

ANALYZING THE LANGUAGE STYLES ON “FOLKATIVE” SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

This study explores how language style and visual elements work together in the Instagram captions of Folkative. Guided by Kress and van Leeuwen’s Multimodal Social Semiotics and McCrimmon’s classification of language styles into formal, informal, and colloquial, the research analyzes 20 captions posted in June and July 2025. The findings reveal that colloquial language is the most dominant, found in 10 captions, followed by 7 informal and 3 formal ones. These styles are often supported by visual features like emojis, layout, images, and typography. For instance, emojis such as *fire*, *heart hands*, and *clapping hands* enhance the friendly, expressive tone used in colloquial captions. The combination of casual language with relatable visuals helps create a personal and engaging message, especially for Gen Z and Millennials. This shows how Folkative effectively blends style and visuals to strengthen brand communication, particularly in promotional content and business partnerships on social media.

Keywords: Digital Communication, Folkative, Language Style, McCrimmon, Multimodal, Social Semiotic

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1. Introduction

Folkative, a digital media platform founded in 2018, has grown into one of Indonesia’s most influential Instagram-based communities, with over six million followers. It shares content on art, culture, lifestyle, and local brand promotion using a casual and relatable style, especially appealing to millennials and Gen Z. As a visual platform, Instagram enables communication through both text and multimodal features such as images, emojis, colors, and typography, making it essential to analyze language in connection with visual elements.

This study draws on Kress and van Leeuwen’s Multimodal Social Semiotics (2010) and McCrimmon’s (1972) classification of language styles which are formal, informal, and colloquial to examine how Folkative integrates verbal and visual strategies in its captions. Social media language, as noted by Tagg (2015) and Zhao and Zappavigna (2018), is often flexible and expressive, combining written and visual modes to build identity and social connection.

Accordingly, this research focuses on two objectives. The first is to identify the types of language styles used in Folkative’s Instagram captions and determine the most dominant one. The second is to analyze how visual elements such as emojis, images, layout, and typography support the communication style. The findings are expected to provide insights into the relationship between language, multimodal features, and youth-oriented digital communication, while also offering practical implications for marketers, content creators, and communication professionals.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language Styles in Digital Communication

Language style is central to shaping tone, identity, and communicative intent in digital contexts. Crystal (2011) notes that online platforms encourage creative and flexible language use, often blending formal and informal expressions such as slang, abbreviations, and code-switching. On Instagram, this hybridity reflects users' social contexts and cultural backgrounds (Nurhaidal et al., 2022; Mardikantoro et al., 2023).

McCrimmon (1972) classifies language styles into three types. Formal style is characterized by grammatical complexity, precision, and objectivity, often used in professional contexts. Informal style is more personal and relaxed, using contractions and simpler sentence structures suitable for everyday communication. Colloquial style mirrors spoken language, with slang, short sentences, and expressive tones that create intimacy and relatability. This framework is useful in analyzing how style is adapted to the communicative purposes of social media platforms.

2.2 Multimodal Social Semiotics

Kress and van Leeuwen (2010) propose Multimodal Social Semiotics to explain how meaning is constructed across multiple modes, including text, images, emojis, layout, and typography. On Instagram, users rarely rely on text alone; instead, they integrate visual and verbal resources to create layered meanings. Visual strategies such as color, typography, and emojis carry strong communicative potential (Danesi, 2017). For instance, bold fonts may project authority, while playful emojis can enhance humor or emotional tone. This theoretical lens is particularly relevant for understanding Instagram captions that combine linguistic and visual resources to engage audiences.

2.3 Folkative and Digital Communication

Folkative, launched in 2018, has positioned itself as a youth-oriented digital media platform promoting news, culture, and local brands. Its concise and relatable communication style aligns with Gen Z's fast-paced media consumption. Studies have shown its role in meeting the informational needs of young audiences (Putri et al., 2024) and highlighted the use of thematic structures in captions to enhance clarity and engagement (Helmie & Sumitra, 2024).

2.4 Previous Studies

Previous research provides a foundation for this study. Rismala (2019) identified the functions of different language styles in advertisements, demonstrating their role in shaping audience perception. Putri and Lobodally (2023) showed how multimodal resources in Instagram brand ambassador posts build audience trust, while Susketya and Nurhayati (2023) examined political Instagram posts, emphasizing the importance of integrating verbal and visual modes. Zhao and Zappavigna (2018) also noted that Instagram communication constructs identity and affiliation through text-image relations. More recently, Telaumbanua et al. (2024) found that Gen Z frequently uses slang, abbreviations, and informal tones on Instagram, reinforcing the platform's role in expressing identity.

Together, these studies demonstrate that meaning on social media is constructed through the interaction of language and multimodal elements. This research builds on that foundation by analyzing how Folkative employs formal, informal, and colloquial styles alongside multimodal features such as emojis, images, and typography to communicate effectively with its audience.

3. Method

3.1 Kind of Research

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the language styles used in Folkative's Instagram captions. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of how different semiotic resources such as text, images, emojis, layout, and typography interact to create meaning in digital media contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In the analysis, two theoretical frameworks were applied. McCrimmon's (1972) classification of language styles provided the basis for categorizing captions into formal, informal, and colloquial styles. Meanwhile, the Multimodal Social Semiotics framework developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2010) guided the examination of how visual elements such as emojis, layout, typography, and imagery supported and shaped the communication style. This combined approach allowed the study to capture both the linguistic and visual dimensions of Folkative's communication strategies on Instagram.

3.2 Data Collection

The primary data consist of 20 Instagram captions posted by Folkative between June and July 2025. The posts were purposively selected for their rich combination of textual and visual content relevant to the study's objectives. Data were collected through online observation of Folkative's official Instagram account, with screenshots taken to preserve the captions, emojis, images, layout, and typography. This method ensured authentic, naturalistic data reflecting real-world social media communication.

3.3 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Multimodal Discourse Analysis framed by Kress and van Leeuwen's (2010) Multimodal Social Semiotics. Language style classification followed McCrimmon's (1972) categories of formal, informal, and colloquial styles. The analysis involved detailed manual coding to identify recurring linguistic and visual patterns, supported by thematic interpretation to understand how modes combined to convey meaning. Coding reliability was maintained through iterative review and comparison with relevant literature to ensure thoroughness and validity.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Result

This study analyzed 20 Instagram captions posted by Folkative through the lens of Multimodal Social Semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2010), which views communication as a meaning-making process shaped by the interaction of language, image, emoji, layout, and typography. Each caption was further categorized using McCrimmon's (1972) classification of language styles: formal, informal, and colloquial. The results showed that colloquial style was the most dominant, appearing in 10 out of 20 captions. This style featured conversational expressions, contractions, local slang, rhetorical questions, and a playful tone, illustrated by phrases such as "whiff," "mood-changer," "keep the vibes high," and "just dropped," which made the messages sound casual and relatable.

Visual resources played a crucial role in amplifying these stylistic choices. Emojis such as 🤍, 🧡, 🤝, and 🌟 were not merely decorative but conveyed emotion, strengthened community ties, and added humor. Photographic imagery, uncluttered

layouts, and consistent bold sans-serif typography supported readability and reinforced the friendly, conversational tone. The overall design often mirrored the simplicity of chat-based interfaces, enhancing accessibility and immediacy.

This multimodal strategy enables Folkative to construct a brand persona that is casual, authentic, and emotionally engaging. By blending colloquial language with visual elements, the platform reduces distance between brand and audience, presenting content that feels personal rather than commercial. Promotional posts, for instance, often incorporated products and brand mentions in an organic, conversational style that resonates more effectively with audiences than overt advertising.

In conclusion, Folkative’s integration of multimodal elements strengthens the effectiveness of its colloquial communication style. This approach builds emotional connections, fosters trust, and positions the platform as a relatable voice in digital spaces. At the same time, it supports broader business communication goals by enhancing brand identity, sustaining audience engagement, and creating persuasive opportunities for partnerships and collaborations.

The analysis of 20 Instagram captions from Folkative revealed that colloquial language style is the most dominant, appearing in 10 captions, followed by informal style in 7 captions, and formal style in 3 captions. Visual elements such as emojis, imagery, typography, and layout strongly support these language styles by enhancing tone and engagement.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of language styles in Folkative Instagram captions.

Language Style	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Colloquial	10	50%
Informal	7	35%
Formal	3	15%

4.2 Discussion

The findings align with previous studies such as Zhao and Zappavigna (2018) and Telaumbanua et al. (2024), which emphasize the role of informal and colloquial language in creating audience connection on social media platforms. The dominance of colloquial style, supported by expressive emojis and playful typography, suggests that Folkative intentionally fosters a warm and relatable brand personality aimed at Gen Z and millennials.

A possible explanation is that colloquial and informal language styles reduce psychological distance between brand and followers, promoting engagement and trust. This is consistent with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2010) Multimodal Social Semiotics theory, which posits that meaning is constructed through the integration of verbal and visual modes.

However, some limitations include the relatively small sample of captions (20 posts) and the focus on a single social media platform, which may affect generalizability. Future research should consider larger datasets and cross-platform analysis to better understand language style dynamics in social media communication.

5. Conclusion

This study examined 20 Instagram captions posted by Folkative between June and July 2025 through McCrimmon’s (1972) classification of language styles and Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2010) Multimodal Social Semiotics. The results indicate that colloquial style was the most frequent, found in 10 captions, while informal appeared in 7 and formal in 3. The colloquial

style was marked by relaxed expressions, casual vocabulary, and emotional tones that built a personal and relatable connection with the audience, especially younger users.

Visual elements further reinforced these linguistic choices. Emojis such as 🧐 and 🌊 amplified expressiveness and emotional resonance, while photos of everyday scenes made the content feel more authentic. Layouts resembling chat messages and the use of simple fonts supported a casual and accessible tone. Informal style was often employed in promotional or business-related posts, allowing Folkative to appear professional yet approachable, while formal style was reserved for serious or data-driven content.

Overall, the integration of language styles with visual design enabled Folkative to communicate in a way that is authentic, modern, and relatable. By flexibly shifting tone according to context and combining it with multimodal features, the platform successfully strengthens audience engagement and positions itself as a brand attuned to digital communication trends.

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