

The Power of Words and Images

Five Key Questions:

1. What is the message?

The illustration on international arrivals suggests that effective communication goes beyond words; cultural understanding and sensitivity are vital. It shows that even in simple settings like airports, messages can be misunderstood if cultural contexts are ignored. The main message emphasizes the power of images and signs in shaping global interactions.

2. What is the purpose of the message?

Its purpose is to remind people that communication in multicultural spaces requires awareness and adaptability. It calls for sensitivity to how symbols, gestures, and words are interpreted differently across cultures, encouraging viewers to reflect on inclusivity and respect in daily exchanges.

3. How is the message conveyed (by the text and/or image)?

The message is communicated through the combination of texts (signs, labels, captions) and imagery (people, symbols, or objects at the arrival area). The fusion of these semiotic cues demonstrates how language and visuals together create meaning, showing that even without reading the words, one can see the intended idea through imagery and tone.

4. Who is the target audience of the message?

The target audience includes individuals exposed to multicultural settings, such as travelers, students, professionals, or anyone engaging in cross-cultural communication. It aims at those who must navigate differences in language and symbols to foster understanding and avoid miscommunication.

5. What other ways of presenting the message are there?

The same message could be shown through short videos, social media campaigns, or role-play skits depicting intercultural misunderstandings. Using digital posters or infographics could also broaden reach and emphasize how visuals and language blend to send a unified message.

Simple Activity

Some multimodal texts fail because their visual and textual elements compete rather than complement one another. For example, in the module's first poster showing a confusing message layout, the use of cluttered backgrounds and misplaced text makes it difficult for viewers to grasp the main idea at a glance. The inconsistency between imagery and tone also weakens the communication purpose, such as when an image conveys joy or humor for a serious cause, or when fonts and color palettes clash with the intended message. These small design errors, including poor color contrast and uneven spacing, make the message visually overwhelming and distort its meaning. When creators focus more on decoration than communication, the message loses clarity and impact.

By contrast, the examples of “Run for Rio” and “Concert for Kids” in the module show how multimodal elements can be harmonized to achieve coherence. “Run for Rio” uses blue as its dominant color to highlight the multi-colored bird mascot and the Christ the Redeemer image, both symbolizing faith and unity—while red fonts emphasize important event details. Similarly, “Concert for Kids” effectively combines playful fonts, a guitar image, and candy visuals to express the concert’s joyful and child-centered theme. These examples show that effective multimodality depends on the balance and purpose behind every design choice. When text, imagery, and color work together intentionally, the message becomes clear, meaningful, and emotionally resonant.

Formative Assessment: Reflective Analysis

Ligo’s advertisements during the COVID-19 pandemic became remarkable for their ability to merge humor, empathy, and social commentary in a time of uncertainty. While other brands focused on product promotion, Ligo used its platform to address the shared struggles of the Filipino people. The brand’s creative team crafted simple yet powerful messages that spoke of resilience and solidarity, showing how communication can transcend commercial intent. The minimalist layout, the familiar red-and-green color palette, and the concise taglines made the ads both recognizable and emotionally appealing. These visual and textual elements worked together to capture the Filipino spirit; hopeful, strong, and united despite hardship.

Beyond their visual appeal, these ads carried deep social relevance. The combination of straightforward text and subtle humor gave comfort without dismissing the seriousness of the crisis. For example, the use of witty lines such as those encouraging empathy and community responsibility resonated with the collective mood of Filipinos confined in their homes. Instead of exploiting fear or sadness, Ligo’s ads reflected understanding and sincerity. This approach demonstrated how multimodal features—color harmony, typography, and relatable imagery—could be used ethically to connect a brand to the emotional landscape of its audience.

Ultimately, Ligo’s pandemic campaigns remind us that communication is not only about delivering information but also about fostering connection. Through these ads, the brand became a symbol of how language and design can unite people under a common experience. The strategic use of semiotic elements, together with cultural sensitivity, made each poster a shared expression of national identity. In this way, Ligo transformed its advertisements into meaningful narratives that echoed the values of empathy, resilience, and hope, turning simple sardine ads into reflections of the Filipino heart during one of history’s most difficult times.