just language, hold importance (Sommer, 2021). Previous research has not effectively illuminated the linguistic function of existing verbal modes. Hence, this current research aims to provide a more comprehensive analysis of visual and verbal modes in political cartoons, incorporating the Systemic Functional Grammar theory by Halliday and Mat-

thiessen (2014).

The primary focus of the current research is the images of Vladimir Putin depicted in the political cartoons about Russia-Ukraine war. The data are the compilation of political cartoons made by American cartoonists collected from usnews.com. This research seeks to explore how Vladimir Putin is visually and verbally represented in the political cartoons. The visual analysis is guided by the theory of Visual Grammar of Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006) to analyze the visual mode, and the Systemic Functional Grammar theory by Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) to analyze the verbal mode. The study aims to investigate how the political cartoons visually depict Vladimir Putin, and what the social contexts underlying the creation of political cartoons related to the Russia-Ukraine war.

METHOD

This research employs qualitative methods with a multimodal discourse analysis approach. Qualitative research is a method that seeks to discover and unveil the meaning of a particular phenomenon by analyzing data collected from various sources, including citations, transcripts, observations, field notes, and document excerpts such as newspaper articles and images (Given, 2008). The data for this study was obtained by accessing usnews.com and downloading political cartoons related to the Russia-Ukraine War that had already been compiled. Specifically, political cartoons featuring Vladimir Putin and encompassing both visual images and verbal text were selected as the primary dataset. To analyze the data, both the visual and verbal modes within the political cartoons were examined. Visual modes were analyzed using Kress & van Leeuwen's visual grammar theory (2006), while verbal data was analyzed using Halliday & Matthiessen's systemic functional grammar theory (2014). Lastly, this research also explains the social context of each political cartoon and linked to the components within these political cartoons.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Political cartoons featuring Vladimir Putin alone

Figure 1. Political cartoons made by David Horsey published on February 18th 2022.

This political cartoon, created by David Horsey for The Seattle Times on February 18th, 2022, conveys a powerful message through its visual and verbal components. In the visual mode, the central male figure, believed as Vladimir Putin as the main participant. He is depicted holding a single black chess piece, set upon a chessboard filled with black chess pieces, except for one that bears the name "Ukraine" that is white. Vladimir Putin gazes directly ahead, meeting the viewer's gaze. The background color is neutral, with black accents surrounding the central participant. The verbal mode in this cartoon takes the form of a speech bubble emerging from Vladimir Putin's character. The text reads,

Why is everyone so upset? It's just a game to me.

Visual Mode Analysis

Representational Meaning Process

The first figure gives its strong message through both narrative representation and conceptual representation. The narrative representation conveys the relationship between the main participant and the surrounding elements with the viewer. Whilst, the conceptual representation showed a meaning through symbolic process.

One indicator of the narrative representation is the use of vector (compositional elements that show the directionality), and the use of speech bubble, which according to Kress & van Leeuwen, is a sign of the speech process. The speech process signifies that the represented participant is engaged in dialogue. This speech is referred to as a "dialogue bubble," as it lacks inner mental feelings or a verb showing emotions. In this context, Vladimir Putin, portrayed as the main participant, is attempting to convey a statement as a dialogue, as if he demanded a response from the viewers to build social interaction

In addition, the conceptual process in Figure 1. centers on Vladimir Putin as the primary represented participant. This figure specifically highlights one type of sub-process within the conceptual process, known as the symbolic process. This process is depicted as Putin's hand lifting one of the black chess pieces. Notably, only the black piece is shown, emphasizing the symbolic nature of this process. The symbolic process is concerned with the meaning attributed to the participant and their identity. Here, Putin, holding a black chess piece, symbolizes his role as the President of Russia, asserting control over his nation and positioning himself on the "black side" in opposition to Ukraine, represented as the "white side."

This figure features other participants as circumstances. These circumstances include the chess pieces, notably the white "Ukraine" chess piece. This aspect is referred to as "Accompaniment," as the chess pieces do not share a direct vectoral relationship with the main participant's body or gaze (Hussein, 2019). Based on the circumstances, the cartoonist depicts Ukraine's position in the war against Russia through a chessboard dominated by black pieces. It is shown that the white chess piece is only one left with the black chess pieces surrounding it. This demonstrates that Russia's game has cornered Ukraine, since the process demonstrates Putin controls the black pieces and how Ukraine is on the verge of defeat against Russia. Based on these circumstances, the cartoonist portrays Ukraine's position in the conflict against Russia through a chessboard dominated by black pieces. The visual representation suggests that the white chess piece is the sole remaining piece surrounded by black chess pieces, symbolizing Ukraine's precarious position in the face of Russia's aggression.

Interactive Meaning

The interactive meaning of this figure is realized through the represented participant's gaze, close-up shot, and the choice of angle in presenting the participants. The participant establishes a connection with the viewer by creating an eyeline directed toward the viewer, fulfilling the act of demand. Vladimir Putin, as the represented participant, is attempting to convey a specific message through his gaze. The gray and black background stresses Putin and entices viewers to engage with the participant's gaze and speculate about its meaning. This generates a strong sense of empathy or identification with the participant (Yang & Zhang, 2014). This figure employs a close-up shot, clear in how the represented participant is only shown from the face to the shoulders. Close-ups signify intimacy and aim to reveal the facial expressions of the participants (Ali, 2021).

Here, the facial expressions of the represented participant comprise a cold stare in his eyes. According to Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), the cold stare may be perceived as a

way for the represented participant to invite the viewer to relate to them. In this context, Vladimir Putin, as the represented participant, wants the viewer to relate to his position of not understanding why everyone is angry with him, despite the reality being the opposite. The cold stare conveys the idea that the participant pretends not to know the cause of everyone's anger.

The angle of this figure is a horizontal frontal angle, with the participant depicted facing forward and maintaining a direct gaze toward the reader, signifying that the participant is communicating with the reader. The message in this figure is directed at the reader, especially Ukraine, Joe Biden, and European leaders. Russia's government has posed several threats to Ukraine, ranging from cyber-attacks to Russian warships in the Red Sea (Horsey, 2022). Joe Biden and European leaders aim to ascertain the date of Russia's invasion of Ukraine to prevent war (Roth, 2022). However, their efforts have been met with mockery from the Kremlin—the Russian Federation's government. The mockery highlights how the Russian government underestimates Joe Biden and European leaders concerning the impending war. Considering the modality of the political cartoon, the cartoonist emphasizes that the political cartoon is based on their opinion. Modality measures realism in the visual image.

Compositional Meaning

In terms of compositional meaning, the centered type of information value is used because Figure 1. features one element placed in the center. The main represented participant holds the salience in this figure, as it receives the greatest amount of light and its size makes it easily noticeable. This figure illustrates that both the visual and verbal elements are integrated within the same frame, ensuring that both convey the same meaning. The visual mode of this figure conveys information related to Vladimir Putin's identity as a dominant figure, more so than Ukraine, and as someone who displays arrogance towards Joe Biden and European leaders.

Verbal Mode Analysis

Table 1. Meta-functional assessment of first verbal mode in Figure. 1

Meta-functional Meaning	*Why*	*Is*	*everyone*	*so upset?*
Textual	Theme	Rheme		
Inter-personal	Adjunct/WH- Residue	Finite Mood	Subject	Predicator
Ideational		Process: Relational Attributive	Carrier	Attribute

Regarding the textual function (the verbal mode), this figure features a speech bubble dialogue from Vladimir Putin, who says, "Why is everyone so upset? It's just a game to me." In the first clause of this figure, the textual metafunction divides the clause into two parts: the Theme and the Rheme. In this sentence, "Why" serves as the Theme, signifying the initial focal point of the message and indicating the speaker's intention, which is to inquire about the reason behind a particular event. The Rheme of this clause constitutes the remaining part of the clause: "is everyone so upset." The Rheme serves as supplementary information related to what the participant is concerned about.

In terms of the interpersonal function, this sentence uses the structure of the interrogative mood with the Finite preceding the Subject. The Finite in this clause is represented by the lexical verb "is," indicating a present-time reference to current events. Using the interrogative mood implies that the represented participant is implicitly seeking information from others, as the word "everyone" is not specifying to whom the message is directed. Here, the Predicator defines the active voice of the clause and the Process for the

ideational metafunction. In this clause, the WH-element is conflated with an Adjunct. WH-elements can be conflated into Subjects, Complements, or Adjuncts. Here, the WH-element is conflated with an Adjunct due to the interrogative structure of Finite preceding the Subject. The answer to this interrogative clause provides additional information, specifically the reason why "everyone is so upset." From the perspective of the visual mode analysis, the interrogative mood in this clause serves as a form of mockery, where the speaker pretends not to know the reason for everyone's anger, even though the speaker is well aware of it.

The ideational metafunction is realized through experiential meaning, revealing the relationships within the clause. An analysis of the text from the perspective of experiential meaning involves examining the choices in the grammatical systems of transitivity. In this clause, there are three elements: two participants and one process. As shown in the table above, the structure of the first clause in this figure involves a relational process. The verb "is" acts as a sign indicating a relational process, specifically an attribute type of relational process, where "so upset" is attributed to "everyone," who functions as the Carrier of the attribution. The word "everyone" emphasizes that the game involves all parties paying attention to the process of this game and supporting the White's side. This suggests that "everyone" refers to the global condemnation of Vladimir Putin's decision to attack Ukraine. The submodifier "so" modifies the nominal group rather than the verbal group, acting as an adverb that provides additional information regarding upset attributed to the process. However, the speaker does not offer further information about what or who is causing this upset. This suggests that the speaker is attempting to convey sarcasm and create the impression that European leaders and Biden are upset without a valid reason.

Table 2. Metafunctional assessment of second verbal mode in Figure. 1

Metafunctional Meaning	*It*	*is*	*just a game*	*to me*
Textual	Theme	Rheme		
Inter-personal	Subject	Finite	Complement	Adjunct
	Mood		Residue	
Ideational	Carrier	Process: Relational Attributive	Attribute	Circumstance: Angle

Further, according to the table above, this sentence is divided into two parts, namely Theme and Rheme. This clause conveys a message related to an unspecified event, represented by the pronoun "It." Consequently, "It" serves as the Theme, signifying the initial point of reference in the text. In contrast, "is just a game to me" constitutes the Rheme of this clause, supplying supplementary information regarding the Theme. The use of the abstract pronoun "it" in this clause indicates the cartoonist's intent to convey a concept that is commonly understood between the participant and the viewer, specifically the threats posed by Russia toward Ukraine. By employing the pronoun "it," the cartoonist assumes that the viewers are familiar with the context being referred to.

In terms of the interpersonal metafunction, the structure of this sentence adopts a declarative mood, with the Subject preceding the Finite structure. The pronoun "it" functions as the Subject, while "is" serves as both the Finite and the Predicator, signaling that the conveyed message pertains to current events. Similar to the first clause, the structure of the second clause in Figure 1. features a relational attributive process. However, the second clause introduces an additional element, namely, the Circumstance. The word 'is' denotes being, serving as an attribute. The pronoun "it" functions as the Carrier, which is being attributed by the adverbial phrase "just a game." Another element introduced is the Circumstance of Angle, which conveys the perspective from which the message is being delivered. The use of this type of circumstance reveals the viewpoint from which the message is conveyed. Rather than simply stating "It's just a game," the cartoonist adds "to me" to underscore the clause's perspective. The choice of the word "game" as the term

attributed to the pronoun "it," or Russia's government threats toward Ukraine, highlights the cartoonist's intention to portray Vladimir Putin in a negative light. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, "game" (n.d.) is defined as an activity typically undertaken for enjoyment, often characterized by rules and the possibility of winning or losing. Describing a situation involving the sacrifice of many lives and causing significant damage with the term "game" reflects the cartoonist's goal of depicting Vladimir as a ruthless figure.

From both visual and verbal mode analyzes, this figure conveys imagery akin to the intense atmosphere of a chess game, focusing solely on the chessboard and the opponent. However, the visual mode clearly represents power dominance by creating tension that the player feels when he is on the verge of defeat. The ruthless opponent persistently breaches the defenses that have been erected, all the while maintaining a cold and unyielding gaze on the player. The visual resemblance to the political figure Vladimir Putin effectively transforms this figure into a political discourse, bridging the narrative of board games with a political event. The verbal mode of this figure remains consistent with the visual mode, as it continues to employ the word "game" in reference to the chess game. The words spoken by Vladimir Putin serve to underscore his viewpoint, along with that of Russia's government, in relation to Russia's threats toward Ukraine, while he tries to present an image of innocence. The cartoonist tries to convey that Vladimir Putin perceives Russia's threats to Ukraine as nothing more than an unserious event.

Political Cartoons Presenting Vladimir Putin and Another Related Figure

Figure 2. Political cartoons made by Dana Summers published in March 18th 2022.

The second figure is a political cartoon created by Dana Summers and published on March 18th, 2022. Visually, this figure features three participants. Judging by their facial features, the primary represented participant is assumed to be Vladimir Putin. The other two participants are depicted as Adolf Hitler (the participant on the left) and Joseph Stalin (the participant on the right). These three participants are positioned next to each other, with Putin's arm draped around the shoulders of the other two participants. However, unlike Putin, the other two participants do not gaze straight ahead. The left represented participant directs an angry expression towards the participant in the middle, while the participant on the right looks to the side with a neutral expression. The verbal mode in this figure is conveyed through the words in the speech bubbles, which read, "I'm cleansing my country" and "welcome to the club."

Visual Mode Analysis

Representational Meaning

In this political cartoon, the narrative process is depicted as the method by which the cartoonist presents each element. The action process is conducted by the figure of Vladimir Putin, who serves as the main represented participant, as he engages in actions involving the other participant. This transactional action process unfolds through the vector created by Vladimir Putin's hands, with him as the actor, embracing the two other represented participants who act as the goal. The side hug action symbolizes the closeness between the three participants. Placing one's hand on the shoulder of the receiver and applying firm pressure during a hug signifies a strong connection between the participants (Forsell & Åström, 2012).

Additionally, a speech process is also clear in this figure. Here, Vladimir Putin delivers an idea with no explicit content of inner mental processes. This makes Vladimir Putin the Sayer, as he merely states a dialogue without revealing his underlying thoughts or emotions. The details of the dialogue will be discussed further in the verbal mode analysis.

Interactive Meaning

In this figure, the interaction between the viewer and the main represented participant is established through the gaze directed by the main represented participant toward the viewer. The viewers are prompted to create an imaginary connection with the main represented participant. However, the ambiguous expression of the main represented participant leaves the type of relationship in question. It primarily demonstrates how the main participant looks at the viewer while embracing the other two participants.

By examining the horizontal angle, it becomes evident that the viewer is actively engaged in this figure. This is because a frontal angle is employed, with all the represented participants facing forward. When considering the narrative processes within this figure, as well as the type of gaze and the horizontal angle, it can be inferred that when Vladimir Putin says, "I'm cleansing my country," he is not just addressing the other represented participants but also the viewer. With the other two participants, who can be considered as leaders of the countries involved in the war, the main participant underscores his superiority over the viewer, even though he may appear equal to the viewer when viewed from an eye-level angle.

Compositional Meaning

Centered structure is noticed to organize the information values of this figure. This structure is seen from how the main represented participant is right in the center while the other elements surround it. The other two represented participants are an information attributed to the main represented participant. The two leaders of the genocide who are famous for being responsible for the deaths are attributed to Vladimir Putin. The most salient element in this figure is the main represented participant. The choice of bright blue color on the main represented participant's clothes indicates that he is different from the other two participants. This makes the main represented participant salient. And thus, the information that is being provided by the cartoonist focuses on the main represented participant as the most salient element. Each element in this figure is close to each other, resulting in the absence of framing means that there is one common identity shared by the three participants.

The centered structure is observed as a way for organizing the informational values within this figure. This structure becomes evident when considering that the primary represented participant is prominently positioned in the center, while the other elements surround it. The remaining two represented participants are linked to and associated with the

primary represented participant. Specifically, the two leaders of the genocide, who are renowned for their responsibility in the deaths, are attributed to Vladimir Putin.

The most salient element in this figure is the primary represented participant. The choice of a bright blue color for the clothing of the primary represented participant signifies their distinctiveness from the other two participants. This contrast renders the primary represented participant salient. The information conveyed by the cartoonist focuses on the primary represented participant as the most prominent element. Each element in this figure is positioned in proximity to one another, leading to the absence of any framing. This absence of framing implies a shared common identity among the three participants.

Verbal Mode Analysis

Table 3. Metafunctional assessment of first verbal mode in Figure. 2

Metafunctional Meaning	*I*	*'m*	*cleansing*	*my country*
Textual	Theme		Rheme	
Inter-personal	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
	Mood		Residue	
Ideational	Actor		Process	Goal

Based on the table above, in terms of the textual metafunction, the topical Theme "I" serves as both the starting and ending point of the Theme structure. This highlights that this clause conveys the thoughts or intentions of one participant about themselves. "I" serves as the source of information and the emphasized element within the clause. The remaining part of the clause is the Rheme, where it elaborates further on the information related to the Theme.

Interpersonally, the clause presents a declarative mood with the Subject structure preceding the Finite. This clause functions as a statement delivered by Vladimir Putin to the other participants, Stalin and Hitler. "I" as the Subject becomes the core of the argument, while the Finite tense conveys a message in the present continuous, suggesting that the action is ongoing and has not yet concluded. The Residue structure comprises the Predicator and Complement. The Predicator signifies that this clause is in the active voice, indicating that the subject is actively performing an action. This shows that Vladimir Putin is taking action related to Russia.

In terms of the ideational metafunction, this clause comprises three elements: two participants and one process. The process in this clause is a material clause, showing the existence of an action performed by Vladimir Putin as the Actor toward "my country" as the Goal. The action described in the clause is "cleansing," derived from the verb "cleanse," which, according to the "Cleanse" (2023) means "to rid of impurities by washing or similar means." The use of "cleansing" implies impurities in Russia and metaphorically links those who disagree with Vladimir Putin's actions in Ukraine to impurities tarnishing the country. This political cartoon is a response to a speech made by Vladimir Putin on March 16, 2022, in which he advocated for the practice of "self-purification" to cleanse the nation of individuals opposing his invasion of Ukraine ('Scum and Traitors', 2022). This decision means that Russians questioning the role of the armed forces may face up to 15 years in prison (Putin and the "self-Cleansing", 2022). The verbal mode "I'm cleansing my country" highlights Vladimir Putin's power over Russia, while the use of the possessive pronoun "my" suggests that Russia belongs exclusively to Vladimir Putin, granting him authority over the country.

Another verbal mode in this figure is "Welcome to the club," spoken by Joseph Stalin. This clause is considered a minor clause and serves as a way for the cartoonist to emphasize the connection between Vladimir Putin and Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. The use of the word "club" suggests a shared interest among the three participants According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "Club" (n.d.) refers to "an organization for

people who share an interest or engage in a sport or activity together." This emphasizes that Vladimir Putin is now joining Stalin and Hitler as a dictator, as both of these leaders are known for their dictatorship. They used brute force to suppress opposition and took control of the media, the police, and the government, establishing themselves as unchallengeable dictators with complete authority over their people (Bevan, n.d.).

Through a visual and verbal mode analysis, this political cartoon effectively conveys its message by depicting three political figures. By illustrating Vladimir Putin's gesture of hugging shoulders, the cartoon successfully portrays him as the next "dictator" following in the footsteps of Hitler and Stalin. The verbal mode further emphasizes the identities of these three political figures, reinforcing the message conveyed through the visual mode. Through this political cartoon, the cartoonist expresses disapproval of Vladimir Putin's actions, attributing them to a form of dictatorship and placing him alongside two historical dictators.

Political Cartoons Presenting Vladimir Putin and Another Unrelated Figure

Figure 3. Political cartoons made by Bill Bramhall published in February 20th 2022.

The third figure, created by Bill Bramhall on February 20, 2022, is a political cartoon that features two participants set against a plain background with a verbal mode. Both participants are depicted engaging with each other, with one participant portrayed as having a large body, topless, and holding the other participant in a much smaller grip. The verbal mode in this figure, "Last warning! Stop threatening me!" is spoken by the represented participant. The larger participant represents Vladimir Putin, identifiable from facial resemblance, while the smaller participant represents Ukraine, portrayed as a human but of smaller stature compared to Vladimir Putin.

Visual Mode Analysis

Representational Meaning

This figure presents a narrative representation in which the central process is Action and Reaction. Vladimir Putin, as the larger represented participant, takes on the primary role and is depicted restraining the other participant. This action signifies the physical restraint imposed by Vladimir Putin. The action he takes prevents the smaller participant, Ukraine, from moving, as the smaller participant's body is locked within Putin's grip. Simultaneously, Vladimir Putin gazes at the smaller participant whom he is holding. The presence of speech within this figure supports the previous description, marking the figure's verbal mode. Since the speech does not involve inner mental processes, it is categorized as a dialogue bubble where the represented participants exchange statements. The processes depicted in this figure signify the power dynamic between Vladimir Putin, the

leader of Russia, and Ukraine. The presence of two participants in this figure reflects the strained relationship between Russia and Ukraine.

Interactive Meaning

In this figure, no connection has been made between the represented participants and the viewer when observed from the participants' gaze. The gaze of the represented participants does not face forward, resulting in the Offer type of gaze. This type of gaze limits the connection between the viewer and the represented participants, resulting in the viewer gaining information solely from the represented participants. This figure discusses messages only between the represented participants, seen from the use of an oblique angle, which indicates the viewer's exclusion from the world of the represented participants. The information attached to this figure results from the cartoonist's thinking, which is shown with low modality.

Compositional Meaning

In organizing the visual information, the cartoonist places each element using a left-right structure. The structure combines both represented participants as the Given and the verbal mode as the New. This is because both participants are incorporated into one vectoral relationship, making it considered as one structure. As a result, rather than creating a framing between the two participants, the framing is established between the participants and the verbal mode. This framing reveals a differentiation or opposition between what Vladimir Putin has done and his speech.

Verbal Mode Analysis

The verbal modes of this figure are divided into two, namely "Last warning!" and "Stop threatening me!". The first verbal mode is a minor clause aimed at conveying a form of threat or alarm to a specific person. In this clause, the participant says "last warning!" as threat, indicating that they will not tolerate it if the particular person to whom the clause is addressed does not comply with the speaker's wishes.

Table 4. Metafunctional assessment of verbal mode in Figure. 3

Metafunctional Meaning	Stop	Threatening	me!
Textual	Theme	Rheme	
Inter-personal	Predicator		Complement
	Residue		
Ideational		Process: Material	Recipient

The second verbal mode is "Stop threatening me!". Textually, this clause delivers a message to ask a particular person to do something. The Theme structure in this clause comprises "Stop" as one sign of imperative clause. The Theme shows a point of departure of this clause which indicates that there's something that is concerned by the speaker and the one who this clause is headed is told to no longer continue to do something. The Rheme of this clause gives a further information of what is the activity need to be not continued.

Interpersonally, the second verbal mode denotes an imperative mood where it asks a service from a particular person. In here the interpersonal structure only contains Residue element. The Predicator signify the active voice and the Process within this clause. The Complement in this clause shows the one where the action or service is directed, which is the speaker. It can be said that the active voice refers to the particular participant. The participant is not mentioned in the verbal mode but is explicitly mentioned in the visual mode. This imperative clause is delivered by the speaker toward the governor of Ukraine, as indicated by the visual representation of the other participant labeled as "Ukraine".

The ideational metafunction in this clause is realized through experiential meaning. The Process of material is denoted in this clause as "threatening" which is action. The participant who receives the beneficiary influence from the process is "me", referring to the speaker and acting as a Recipient. However, "threatening" has a negative connotation, which according to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, "Threat" (n.d.), means "a statement in which you tell somebody that you will punish or harm them, especially if they do not do what you want". So, rather than benefiting, the speaker tries to show that he, as a Recipient, feels disadvantaged.

From the verbal mode itself, the results show the cartoonist tries to build two opposing statements. While "last warning!" suggests threat, the second verbal mode "stop threatening me", suggests that Putin, as the one who made the previous threat, feels threatened. The use of the word "threatening" in this political cartoon is based on an event in late 2021 where a satellite image showed a new buildup of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine. The reason for Russia's troops on Ukraine stems from Russia's anxiety over the possibility of Ukraine getting involved with the European Union and NATO after the revolution against Russian supremacy in 2014 (Oktarianisa, 2022).

The cartoonist tries to frame Putin as a figure who pretends to be in a weak position while he is in a stronger position compared to Ukraine. The cartoonist's intention to depict Vladimir Putin is successfully channeled through visuals that show Putin's position as the stronger side, while the verbal mode shows that Russia's position is on the weak side. This is in line with the visual analysis where in compositional analysis mentioned that the framing in the political cartoon emphasizes a differentiation of information between each element. The left-right structure used also emphasizes that Russia's position as the stronger party is generally known. It is the verbal element that needs to be discussed more. The choice of the phrase "last warning and the word "threatening" successfully shows an irony, as Vladimir Putin, as the speaker, is portrayed as the one who makes threats but he is also the one who asks to stop being threatened. From both visual and verbal analysis, the cartoonist conveyed the message with simple visuals with little symbolism. By presenting visual nodes whose connotation meaning is opposite to the verbal mode, the cartoonist creates irony in this political cartoon.

CONCLUSION

After conducting the analysis, it is concluded that visually, the cartoonists successfully highlight Putin's power and dominance over other participants, including Ukraine and the Russian people, by portraying the relationships between the depicted participants. The analysis reveals that the most common process is narrative representation, which shows the relationship between the represented participants through action processes. This is evident in the depiction of Putin locking a smaller participant (Ukraine) in his grip and embracing other ruthless political figures from history, such as Stalin and Hitler, signifying direct power from Vladimir Putin.

Although not used as frequently, the symbolic process also demonstrates Putin's power over others, such as when he is shown holding a black chess piece to represent his control. The classificational process presents an image of dictatorship by paralleling Putin with other political figures. In terms of interactive meaning, all the political cartoons reflect the cartoonist's point of view. Moreover, the arrangement of information emphasizes Putin as the focus of the political cartoons' message, supporting the portrayal of Putin as a powerful leader.

Verbally, it is deduced that the verbal mode in the political cartoons effectively conveys messages that complement the visual mode. The political cartoons predominantly use material, relational, and mental processes, which can be seen in the choice of verbs, modality, and sentence structure. Through visual and verbal analysis, the cartoonist constructs a negative portrayal of Vladimir Putin as a dictatorial leader.

This study has limitations in its scope, as it does not deeply address potential variations
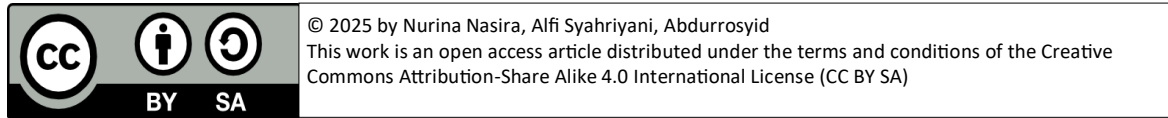
in viewer interpretation based on individual backgrounds and experiences, nor does it consider broader social and historical contexts. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to also explore the production and consumption of similar texts, which might offer multiple perspectives on the subject.

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