



Decoding Autism Awareness Posters: Small Stories and Visual Grammar in Malaysian Health Campaigns

**Maslinda Md Yusof^{1,*}, Mohd Iqbal Ahamat², Lee Yi Ling³,
Chong Seng Tong⁴, Nur Syafiqah Mohd Shkuri⁵**

¹ (Corresponding Author) College of Continuing Education, Universiti Tenaga Nasional, 43000 Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia.

E-mail: Maslinda@uniten.edu.my

²Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, 21030 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia

³College of Continuing Education, Universiti Tenaga Nasional, 43000 Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia.

⁴ College of Continuing Education, Universiti Tenaga Nasional, 43000 Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia.

⁵UNITEN Business School, Universiti Tenaga Nasional, 43000 Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia.

Article Info

Article history:

Received: 31 May 2025

Accepted: 11 October 2025

Published: 31 October 2025

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.33102/alazkiya.a153>

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to decode autism health visual contents on social media utilising Kress and van Leeuwen's compositional metafunction and Bamberg and Georgakopoulou's small stories framework through narrative stancetaking. The features of four posters collected from the Facebook page of the Malaysian Ministry of Health were assessed qualitatively, focusing on their visuals and narratives. Compositional metafunction was a significant component in the messages delivered through the posters. Information value, salience, and framing were the metafunction subcategories identified. The results also indicated that metafunction contributed to effective autism message delivery to the Malaysian audience. Furthermore, Visual Grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) was vital in enhancing public understanding of autism. The effort coincides with the aim of the United Nations of achieving inclusivity by 2030 through its sustainable development goals. In this study,

an element in the small stories' framework, narrative stancetaking, was employed, as it can be implemented to analyse social media. Nonetheless, only four posters were selected and analysed in this study, limiting the data collected in this study. Consequently, future studies may consider incorporating more posters from diverse sources. Exploring other metafunctions in understanding the messages delivered through the posters can also be employed.

Keywords: *Autism, compositional metafunction, small stories, inclusivity, posters, social media*

INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (henceforth autism) "is a developmental disorder. The condition is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by social communication deficits, restricted interests, and repetitive behaviours" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, as cited in Hodges, Fealko, & Soares, 2019). Among the traits observed in autistic individuals are echolalia, hand flapping, and restricted social communication and interaction.

Autism can be detected using Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT) among children of 18 and 24 months (Ministry of Health Malaysia, n.d.). Parents or caregivers may be required to bring their children to healthcare providers, such as developmental paediatricians, psychologists, and psychiatrists, for diagnosis. Obtaining a diagnosis will facilitate parents and caregivers to move forward and access the best treatment. Autism can be treated with drugs, therapeutics, psychological therapy, or diet (Kalra et al., 2023).

Inadequate understanding of autism may impact autistic individuals who are unable to receive an early diagnosis due to insufficient awareness. Consequently, effective autism awareness campaigns are crucial in fostering comprehension of the condition. Furthermore, such understanding is crucial for altering the attitude towards autism. Cleary et al. (2022) stated that awareness campaigns can contribute to attitudinal change to support autistic individuals. Many studies have been conducted on awareness, understanding, knowledge and interventions (Cremin et al., 2021; Altay, 2019; Dillenburger et al., 2017; Dillenburger et al., 2013), and campaigns (Serter & Yildiz, 2021; Mac Cárthaigh & López, 2020). Chu et al. (2021) stated that "increased knowledge and awareness of a specific disorder (i.e. mental illness) may positively affect people's attitudes and behaviours, reducing fear, avoidance and discrimination". In the recent Malaysian Budget 2025, the Prime Minister has announced many initiatives with regard to autism such as the establishment of schools – owing to the increased awareness of autism.

Social media platforms can be used to disseminate knowledge of autism because it can display the true content on autism (Egge & Gabarron, 2024). On social media such as Facebook, users can share textual information and visual illustration such as posters. The contents on these platforms can portray autistic individuals positively (Mittmann et al., 2023). The posters employed in campaigns promoting health information involving autism awareness are designed through a multimodal approach before being disseminated across digital and physical platforms. Messages can be conveyed visually and supported by effective designs. Signs are also integrated to communicate messages regarding autism to ensure a holistic poster.

Various elements are incorporated into posters to adapt to a wide range of audiences and effectively communicate messages. These elements are added through combinations of images, colours, and phrases (Deng, 2023). According to Chandler (2017), “all meaningful phenomena, including words and images, are signs”, rooted in Saussure’s semiotic theory. Consequently, the elements in posters, including colours, imagery, and layout, are deemed as signs in semiotics, considering that they are utilised to communicate meanings. Saussure also asserted that there are two interdependent aspects of signs in the language sign system: signified (a mental representation) and signifier (a relational concept) (Chandler, 2017), as represented in Figure 1.

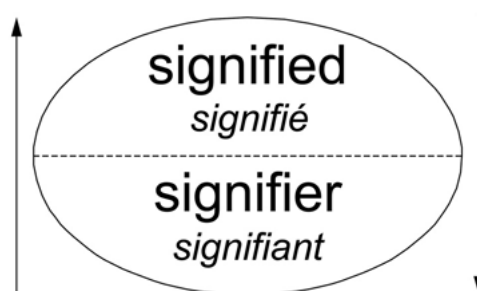


Figure 1. Saussure’s dyadic model of the sign (Chandler, 2017)

The meanings represented by the signs incorporated in the autism awareness posters can be evaluated through the signified-signifier form. Visual Grammar also enables comprehension of the messages intended to be conveyed in the posters through the analysis of representational, interactive and compositional meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Compositional meaning aids viewers to understand the messages by combining multimodal elements, such as colours and placement of elements that contribute to effective message delivery, leading to improved understanding of autism. Three principles of composition applies in the analysis namely information value, salience and framing (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Numerous previous studies employed Visual Grammar such as in research that analysed advertisements, posters (Ezirim & Aworo-Okoroh, 2023; Zhang, 2023; Hu, 2019), website (Ping, 2018), and education (Qadha & Al-Wasy, 2024; Kempen, 1999)

Besides compositional metafunction, messages, particularly in the captions of autism awareness posters, also share stories with the viewers. Frequently, the captions are related to the posters and framed within real-life contexts, extending content relatable to the viewers. Content creators share everyday events through social media, which can be analysed with the small stories framework. Developed by Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008), small stories are the stories about notably mundane things and everyday occurrences conveyed during interactions, generally within everyday settings (Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). The framework allows the analysis of narratives in captions that contribute to public perception towards autism.

Due to the limited research that interrelate Visual Grammar and autism in the Malaysian context, this study seeks to fill the gap. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- (i) To identify multimodal elements in autism posters contributing to autism awareness
- (ii) To analyse narrative stance taking in autism awareness poster small stories

LITERATURE REVIEW

Autism and Stigmas

Advocacy efforts to raise autism awareness in diverse landscapes, such as digital and traditional media, should be increased. Neik et al. (2014) conducted a prevalence, diagnosis, treatment, and research study on autism and noted that autism awareness in Malaysia remains low compared to Singapore. Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri, the Women, Family, and Community Development Minister, also raised concerns about the awareness level of autism in Malaysia (Mohd Rahmat & Najihah, 2024), considering that the situation can lead to stigmas surrounding autistic individuals and their families.

According to Turnock et al. (2022), autistic individuals encounter negative experiences in their everyday lives, potentially reflecting autism stigma. Autistic individuals are considered deficient (Hotez et al., 2024) and the source of disappointment, annoyance, or shame (Sarris, 2024). Stigmas surrounding autistic individuals also affect their family or caregivers, including limiting care-seeking (Link & Phelan, 2006). The families of autistic individuals are commonly associated with poor parenting (Hotez et al., 2024), where mothers are labelled as refrigerator mothers (Bettleheim in Clarke et al., 2024; Cleary et al., 2022). The phenomenon may result in the poor well-being of autistic individuals due to not receiving proper care, such as seeking therapy as required. Diverting from the previous label of refrigerator mothers by Bettelheim (van Rosmalen et al., 2020), mothers of autistic individuals are currently considerably held responsible for mitigating the effects of autism on their children. This indicates the importance of public awareness, acceptance, and inclusion of autistic individuals in all aspects of life.

Autism is represented through various platforms, such as the media, in this technological era. Nevertheless, the representation of autism in the media deviates from the actual representation, introducing issues. For instance, autistic individuals are deemed savants in the media (Mittmann et al., 2023). Consequently, a representation that allows viewers to understand the challenges faced by autistic individuals and their abilities is essential in ensuring a comprehensive portrayal of autism.

Inclusivity and Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations aims to achieve inclusivity by 2030 via the sustainable development goals (SDG). Among critical goals in SDG regarding inclusivity included in SDG are SDG4: quality education, SDG8: decent work and economic growth, SDG10: reduced inequalities, SDG11: sustainable cities and communities, and SDG17: partnerships for the goals (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). The goals highlight the need to address the marginalised autism community so that they can have access to their rights. The autism community feels marginalised “not only because of their autism but also because of their ethnicity and culture, economic status, level of English or being in the care system” (Perepa et al., 2023, p.3).

Undivided governmental, familial, and societal support can facilitate inclusivity by 2030. Autism awareness is vital for attaining inclusivity in an effort to combat stigma. Stigma would lead to internalisation that would affect autistic adults’ mental health (Han et al., 2023). To reduce stigma, autistic individuals tend to mask to hide their autistic traits so that they will not be excluded and bullied (Chapman, 2020). Hence, posters that contribute to awareness can contribute to build a safe space for autistic individuals as well as to build an inclusive society.

Multimodality and Visual Grammar

Posters are powerful communicative tools that combine linguistics and visual elements. Like languages, visual illustrations can articulate messages through multimodal features. The integration of multimodal elements such as texts, speeches, images, sounds, spaces, and gestures may amplify messages. Alyousef (2020) also indicated that multimodality allows writers to deliver meanings and intentions. Belgrimet and Rabab’ah (2021) noted that all discourse types are multimodal, including spoken discourse, which combines language, intonation, voice quality, gesture, facial expressions, and posture. Similarly, poster compositions can attract viewers to learn the intended messages, considering that the modes combined in posters contribute to meaning making. Yu (2019), Belgrimet and Rabab’ah (2021), Deng (2023), and Iftikhar et al. (2020) employed multimodality in analysing posters.

To systematically interpret posters, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) proposed utilising Visual Grammar to determine modes and ensembles. Extending the metafunctions introduced by Halliday in his Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) was also suggested to visualise communicative modes contributing to Visual Grammar, which are representational, interactive, and compositional meanings. This study utilised compositional meanings by examining the arrangement in the posters, supported by three systems: information value, salience, and framing. The following explains the systems:

- (i) Information value: Element placements (participants and syntagms relating them to each other and the viewer) that provide specific informational values attached to the various 'zones' of the image: left and right, top and bottom, centre and margin (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 177) (see Figure 2).

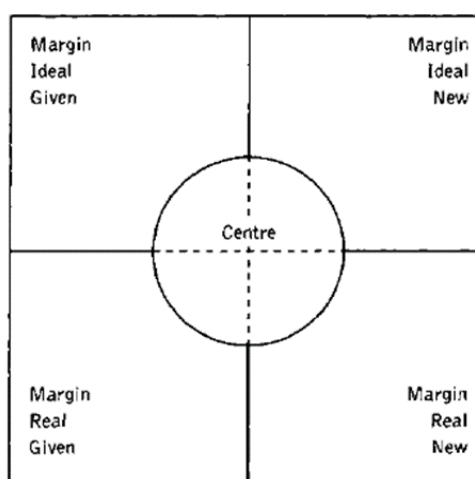


Figure 2. The dimensions of visual space proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

- (ii) Salience: "The elements (participants, representational, and interactive syntagms) are made to attract the viewer's attention to different degrees, as realised by factors, such as placement in the foreground or background, relative size, contrasts in tonal value (or colour), differences in sharpness, etc." (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 177).
- (iii) Framing: "The presence or absence of framing devices (realised by elements which create dividing lines, or by actual frame lines) disconnects or connects elements of the image, signifying that they belong or do not belong together in some sense" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.177).

These systems demonstrates how posters strategically raise autism awareness through elements of inclusion, support and empathy.

Small Stories-Narrative Stancetaking

While Visual Grammar analysed visual illustrations and other elements in posters, the Small Stories framework introduced by Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) - a narrative applied in everyday stories and identity studies (Georgakopoulou et al., 2023), analyses accompanying texts such as captions. Stancetaking is an element in the small stories framework that enables tellers to share their identities and messages. The three types of stancetaking are epistemic ("what I know and how I know it") (Freyburger, 2023), affective ("what my mood, attitude, feeling or emotions is, including how intense it is") (Freyburger, 2023), and narrative ("speaker's mobilisation of conventionalised communicative means to signal that there is a narrative tale or telling in the making and/or circulation of it" (Georgakopoulou, 2014).

This study applied narrative stancetaking due to its suitability for social media storytelling (Eklund, 2023). The narrative stancetaking elements adopted in this study include temporal framing and notifications of activities that have occurred, localisations, assessments of emotive states, events and activities that are happening, and references to characters and relationships. The integration of Visual Grammar and Small Stories expand discussions on how posters operate visually and narratively, showing how both frameworks shape public understanding.

METHODOLOGY

Autism posters were analysed in this study. The posters were predominantly retrieved from the Facebook page of the Malaysian Ministry of Health (MOH). Only posters that were published online and publicly accessible and contained content related to autism awareness were selected. Nevertheless, only four posters were analysed due to the limited time allocated to complete this study. Modes, such as images and texts, were identified and analysed. Subsequently, the data were assessed through narrative stancetaking to address the second aim of this study. The following are the stages employed during data selection:

- (i) Identification- The MOH Malaysia Facebook page, which was under the name Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia, was visited. Following searches utilising the word "autism", posts relevant to autism were observed.
- (ii) Screening- Other users' posts tagged by the MOH Malaysia and posts irrelevant to this study, including posts about dyslexia, stress, vaccines, Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), were removed. Meanwhile, posts relevant to this study were assessed regarding suitability before their selection for inclusion.

- (iii) Inclusion- Four posters on autism published between 2019 and 2024 were selected for analysis in this study. The posters chosen were publicly accessible, incorporated multimodal elements, and focused on autism advocacy.

This study gathered publicly accessible data from posters published on the Facebook page of the MOH Malaysia. Ethical and citation practices were followed by identifying the source of the information. Although categorised as the study of disability, this study did not involve disabled individuals. Only posters regarding autism were evaluated to establish how creators produce meanings and deliver messages to the audience by implementing various modes in one poster.

The selected posters aimed to disseminate information on autism – autism awareness day, what autism is and the symptoms. The posters are publicly accessible; hence, the audience was diverse. However, the texts in the posters and the captions are in the Malay language, making them only understandable by Malaysians and international audience who speaks or understands the language. All posters comprised several modes including visual illustration, colours, and texts, supplemented by captions that provided more information.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Compositional Metafunctions within the Posters

The posters in Figures 3–6 and the captions in Table 1–4 were retrieved from the Facebook page of the MOH Malaysia, which were related to autism spectrum disorder. This study assessed the data on the posters in three aspects under compositional metafunction: information value, salience, and framing.



Figure 3. World Autism Awareness Day 2019

Table 1. Details of Poster 1

Date posted	2 nd April, 2019
Caption	<i>Tahukah anda bahawa satu daripada 160 kanak-kanak di dunia adalah kanak-kanak autistik?</i> <i>Masih ada dalam kalangan anggota masyarakat yang tidak memahami apa itu sebenarnya sindrom autisme kerana kebanyakan kanak-kanak yang menghadapinya kelihatan normal seperti kanak-kanak biasa.</i> <i>Sekiranya anak menunjukkan gejala awal, ibu bapa dan guru digalakkan melakukan pemeriksaan kesihatan untuk memastikan tahap kesihatan mental kanak-kanak.</i> <i>Tindakan awal mendapatkan rawatan terapi adalah langkah bijak yang perlu diambil.</i>

**Figure 4.** What is autism spectrum disorder?**Table 2.** Details of Poster 2

Date posted	11 th February, 2023
Caption	🧑‍🎒 <i>Setiap kanak-kanak yang mengalami autism spectrum disorder (ASD) menunjukkan ciri-ciri yang berbeza.</i> 📌 <i>ASD tergolong dalam kategori masalah pembelajaran dan bukannya satu penyakit mental.</i> ✅ <i>Sekiranya anak anda menunjukkan ciri-ciri ASD, rujuk mereka kepada pakar kesihatan.</i> ❤️ <i>Melalui pengesanan dan rawatan pemulihan awal mampu memberikan harapan untuk mereka menikmati kehidupan yang lebih berkualiti.</i>



Figure 5. Symptoms of autism

Table 3. Details of Poster 3

Date posted	16 th February, 2023
Caption	<i>Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) adalah satu kumpulan permasalahan kompleks yang berkaitan dengan perkembangan otak.</i> <i>Antara simptom yang dihadapi oleh kanak-kanak ASD adalah seperti dikongsikan.</i> <i>Oleh itu, pengesanan dan intervensi awal untuk kanak-kanak yang mempunyai ASD adalah penting supaya dapat membantu mereka menguasai dan meningkatkan kemahiran mereka agar mereka dapat menikmati hidup lebih berkualiti.</i>



Figure 6. World Autism Awareness Day 2024

Table 4. Details of Poster 4

Date posted	2 nd April, 2024
Caption	🧩 <i>Hari Kesedaran Autisme yang disambut pada 2 April setiap tahun merupakan satu inisiatif bagi meningkatkan kesedaran masyarakat dalam memahami penghidap autisme.</i> 🧩 <i>Autisme atau autism spectrum disorder (ASD) merupakan suatu gangguan neurologi di otak 🧠 yang mempengaruhi perkembangan pemikiran kanak-kanak 🧒 yang mengganggu komunikasi, interaksi sosial dan tingkah laku dalam menjalankan aktiviti seharian.</i> 🩺 <i>Dari sudut perubatan, masih belum terdapat ubat yang boleh merawat autisme. Walau bagaimanapun, terapi dapat membantu mereka untuk mendapat kemahiran yang diperlukan bagi membolehkan mereka mengurus diri, belajar dan berkomunikasi dengan orang lain. Antara terapi yang penting untuk kanak-kanak autisme adalah terapi pertuturan-bahasa dan terapi carakerja.</i>

Important information is placed in the middle of the posters. The texts in the posters are supplemented by visual illustrations that foreground the identity and traits of autistic individuals. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) indicated that central composition is essential in the imagination of young Asian designers. Consequently, this study primarily focused on the **informational value** at the centre of the posters analysed. Based on Figures 3 to 6, the contents were positioned in the centre of the posters, which featured the central ideas that serve various purposes.

The World Autism Awareness Day posters illustrated in Figures 3 and 6 indicated the significant importance of the global autism event. Meanwhile, the posters in Figures 4 and 5 shared autism-related information and educational content, including what autism is and its symptoms. Nonetheless, the theme in the poster in Figure 6 moved from serving to thriving: awareness, acceptance, and appreciation. The critical feature indicated the importance of supporting autistic individuals for them to thrive.

In all of the posters analysed in this study, features, such as the logo and ministry name, MOH Malaysia, were placed at the top, which is the ideal position. The placement indicated the authority of the ministry in overseeing autism-related matters. Other logos were included in the real positions, such as Malaysia Madani, Unit Komunikasi Korporat (UKK) Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM), and Agenda Nasional Malaysia Sihat.

Malaysia Madani was introduced by the 10th Prime Minister of Malaysia as an effort to

drive and restore the dignity and glory of the nation in the global arena (Bernama, 2023), whereas Agenda Nasional Malaysia Sihat was approved by the Cabinet in 2020, advocating healthy Malaysians through wellness lifestyle and sustainable environments (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2021). According to the 2019 MOH Annual Report, UKK KKM was tasked to enhance the image of MOH and promote policies and programmes (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2019, p.316), supporting its name placement at the bottom of the posters analysed in this study.

Salience is the second feature in compositional metafunction that differentiated the posters. Based on the poster illustrated in Figure 3, larger fonts were employed for the date and tagline than other texts in the posters. As the primary idea of the posters, the word "autism" and the date "2 April 2019" were in red font, emphasising their significance to the viewers. Colour and font size selections are essential in attracting viewers' attention to the central ideas. Consequently, utilising specific colours in posters, such as red, is relevant and appropriate in delivering messages. The "Autism Awareness Day" message in Figure 6 was in bigger fonts than the other texts. Another salient feature incorporated into the poster was the hands with puzzle designs.

Meanwhile, the posters demonstrated in Figures 4 and 5 had pictures of a kid, which was larger than the content, elevated human imagery and enhancing salience. Pink font was utilised for the word ASD in Figure 5, emphasising its prominence in the title. Besides texts and images, each poster analysed in this study was designed for the purpose it was intended to serve. The colours and designs employed reflected the idea of autism, such as blue and puzzle, while other colours and pictures complemented the designs. The balance between colours, symbols and images reflected effective strategies to highlight autism awareness through multimodal forms.

Framing provides clarity in posters while also addressing the difference. The poster demonstrated in Figure 3 included close-ups of children holding puzzles. Similarly, Figures 4 and 5 had close-ups of children waving their hands with happy faces. The images represented closeness to the viewers. Nonetheless, Figure 6 only featured hands with puzzle designs and different colours, which symbolise neurodiversity. The feature invokes solidarity in the inclusivity effort. Bringing society closer to the autism community to understand them to achieve an inclusive society requires a significant effort. The effort would also foster connection in the community, focusing on 'our community' rather than 'your community' and 'my community'. The transition from portrayal of children to symbolic hands shifted from individual responsibility to collective inclusivity.

Narrative Stancetaking

Five elements of narrative stancetaking were applied during caption assessments of the posters evaluated in this study. Although four elements were discovered in all four

captions, localisations were not included. The captions did not specify a location or venue. Nevertheless, general information, including autism awareness day, which is celebrated annually, what autism is, and the symptoms, were incorporated.

Temporal framing and activity notifications highlight the necessity for early intervention and establish urgency. For instance, Caption 1 in Table 5 included "*Sekiranya anak menunjukkan gejala awal*" (If a child shows early symptoms), "*Melalui pengesanan dan rawatan pemulihan awal*" (Through early detection and rehabilitation treatment), and "*pengesanan dan intervensi awal*" (early detection and intervention). Meanwhile, Caption 4 added "*2 April setiap tahun*" (the 2nd April of every year...), which indicated that autism awareness is an ongoing initiative and requires sustained efforts.

In the posters analysed in this study, localisations were absent. Specific locations were not mentioned in the captions, as messages beyond locations were included. The posters addressed everyone in Malaysia and emphasised collective responsibility.

Assessments of emotive states, such as sad and amused, were not directly employed in the posters analysed in this study. Nevertheless, words relating to emotions, such as *langkah bijak* (a wise step), suggested that early intervention is a substantial, responsible, and positive act. Meanwhile, Captions 2 and 3 incorporated the words *harapan* (hope) and *menikmati hidup lebih berkualiti* (enjoy a quality life), respectively, which conveyed positive mood that evokes a motivating tone.

The fourth element identified in the posters analysed was events and activities. The mentioned events and activities were all related to early intervention and therapy, hence relevant to autistic individuals' requirements to achieve an improved quality of life – an aspirational tone.

Furthermore, the characters mentioned in the captions were framed according to an inclusive-society model, involving *masyarakat* (society), *ibu bapa* (parents), *guru* (teachers), *anak/kanak-kanak/kanak-kanak ASD* (children/children with autism), and *pakar kesihatan* (medical practitioners). Consequently, autism awareness was positioned as a collective responsibility towards inclusivity, which is a progression from a family responsibility.

Table 5. The elements extracted from the captions

Element	Caption 1	Caption 2	Caption 3	Caption 4
Temporal framing and notifications of activities that have occurred	<i>Sekiranya anak menunjukkan gejala awal, ibu bapa dan guru</i>	♥ <i>Melalui pengesanan dan rawatan pemulihan awal</i>	<i>Oleh itu, pengesanan dan intervensi awal untuk kanak-kanak</i>	<i>Hari Kesedaran Autisme yang disambut pada 2 April setiap tahun...</i>

	<i>digalakkan melakukan pemeriksaan kesihatan untuk memastikan tahap kesihatan mental kanak-kanak.</i>	<i>mampu memberikan harapan untuk mereka menikmati kehidupan yang lebih berkualiti.</i>	<i>yang mempunyai ASD adalah penting...</i>	
Localisation	None	None	None	None
Assessments of emotive states	<i>Tindakan awal mendapatkan rawatan terapi adalah langkah bijak yang perlu diambil.</i>	<i>Melalui pengesanan dan rawatan pemulihan awal mampu memberikan harapan untuk mereka menikmati kehidupan yang lebih berkualiti.</i>	<i>...supaya dapat membantu mereka menguasai dan meningkatkan kemahiran mereka agar mereka dapat menikmati hidup lebih berkualiti.</i>	<i>...merupakan satu inisiatif bagi meningkatkan kesedaran masyarakat dalam memahami penghidap autisme.</i>
Events and activities that are happening	<i>Sekiranya anak menunjukkan gejala awal, ibu bapa dan guru digalakkan melakukan pemeriksaan kesihatan untuk memastikan tahap kesihatan mental kanak-kanak.</i>	<i>Sekiranya anak anda menunjukkan ciri-ciri ASD, rujuk mereka kepada pakar kesihatan.</i>	<i>Oleh itu, pengesanan dan intervensi awal untuk kanak-kanak yang mempunyai ASD adalah penting supaya dapat membantu mereka menguasai dan meningkatkan kemahiran</i>	<i>Walau bagaimanapun, terapi dapat membantu mereka untuk mendapat kemahiran yang diperlukan...</i>
References to	<i>Anggota</i>	<i>Kanak-kanak</i>	<i>Kanak-kanak</i>	<i>Kanak-kanak</i>

characters and relationships	<i>masyarakat, ibu bapa, guru, anak</i>	<i>yang mengalami Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), anak anda, pakar kesihatan</i>	<i>ASD</i>	<i>autism, masyarakat</i>
------------------------------	---	--	------------	---------------------------

CONCLUSION

Increasing autism visibility to an elevated level through strategic, multimodal communication is vital to achieve inclusivity by 2030, as proposed by the United Nations in the SDG. Accordingly, MOH Malaysia is working towards improving autism awareness through various ways, including disseminating information through posters.

This study found meaningful and powerful messages that educate the public upon analysis through compositional metafunction (information value, salience, and framing). At the same time, understanding the narratives in the captions supplementing the posters is also essential as they reinforced responsibility and solidarity. The combination of visual and textual elements contributed to the enhanced autism advocacy messages in the posters. The findings suggest that there was a shift from family-centred framings to collective responsibility.

This study contributes to existing research on multimodality and health by integrating Visual Grammar and Narratives to enhance public understanding and raise awareness. While previous research has examined autism and posters in various disciplines such as health and education, this study provides insights into how autism is represented in Malaysia.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. Due to short data collection duration, only four posters from a single source were analysed. Although the small sample size restricted the generalisability of the findings, it ensured depth in visual assessments. Selecting posters from one source also allowed consistent evaluation of the messages conveyed by the government regarding health. Nonetheless, future studies may consider assessing the representational and interactive metafunctions of autism posters. Posters procured from various sources can also be considered for a better understanding. Furthermore, future studies may determine the efficacy of similar posters in raising autism awareness.

Looking forwards, sustained effort across all media is ultimately required to attain inclusivity. Evaluating moving images, including those on social media, can enrich the language and disability fields. Accordingly, future studies may consider including

moving images, such as videos and movies, to comprehend how creators convey meanings to raise awareness. Utilising online platforms, including social media, can also be beneficial in comprehending how content creators raise awareness. Although physical posters may have limitations in reaching a wide audience, the posters analysed in this study were retrieved from a social media page, potentially contributing to their vast audience reach.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was supported by the UNITEN BOLD Research Grant (BOLD 2024) under the Project Code J510051003 awarded by Universiti Tenaga Nasional. The authors extend gratitude to Universiti Tenaga Nasional for the financial support. The authors also appreciate all individuals and institutions for their contributions to this study.

REFERENCES

- Altay M. A. (2019). Family physicians' awareness of autism spectrum disorder: Results from a survey study. *Open access Macedonian Journal of Medical Sciences*, 7(6), 967–972. <https://doi.org/10.3889/oamjms.2019.199>
- Alyousef, H. S. (2020). A multimodal discourse analysis of English dentistry texts written by Saudi undergraduate students: A study of theme and information structure. *Open Linguistics*, 6(1), 267–283. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2020-0103>
- Bamberg, M., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text & Talk*, 28(3), 377–396. <https://doi.org/10.1515/TEXT.2008.018>
- Belgrimet, S., & Rabab'ah, G. (2021). A multimodal discourse analysis of English posters in violence awareness campaigns against women. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 11(2), 191–201. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1102.12>
- Bernama. (2023, January 19). Malaysia Madani to restore dignity of the nation - PM Anwar. *Bernama*. <https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2157587#:~:text=PUTRAJAYA%2C%20Jan%2019%20%28Bernama%29%20--%20Prime%20Minister%20Datuk,Malaysia%E2%80%99s%20dignity%20and%20glory%20in%20the%20global%20arena>.
- Chandler, D. (2017). *Semiotics: The Basics* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315311050>
- Chapman, L. (2020). *"Don't treat autistic people like they're a problem, because we're not!": An exploration of what underpins the relationship between masking and mental health for autistic teenagers* [Doctoral thesis, University College London].
- Chu, S. Y., Lee, J., Wong, Y. Y., Gan, C. H., Fierro, V., & Hersh, D. (2021). Knowledge mediates attitude in autism spectrum disorders? Data from Malaysia. *International Journal of*

Developmental Disabilities, 69(4), 568–577.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2021.1975254>

- Clarke, E. B., McCauley, J. B., Lutz, A., Gotelli, M., Sheinkopf, S. J., & Lord, C. (2024). Understanding profound autism: Implications for stigma and supports. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 15:1287096. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2024.1287096>
- Cleary, M., West, S., & Mclean, L. (2022). From 'refrigerator mothers' to empowered advocates: The evolution of the eutism parent. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 44(1), 64-70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840.2022.2115594>
- Cremin, K., Healy, O., Spirtos, M., & Quinn, S. (2021). Autism awareness interventions for children and adolescents: A scoping review. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 33, 27–50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-020-09741-1>
- Deng, J. (2023). A multimodal discourse analysis of posters based on visual grammar. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 15(6). <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v15i6.21560>
- Dillenburger, K., Jordan, J. A., McKerr, L., Lloyd, K., & Schubotz, D. (2017). Autism awareness in children and young people: Surveys of two populations. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 61(8), 766-777. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12389>
- Dillenburger, K., Jordan, J. A., McKerr, L., Devine, P., & Keenan, M. (2013). Awareness and knowledge of autism and autism interventions: A general population survey. *Research in autism spectrum disorders*, 7(12), 1558-1567. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2013.09.004>
- Egge, H. S. B., & Gabarron, E. (2024). TikTok and YouTube shorts by autistic individuals for increasing autism awareness. *Studies in Health Technology and Informatics*, 316, 1891-1895. <https://doi.org/10.3233/SHTI240802>
- Eklund, F. (2023). Telling the small, fragmented, and 'in-complete' about experiences with sexual violations: Narrative stancetaking in feminist hashtag storytelling practices on Twitter in Sweden. In A. Georgakopoulou & M. De Fina (Eds.), *Small stories research* (pp. 227–247). Routledge.
- Ezirim, C., & Aworo-Okoroh, J. (2023). Multimodal analysis of selected health awareness materials: A visual grammar approach. *South Asian Research Journal of Arts, Language, and Literature*, 5(4), 97-107. <https://doi.org/10.36346/sarjall.2023.v05i04.002>
- Freyburger, P. (2023). *Small stories in oral histories: Multimodal analyses of narratives about extreme sensory experiences*. In A. Georgakopoulou, K. Giaxoglou, & S. Patron (Eds.), *Small stories research: Tales, tellings, and tellers across contexts* (pp. 248-268). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003253563>

- Georgakopoulou, A. (2014). Small stories transposition and social media: A micro-perspective on the 'Greek crisis'. *Discourse & Society*, 25(4), 519-539. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926514536963>
- Georgakopoulou, A., Giaxoglou, K., & Patron, S. (Eds.). (2023). *Small Stories Research: Tales, Tellings, and Tellers Across Contexts* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003253563>
- Han, E., Scior, K., & Crane, L. (2023). Development of stigma-related support for autistic adults: Insights from the autism community. *Autism*, 27(6). <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613221143590>
- Hodges, H., Fealko, C., & Soares, N. (2019). Autism spectrum disorder: definition, epidemiology, causes, and clinical evaluation. *Transitional Pediatrics*, 9(S1). <https://doi.org/10.21037/tp.2019.09.09>
- Hotez, E., Phan, J. M., & Truong, D. M. (2024). Addressing stigma-related health disparities for autistic individuals through cultural competemility: Insights from research and lived experience. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 26, 761-770. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-024-01551-y>
- Hu, H. (2019). A multimodal discourse analysis of movie posters based on visual grammar. Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Social Science and Education Research (SSER 2019) (pp. 798-803). Francis Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.25236/sser.2019.150>
- Iftikhar, S., Shahnaz, A., & Masroor, F. (2020). Multimodal discourse analysis of the poster covers of Academy Award-winning animated feature movies. *Linguistics*. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/59/20241790>
- Kalra, R., Gupta, M., & Sharma, P. (2023). Recent advancement in interventions for autism spectrum disorder: A review. *Journal of Neurorestoratology*, 11(3), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnrt.2023.100068>
- Kempen, G. (1999). Visual Grammar: Multimedia for grammar and spelling instruction in primary education. In *CALL: Media, design, and applications* (pp. 223-238). Swets & Zeitlinger.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. Routledge.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Link, B. G., & Phelan, J. C. (2006). Stigma and its public health implications. *The Lancet*, 367(9509), 528-529. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(06\)68184-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(06)68184-1)
- Mac Cárthaigh, S., & López, B. (2020). Factually based autism awareness campaigns may not always be effective in changing attitudes towards autism: Evidence from British and

- South Korean nursing students. *Autism*, 24(5), 1177-1190.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361319898362>
- Ministry of Health Malaysia. (2019). *Laporan Tahunan KKM 2019*. Retrieved from https://www.moh.gov.my/moh/resources/Penerbitan/Penerbitan_Utama/ANNUAL_REPORT/LAPORAN_TAHUNAN_KKM_2019/mobile/index.html
- Ministry of Health Malaysia. (2021). *Agenda Nasional Malaysia Sihat (ANMS)*. Retrieved from <https://www.moh.gov.my/index.php/pages/view/7012>
- Ministry of Health Malaysia. (n.d.). *Quick reference: Management of autism spectrum disorder in children and adolescents (2nd ed.)*. Clinical Practice Guidelines Secretariat, Malaysian Health Technology Assessment Section (MaHTAS), Medical Development Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia.
<https://www.moh.gov.my/moh/attachments/CPG%202014/QR%20Management%20of%20Autism%20Spectrum%20Disorder%20in%20Children%20and%20Adolescents.pdf>
- Mittmann, G., Schrank, B., & Steifner-Hofbauer. (2023). Portrayal of autism in mainstream media - a scoping review about representation, stigmatisation and effects of consumers in non-fiction and fiction media. *Current Psychology*, 43, 8008-8017.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04959-6>
- Mohd Rahmat, N. N., & Najihah, F. N. (2024, June 13). *Autism stigmas prevent families from seeking help: Murder case of autistic boy spurs call for change*. New Straits Times.
<https://api.nst.com.my/news/nation/2024/06/1063100/autism-stigmas-prevent-families-seeking-help-murder-case-autistic-boy>
- Neik, T. T. X., Lee, L. W., Low, H. M., Chia, N. K. H., & Chua, A. C. K. (2014). Prevalence, diagnosis, treatment and research on autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in Singapore and Malaysia. *International Journal of Special Education*, 29(3), 82-92.
- Perepa, P., Wallace, S., & Guldberg, K. (2023). *The experiences of marginalised families with autistic children*. University of Birmingham.
<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/public-affairs/policy-briefings/2022/autistic-children>
- Phoenix, C., & Sparkes, A. C. (2009). Being Fred: Big stories, small stories and the accomplishment of a positive ageing identity. *Qualitative Research*, 9(2), 83-99.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794108099322>
- Ping, K. (2018). A visual grammar analysis of Lesaffre's website. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 9(6), 38-41. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.9n.6p.38>
- Qadha, A. M., & Al-Wasy, B. Q. (2024). The impact of implementing visual grammar on learning participle adjectives by EFL learners. *PSU Research Review*, 8(2), 455-466.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/PRR-02-2022-0017>

- Sarris, M. (2024, June 13). *The stigma of autism: When all eyes are upon you*. Interactive Autism Network. [The Stigma Of Autism: When Everyone Is Staring At You](#)
- Serter, S. S., & Yıldız, S. (2021). A communication study for measuring and increasing autism awareness through a social media campaign. *Selcuk Communication Journal*, 14(4), 1844-1878.
- Turnock, A., Langley, K., & Jones, C. R. G. (2022). Understanding stigma in autism: A narrative review and theoretical model. *Autism in Adulthood*, 4(1), 76-91. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2021.0005>
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and disability. UN DESA Social Inclusion. <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability>
- van Rosmalen, L., van der Veer, R., & van der Horst, F. C. (2020). The nature of love: Harlow, Bowlby and Bettelheim on affectionless mothers. *History of psychiatry*, 31(2), 227–231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957154X19898997>
- Yu, B. (2019). *Multimodal discourse analysis of posters*. In *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Art Studies: Science, Experience, Education (ICASSEE 2019)*. Atlantis Press. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icassee-19.2019.83>
- Zhang, P. (2023, March). *Visual grammar in multimodal discourse: A case study of Nezha's poster images*. In *Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Education, Language, Art and Inter-cultural Communication (ICELAIC 2022)* (pp. 59-65). Athena Publishing. *Athena Transactions in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.55060/s.atssh.230322.010>