SUDANESE REVULSION'S GRAFFITI AS MEANS OF COMMUNICATION: A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

Since its emergence in the late 1970s in New York in the United States, graffiti has been associated with vandalism and crime (Bates, 2014). However, this notion has faded out in the last few decades with graffiti and street arts development. People have begun to recognize it as art rather than crime (Bates, 2014). This paper explores how graffiti is employed to communicate political messages during the Sudanese revolution between December 2018 and April 2019. Six graffiti are selected from the Sudanese Professional Association and Sudan Uprising's pages on Facebook as well as other media outlets' sites. The data are analyzed according to Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar (VG)'s representational and interactive dimensions, which stemmed from the Multimodal Discourse Analysis. The study revealed that graffiti had become an effective means of communicating political messages during the Sudanese popular uprising. The study also found that the reproduction of graffiti on social media platforms affects the way people interact with it. Besides, while many visually based types of researches have applied VG on the analysis of advertisement and Websites, the current research found that the VG appeared to be capable of decoding the graffiti's political messages. Accordingly, the study contributes to discourse-oriented studies of how visuals create information.

Keywords: Sudanese revolution, graffiti, visual grammar, protesters, popular uprising, social media

1. Introduction

Sudan is an African-Arabic country located in North-East Africa. Since its independence in January 1956, Sudan has witnessed political instability. The country has oscillated between democratic multipartism rule and a military dictatorship. The former president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, became president after a military coup in June 1989. His totalitarian, dictatorial, and repressive approaches led to a series of economic and political deterioration. Accordingly, the country witnessed a number of civil wars and protests against the government. The current

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Sudanese revolution started in December 2018 and, eventually, succeeded in toppling al-Bashir's regime in April 2020. During the popular uprising, the Sudanese masses have expressed their political demands through different means, including songs, poems, chanting the revolution's slogans as well as graffiti. Alamin states that "*[s]oon after protests against longtime President Omar al-Bashir began in December, murals and graffiti appeared in Khartoum*" (Alamin, 2019, para, 2). This research aims at examining the use of graffiti as a means of communicating political messages during the revolution in Sudan. It will also explore how social media affects the graffiti and the way people interact through it.

The Longman dictionary defines graffiti as "*rude, humorous, or political writing and pictures on the walls of buildings, trains, etc.*" (Longman Dictionary, n.d). According to this definition, graffiti may include different modes such as language and images. Thus, the Multimodal Discourse Analysis theory will be useful for analyzing the data. Several studies have applied the MDA on analyzing advertisements or Websites which creates a knowledge gap on the use of the theory in other fields. Therefore, this paper attempts to utilize the MDA to analyze something different, the graffiti.

2. Research Questions

This research focuses on the use of graffiti in communicating political and social messages during the Sudanese revolution. The author, therefore, seeks to address the following research questions:

- RQ 1: In what ways is the Sudanese revolution represented visually and verbally to communicate a political message?
- RQ 2: How do the visual participants construct the interactive meaning?
- RQ 3: In which ways does the reproduction of the graffiti on social media platforms affect the interactive meaning?

Addressing these questions requires a perspective that can help analyze both the verbal and the visual components of the graffiti. Therefore, the theory of Multimodal Discourse Analysis will be utilized as an analytical basis for this study.

3. Theoretical Framework

For some time now, linguists have been focused primarily on language as a mode of meaning-making and ignore non-language modes' effect. Nevertheless, with the emergence of information and communication technology, other modes of meaning-making, including images, colors, sounds, and spaces, have begun to gain considerable attention. Kress and van Leeuwen argue that "*most texts now involve a complex interplay of written text, images and other graphic or sound elements, designed as coherent entities by means of layout*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 17). Such text is known as the multimodal text.

3.1 Multimodal Discourse
Kress and van Leeuwen define multimodality as "*the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with particular way in which these modes are combined*" (Kress &

van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 20). The combined modes may strengthen or complement each other and make the meaning evident material that others can realize through different senses e.g., seeing it, hearing it, or touching it. In this sense, multimodality enriches the language and its understandability. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) is the study of the interaction and intersection of these modes of communication and their influence on the meaning within a given context. Many linguists, including Kress and van Leeuwen, Norris, Baldry and Thibault, Lemke, Royce, and O'Halloran have significantly contributed to MDA's development. For instance, Kress and van Leeuwen developed a grammatical tool for analyzing and reading visual contents. They termed this new instrument as Visual Grammar (VG). Their theory is derived primarily from Michel Halliday's theory of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). To better understand how VG works, the next sub-sections will compare the SFG and the VG.

3.2 Systemic Functional Grammar and Visual Grammar

Halliday regards language as a social semiotic that its functions are to "*mak[e] sense of our experience, and act out our relationships*" (Halliday, 2004, p. 29). In his account, the meanings come from society or socially made; hence, his SFG examines how language interacts with the social context. Halliday argues that in functional grammar "*[a] language is [interpreted as] a resource for making meaning, and meaning resides in systemic patterns of choice*" (Halliday, 2004, p. 23). The meaning can be realized through the systemic patterns, the 'lexcogrammar'. He terms his functions of language 'meta-functions' and divides them into ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Kress and van Leeuwen develop three meta-functions of images similar to Halliday's meta-function of language. According to them, the images have three meta-functions; representational, interactive, and compositional.

3.2.1 Ideational Function vs. Representational Function

Halliday explains that in the ideational function, language is used to construe all facets of individual's experience (Halliday, 2004). Through its 'lexicogrammar', language provides an interpretation to our sensing, being, having, thinking, meaning, and becoming. The representational function of the image, on the other hand, functions similarly through its 'narrative' and 'conceptual' processes. The narrative process is dynamic and "*represent[s] unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory [and] spatial arrangements*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 79). The narrative shows the relations between the components of the image. Kress and van Leeuwen term these components as the 'represented participants' which can be people, places, or things. The connection between them is defined by a 'Vector', an imaginary line formed by elements in the image. The vectors resemble the function of action verbs in a language. The represented participant who creates the vector is termed as the 'Actor', and the one to whom the vector is done is known as the 'Goal' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). When the 'actors' are represented as doing something to or for each other, the vectors can be formed by body language (gesture, eye-lines, limbs), or tools.

The conceptual process, on the other hand, is static and represents "*participants in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, or structure or meaning*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 79). In this sense, the represented participants in conceptual images or any other visuals are designed by the producer to provide information or

ideas that can be classified ("*classification process*"), analyzed ("*analytical process*"), or defined ("*symbolic process*") (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

3.2.2 Interpersonal Function vs. Interactive Function

The interpersonal function describes how the language is used in the interaction between individuals: how they communicate, create relations, express feelings, discuss issues relating to their existence, influence and educate one another, and exchange ideas. In this sense, the grammar's interpersonal function is "*both interactive and personal*" (Halliday, 2004, p. 30). "*Likewise, in the image's interactive function, the interaction is between the producer of the image and the viewers named 'interactive participants*". They communicate through the image or any kind of visual. Such communication can be direct where the producer and the viewer are present and engage in 'face-to-face' and make sense of the represented participants. However, in many cases, the communication can be indirect where "*[t]he producer is absent for the viewer, and the viewer is absent for the producer*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 114). In this case, the producers encode social meanings into the represented participants and the viewers, in turn, decode these meanings by analyzing the gaze and the social distance and the angle from which the viewer can see the represented participants and a modality.

3.2.3 Textual Function vs. Compositional Function

Kress and van Leeuwen state that "*[a]ny semiotic mode has to have the capacity to form texts, complexes of signs which cohere both internally with each other and externally with the context in and for which they were produced*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 43). The textual meta-function is the language's mechanism of constructing and organizing different discourses by creating a coherent text. Thus, the textual function "*can be regarded as an enabling or facilitating function*" (Halliday, 2004, p. 30). In a similar vein, the compositional function of image organizes the relations between the representational and interactive meanings of the image through three interrelated systems: 'information value' (relates the image's elements to each other left and right, top and bottom, center and margin), 'salience' (how the elements attract the viewer's attention: foreground, background, size, color, and different sharpness) and 'framing' (the present or absent of framing) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 177).

4. Methodology

The data for this study is collected by browsing the pages of the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA) and Sudan Uprising (SU) on social media platform Facebook as well as websites of some media outlets. The graffiti was posted during and after the Sudanese revolution. A qualitative analysis method will be adopted to examine how the multimodal symbols, visual and verbal, work together to communicate political and social messages. The graffiti will be analyzed from the Visual Grammar's two dimensions, the representational meaning, and the interactive meaning.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Analysis of the Representational Meaning

RQ1: In what ways is the Sudanese revolution represented visually and verbally to communicate a political message?

Figure 1: Murals of the different Sudanese identities. (Sources 1, 2)

Kress and van Leeuwen assert that "*[a]ny semiotic mode has to be able to represent aspects of the world as it is experienced by humans*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 42). In this sense, as semiotic modes, images, or any visuals can represent human experience because it is able to represent objects and their relations in the image's imaginary world through vectors, classification, and analytical. In figure 1, the two graffiti consist of visual and verbal represented participates. In the first mural, the visual includes a cartoony hand and nine portraits in the shape of caricature. The huge figure of a hand with two fingers up showing the victory signs communicates a peaceful protest message. In the nine portrays, each picture is portrayed in a close-up shot and separated by a frame from the other portraits in a way that the viewer may see them as different personal photographs hanged on the wall. In the second mural, there are ten figures which are depicted in a common ground. The images in the two graffiti are static; there is no obvious vector to show action or event; it can be assumed that they are represented conceptually to provide certain information.

There is an 'analytical process' in which the nine portraits in the first image and the ten figures in the second one are related in a part-to-whole relationship where the 'Carrier' (the whole) is related to its 'Possessive Attributes' (the parts). For example, in the first mural, each of the portraits represents one part of the Sudanese culture, and together with the other portraits, they form the country's cultural identity. In this sense, the two graffiti images are classified in terms of their gender, age, clothing, and hairstyle to represent the country's cultural and ethnic diversity. The political messages encoded in these graffiti are that all the Sudanese are participating in the protest against the government.

The verbal participants at the bottom of the nine portraits and the ten figures are represented to foster such messages. In the first graffiti, the texts represent some cities and towns'

names across the country to refer to the different places where the revolution has already started. In the second graffiti, there is one phrase that reads: '*one country*' which indicates that the country is united against the government regardless of its cultural diversity. The graffiti invites the viewer to contemplate how the revolution has succeeded in gathering all Sudanese people regardless of their different ethnicity or cultural backgrounds, under the slogan of 'one country, one nation'. In addition, the verbal texts on the right side of the first graffiti read: '*freedom, peace, and justice'* and '*Sudan has enough space for all*' respectively. These texts represent some of the revolution's slogans that call for anti-racism and equal citizenship. They communicate political information to the viewers about what the protesters are keen to achieve and urge them to participate in the demonstrations.

(1)　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(2)

Figure 2: Murals of the women's participation in the revolution. (Sources 1, 2)

In Figure 2, the two graffiti include a quasi-human figure of a girl and some verbal participants. The cartoon girl in the two murals raises the left hand, which implies that she is 'doing something'; accordingly, there is a 'narrative process'. In the first graffiti, the grill raises her hand with the victory sign to indicate that the revolution will oust the regime. In the second one, she raises a traditional Sudanese cooking tool named 'Mofraka' to show that even housewives participate in the demonstrations. Another interpretation is that the producer wants to beat or fight the gender-based stereotype that Sudanese housewives are not concerned or involved in public and political issues. In this way, the graffiti encourages women to participate in the protests actively.

Moreover, because the represented participant's eyes are closed in the two graffiti, it can be assumed that there is no eye-lined vector formed with the viewer. In this case, the viewer is left to imagine what is the participants are dreaming or thinking about. However, the verbal participants around the girl in the two graffiti might help the viewer's imagination about the girls' dreams. The words in the first mural means: '*Hey, ladies, stand your ground. This is a women revolution'*; while in the second one can be translated as: *'the women place is among the protesters, not the home'.* The producer utilizes these slogans to fuel political actions, especially among women.

The participant's identity is represented by the tribal scars on the face, the well-known Sudanese earrings, and the traditional dress. In fact, the cartoon figures represent Alaa Salah, the

22-year-old student who became a protest icon after leading protestors chanting against the regime. The crown on the head of the cartoon girl in the two graffiti refers to the Kandakat, who were "*queens and queen mothers of the ancient Kingdom of Kush in Nubia*" (Engeler et al., 2020, para. 29). At present, the term Kandaka is used in the revolution to glorify women protesters. The first Sudanese flag in the background of the first graffiti represents the revolution's flag. The protesters adopt it during the revolution because it referred to the first democratic, civilian administration after Sudan's independence in January 1956. In addition, there are two verbal texts on the end left side of the first graffiti; they read: '*freedom, peace, and equality*' and the hashtag '*Just fall. That is all*'. They represent the most famous slogans which were frequently chanted by the protesters in the months leading up to the ousting of Omar el-Bashir.

As in figure 1 and 2, the graffiti in figure 3 contains visual and verbal participants. The visual participants in the first graffiti are depicted to represent the young Sudanese people who led the protest against the former government. They are standing in front of a wall and looking at one of the revolution's slogans. Their eye-line vectors indicate that they are reading the texts on the wall which means they are 'doing something'. In this sense, they are 'actors', and the verbal participant they are looking at is the 'goal'. The verbal participant is written in the Arabic language and represents one of the revolution's slogans. It means: '*the martyr's blood is my blood; the martyr's mother is my mother*'. The visual and verbal participants are combined to communicate a message that the protesters will never forget those who have fallen during the demonstrations.

There are two visual participants in the second graffiti, the woman and the young boy on the portrait. There are both a narrative and a conceptual process in this graffiti. On the one hand, the woman's image is dynamic because she is crying which means she is 'doing something'; while the young boy's portrait is static. The verbal participant on the background reads '*My dear mother; don not cry*'. The producer wants to represent the suffering of the mothers of those who have been murdered by the security forces during the demonstrations. This graffiti's message is that the viewers should never forget the victims' families' suffering which adds a new reason why they should continue protesting until they sweep the oppressive regime. To conclude, by applying VG's representation dimension, the graffiti analysis yields rich information about how the murals are used to communicate messages.

5.2 Analysis of the Interactive Meaning

Kress and van Leeuwen contend that "*[a]ny semiotic mode has to be able to represent a particular social relation between the producer, the viewer, and the object represented*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 42). This section will be divided into two subsections to examine these relations. The first will look at the interaction between the represented participants and the viewer and the modality of the graffiti. The second will examine the social media's influence of on the interaction between the viewers and the producer and between the viewers themselves.

5.2.1 The interaction between the participants and the viewer

RQ2: How do the visual participants construct the interactive meaning?
As mentioned previously, the interactive meaning in visuals can be realized through the gaze, social distance, the perspective or angle, and modality.

5.2.1.1 The Gaze

In Figure 1, the visual participants in the first graffiti are not looking directly at the viewer; instead, they direct their eyes at something that the viewer cannot see, while in the second graffiti, they are depicted without eyes. The participants are 'impersonal' and detached away from the viewer due to the absence of eye contact between them. Kress and van Leeuwen term this kind of image as 'offer image'. The represented participants offer themselves as an object which the viewer examines carefully to extract meanings. Furthermore, the huge hand on the right side of the first graffiti is represented without the body; therefore, it does not have an eye to contact with the viewer. Therefore, it could be considered 'offer image' that offers information about the nonviolence of the protest or 'demand image' which urges the viewer to participate in the revolution. These murals try to communicate the political message that all the Sudanese people participate in the revolution regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, or cultural background. The viewer is left to contemplate what his /her position from the protest is.

Similar interpretations can be observed in female cartoons in figure 2. The female eyes in the two murals are closed, which means no eye contact with the viewer; therefore, the image offers the female to the viewers as a contemplation object. Moreover, the female raises her left hand in the two murals with the victory sign and the 'Mofraka'. These hand gestures indicate that the image is 'demand image' where the female wants the viewers, especially women, to be part of the demonstrations. Another interpretation of the hand gestures might mean that the producer considers the revolution an important event that will address women's issues in society, including gender equality.

<p align="center">(1)   (2)</p>

Figure 3: Murals of solidarity with the families of the revolution's martyrs (Sources 1, 2)

Figure 3 shows that the participants in the first graffiti do not look directly at the viewer; however, they look at something that the viewer can also see. Looking at the same direction indicates that the image is a 'demand image' because the participants want the viewer to read the verbal texts on the wall. Also, the participant's face and hand gestures indicate that this graffiti is a demanding one. The angry facial gesture, including the frown eyebrow and the boy's open mouth which is yelling out the slogan, show that the participant wants the viewer to have a similar emotional experience about the written slogan: "*the martyr's blood is my blood; the martyr's*

mother is my mother". The participants' hand gestures raise the victory sign that asks the viewer to rebel against the government. There is direct eye contact between the viewer and the woman in the second graffiti, which implies that the image is a 'demand image'. The crying eyes demand the viewers' sympathy with the martyr's mother and urge them to mourn and show their condolences to her loss. In this sense, the graffiti in the two murals agitate the viewer against the oppressive regime, killing the peaceful protesters.

5.2.1.2 Social Distance

In figure 1, the first graffiti can be divided into two parts, the hand, and the nine portraits. Although each portrait is depicted in a close-up shot, the producer employs a very long shot to show them all, as if they are put in one huge frame. This frame's size suggests impersonality, a relatively far distance, which makes the participants object to the viewers. In this sense, the viewers tend to be convinced of the truthfulness of the graffiti's content. The massive hand with the peace and victory signs is portrayed in a close-up shot, which creates a close social distance. Kress and van Leeuwen suggest that "*[a] hand […] can invite the viewer to come closer*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 118). It invites the viewer to engage in the protest as people from all over the country have done. In the second graffiti, the visual participants are portrayed in a very long shot where the ten figures' whole body can be seen. This shot creates a "*public distance [which is] the distance between the people who are and are to remain strangers*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p.125). Such distance makes the mural objective to the viewer and reveals more information to them. The producer shows the different cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the human participants.

The two murals of the female in figure 2 are depicted in a medium close shot where the viewer can see the participant from the waist up. This distance is "*[f]ar personal distance […] at which subjects of personal interests and involvements are discussed*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 124). This close social distance indicates that the viewer can get close enough to form an imaginary friendship with the participants. The political message that the viewer, especially female viewers, might extract from this graffiti is that the revolution brings them together as close friends to rally against the regime. In figure 3, in the first mural, the participants are portrayed in a medium-long shot where the whole bodies are visible. This image implies a close social distance where the relationship between the represented participants and the viewer is impersonal. The impersonal relationship suggests impersonal business between the participants and the viewer, which in this sense, is the popular uprising. The participants encourage the viewer to join the revolution to remove the regime that murders the innocent protesters. In the second mural, the participant is portrayed in a close-up shot, which indicates a close personal distance between the participant and the viewer. Perhaps the producer wants the viewer to feel that the martyr's mother considers all the protesters as her own children; therefore, she wants them to come closer to her. This distance allows the viewers to express emotional feelings of condolences and sorrow to the dead protester's mother.

5.2.1.3 Perspective or Angle

The visual participants in Figures 1, 2, and 3 are depicted from a frontal angle. Kress and van Leeuwen state that "*[t]he frontal angle is the angle of maximum involvement*" (Kress & van Leeuwen,

1996, p. 145). Thus, the viewers of the three graffiti are involved in the participants' world. For instance, in figure 1, the viewer of the graffiti feels that he/she belongs to the participants in the first and the second murals because they represent the ethnic diversity in Sudan. The first image's low angle shot depicts the represented participants as more powerful, where the viewer looks at the nine portraits from a low angle. This power is symbolic; it might imply that the Sudanese's collective identities are more substantial than the individual identity (multiculturalism against monoculturalism).

Moreover, the graffiti's frontal angle in figure 2 and 3 indicates the viewer's involvement with the represented participants. Therefore, the graffiti can be transcoded as "*what you see here is part of our world, something we are involved with*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 136). The viewers of the graffiti in figures 2 and 3 can see the participant at the eye level which suggests equality and no power difference between them. Thus, the perspective from which the viewers look at the graffiti in figures 2 and 3 suggests that the producers want the viewer to engage in similar emotional attitudes of anger and sorrow, leading them to participate in the demonstrations against the government.

5.2.1.4 Modality

In social semiotics, modality refers to the reliability and validity of statements made about the world (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). In other words, it is about the degree to which signs, texts, or visuals claim to be a representation of something real or true. In visuals, modality can be realized through many elements, including representation, contextualization, color, illumination, depth and brightness. In figure 1, the producers represent the participants in the first and the second murals as cartoon figures, which mean they are represented in lower modality. However, there are some details that differentiate the portraits as well as the image of the ten human figures, including the different hairstyles, facial features, and clothes that refer to different ethnic groups. In this sense, the two graffiti have a high modality because it reflects the real different features of Sudanese people. In terms of color, the participants in the first mural are portrayed in less vibrant colors while there are vibrant colors in the second mural. The hand's representation in the first mural is amplified 'more than real', to use Kress and van Leeuwen's term.

In figure 2, the represented participant in the first and the second mural is also depicted as a cartoon or a caricature. It means low modality in terms of representation. For instance, the representation of the hand, facial details, hair, and earrings are amplified 'more than real' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The female color in the first mural is 'unmodulated'; it is reduced to only one color, white, which is "*less than real*" (Kress & van Leeuwen). In this way, the participant in the two murals is only faithful to "*the abstract truth, to "the spirit of the man" and the essence of what he looks like*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 167). The former Sudanese flag in the first mural has high modality in terms of colors and representation.

Like figures 1 and 2, figure 3 is portrayed as a caricature image indicating its lower modality. The producer uses a diverse range of colors in the first mural, making high modality of the graffiti in color differentiation. In terms of contextualization, the two murals have a background, the verbal text. The graffiti is also at high modality in terms of representing the

facial details in the second mural. The woman's facial details represent the emotions of the mothers' who have lost their beloved children during the revolution.

5.2.2 The interaction between the interactive participants

RQ3: In which ways does the reproduction of the graffiti on social media platforms affect the interactive meaning?
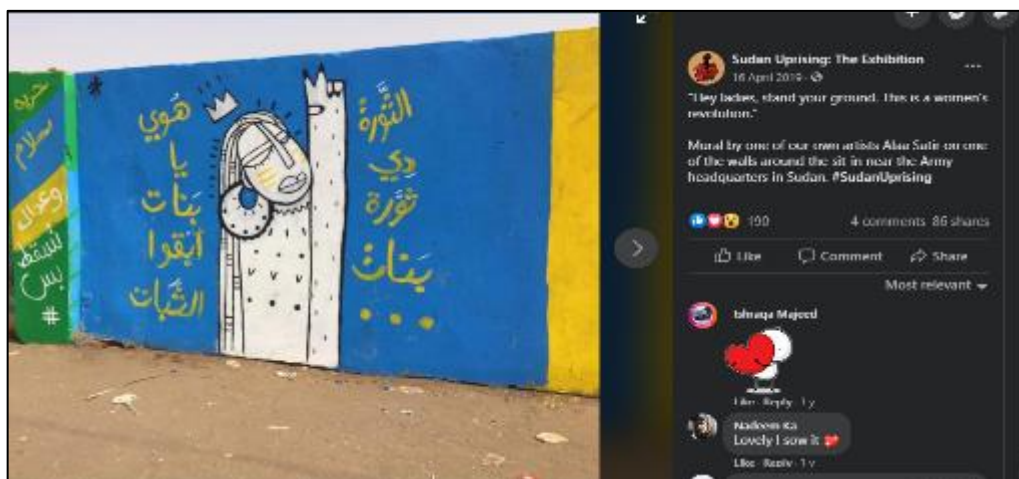

Figure 4: A screenshot of the female's mural. (Source 1)

Kress and van Leeuwen argue that "*[t]echnology enters fundamentally into the semiotic process: through the kinds of means which it facilitates or favors, and through the differential access to the means of production and reception which it provides*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 217). Through its technological means, social media reproduce the graffiti by taking them from the concrete walls to virtual ones. In this way, social media platforms function as "*synthesizing technologies which allow the production of digitally synthesized representations*" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 217). The digital change of the graffiti's nature alters the way viewers interact with it at different levels. Figure 4 is a screenshot of the same graffiti in figure 2 taken from the Sudan Uprising page of Facebook. A look at the screenshot's right side shows how viewers may react to the graffiti and interact with one another. The page provides an English translation to the Arabic verbal participants at the right and left sides of the girl as well as detailed information about the producer and where the graffiti is drawn. This information facilitates the viewers' understanding of the graffiti and what it intends to communicate.

Some viewers press the "Like" icon and the emojis to give their positive feedback about it or express their emotions (love or surprise) to react to the graffiti. Other viewers comment on the picture to show solidarity, or they share it with other viewers. Reading other viewers' comments can also affect how individuals might react to the graffiti because the comment might motivate them to do so. Moreover, the "reply" feature allows the viewers to interact and exchange their ideas about graffiti with other viewers. In this sense, social media allows the viewers to utilize different modes to react to the graffiti's digital version. Furthermore, the viewer might also interact with the producer on Facebook rather than face-to-face interaction. If the viewer reacts

to the graffiti by using emojis, he/she encodes social meanings into them. In this sense, the producer and the viewer engage in an *encoded interaction* through the picture and the emojis.

6. Conclusion

The study aimed to examine how graffiti was employed to impart political messages during the Sudanese revolution. The analysis revealed that the aspects of representational and interactive dimensions of Visual Grammar work together to construct the graffiti's political message. For example, the depiction of the portraits and the human figures as *Carrier* and the social distance in figure 1 provides sufficient information to the viewer about different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities and invites him/her to be part of the protest. The social distance in figure 2 establishes an imaginary friendship relation between the viewer and the represented participant, which encourages the viewer, especially females, to play some role in the demonstrations. The gaze, the angry facial expressions as well as the mother's tears in figure 3 are depicted to agitate the viewers and encourage them to uproot the regime and revenge for those who were killed during the revolution.

Moreover, the verbal and visual participants are used together to communicate the political messages in the graffiti successfully. For instance, the producers' organization of the verbal text in figures 1, 2, and 3, and utilizing the revolution's slogans might encourage the viewers to protest against the government. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that social media platforms facilitate the interaction between the interactive participants. Therefore, it is safe to assume that graffiti in the current Sudanese popular uprising was significant in communicating political messages to mobilize protesters demanding the handover of power to a civilian government.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

I declare that I have no financial and personal relationship with any organizations or people that can inappropriately influence my work.

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