

## THE 12<sup>TH</sup> SARAWAK STATE ELECTION: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF BANNERS & POSTERS OF THE RULING AND OPPOSITION PARTIES

<sup>1</sup>Siti Haslina Hussin

<sup>2</sup>Jamilah Maliki

<sup>3</sup>Malia Taibi

<sup>1,2&3</sup>Fakulti Bahasa dan Komunikasi, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300, Kota Samarahan Sarawak

<sup>1</sup>hhaslina@unimas.my, <sup>2</sup>mjamilah@unimas.my, <sup>3</sup>tmalia@unimas.my

Tarikh dihantar: 5 Jun 2023 / Tarikh diterima: 30 Jun 2023

**Abstract:** This study analysed selected election banners and posters in Kuching and Kota Samarahan areas during the 2021 Sarawak State Election. Crystal and Davy's framework was used to analyse the graphetic, typographical, and textual features of the election poster and banners. A total of 20 posters and 12 banners were photographed, studied, and analysed. The results show that at the graphetic level, the ruling party used new colour and logo as a new identity. Whereas the opposition parties use many colours which confused the electorate. The ruling and opposition parties similarly utilize photos of the candidates and the logo of the party. Typographically, the opposition parties use more capital letters in their messages. The syntactic features of the ruling party are clear, precise, factual, and mostly in declarative moods. The stylistic analysis shows there are similarities in the strategies used in the election banners by the ruling and opposition parties. Nevertheless, they share differences in the strategies for election banners.

**Keywords:** stylistic analysis, election posters, election banners, Sarawak, Malaysia

## INTRODUCTION

Political posters are a means through which parties and candidates present themselves to the electorates. Traditionally, these posters have been used for propaganda purposes and persuasion in election campaigns (Popova, 2012). In election campaigns, political advertising takes the form of campaign speeches, broadcast advertising, walkabouts, online media messages and campaign materials such as election posters, banners, flyers and fishtails. Despite the increase in the use of social media for election campaign (Barlett et.al, 2015; Narasimhamurthy N, 2014 & Pătruț & Monalache, 2013), election posters and banners are still an important form of political advertising to influence voters. Sillion (2006) sums up those three theses of the functions of election posters: (a) assurance of the fast spreading of the ideas they contain, (b) creation of a good image of the party they are made for, and (c) persuasion of the electors.

According to Ansari (2000), election posters play a major part in spreading information and in convincing electorates to votes certain party or candidate". Election posters and banners convey the party's general campaign messages and allow the party to send unmediated messages directly to the voters (Russmann, 2012). Political parties set aside a huge budget for campaigns, inclusive of spending on election banners, up 20% of the campaign communication budget for France, Belgium, Germany and Ireland (Dumitrescu, 2009). Dumitrescu's survey (2012) revealed that in some countries, election posters play a more crucial role to show the campaign strength of a party, for example, election posters are more important for this purpose in Belgium than in France. Among the European countries, Austria has the highest density of election posters (Burkert-Dottolo, 2004 as cited in Russmann, 2012).

In Malaysia, the ruling party (Barisan Nasional, BN) spent almost RM100 million in the 2013 parliamentary election on campaign materials (Kamarudin, 2015). Section 19 of the Elections Act does not allow candidates to spend more than RM200,000 in their campaigns, the expenditure of candidates from the ruling party exceed this amount (Lee, 2007; Weiss, 2000). Use of election posters during campaigns is costly but it is often seen as the only means to reach voters when access to the media is restricted (Norris, 2000, as cited in Dumitrescu, 2009), particularly for opposition parties since mainstream newspapers are often affiliated to the ruling party. In this paper, opposition parties and the ruling party are alternatively referred to as the minor and major parties respectively.

Research has indicated that the posters for major and minor parties are different. Dumitrescu (2012) reported that the major parties use poster designs that attract voters, and the messages signal their power whereas the posters of minor parties provide information on their party and ideology in order to increase their voter base. In the Romanian 2012 parliamentary campaign, most of the election posters of the major party transmitted information about the candidate's identity (number/position on the voting paper), photograph, party logo, party name, and slogan (Pătruț & Manolache, 2013). The posters made references to ideology and political values but hardly attacked the opposition parties. Using manipulated campaign posters about a fictional party, Bremmer (2012) studied the effect of visuals in European campaign posters and concluded that effective campaign posters need to contain the candidate's image and the issue in text form in order to attract the voters' attention and help them to form a positive attitude towards the party or candidate and remember the poster better. On the basis of Dumitrescu (2012) and Pătruț & Manolache's (2013) findings, it seems that the election posters of the major parties have the candidate's image whereas the election posters of the minor parties tend to highlight issues. The major parties' strategy in election posters appears to target increasing the voter's recognition of images and icons associated with the party (Whalen, 2012). "By studying

election posters, we can better understand how propaganda has been used to influence public opinion and how messages are designed for audiences” (Seidman, 2008 p.413).

In Malaysia, little is known about differences in election campaign materials of minor and major parties. Most studies have focused on voter perceptions and behavior (e.g., Besar, Fauzi, Ghazali, & Ghani, 2014; Besar, Ghani, Jali, & Lyndon, 2015) and the impact of online media in the 2008 and 2013 parliamentary elections (e.g., Gomez, 2013; Lim & Ong, 2006; Rajaratnam, 2009). Despite the rise of Internet as an alternative medium for campaigning, Sualman, Salleh and Firdaus’s (2008) survey of 1,049 registered voters in Permatang Pauh constituency has shown that election poster is the third most trusted media during elections in Malaysia, after candidate’s photograph and television coverage. Sualman et al. also found that poster is the second most effective media, after campaign speeches, in determining whether a candidate wins the election. A study in Malaysia (Aman, 2014) focused on manifestos of the main political parties in the 13th Malaysian parliamentary elections but not election posters. The language analysis revealed that the ruling party used a lot of colors, photographs, and font colors and sizes to highlight their leader compared to the opposition party, concurring with Dumitrescu (2012) and Pătruț & Manolache’s (2013) findings. Aman (2014) also found that the ruling party used clauses whereas the opposition party used phrases in their manifestos. The ruling party also used more personal pronouns (exclusive-we, inclusive-we, I) to manipulate the social relationship with the electorate. More studies are needed to examine the strategies used by political parties to influence voters because political advertisements use vague and ambiguous language to misinform and strike fear among the electorate (Kaid, 2000).

This study aims to examine the selected election posters and banners during the 2021 Sarawak State election in Kuching and Kota Samarahan, Sarawak using stylistic analysis. The objectives are to examine the graphical and typographical features of the posters and banners in the study corpus. This study also determines to identify and discuss the textual features, which comprise of the syntactic and semantic features of the posters and banners.

## METHOD

The largest among the 14 states in Malaysia, Sarawak is located on the Borneo Island. As recorded in 2021, the population of Sarawak is estimated at 2.82 million, in which Kuching has 711, 500 people of the total of 812,900 people in Kuching Division. On the other hand, there are 102,700 people at Kota Samarahan, in Samarahan Division. Sarawak is divided into 11 administrative divisions and for election purpose, the state is divided into 82 constituencies comprising 1,213,769 registered voters (The Borneo Post, 2021). The ruling party, Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS), made its maiden electoral appearance in 2021 Sarawak state election. The incumbent Premier of Sarawak (then was widely known as Chief Minister) is Datuk Amar Abang Johari Abang Openg who took office on 13 January 2017. GPS comprises of Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB), Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP), and Parti Rakyat Sarawak (PRS). Whereas the opposition parties include Democratic Action Party (DAP), Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), Parti Bumi Kenyalang (PBK), Parti Sarawak Bersatu (PSB). Besides political parties, independent candidates also contest in the state election.

The corpus of this studies consists of 20 posters (10 each from the ruling and oppositions parties) and 12 banners (6 each from the ruling and oppositions parties) photographed from the 2021 Sarawak State Election at Kuching and Kota Samarahan areas. Kuching was selected because it is considered as the urban area, in which some hot seats are contested rigorously by the candidates. Whereas seats at Kota Samarahan areas are strongly



held by the ruling party. Thus, some of the political posters and banners are in mandarin, Iban language and local Malay Sarawak language, literal translation is used to explain them. In Malaysia, political posters, banners, and fishtails can only be put up in the two weeks between the announcement of the candidate nominate date and election date. The random selection of posters (10 GPS, 2 DAP, 2 ASPIRASI, 2 PKR, 2 PSB, 1 PBK, 1 AMANAH) and banners (6 GPS, 4 DAP, 2 ASPIRASI) was based on accessibility and availability and purely for academic purpose.

### Instrument: Data analysis framework

This study employs the stylistic framework of Crystal and Davy (1969) to analyse the selected election banners and posters. This framework has been used extensively until now for the analysis of political advertisements. For example, Sharndama and Mohamed (2013) used the framework to analyse selected political campaign posters and slogans in Nigeria; Daud et al, (2018) on election banners of ruling and opposition parties in Malaysia. Nevertheless, this framework has also been used for other forms of stylistic analysis such as sign boards of churches in Enugu Metropolis (Ofoegbu and Okey-Kalu, 2019, magazine advertisements (Li, 2009; Zhu, 2006) and Youtube video advertisement (Damayanti, 2017).

In this study, Crystal, and Davy’s (1969) stylistic framework approaches the analysis from three levels. The first level covers the graphetic features which include colour, size, and artistic flair. The second level of stylistic analysis deals with typographical features which are punctuation and capitalization. The third level examines textual features which include choice of lexical items, syntax, and semantics. Syntactic analysis deals with emotive versus factual, figurative versus literal, phrasal versus full sentence and declarative versus question messages. Analysis focuses on identifying patterns of language use and change. For semantic analysis, this study looks at the clear versus ambiguous messages. Table 1 shows the framework of stylistic analysis for election posters and banners.

**Table 1: The framework of stylistic analysis for election posters and banners**

Level of stylistic analysis	Elements and Definition	Examples
Level 1 Graphetic features	<b>Colours</b> The usage of any colours	 <p>Example 1</p>
	<b>Size</b> The usage of photographs, texts, and logo	

**Level 2**  
Typographical  
features

**Artistic**

The usage of effects such as shadow and outline

Example 2



Example 3



Example 4



Example 5

**Capitalisation**

The whole message is capitalized

**Punctuation**

The usage of punctuation marks such as exclamation mark and question mark

**Level 3**  
Textual  
features

Syntactic features:

**Emotive**

words appeal to emotions



*“KITA BINA MASA DEPAN ANAK BANGSA LEBIH BAIK” (WE BUILD A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN)*

Example 6

vs

**Factual** words present facts that appeal to logic



Example 7

**Level 3**

Syntactic features:

**Figurative** language refers to a figure of speech that uses a word or phrase which does not have its literal meaning.



Example 8

vs

**Literal** language means exactly what it says

**Syntactic features:**  
**phrasal**

A phrase is a group of words that does not express a complete thought and does not have a subject and predicate pair



Example 9



‘VOTE FOR AMANAH: WILL YOU NEVER LEARN?’

Example 10

Vs

**Full sentence**

A complete sentence always contains a verb, express a complete idea and makes sense standing alone.



“KITA PILIH CALON GPS” (WE CHOOSE GPS CANDIDATE)

Example 11

**Declarative**

Declarative are sentences in which it is normal for the subject to be present and to precede the verbs and includes imperative

Vs



Example 12

**Question**

Interrogatives are sentences, which are normally marked by question mark.



Example 13

Level 3

**Semantic features**

**Clear**

Clear messages have one meaning only.

vs



(GPS GOVERNMENT FAILS, PRICE INCREASES, PEOPLE SUFFER!)

Example 14

**Ambiguous**

Ambiguous messages are open for interpretation.



*Literal translation from Mandarin: A man who is looked down on by a thousand men still works like a cow*

Example 15

## RESULTS

### Level 1 Graphetic features (colour, size, artistic)

Graphetic features refer to the use of colour, size of images and text, artistic effects of text, photographs and logos in the election banners and posters. All the election banners and posters analysed presented that the photographs were well coloured and attractive. The prominent colours used were red, white, and blue. This was to highlight the colour of the political parties. For the ruling party, this was the first time it used the new brand as Gabungan Party Sarawak (GPS). It embraced white or red as the background colours for its banners and posters. Whereas two of the opposition parties used blue to attract attention. Even so, both parties used different tones of blue. Although not prominent, other colours used were orange and yellow. It is interesting to point out that the colours used for texts in the election banners and posters were black, white, red, yellow, and even green.

The usage of photographs, text and logos were large enough to catch the attention of the electorates and any passers-by. All GPS posters show the photographs of the candidates of the ruling party were placed on the left-hand side. Whereas, in the opposition posters, 6 of the candidates' photographs were put on the right-hand side, 1 on the left hand side and 2 in the middle of the posters. Moreover, for the placement of logo, 9 of the logos of the GPS were placed on the bottom of the posters and only one was on the top. Moreover, the ruling and the opposition parties placed their logos on the bottom right-hand side in 5 banners, whereas only 1 banner of both parties showed the logo on the left hand side.

The graphic features on the ruling and opposition parties' posters and banners were considered interesting, with artistic flair. Among the artistic effects used were shadow and outline of the text, which could be found in 3 of the ruling party posters, and 3 of the opposition parties' posters. Shadow and outline of text could also be found in 2 of the ruling party banners and 3 of the opposition parties. Text written in white was outlined in either black or red. The shadow and outline with different colours of the text were used to make certain messages stand out from the rest of the text. Thus, emphasized the main point that the candidates want to convey.

## **Level 2 Typographical features (capitalization, punctuation)**

According to Crystal and Davy (1969), the second level of stylistic analysis analyses the typographical features of text which include capitalization and punctuation. Out of 20 election posters, 8 used capital letters for the text (6 ruling party; 2 opposition parties). The ruling party used more capitalization than the opposition party in the posters. On the other hand, the opposition parties used more capitalization in the banners. For instance, "GPS KERAJAAN GAGAL, HARGA BARANG NAIK, RAKYAT SUSAH" (meaning GPS is a failed government, prices strike up, people suffer". Although it seems that capital letters are more difficult to read, the opposition opted the usage because apparently, capital letters served the purpose of emphasizing the importance of the message they wanted to convey.

The ruling and the opposition parties used both the exclamation and questions marks in their posters and banners. The usage of exclamation in the posters by the ruling party is less/more than the opposition parties. On the other hand, opposition party used more question marks in their banners. For example, "It's Time to Change!!!". The exclamation mark adds affective meaning to the text by making the message sound very angry and serious. On the other hand, the question mark lures the electorate to doubt the credibility of the candidate. The following examples illustrate the use of rhetorical questions to engage the electorate and exclamation marks to make a strong statement:

Excerpts 1-2:

1. I am SIH HUA TONG. I am NOT a POLITICAL FROG! – GPS banner
2. CCJ, where's the promised RM2000 for each Sarawakian every year? - GPS banner

## **Level 3 Textual features**

In Crystal and Davy's (1969) framework, the third level of stylistic analysis involves an analysis of textual choices which encompass syntax and semantics. For the syntactic features, analysis focuses on emotive versus factual words, figurative versus literal language, phrasal versus full sentences, and declarative versus questions sentences. Apparently, the usage of emotive words in the ruling party's posters and banners was similar with the opposition parties. 2 of the posters and 3 of banners used emotive words, whereas 5 of the posters and 3 of banners used factual words.



### *Excerpts 3-6*

1. “*DEMI MASA DEPAN ANAK-ANAK STAKAN. KITA SAMA SAMA BANTU*” (FOR THE FUTURE OF STAKAN CHILDREN, WE HELP TOGETHER) – GPS poster in Malay language
2. “*KITA BINA MASA DEPAN ANAK BANGSA LEBIH BAIK*” (WE BUILD A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN”) - PKR poster in Malay language
3. SARAWAK DIUTAMAKAN; SARAWAK FIRST; SATOK FOR ALL; ALL FOR SATOK - GPS poster
4. CORRUPT POLITICIANS MUST GO. GIVE WAY TO THE NEW GENERATION OF CLEAR YBS - PKR banner

Except 3 is the GPS poster written in Malay. The emotive words were used to appeal to the electorates to think of the future of their children. The same goes with the PKR poster (excerpt 4) which persuaded electorates to defend their future generation. Both posters used Malay language since most of community in the constituencies (Stakan and Satok) are Malays.

The factual words, ‘SARAWAK DIUTAMAKAN; SARAWAK FIRST, SATOK FOR ALL; ALL FOR SATOK’ used in the GPS poster (excerpt 5) clearly indicated that the ruling party presented facts that cannot be denied. On the other hand, the opposition party also presented facts in excerpt 6 ‘CORRUPT POLITICIANS MUST GO. GIVE WAY TO THE NEW GENERATION OF CLEAR YBS’ that persuaded electorates to think and make the best decision to choose their representatives.

### **Figurative versus literal language**

There were only five posters and banners that used figurative language by both the ruling and opposition parties. An example of the poster by the opposition party that used figurative language is “MERDEKA”. On the other hand, an example by the ruling party is “A man who is looked down by a thousand men is willing to work as a cow” (literal translation from mandarin). Here, the meanings of the individual words with figurative language are not obvious without contextual information.

Nine posters and five banners of both the ruling and opposition parties used literal language. An example of the opposition party’ banner that used literal language is “UNDILAH GPS, VOTE FOR GPS, UNDI MEH GPS” (written in Malay language, English and Iban). Using literal language, the meaning is clear and easy to understand.

### **Phrasal versus complete sentences**

The opposition parties used more phrases (6 posters and 4 banners) while the ruling party’s posters (3) and banners (3) used more complete, but short sentences.

#### *Excerpts 7-8*

1. *UNDI AMANAH. SIK PANDE JERAK KAH?* (Vote AMANAH. Aren’t you afraid? -PAN poster in Malay language
2. *KITA PILIH CALON GPS* (We choose GPS candidate)- GPS poster in Malay language

Excerpt 7 shows that phrases were used because the message is straightforward. The candidate asked a direct question, and it can be easily understood. Excerpt 8 reveals an example of the

ruling party’s poster that used complete sentence “KITA PILIH CALON GPS” (We choose GPS candidate). Again, both phrases and complete sentences used by the ruling and opposition parties were short and straightforward.

### Declarative versus interrogative sentences

There are 3 posters and 4 banners that used declarative sentences by the ruling party, while 6 posters and 5 banners by the opposition parties. Moreover, only 2 of the posters and 2 of banners that used questions by all the parties. Examples of the declarative and interrogative sentences are as follows:

Excerpts 9-10

1. Referendum is the only chance - ASPIRASI poster
2. CCJ, where’s the promised RM2000 for each Sarawakian every year? – GSP banner

Excerpt 9 indicates that the use of declarative sentence was to make a serious statement. On the other hand, the interrogative sentence in excerpt 10 shows how the opponent candidate was questioned, suggesting that his credibility was doubtful. Here, the direct attack strategy was used in order challenge the candidate, or even ridiculed his credibility.

### Semantic Features (clear vs ambiguous)

Analyzing the last aspect of the stylistic analysis involves the semantic features, which include clear versus ambiguous meanings in messages on the posters and banners.

**Table 2: Results of the semantic analysis of posters and banners of ruling and opposition parties**

Semantic features	Ruling party	Opposition parties	Total
Clear	14	12	26/32
Ambiguous	2	4	6/32

The ruling and opposition parties were similar in using clear messages in their posters and banners as shown in table 2. An example of a clear message is “*Untuk Mu, Kerana Mu, Bersama Mu. UTAMAKAN SARAWAK. SATOK UNTUK SEMUA. SEMUA UNTUK SATOK*” (For You, Because of You, With You. SARAWAK FIRST. SATOK FOR ALL. ALL FOR SATOK) found on a GPS poster. Whereas an example of the opposition party’s clear message is “WE SEE THE FUTURE. WE SHARE”. The clear messages used by the ruling and opposing parties mostly directed electorates to vote for their candidates.

On the other hand, the semantic features that revealed ambiguous messages were quite difficult for people outside of the constituencies to understand the context because the messages were unclear. For example, “*Tanpa SARAEXIT, Telekomunikasi gagal, Jalan raya buruk selama-lamanya*” (Without SARAEXIT, communication fails, roads are bad forever). Another example is “*Membawa 300 ribu petisyen rakyat ke DUN menggubal Ordinan Referendum*” (Bringing 300,000 people’s petitions to State Assembly to enact Referendum Ordinance). here, the meaning is not clear to people who do not know the context or the political situation in the constituency.

## DISCUSSION

Firstly, graphetic features refers to the analysis of the layout of texts, size or shape of words and other features like bold print, italics and so on (Agbede ,2016). In terms of colours used in the posters and banners, the opposition parties try to confuse electorate by using the same colour (blue) like the ruling party in the previous state election. Previously, the ruling party was under the flag of Barisan Nasional which is synonymous with the color of blue. Whereas in this election, the ruling party appeared with the new official logo and color to highlight its new identity after being re-branded. The color white used in many posters, banners, and flags to signify purity and the party's commitment to serve the people. Other colours used by the opposition parties simply represent the colors and attitudes of their parties. Nevertheless, the usage of the image of rhinoceros hornbills (*Buceros rhinoceros*), locally known as *burung kenyalang*, by the ruling party and one of the opposition parties demonstrates the Sarawak party's association with their own local cultures. This is because the hornbills are used as the state's emblem. Besides the logo, the usage of candidates' photos was taken seriously by the ruling and opposition parties. As mentioned by Whalen (2012), the images of the candidate and party icons are important because they help voters to recognize the party. The ruling party maintained using the photo of the chief minister (now Sarawak Premiere) as the poster boy to reinforce the "Sarawak First" campaign strategy. In contrast to the findings of a study by Aman (2014), the usage of development photos by the ruling and opposition parties shows a new trend in which they use them to highlight their achievement and plans for the development of their constituencies. Bremmer (2012) stated that the candidate's image and the issue in text form help voters to form a positive attitude towards the party or candidate. For the election banners, the ruling and opposition parties utilize more text compared to photos as they want to highlight manifestos and issues to the electorates. The usage of capitalization, italic, and other artistic flair was intended deliberately to make the features prominent or important in order to catch the attention of the audience instantly as asserted by Agbede (2016).

Secondly, at the textual level, the stylistic analysis showed that ruling parties repeatedly used short sentences in both posters and banners telling the electorates to vote for a particular candidate. Although using short sentences, GPS as the ruling party paid attention to highlighting it's 'promises' to the electorates. This is important to the ruling party because electorates need to know what the government continues to do for the people. Placing the posters and banners at strategic locations, like at the traffic lights and roundabouts, the ruling party made sure the short messages resemble oral or verbal communication which has the effect of the candidates speaking directly to the electorates.

On the other hand, the opposition parties used phrases especially in banners. Although the space on banners is considered limited, somehow opposition parties managed to use up all the space and highlight political issues that attacked the ruling parties. To make sure electorates can read their messages, opposition parties selected strategic places to put up posters and banners. One place was the roundabouts where drivers have ample time to read especially during packed hours. In terms of using declarative and interrogative sentences, the ruling party and opposition parties used them for the same purposes, which were to declare intentions and question credibility. It seems that the ruling party used declarative sentences to emphasize the government's agenda of putting Sarawak first. Whereas when the opposition parties used declarative sentences, their intention was to persuade electorates to change their belief about the ruling government. For the reason using the interrogative sentences, both the ruling and opposition parties used them as a direct attack strategy to tarnish the credibility of the candidates. Interrogative sentences are generally used to perform speech acts of directly asking

a question or making a request, but they are also used to convey such speech acts indirectly (Min & Park, 2007).

Another aspect that the textual analysis showed is that the ruling and opposition and ruling parties are similar in sending clear messages using factual and literal language in their posters and banners, although there were some posters and banners that used emotive (refer example 6), figurative (refer example 8), and even ambiguous messages (refer example 15). As stated by Sharndama and Mohamed (2013), the emotive words appeal to the emotion of the electorates. For the purpose to influence electorates' decision to choose one party over another, the messages must be presented clearly and directly to them. After all, it seems that the ruling and opposition parties projected different issues from one another.

On the semantic level, although ambiguous sentences were used and they could hardly be interpreted objectively (Sharndama & Mohamed, 2013), parties used clear messages with the intention that electorates can easily memorize and retain the ideology and missions of the candidates. Therefore, if the messages are presented in ambiguous ways, electorates might miss the issues that affecting them. Even though some electorates might understand the issues, others could not afford to be wandered to understand the real messages. The use of short phrases by the ruling party indicates that the party wants electorates to easily synthesize the messages. In terms of using declarative and interrogative sentences, the ruling and opposition parties use them with political strategy. There were some declarative sentences to emphasize the pledge or manifesto of the parties. Whereas questions were asked in banners as to rise curiosity and interrogate the credibility of the candidates. This study merely focuses on pragmatic approach which excludes voters' understanding, interpretation and behavior towards the election posters and banners. Future research should look at how voters perceive the elections and banners based on their own literacy, prior knowledge and experience.

## CONCLUSION

From the stylistic analysis, this study has revealed that there are some similarities and differences of styles used by the ruling and opposition parties in the 2021 Sarawak State election. The first level of analysis indicates one of opposition parties used colors for the purpose to confuse electorate. Whereas the rest simply used their official party colors to entice the electorates to vote their candidates. On the other hand, the ruling party introduces its new color and logo for the first time. The ruling and the opposition parties utilize the usage of candidates' photos in election posters to show the importance of introducing the candidates and their political parties. Whereas the space in banners is mostly filled with texts that contains clear messages by the ruling and opposition parties. The clear messages are based factual and literal language and strategically used to persuade and influence the electorates' opinion. Indeed, there are some banners that have interrogative messages which directly attack the candidates in the hope that the electorates can be influenced to create negative impression about the candidates. The ruling party uses more declarative messages to emphasize their pledges.

The stylistic analysis shows there are similarities in the strategies used by the ruling and opposition parties. Nonetheless, there are also some differences in terms of utilizing election posters and banners to persuade the electorates to vote the candidates and parties. For future study, it is recommended to examine the electorates' reactions towards the election posters and banners to see the effectiveness of strategies used by the ruling and opposition parties.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our utmost gratitude to Universiti Malaysia Sarawak and our colleagues who have provided their expertise and have greatly assisted the research, although they may not agree with all of the interpretations provided in this paper. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Jurnal Komunikasi Borneo for considering our work and providing the opportunity to publish our findings.

## REFERENCES

- Agbede, G. T. (2016). "Stylistics in advertising: A comparative analysis of selected bank advertisements in newspapers and magazines from South Africa and Nigeria." (MA Thesis). Durban University of Technology.
- Aman, I. (2014). Manifesto pilihan raya dan prestasi parti politik utama Malaysia dalam Pilihan Raya Umum ke-13: Suatu analisis linguistik. *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 10, 65-82.
- Bartlett, J. A. M. I. E., Krasodonski-Jones, A. L. E. X., Daniel, N. E. N. G. A. K., Fisher, A., & Jespersen, S. A. S. H. A. (2015). Social media for election communication and monitoring in Nigeria. A report prepared for the Department for International Development (DFID), March.
- Besar, J. A., Fauzi, R., Ghazali, A. S., & Ghani, M. H. A. (2014). Political perceptions in the 2013 general elections: A case study in the federal territory Kuala Lumpur. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 9(2), 135-161.
- Besar, J. A., Ghani, M. H. A., Jali, M. F. M., & Lyndon, N. (2015). Pola politik kaum dalam pilihan raya umum Malaysia ke-13: Kajian ke Negeri Selangor. *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 11(9), 99-111.
- Bremmer, M. (2012). The effects of visuals, focus and congruency in European campaign posters on attention, recall and attitude. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Van Amsterdam, Amsterdam.
- Crystal, D. & Davy, D. (1969). *Investigating English style*. London: Longman.
- Damayanti, P. (2017). *A Stylistic Analysis On Wardah Cosmetics' Commercials as Presented in YouTube Video Advertisement* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Brawijaya).
- Dumitrescu, D. (2009). *Spatial visual communications in election campaigns: Political posters strategies in two democracies*. Doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University.
- Dumitrescu, D. (2012). The importance of being present: Election posters as signals of electoral strength, evidence from France and Belgium. *Party Politics*, 18(6), 941-940.
- Kamarudin, R. P. (2015, August 3). Why Malaysian elections cost billions. <http://www.malaysia-today.net/why-malaysian-elections-cost-billions>.
- Min, H. J., & Park, J. C. (2007, November). Analysis of indirect uses of interrogative sentences carrying anger. In *Proceedings of the 21st Pacific Asia Conference on Language, Information and Computation* (pp. 311-320).
- Narasimhamurthy, N. (2014). *Use and Rise of Social Media as Election Campaign medium in India*.
- Pătruț, M. & Monalache, M. (2013). The political poster: An advertising tool on Facebook. *International Conference SMART 2013. Social media in academia: Research and teaching*, 231-236.
- Ofoegbu, O. C., & Okey-Kalu, O. J. (2021). A Stylistic Analysis of the Communication Styles Used in Selected Signboards of Churches in Enugu Metropolis. *Ansu Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 1(5).

- Russmann, U. (2012). Going negative and going positive: Political parties' communication strategies in election posters, campaign advertisement and press releases during the 2008 Austrian National Election Campaign. [http://paperroom.ipsa.org/app/webroot/papers/paper\\_14728.pdf](http://paperroom.ipsa.org/app/webroot/papers/paper_14728.pdf).
- The Official Portal Sarawak Government (2022) [https://sarawak.gov.my/web/home/article\\_view/240/175/](https://sarawak.gov.my/web/home/article_view/240/175/) (3 May 2022)
- Sharndama, E. C. & Mohammed, I. (2013). Stylistic analysis of selected political campaign posters and slogans in Yola metropolis of Adamawa State in Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (AJHSS)*, 1(3), 60 – 68
- Sualman, I., Salleh, I. M., & Firdaus, N. (2008). Media dan pilihanraya: Kajian kes di parlimen Permatang Pauh, Pulau Pinang. [https://www.academia.edu/1293001/Media\\_dan\\_pilihan\\_raya\\_Kajian\\_kes\\_dl\\_pilihan\\_raya\\_kecil\\_Permatang\\_Pauh\\_Pulau\\_Pinang](https://www.academia.edu/1293001/Media_dan_pilihan_raya_Kajian_kes_dl_pilihan_raya_kecil_Permatang_Pauh_Pulau_Pinang)