

Interpersonal Meaning in Instagram Captions: a Discourse Analysis of the Instagram Account @kopikenangan.id

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the interpersonal meaning in the captions of the Instagram account @kopikenangan.id using the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics and Discourse Analysis. The goal is to identify the linguistic forms and discourse strategies that brands use to build social proximity with their audiences. Descriptive qualitative data in the form of ten captions were analyzed based on elements of mood, modality, and pronouns. The results show the dominance of declarative sentence structures that function informatively while affirming the brand image of a friendly and nationalist brand. In addition, the use of inviting and familiar imperative sentences was found, strengthened by positive modalities such as can and should. Inclusive pronouns (we, us, you) and typical greetings (Ex-Men) are key strategies to eliminate social distancing and create emotional and participatory connections. Overall, Kopi Kenangan captions utilize language as a social practice to construct a friendly and inclusive brand identity in the digital space.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Meaning; Discourse Analysis; Functional Systemic Linguistics; Instagram Captions; Digital Communication.*

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INTRODUCTION

Language has a central role in shaping social relationships and conveying interpersonal meaning, both in face-to-face communication and in digital interactions. In the era of social media, language is not only a tool for conveying messages but also a means of representing identity, expressing emotions, and building closeness between speakers and readers. Social media such as Instagram brings together visual and verbal elements in one meaningful communication space. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the relationship between text and imagery in visual media is complementary because both work semiotically to build complete social meaning. In this case, verbal language through captions is the main medium for users or institutions to negotiate meaning and form interpersonal relationships with their audience (Clegg, 2018; Purba et al., 2021; Sarfraz et al., 2023; Schreiber, 2017).

In the functional systemic linguistics view put forward by Halliday, language has three main metafunctions: namely, ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational function is concerned with the delivery of information or experience, the textual function organizes the message to be coherent, and the interpersonal function highlights the way the speaker builds social relationships through certain grammatical and lexical choices (Paltridge, 2012). Through interpersonal functions, language plays a role in conveying attitudes, feelings, and the level of formality or closeness between the speaker and the interlocutor (Cheng, 2024; Hu & Zhou, 2024; M Kakharova, 2025; Muslimawati, 2022). In digital communication, interpersonal functions are seen through the use of casual language styles, greeting forms, or sentences with tones of invitation and humor to create closeness with the audience (Bliss-Carroll, 2016; Evans, 2017; Huwaidah & Heriyati, 2025).

Instagram, as one of the visual-based platforms, has become a strategic medium in marketing communication practices (Kusumasondjaja, 2020; Latif et al., 2025; Milanese & Guercini, 2020; Zhou, 2017). Instagram captions not only serve as a complement to the image

but also as a rhetorical instrument that influences the audience's perception of a brand's identity. Based on research by Lativa et al. (2025), the use of captions in Instagram posts can show various language functions, such as personal, directive, referential, phatic, and imaginative. The personal function is the most dominant, as it allows the writer to express feelings and build emotional closeness with their followers. This phenomenon shows that the use of language in social media has a strong interpersonal character in strengthening the relationship between writers and readers.



Figure 1. Instagram Profile @kopikenangan.id

Source: Screenshot taken from the Instagram account @kopikenangan.id (accessed October 2025).

The @kopikenangan.id account is a relevant case study for examining the implementation of interpersonal linguistic strategies on social media. As a major local coffee brand, *Kopi Kenangan* utilizes straightforward, expressive language that younger generations easily assimilate. The lexical choices in its captions indicate that the interpersonal function effectively shapes a friendly and accessible brand image. In line with Gee (2014), language serves as a means of representing social identity, marking membership in a discourse community. Observing this phenomenon, this study addresses two main research questions: (1) How is sentence structure (*mood*) in the captions of the Instagram account @kopikenangan.id used to build relationships between the author and readers? (2) How do modalities and pronouns reflect social relationships between brands and audiences?

Research by Fauziyah and Nurjannah (2019) shows that interpersonal meanings in Instagram captions often manifest through *mood* and speech functions that are not always immediately apparent. Many caption writers employ indirect illocution to convey specific intentions, such as invitations or expressions of feelings, via declarative forms. This phenomenon demonstrates that linguistic interaction on social media is dynamic and creative, as users play with language structures to foster closeness with readers. In the Instagram account @kopikenangan.id, declarative and imperative *moods* with friendly tones serve as effective communication strategies to influence followers' attitudes and emotions.

Visually, Instagram relies on appealing images to capture attention, but the linguistic power of captions determines interpersonal meaning construction. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) assert that images and language form a multimodal semiotics that operates simultaneously to produce messages. Captions provide linguistic elements that offer interpretive orientation to visuals, enabling readers to receive not only aesthetic messages but also inherent

social meanings. Through discourse analysis, correlations between lexical preferences and sentence structures in captions can be identified as efforts to build social solidarity and shared values with audiences (Paltridge, 2012). In line with this problem formulation, this study aims to: (1) identify linguistic forms realizing interpersonal functions in @kopikenangan.id captions; (2) analyze discourse strategies used to build social closeness between brands and followers.

Previous research by Khotimah and Sumarlam (2020) on Kalis Mardiasih's Instagram captions shows that language styles like repetition strengthen messages and create emotional closeness. Repetition affirms meaning, enhances memory, and fosters community between writers and readers. Thus, choices of language structure and style function not only as communication tools but also as elements of a brand's discourse strategy to instill social values in audiences.

In the study by Lativa et al. (2025), the interpersonal function emerges as dominant in social media language, as users express personal feelings and establish emotional closeness. This aligns with Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse theory, which posits that authors use linguistic devices to build social relationships with readers and guide message interpretation. On social media, these metadiscursive devices include humor, invitations, rhetorical questions, and personal pronouns such as *you*, *us*, or *friends*.

Analysis of interpersonal meanings on platforms like Instagram enables deeper understanding of digital communication practices in modern society. Halliday, via Paltridge (2012), emphasizes that language's interpersonal function relates to *mood* choices and modalities reflecting speakers' positions toward interlocutors. In other words, choices of sentence structure—declarative, imperative, or interrogative—indicate how speakers negotiate power, proximity, and solidarity with readers.

By integrating linguistic and visual elements, Instagram captions constitute multimodal discourse embedding social and ideological values. As Gee (2014) states, discourses reflect social practices involving specific values, identities, and communication goals. Thus, analyzing interpersonal meaning in the @kopikenangan.id account highlights not only linguistic aspects but also how language constructs brand image and strengthens relationships with followers. This study contributes theoretically to understanding language's role in digital interpersonal communication and offers practical implications for effective brand strategies on social media.

This study investigates the realization of interpersonal meaning in @kopikenangan.id captions through *Systemic Functional Linguistics* and discourse analysis. Specifically, it identifies linguistic forms—such as *mood*, modality, and pronoun usage—that enact interpersonal functions and analyzes discourse strategies fostering social closeness between the brand and followers. The findings contribute theoretically to digital communication contexts and practically provide insights for brands enhancing engagement and relational communication on social media. Furthermore, this research serves as a reference for future inquiries into language, media, and social interaction in the digital age.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method to provide an in-depth description of linguistic phenomena in the Instagram captions of the @kopikenangan.id account. This approach aligned with the objectives of analyzing interpersonal meaning through discourse analysis.

Data were collected from ten captions posted by @kopikenangan.id between 1 and 5 October 2025, selected for their prominent linguistic features in fostering brand-follower closeness. Collection involved observation and note-taking, recording captions containing interpersonal elements, as described by Septiani (2023).

Data analysis proceeded in three stages. First, linguistic elements representing interpersonal functions—such as mood, modality, and pronouns—were identified using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (Paltridge, 2012). Second, findings were grouped by interpersonal function categories to reveal the speaker's attitude and social position toward readers. Third, discourse strategies building brand-audience closeness were interpreted through Gee's (2014) view of discourse as social practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sentence Structure (Mood) and Communicative Purpose

The results of the analysis show that the dominant sentence structure in the caption of the @kopikenangan.id account is a declarative sentence that serves to convey information and build a friendly brand image. The declarative form allows the writer to affirm the message without creating social distance from the reader. As explained by Halliday in Paltridge (2012), the declarative structure in interpersonal metafunctions serves to inform and maintain a balanced relationship between the speaker and the speech partner.



Figure 2. Instagram Caption Data (1)

Source: Screenshot of a post from the Instagram account @kopikenangan.id, dated 1 October 2025

Phrases such as "From us who have always been proud of Indonesian Coffee, for the World" (1 October) show how the brand positions itself as a proud representation of national identity. Through this structure, the brand seeks to construct a social position as part of an empowered Indonesian community that is proud of local products. Thus, the choice of declarative forms not only displays an informative attitude, but also reflects the brand's ideological position in building emotional closeness with the audience (Gee, 2014).



Figure 3. Copyright © 2019 Copyright © 2019 Copyright © 2

Source: Screenshots of posts from the Instagram account @kopikenangan.id, collected during the research period (1–5 October 2025)

In addition to the declarative form, the @kopikenangan.id caption also utilizes imperative sentences that function to invite the audience to be directly involved in brand activities. For example, it can be seen in the words "Tag your coffee buddies in the comment column so you don't miss the promo" and "Let's stop by the Kopi Kenangan booth in @synchronizefest 2025". The sentences use lexical choices that are both inviting and familiar, showing how language is used to reinforce participation and build a two-way interaction between the author and the reader. According to Hyland (2005), the imperative form in digital discourse has a prominent interpersonal function because it creates emotional closeness and engagement. This structure allows readers to feel included in the brand's narrative, thus fostering a sense of closeness that is dialogical.

Based on linguistic analysis, the mood patterns used show communicative strategies that are consistent with the brand character. The casual language style, informal diction such as "yuk", "sobat ngopi", and the use of exclamation forms are markers of how the brand adapts its discourse to the typical communication style of the Indonesian young generation. Hyland (2005) emphasized that interaction in digital discourse is built through linguistic strategies that combine elements of familiarity and persuasion. Thus, the use of sentence structure in the @kopikenangan.id caption is not only intended to convey an informative message, but also to be an instrument in creating a friendly and inclusive brand image.

The strategy of using mood also shows that there is an awareness of the discourse on the role of language in shaping social relations in digital media. According to Gee (2014), discourse is not only a medium of conveying messages, but also a means of forming social identity and values. In this case, @kopikenangan.id uses language as a tool to assert its identity as a brand that is close to the daily lives of urban people, while establishing an emotional connection with the audience through simple but communicative speech. Thus, the sentence structure in the caption not only shows an interpersonal function in a linguistic sense, but also contains a social function that strengthens the brand's communication strategy through interactive and relational digital discourse practices.

Modalities and Pronouns as Markers of Social Relations

Analysis of the captions of the @kopikenangan.id account shows that elements of modality and pronouns play a central role in building social closeness between brands and

audiences. Modality functions to mark the speaker's attitude towards events or actions expressed through certain lexical choices.

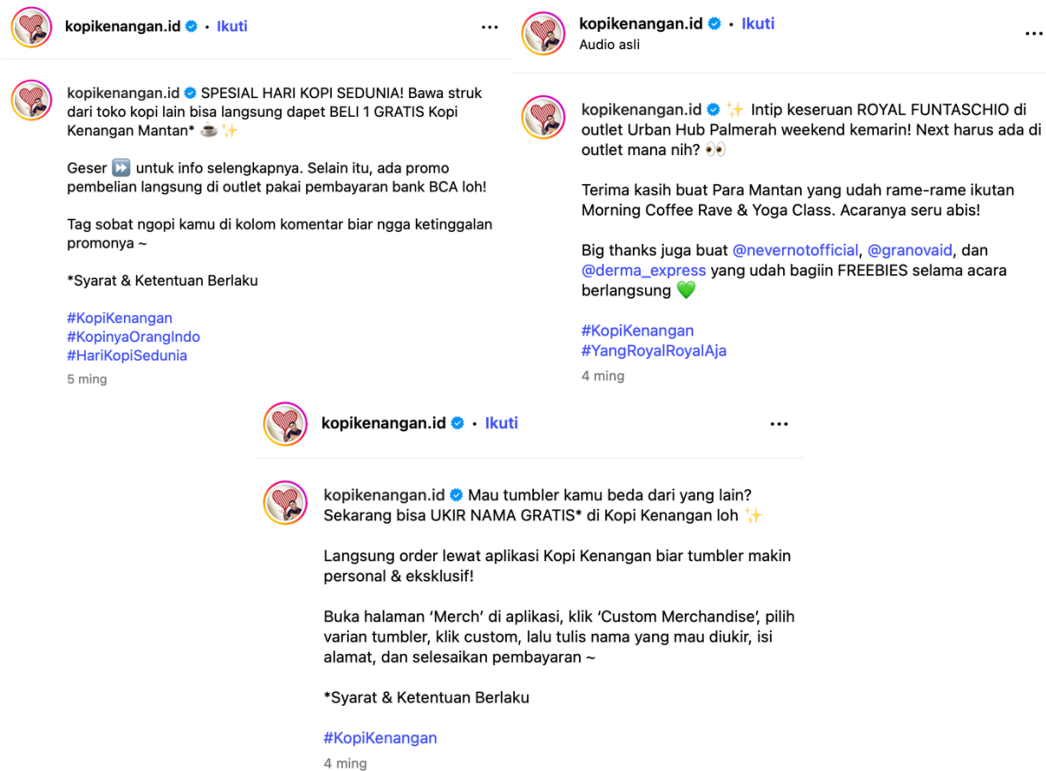


Figure 4. Copyright © 2019 Copyright © 2019 Copyright © 2

Source: Screenshots of posts from the Instagram account @kopikenangan.id, collected during the research period (1–5 October 2025)

In captions such as "can you get it immediately", "where should it be at this outlet?", and "can carve a free name", there are positive modalities that reflect confidence, optimism, and invitation with a persuasive tone. These forms affirm the brand's position as a communicative entity and oriented towards positive consumer experiences. According to Halliday in Paltridge (2012), modality is a linguistic means of expressing interpersonal attitudes, especially in showing a level of trust, commitment, or invitation to a speech partner. In digital discourse, the use of positive modalities is an effective rhetorical strategy to create a friendly and pleasant impression.

These findings are in line with the results of research by Ratnasari et al. (2020), who stated that the use of modalities with affirmative nuances strengthens close and collaboration-oriented social relationships between speakers and readers. In the @kopikenangan.id caption, modalities such as "can" and "should" not only state possibilities or necessity, but also contain suggestive values that encourage the audience to participate. Thus, modality acts as an interpersonal strategy that refines forms of commercial persuasion to feel natural and not domineering. Hyland (2005) explained that linguistic choices that indicate emotional involvement are a form of negotiation of meaning between writers and readers, which serves to strengthen a sense of interconnectedness in digital discourse.

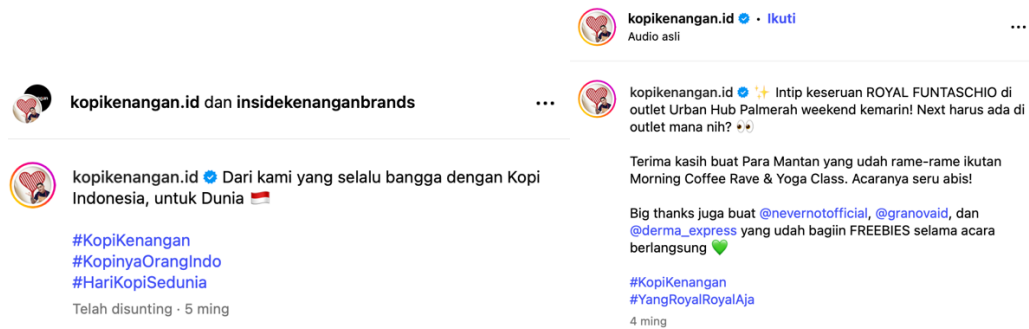


Figure 5. Copyright © 2019 Copyright © 2019 Copyright © 2

Source: Screenshots of posts from the Instagram account @kopikenangan.id, collected during the research period (1–5 October 2025)

In addition to modalities, the pronoun element is also the main linguistic tool in building interpersonal relationships in the @kopikenangan.id caption. Pronouns like we, we, and you show an inclusive and dialogical form of communication. The use of our pronoun in the phrase "From us who are always proud of Indonesian Coffee" marks the collective image of the company positioning itself as part of the national community. Meanwhile, your use and typical terms like "Ex" present a familiar speaking style, as if the brand is speaking directly to its followers with a personal and warm feel. This shows the brand's explicit efforts to negate social distancing through a friendly communication style.

According to Gee (2014), pronouns function as instruments of discourse that shape social identities and participatory relationships between members of discursive communities. In this case, the inclusive choice of pronouns shows the brand's efforts to create a sense of community, where the audience is not only positioned as consumers, but also as part of the brand narrative. Baitillah and Ghanistyana (2024) add that interpersonal interactions on Instagram often rely on a form of two-way communication that allows users to feel emotionally engaged without the need for face-to-face interaction. Therefore, the use of direct and personal pronouns is an effective strategy in strengthening social relationships through digital text.

Overall, the combination of positive modalities and inclusive pronouns reflects a pattern of discourse designed to build emotional closeness while reinforcing brand identity. Through this strategy, @kopikenangan.id has succeeded in creating an expressive, participatory, and audience-oriented communication style. Language serves not only as a promotional tool, but also as a medium of social relations that affirms the friendly and nationalist character of the brand. Such a linguistic approach shows that interpersonal meaning in digital discourse is not only built through sentence structure, but also through word choice that is able to create an emotional connection between producers and consumers.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of ten captions from the @kopikenangan.id Instagram account, using Systemic Functional Linguistics and discourse analysis, revealed that the brand strategically employed interpersonal meaning through dominant declarative moods (e.g., "From us who are always proud of Indonesian Coffee, for the World") to convey information while fostering friendly, nationally proud images; imperative moods (e.g., "Tag your coffee buddies") with informal diction for participatory invitations; positive modalities like can and should for

optimistic engagement; and inclusive pronouns (we, us) alongside second-person you with familiar terms (e.g., “Exes”) to build collective identity, eliminate distance, and position followers as active participants. This created expressive, persuasive discourse resonant with urban youth, transforming captions into tools for emotional connection and solidarity beyond mere promotion. Future research could compare these strategies across competing coffee brands or examine their evolution over longer time periods to assess sustained impact on follower loyalty.

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