

Visual and Textual Analysis of American Anti-racism Wall Literature

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Abstract

Racism and anti-racist movements existed and continue to exist in many societies, and many people suffer as a result. Certain members of the racist society suffer from unequal opportunities, injustice and loss of many rights. On top of all this, they are a marginalized group and deserve the least in the eyes of the dominant group. People reject racism in different ways, including expressing their opinions through drawing and writing on the wall of buildings and roadsides, this is called wall literature or graffiti. After the brutality of the policemen's actions towards the blacks in America, the artists began to express their rejection through many drawings and writings, and this is the central point of the study. This study is probably the first of its kind that tackles graffiti from a multimodal critical discourse analysis viewpoint. So it aims to bridge the gap through analyzing this genre visually and textually. It also tries to answer some questions such as how social and environmental changes have an effect on adopting such type of art, how images have the ability to convey the suffering of blacks and reflect the ideologies of both groups (blacks and whites) and whether white supremacy and racism are deeply rooted in American society. It hypothesizes that the environmental and social changes have an effect in adopting this genre, these images have the ability to convey the suffering of blacks and deliver their messages to the world. The analyzed graffiti reflect the ideologies of both groups, i.e., blacks and whites. Furthermore, white supremacy and racism are deeply rooted in American society. This study concludes that images are depicted in a powerful and independent manner and based on the attractiveness elements. These images are intended to attract the attention of targeted people to change the situation which is clear through the combinations of visual elements such as (gazes, size of frames, angles and colors, etc.). Images can be a way of expressing the struggle for survival and access to rights socially worldwide. The blacks succeed in showing all their sufferings to the world and winning the sympathy of the majority by using different colors, gazes and relationships between the represented participants and viewers.

Keywords: Racism, wall literature, multimodal critical discourse analysis, ideology.

1-Introduction

In response to the brutality of George Floyd murder, there have been many demonstrations around the world, especially in America. There was also a movement of artists, through which they

expressed their feelings, opinions, resentment and rejection of racism which leads to cruelty in dealing with different races. Images somehow similar to language. They are richly meaningful. People use this art, i.e., graffiti for various purposes to depict the situation in which they live. They can be found in buildings and roadsides whose nature and purpose vary according to the purpose for which they are intended. Multimodal discourse analysis considers the way in which texts are incorporated with other modes of communication such as images, film, video and sound to create meaning. It considers how multimodal texts are conceived and how semiotic tools such as color, framing, focusing and positioning of elements contribute to the meaningfulness of these text images. These different modes do not support meaning, but they contribute to it. People choose one of these modes in order to make meanings and communicate their ideas with each other. These meanings are shaped by social standards, rules and conventions in a specific context. (Paltridge, 2012: 170-171).

2- Aims of the study

This study aims at:

- Showing the main reasons behind using this type of art in the present time.
- Showing how people communicate and explain their needs and sufferings through this genre.
- Showing the cultural and social significance of graffiti.

3- Data selection and the adopted model

The pictures selected for the study cover several regions in America, including New York, Miami, Washington, Chicago and Minnesota. They have been collected through various websites such as (google, Instagram and facebook). The researcher depends on an eclectic approach to analyze the data which is suit the requirements for this study.

This study is based on the following models:

-Van Dijk's model (2016) Sociocognitive Discourse Studies for textual analysis. There are two sides for analysis. One side reveals the micro structure of discourse according to (Syntactic word order, Cohesion and coherence relations, indexical expressions, metaphors, implications and presuppositions). The other side reveals the attitudes and ideologies.

- Kress and Van Leeuwen's model (2006) Reading Images for visual analysis. This analysis is carried out according to three dimensions:

1- Representational dimension: represented or interactive participants can be analyzed according to narrative processes or conceptual processes)

2- Interactive dimension includes the gaze of the represented participants, the distance of the participant from the viewer or the size of the frame, the angle from which the participant is seen by the viewer and modality.

3- Compositional dimension includes information value, salience and framing.

4- Graffiti and Street Art

In the last fifty years, however, graffiti, street art and the issues around them have become particularly important. New styles of graffiti writing and wall art proliferated in Philadelphia and New York during the 1970s, quite quickly became national, then global, and from the beginning started to breed and spread new styles of street art as well. In recent decades, graffiti and street art have also merged into a definitive form of popular city art, and a profitable form of commercial art also, with graffiti and street art that now moves from the street to the gallery to the business advertising campaign. (Ross, 2016: xxx).

Graffiti wall writing has an extremely long history. It is older than the invention of towns and cities as examples exist on the walls of prehistoric caves. (Ganz, 2004: 9).

Today's graffiti must be viewed in contrast to such texts by public authors. The distinctive feature of graffiti is the insistent individuality of their voices, these are words, or images, produced by one person of his own initiative without the type of authorization that is explicitly or implicitly behind other types of texts written on the walls. (Milnor, 2014: 3-4).

There are many purposes and methods for street art like bringing up basic messages for political change. Such communication techniques encourage an audience to change, to unite a population towards a common goal, shaping popular consciousness, informing people of significant events, or documenting a source of popular history and memory. This art is a dynamic source of information that is extremely important to study in order to accurately evaluate this constantly changing. (Oblerg, 2013: 17).

There are numerous variations between graffiti and street art. An important point to emphasize is that street art is often a reflection of its location, whereas graffiti writing represents a more standardized universal language. Street art is more about interacting with people on the street and street artists prepare their work in advance before putting them on the street. This process connects street artists to studio artists on the contrary of graffiti artists who scarcely prepare something beforehand. (Lewisohn, 2008: 63-65).

5-Reading Images

From the time when humans first painted pictures on the walls of the Lascaux caves in France until today, as the images flow through our computer screens, humans have used visual images to aid understanding themselves and make sense of the world around them. Visual images help to convey feelings and ideas in time and space, to establish relationships and document daily experience. (Serafini, 2014: 17).

Educators from all over the world have realized the growing role of visual communication in learning materials of all kinds, and wonder what type of maps, graphs, diagrams, images, and presentation forms will be most effective in learning. So the analysis of images is or should be a pivotal part in the field of critical discourse to reveal the hidden ideologies. CDA seeks to provide the ways and means to realize discourses as ideological positions as well as texts that editorialize or propagate in a more explicit way. (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006: 14).

Visual culture is not something new because people always look at and see the world that surround them, and try to find meaning to themselves and others by understanding what they see.

Furthermore, writers are always used to deal with the visual world and study visual forms with their meanings from the ancient Greek philosophers to the art historians of the 19th and 20th centuries.. (Schirato & Webb, 2004: 1).

Reading pictures have theoretical goals beside descriptive ones. It has developed a framework that could serve as an ideological analysis, In the same way, different ideological positions may be expressed through different grammatical structures. Images of any nature can fall within the field of ideology and different images may convey different ideologies. Visual structures carry out meanings as language structures also do. (Catalano & Waugh, 2020: 52).

Language and visual communication shape our culture and they represent mostly the same meaning, but each of them produces that in different forms and ways. In multimodal condition, the text conveys one meaning and the image or any other media conveys the other. Furthermore, not every meaning which can be recognized by texts can also be perceived by images or vice versa.(Kress & Leeuwen, 2006: 19-20).

Artists use such categories of form and color in their works to capture something universally important. There are different purposes and attitudes towards the situations of life conveyed by the image. So someone needs to enter the image world through particular mood and feeling to receive its message. (Arnheim, 1974:3).

It is important to perceive that visual images, written language and design components work independently and with each other to represent meanings and communicate information. (Frank Serafini, 2014: 18).

6-Racism

At the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, ethnic minorities, refugees and immigrants in North America and Europe continued to face increasing racism, ethnicism, and fear of strangers. In the light of uniting the European community in 1993, minority politics get tougher every day. The ideological legitimization of these policies and practices leaves little doubt on the manner in which people of another color or culture are considered by white politicians in power, and on the status of minorities in the future. (Van Dijk, 1993:1).

Racism is a form of abuse of authority against minority European groups. Racist discourse is an expression of the ethnic prejudices of the dominant groups and has a political and social function. Discourse is the key interface for these subsystems. Members of dominant groups learn racist prejudices and ideologies through various forms of public discourse, especially through political and media discourse. Discourse itself is a social practice and is therefore part of everyday discrimination and racism that define the social manifestation of the system of racism. (Capone & Mey, 2016: 289).

Racism also involves negative views, attitudes and ideologies and apparently subtle acts and conditions of discrimination against minorities, i.e., those social cognitions and actions, processes, structures or institutions contribute directly or indirectly to the domination of the white group and the subordinate position of minorities. (Van Dijk, 1993: 5).

Racism is a system of ethnic and racial inequality, replicated in discriminatory social practices, including discourse, at the local or micro level, and by institutions, organizations and group relations at the global or macro level, and cognitively supported by racist ideologies. (Van Dijk, 2000: 41).

Modern racism is a complex system of society where peoples of European origin dominate the peoples of other origins, most notably in Europe, North America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. This relationship of dominance can take more than one form of economic, social, cultural and/or political. It is evaluated negatively and attributed to the dominant people. (Van Dijk, 1991: 24).

It is a global system of social inequality where Europeans have more power than non-Europeans. Non-European minorities are faced daily with a subtle system of inequalities, which is called everyday racism. (Van Dijk, 2000: 39).

7-Data analysis

This section is conducted to analyze some pictures according to the models explained above. Particular themes, ideologies and attitudes are shown throughout the written words, different use of colors.



Visual analysis:-

In terms of the representational dimension, the represented participants in this image are introduced in terms of narrative processes. It is dynamic. It tells a story to the viewers. It started with the idea of justice and how society is organized through it. True justice brings people back to their communities or wherever they want to be. Peace is more than the absence of conflict, it requires the existence of justice. It makes a reaction to the current situation rather than an action so a type which is called ractional processes is presented in this picture. The type of reactoin is called non-transactional .

From an interactive perspective, the represented participant does not look directly to the viewers so it is called an offer picture. In this image, the participant provides information to the viewers that the absence of armed conflict is not enough. There must be a just and cooperative society. The distance between the represented participant and the viewer is far social distance so it creates a formal and impersonal relationship with the viewers. The angle in this picture is horizontal, frontal and at the eye level so it creates a sense of involvement and there is no power difference involved. This picture has different colors with a blue and yellow background. So the picture occurs within the range of high modality as different modulations of colors are depicted with the focus on tiny details.

The view of the compositional dimension is presented in three points, the painted figure is the center of the image and can be considered as the core of information whereas the written words are the margin. The second point is the salience which is presented in this picture by placing elements in the foreground, the use of different colors, the color of the background which is a mix between

blue and yellow to refer to life, vitality, control and strength. All these details attract the viewers' attention. Framing is the third point in this dimension which shows the actual frame lines connecting the elements of the picture together to hold one idea.

Textual analysis (micro structure):-

-True peace is not merely the absence of tension, it is the presence of justice.

The type of sentence is a declarative one. It conveys a powerful message that aims to get not only peace in the society, but to get peace of mind and soul, the peace which reflects the joy, social harmony and exalted justice. The sentence is coherent and cohesive one. The anaphora (it) follows the expression to which it refers (true peace) makes a sentence a coherent one. The reader or the viewer, has reached the idea contained in the sentences so the producer is managed to present a cohesive text. It implicates that true peace is to be free and having rights because the absence of tension does not mean to have a comfortable life. The text presupposes that their sufferings include not only tension or armed conflict, but violent words with the lack of justice. So their real need is a truly just society and this can be done by ending racism in all its forms.

These words reflect positive and negative ideologies. Positive ideologies of blacks are reflected through the words of MLK. They want to spread an integrated picture of justice and peace. Peace does not mean only the absence of war, but it also means the existence of justice among members of society without discrimination, whereas the negative ideologies of whites are reflected in their unjust treatment for those who have different skin color which made them demand it. They spread tension and racial discrimination in society through their daily dealings with black people and this is what must be ended.

Visual analysis:-



In terms of the representational dimension, the represented participant in this image is introduced in terms of narrative processes. The image is dynamic and serves to present events to the viewers. The image seeks to lift up and raise the self-regard of the black men. It is just like a challenge because being a black man can have a huge impact on the stereotype of life. So during this picture, he tends to change many people's perspectives after his appearance in a cheerful way. Within the narrative processes, there is a type which is called ractional processes presented in this picture. Since the ractor is only present here, the type of reactoin is called non-transactional.

From an interactive perspective, the represented participant looks directly to the viewers so it is called a demand picture. It demands the viewers to respect and raise the level of treatment in a manner that befits a person. Being a black man does not mean that he is not worthy of respect and his life has no value. The distance between the represented participant and the viewer is close personal distance so it creates an intimate relationship with the viewers. The angle in this picture is horizontal, frontal and at the eye level so it creates a sense of involvement without power difference. This picture is full of different colors with an orange background to refer to the energy of youth. So

the picture occurs within the range of high modality as different modulations of colors are depicted with the focus on tiny details.

The view of the compositional dimension is presented in three points. The image and the information are in the center and considered as the core of information. The second point is the salience which is presented in this picture by placing elements in the foreground; the size of the drawn figures with written words attract the viewers' attention. Framing is the third point in this dimension which shows the actual frame lines connecting the elements of the picture together to hold one idea.

Textual analysis (micro structure):-

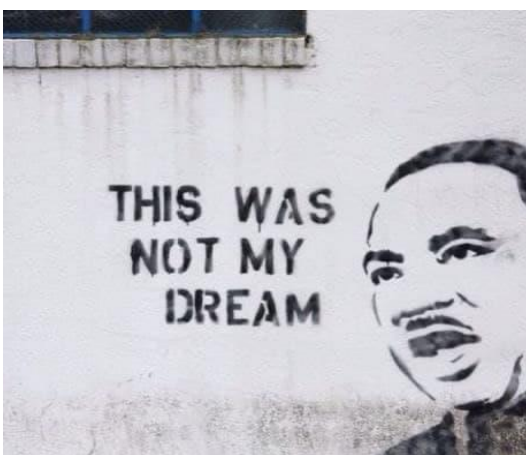
-Black lives matter.

-I am a black man.

The type of sentence is a declarative one. It conveys a powerful message that aims to confront some of the traumas that have built up in the blacks community because of their difference. It can be considered as a way to raise other black men's confidence and boost their self-esteem. The sentence is coherent as it carries a single idea which is clear to the reader or the viewer. The pronoun (I) is used as an indexical expression. It implicates the pain that a person feels every time he is referred to as black. It also includes building each other at a time when they may be feeling knocked down. The existence of racism complicates their lives. It always makes black people in constant conflict, but they never give up because tomorrow is another day. It presupposes the existence of man, whether he is black or white. He exists and deserves to live, to dream and to achieve what he wants in his large family, which is society.

These words reflect positive and negative ideologies. Positive ideologies of blacks are reflected in their reconciliation with themselves, their acceptance of their differences from others in their society. They tried to build each other instead of tearing themselves and the society, whereas the negative ideologies of whites are reflected in their contempt, bullying the blacks and considering them a minority who do not deserve life. They find it easier to criticize and demolish others. Little by little some whites lost their sympathy and love for blacks.

Visual analysis:-



The presence of this character in the picture is enough to express the reality that black people live in, and that one of their dreams is to live in a healthy society in which they get all their rights. In terms of the representational dimension, the represented participant in this image is introduced in terms of narrative and connected by a vector. Since the participant's eyes appear to be looking to something the viewer cannot see. Therefore the process is reactionary and the participant can be identified as a Reacter because he is reacting to the unknown thing. The absence of a

Phenomenon classifies the image as a non-transactional reactional process, it leaves the viewer imagining what the Reacter is looking at, and this can create a powerful sense of empathy or identification with the represented participant .

From an interactive perspective, the eyes of the represented participant are directed not at the viewer, but at something outside the image frame with an open mouth. As a result, the picture can be categorized as an offer picture. The represented participant offers himself to the viewer as if he wants to tell them something. As it appears from the picture is the head only, an intimate distance is created between the represented participant and the viewer. The angle in this picture is horizontal, frontal and at the eye level so it creates a sense of involvement as what depicted in this picture is part of our world. The relationship between the represented participant and the viewer is equal, there is no power difference between them as they have the same goals. The picture is at the minimum scale value of modality. Since it is depicted in white and black colors, nothing than these two colors can be seen .

The view of the compositional dimension is presented in three points, the information on the left side sends a message to the viewers to get rid of the injustice and tyranny that they have suffered for many years and this is not the reality that they should live in, Whereas on the right side is the picture of King to attract the viewer's attention to this character. It can be considered as something new for the current generation only to remind them of the struggle of previous generations and to follow Martin Luther's footsteps to achieve their dreams. The center of the image is the sentence. The second point is the salience which is presented in this picture by placing elements in the foreground. The sentence is written in a clear way and in capital letters also the painted image of the character is so clear. Framing is the third point in this dimension which shows the actual frame lines connecting the elements of the picture together to hold one idea.

Textual analysis (micro structure):-

This was not my dream.

It is a negative declarative sentence. It declares to all the world that the present situation of blacks is not their dream. It is a coherent sentence as the receiver can interpret the text easily as the idea of the sentence is clear. There is indexicality, the word (this) refers to the life of blacks in America. This sentence implicates dissatisfaction with the current situation and that there is a greater ambition to live in a better way. It also presupposes the existence of another dream which is not explicitly mentioned in the sentence.

The underlying negative ideologies are the condition of black people as (in-group) and how they are treated badly by whites as (out-group).



Visual analysis:-

The picture, along with what is written in it, expresses the voice of the blacks and their steadiness against injustice. This shows

the world that they deserve life just like others. Also, it is not right for their existence to be determined by the color of their skin or anything else.

In terms of the representational dimension, the represented participants in this image are five hands with a sentence written above them so they are presented in terms of conceptual processes. It is static and holding an idea to the viewer, it is highly symbolic picture. The picture shows the unity and solidarity against the oppression that holds back everyone involved i.e., black people.

From an interactive perspective, this image offers information to the viewer that our voice echoes when we come together peacefully. Furthermore, it is a form of resistance to spread love and justice to communities. So the concept of sight in this image is an offer. The distance between the represented participants and the viewer is far social distance as we can see the whole picture with space around it. The angle which is presented in this picture is horizontal, frontal and the participants are seen from a low angle by the viewer so it indicates that the participants have the power. This image has different colors which make it look as a real. The picture has high modality i.e., full color saturation with a focus on tiny details such as the existence of tattoos and accessories in various colors.

The view of the compositional dimension is presented in three points, the information value which is presented at the top and bottom i.e., ideal and real. The top of this image is the sentence which tends to be more emotional and contains the core of information, whereas the real tends to be more informative and practical. The second point is the salience which is presented in this picture by using many colors to attract the viewer's attention to the main idea drawn for it. Framing is the third point in this dimension which shows the actual frame lines connecting the elements of the picture together.

Textual analysis (micro structure):-

-We got us.

The type of sentence is a declarative one. It tends to convey an idea that a person's pursuit to get his rights means that he wants to avoid losing himself. (We – us) it is a kind of personal reference which makes the text cohesive. The sentence is coherent as it suits its context and the viewer can reach to its idea through its details. It implicates that they got their rights. The negation of this sentence will not eradicate their existence and solidarity and here the constancy under negation principle is clear.

The positive ideologies are presented through the solidarity of blacks and the only way to become a strong community is through unity. So when they get their rights, they get themselves.



Visual analysis:-

In terms of the representational dimension, the represented participants in this image are introduced in terms of narrative processes. The image is dynamic. It describes the brutal and unjust

actions towards black people which make them to humiliate others. Also blacks confront difficult situations and horrific acts in their daily life.

The represented participant creates a vector so is called the actor. Within the narrative processes, there is a type which is called ractional processes presented in this picture. Though the represented participant wears sunglasses, he seems to look to the viewers to tell them their sufferings. Since only the ractor is present here, the type of reactoin is called non-transactional.

From an interactive perspective, the represented participant looks directly to the viewers so it is called a demand picture. In this mural, the represented participant demands the viewers to accept each other differences and treat each other with humanity. Furthermore, he demands to be admitted and live without any discrimination. The distance between the represented participant and the viewer is far social distance since the whole figure and the space around it is visible. The angle in this picture is horizontal, frontal and at the eye level so it creates a sense of involvement as there is no power difference involved. It makes viewers think about people's rights and how they should live without disregard, racism and marginalization. This picture has normal modality because not many colors are used to convey the idea through it .

The view of the compositional dimension is presented in three points. The information value which is presented at the center of the image. The image itself is the core of information. The second point is the salience which is presented in this picture by placing elements in the foreground, the use of different colors and the clarity of the sign with its white background. All these details attract the viewers' attention. Framing is the third point in this dimension which shows the actual frame lines connecting the elements of the picture together to hold one idea .

Textual analysis (micro structure):-

-I see humans but no humanity.

The type of sentence is a declarative one. Its purpose is to declare that humanity is not a matter of being black or white. We are all human and have equal rights without racial discrimination or anything else. It is possible to slowly create change for humanity through being more mindful and practicing the things that matter most to all human beings like awareness, love, kindness, compassion, respect, understanding, and most of all acceptance. The use of (but) as a coordinated conjunction makes the text a cohesive one. Also, it is coherent as it carries a clear impression to the reader or the viewer. An indexical is clear here by using the personal pronoun (I). It implicates the need for a kinder world than this we live in. Pain, cruelty and racial discrimination are not properties of humanity, and this is what is included in the content of the image. The implicature in this sentence is the use of (but) which adds a contrary interpretation to its meaning.

This image reflects positive and negative ideologies. Acceptance is the key element which reflects the positive ideologies of blacks. They express their needs to be accepted in any society because the skin color does not determine their humanity. The negative ideologies of whites are reflected in

their refusal to recognize the existence of blacks as human beings and consider them as a category inferior to them, up to the point of treating them without humanity.

8-Conclusion

- Based on the visual analysis, the study finds that this marginalized group has many sufferings, including unequal opportunities, racist treatment and suffer from Psychological and physical violence which lead them to make protest for changes. All these sufferings are clarified through using different colors, gaze and the relationship between the represented participants and viewers as well as the main points presented in the three dimensions of visual analysis.
- Based on textual analysis, different ideologies are revealed by blacks and whites such as (anti-racism, social solidarity, respect, acceptance, etc. represented by blacks and racism, inequality, violence, discrimination, etc. represented by whites).
- The study supports that images can be a way of struggle for survival and access to rights socially worldwide. As black break their salience and insist on equality between the members of their society and reject white supremacy which is one of the primary ideological values pursued for a long time.
- At the deeper ideological level, images reflect the themes of social rights such as the discriminations which realized by ideas, words and attitudes. So street art can be considered as a powerful form of communication, resistance and liberation and these techniques are found worldwide.
- The visual and textual analysis completes each other i.e., there is a direct and complementary relationship between these two modes to achieve communication.

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