

## Linguistic Relativity in Gap X Katseye 2025 Instagram Advertisement: A Whorfian Weak Hypothesis Approach

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### Abstract

This study applies the Whorfian Weak Hypothesis to analyze how language choices in the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 Instagram advertisement captions can shape the audience perceptions of the brand that is being advertised to convey a specific message. Using a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative linguistic analysis and quantitative survey data from 30 respondents aged 17–25, this research identifies the influence of lexicon, syntax, and discourse on audience cognition. The results show that 63.33% of respondents associated the brand language with “freedom” and 32.1% perceived it as “expressive and empowering.” This study describes that the roles of words, sentences, and discourse successfully influence how the audience's perception can interpret the meaning of messages conveyed by the advertisement, although not completely dominating, because the Whorfian Weak Hypothesis produces language that is relatively moderate in evaluating the advertisement. These findings also demonstrate that linguistic construction effectively embodies cultural values of individuality and empowerment in digital advertising. This study indicates that the roles of words, sentences, and discourse successfully influence how the audience's perception can interpret the meaning of messages conveyed by the advertisement, although not completely dominating, because the Whorfian Weak Hypothesis produces language that is relatively moderate in evaluating the advertisement. The study contributes to sociolinguistic perspectives by reaffirming the Whorfian Weak Hypothesis within the context of global social media marketing.

**Keywords:** *Advertising Language, Consumer Perception, Instagram Captions, Linguistic Relativity, Whorfian Weak Hypothesis*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to researchers, language is perceived as a means of communication where thoughts and ideas are conveyed using either spoken or symbolic methods (Bonvillain, 2019 cited in Alifah et al. 2024). It serves as a medium for expressing and exchanging information between individuals or groups. Language encompasses spoken, written, and symbolic forms, enabling individuals to convey meaning and interact socially. Within this perspective, language is considered a fundamental tool for human communication and plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals perceive and understand the world around them (Rabiah, 2018 cited in Alifah et al. 2024). This communication language is used for all aspects of human life, such as in business and advertising. Nowadays, social media, like Instagram, are used as a medium for promoting products. The engagement rate of Instagram is higher than other social media platforms, and Instagram marketing can reach the best returns (Katai, 2021 cited in Aulia et al. 2022).

The development of digital technology has brought about major changes in various aspects of life, including how people communicate and receive information. One significant change is how digital technology is used in the world of advertising. By utilizing social media, websites, and applications, advertisements can now reach a wider and more diverse audience (Lestari, 2023). E-commerce networks, such as Instagram, frequently blur the line between genuine user interaction and commercial persuasion, use language to create the illusion of a personal connection or to influence client decisions (Rialdi 2025).

In the digital era, social media, especially Instagram, has become the main stage and battleground for global branding. Marketing now relies not only on visuals but also on the formation of narratives and values through words. The collaboration between fashion brand GAP and global girl group KATSEYE in the Jeans 2025 campaign is a crucial and relevant case study. The issue of the deep relationship between language and thought has long been a central topic in sociolinguistics, one of which focuses on the Whorfian Hypothesis or Linguistic Relativity. The linguistic relativity position, also known as the Sapir-Whorf or Whorfian hypothesis, argues that linguistic categories constrain and determine cognitive categorization, and thus language influences thought and behavior (Whorf, 1956 cited in Tursunova, 2025). Although the strong version of this hypothesis has been widely refuted, the weak version states that language influences the speaker's worldview and cognitive associations, without absolutely determining them (Vaishnav, 2025). This influence of language is particularly felt in the realm of persuasive communication such as advertising, where diction is used strategically to instill product associations.

This study aims to analyze how lexical, syntactic, and discourse-level structures in GAP X KATSEYE Instagram advertisements influence audience perception through the Whorfian Weak Hypothesis framework. Several previous studies have applied the Whorfian Hypothesis to analyze the relationship between language and cognition, confirming its relevance in the context of persuasive and digital communication. For example, the Whorfian Hypothesis has been used to compare the manipulation of language in fictional political contexts such as Newspeak in the novel 1984 and language in Animal Farm, demonstrating how language is used to shape reality and control the audience's thought processes (Hossain, M. S., Kabir, M. S., Yeasmin, F., Ahsan, G. M. N., & Sepai, M. K, 2024). Furthermore, the Whorfian Hypothesis has also been tested in the context of contemporary digital communication, such as a study exploring the use of emojis in formal settings, which has been shown to influence the interpretation of messages and the sender's image (Rehman & Butt, 2024). Other studies have also focused on analyzing specific linguistic structures to show how language differences influence worldviews or perceptions of reality (Natsir, Harahap, & Khairani, 2025). Collectively, these studies support the premise that the Weak Version of the Whorfian Hypothesis is valid and relevant for analyzing how language can subtly shape cognitive views and associations in a variety of contexts, including marketing.

Although numerous studies have addressed the application of the Whorfian Hypothesis, there is a gap in the existing literature. Existing research has focused little on in-depth analysis of linguistic structures at the lexical (word), syntactic (sentence), and discourse levels in the context of Instagram captions, which are a concise text format that is very typical on social media. No study has specifically examined how the narrative and language structure of the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 collaboration advertisement captions on Instagram influence audience perceptions. Yet, captions in the context of this celebrity collaboration have the potential to have highly structured language constructions that instill values of self-expression in a young demographic. Therefore, this research aims to examine how lexical, syntactic, and discourse-level linguistic elements in the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 Instagram advertisement captions influence audience perception through the lens of the Whorfian Weak Hypothesis.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a mixed-methods approach with a descriptive-explanatory design, combining qualitative linguistic analysis with descriptive quantitative data from a perception survey to reveal how language choices in the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 Instagram captions influence the perceptions of 30 consumer participants. The qualitative component utilizes Stylistic Analysis (at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels) framed within a Sociolinguistic lens, specifically applying a weak version of the Whorfian Hypothesis to interpret how these choices shape cultural ideas. Simultaneously, the quantitative component uses a Descriptive Quantitative Survey to measure the frequency of specific perceptions and validate qualitative interpretations. This study uses two primary data sources: curated main Instagram caption choices and a complete set of responses from a Google Form survey.

The research subjects consisted of 30 participants aged 17-25 years, who were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance as the core target demographic. The instrument used was a structured Google Form questionnaire containing demographic questions, closed questions, and open questions. The analysis procedure was sequential: first, the Data Collection Stage involved archiving captions and distributing surveys; second, the Linguistic Analysis Stage deconstructed captions using stylistics and Whorfian theory; third, the Survey Data Processing Stage involved calculating descriptive statistics (percentages) and quantifying thematic responses; and fourth, the Synthesis Stage triangulated the two sets of data, using participant data as objective evidence to prove how linguistic instruments successfully influenced the cognitive reality of participants.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Analysis at Word Level (Lexicon)

According to the Oxford dictionary, a lexicon is a collection of words. In theoretical linguistics, the term mental lexicon is used to refer to the grammatical component that contains the knowledge possessed by speakers and listeners about words in a language. In the context of advertising, (stylistics) helps us understand how language is used effectively and persuasively to achieve communication goals, namely selling products and instilling brand image.

The findings of this study demonstrate a close relationship between an advertisement's linguistic construction and its audience's perception. This discussion chapter will elaborate on this causal relationship. Using a dual framework, we will analyze how the beauty and precision of diction (*stylistics*) are not merely decorative, but rather strategic tools. This tool, according to the Whorfian Sociolinguistics lens, serves to instill and reinforce specific cultural values.

To test this claim, our analysis will be combined and elaborated with other data sources from the responses of 30 questionnaire participants. Each qualitative response has been categorized and quantified based on variations of the same concept, resulting in key words indicating the intersection between language and culture in a sociolinguistic context. Furthermore, these participants' ideas will be used as indicators to analyze the strength of each word choice in the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement caption.

After analyzing word choice theoretically, the next step was to validate its impact through quantitative perception data from 30 participants. Participants were asked a key question: “What do you think words like ‘*individuality*,’ ‘*self-expression*,’ and ‘*style*’ convey?” Their answers were then categorized and tallied to determine which concepts emerged most dominantly.

Table 1. Participant Impressions Arising from the Key Lexicon

No	Answer	Quantity (30)	Percentage (%)
1	Freedom	12	63.33%
2	Trends/ Modernity	6	20.00%
3	Exclusive	3	6.67%
4	Others	2	10.00%

The most significant finding is that the majority of participants (63.33%) directly associate the core marketing lexicon with the concept of “Freedom.” This is no longer a theoretical interpretation, but rather a measurable cognitive reality in the minds of the audience. From the perspective of the Whorfian Weak Hypothesis, this data is a confirmation. These words function as “linguistic triggers” that actively influence and shape the audience's thought processes. The language in this caption successfully led nearly two-thirds of participants to jump from a fashion product (jeans) to a highly abstract and powerful cultural value. This outcome strongly parallels the findings of Boroditsky (2011) in *Linguistic Relativity & Cognition*, demonstrating how language can actively guide cognitive attention rather than merely label experience. Furthermore, it is consistent with Goddard & Wierzbicka's (2019) in the *Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM)*. concept of “cultural key words”, where lexis like “freedom” serves as

a deeply resonant cultural anchor in Western discourse. This demonstrates how language not only describes the world but also constructs it.

In second place, (20%) of participants associated these words with “*Trends/Modernity*.” This finding is also important because it demonstrates that in addition to instilling a deep cultural value (Freedom), the language used also successfully fulfills a more conventional advertising function, positioning the brand as relevant, current, and modern. Sociolinguistically, these two findings work synergistically. The concept of “*Trends/Modernity*” provides the cultural context (being part of what is currently relevant), while the concept of “Freedom” provides the personal and ideological meaning within that context.

When participants were asked to distill their entire impression of an advertisement into three words, their answers provided a “*cognitive map*,” a candid picture of which messages were most successfully internalized. To analyze this data, the 78 words collected were classified into conceptual categories based on similarity of meaning.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of Three Descriptive Words of Audience Choice

Concept Category	Representative Words that Emerge	Total Appearances	Percentage (%)
Expressive and Empowering	“Expressive,” “Free,” “Unique,” “Bold,” “Empowering,” “Confident,” “Strong”	25	32.1%
Modern and Stylish	“Modern,” “Stylish,” “Cool,” “Current,” “Trendy,” “Fashion”	23	29.5%
Aesthetics and Elegance	“Beautiful,” “Elegant,” “Aesthetic,” “Simple,” “Charming,” “Iconic,” “Classy”	14	17.9%
Youthful and Energetic	“Energetic,” “Fresh,” “Youthful,” “Enthusiastic,” “Dynamic”	10	12.8%%
Others	“Katseye,” “Denim,” “Comfy,” “Dance”	6	7.7%

The most significant finding was the “Expressive & Empowering” category, which topped the list with a percentage of (32.1%). This demonstrates that the message that resonated most with audiences wasn't simply the visual image, but rather the abstract values of freedom, courage, and personal identity. This is a direct manifestation of the Whorfian Weak Hypothesis. The language used in the caption “Your style, your story” wasn't merely a visual complement. Instead, it actively shaped how audiences interpreted the advertisement as a whole. The use of personalized lexicon “your story” is consistent with the findings of Thornborrow & Brown (2009) in the framework Media, Language and Culture, which show that this stylistic technique sociolinguistically positions the audience as subjects of empowerment, reinforcing the Whorfian effect. This linguistic construction successfully “led” audiences to see the advertisement not just as a fashion promotion, but as a manifesto about self-confidence. Audiences didn't just see jeans; they saw an idea.

In second place, the “*Modern and Stylish*” category (29.5%) demonstrated that the visual aspects, trends, and cultural relevance of this collaboration were also well-received by audiences. However, what makes this analysis interesting isn't which category won, but rather the interconnectedness between the two. This advertisement successfully created a modern and relevant image (both cultural and visual aspects), but the language in the caption lent meaning and depth to that image. The *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis* explains that audiences may be attracted by the stylish visuals, but they remember and internalize the advertisement because the language assigns them roles as expressive and empowered individuals. Thus, this data confirms that the language in the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement captions serves as the “soul” of this marketing. It provides ideological substance to the visual aesthetic and successfully implants an idea, not just a product, in the minds of the audience.

Participant data has confirmed that “*Freedom*” and “*Self-Expression*” are central concepts formed in the minds of the audience. Of course, this perception did not arise from a hollow space. Therefore, it is crucial to trace the main linguistic sources that instilled these ideas. The following analysis will dissect

several key captions used in this campaign. The goal is to identify the contribution of these selected texts and, most importantly, determine which captions serve as the main foundation in shaping audience responses.

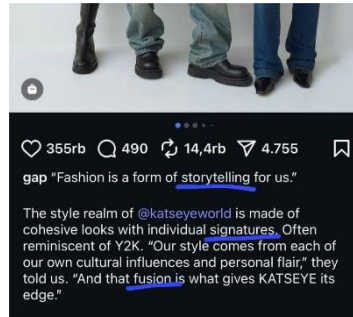


Figure 1. GAP official Instagram feed on August 27, 2025  
keyword: “*storytelling*”, “*signatures*”, “*fusion*”

The use of the term “*storytelling*” is central to the metaphor of this caption. This conceptual term elevates fashion to the level of narrative, persuasively creating a new association in the minds of the audience which is that Fashion is a form of Narrative. This approach effectively changes the way the audience perceives clothing, no longer just a material object, but a medium for expressing their personal stories. “*Signatures*” reinforce the idea of personal uniqueness and the value of individualism. On the other hand, “*Fusion*”, a metaphor borrowed from the culinary or chemical world, highlights the value of multiculturalism through the harmonious blending of different elements. Collectively, these two terms enrich the audience's lexicon, providing a conceptual framework for understanding fashion in a more complex and sophisticated way. The use of the term “*storytelling*” and the metaphor “*Fashion is Narrative*” is fundamentally supported by Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) conceptual metaphor theory. They argue that this metaphor cognitively elevates clothing from a material object to a medium for expressing personal stories.

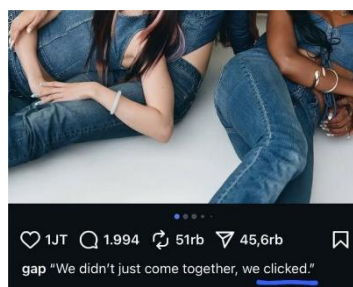


Figure 2. GAP official Instagram feed on August 28, 2025  
Keyword: “*clicked*”

This is a very effective colloquial (slang) verb. It implies instant, natural, and perfect compatibility just like the sound of a “*click*.” It is much stronger than “*we are compatible*.” This word shapes the audience's perception of the authenticity of the relationship between KATSEYE members. Their relationship is described as something magical and destined, not contrived. This indirectly makes the collaboration with GAP feel more sincere and natural. This slang vocabulary strategically supports the advertising goal of creating authenticity, as highlighted by Spenke and Scholl (2017) in *Authenticity in Brand Communication*. This informal language breaks down the distance of formal advertising, thereby reinforcing the feeling that the relationship depicted is real and sincere.



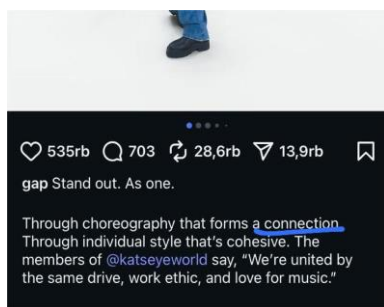


Figure 3. GAP official Instagram feed on September 1, 2025

Keyword: “*connection*”

This word focuses on the emotional outcome of an action (choreography), rather than the action itself. It shifts the focus from the physical to the interpersonal. This word leads the audience to see art (dance, music, fashion) as a means of building human relationships. It instills cultural values about the importance of community and emotional bonds, positioning GAP as a facilitator of those connections. The use of the word “bonding” which focuses on emotional outcomes rather than physical actions makes art a means of building community. This concept is supported by Gee (2015), who sees language as the primary tool in building affinity spaces where shared values (such as community and human connection) are sociolinguistically imbued.

### 3.2. Analysis at Sentence Level (Syntaxis)

According to (Chomsky, 1956) syntax is a set of rules, principles, and processes that govern the structure of a sentence in a given language, specifically the order of words. The term syntax is also used to refer to the study of such principles and processes. The Oxford Dictionary defines English syntax as the arrangement of words and phrases to create well- formed sentences in a language. The analysis of sentence level (syntaxis) uses *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis* in the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 Advertisement on Instagram Caption will combine and elaborate with another data source from the 30 questionnaire participation answers. Each answer will be categorized and calculated based on the same variety. In this analysis, the categories of the questionnaire participant answers will be divided into some keywords that indicate language and culture in the Sociolinguistics context. Subsequently, the participant's ideas will be used as an indication to analyze the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement on other Instagram captions. Thus the result of this analysis will be more objective since the data perception is supported and elaborated by the 30 participants point of view as the representative of people.

Table 3. Participants' Perception of the Captions

No	Answer	Quantity (30)	Percentage (%)
1	Social	19	63.33%
2	Personal	8	26.67%
3	Personal & Social	1	3.33%
4	Ambiguous	2	6,67%

Based on the data source from the 30 questionnaire participation answers, 4 strong various keywords reflect some sentences in the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement on Instagram caption, that is “Powerful on your own” and “Even better together” as the strong representation of the language and culture in sociolinguistic using *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis* to other sentence captions, that related to the point like “individual”, “social”, “unity”, “diversity”, and so on. Based on the questionnaire answer, the keywords consist of “social” with 19 participation answers, “personal” with 8 participant answers, “personal and social” with 1 participant answer, and the last is “ambiguous” with 2 participant answers.

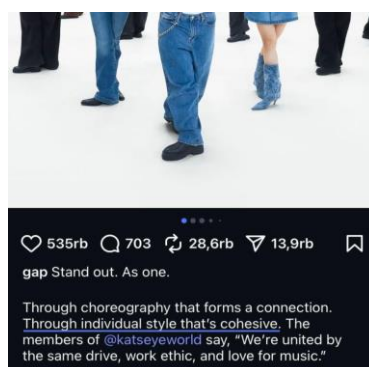


Figure 4. GAP official Instagram feed on September 1, 2025  
“Through individual style that’s cohesive” (GAP official Instagram caption, September 1, 2025)

One linguistic approach that reflects sociocultural identity and language is linguistic paradox that is reflected in the clause “through individual style that’s cohesive”. The combination of the words “individual” and “cohesive” shows how personal expression and collective unity are linguistically intertwined, revealing the brand’s language to merge self-uniqueness with social belonging. From a sociolinguistic point of view, this conflict reflects modern cultural principles that emphasize individuality while simultaneously maintaining alignment with community aesthetics. Through the lens of the *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis*, the language used here shapes cognitive perception by inviting audiences to conceptualize identity as both personal and social, rather than mutually exclusive. The preposition “through” further constructs individuality as a medium for achieving harmony, suggesting that self-expression gains meaning within collective coherence. This relational function can be visualized syntactically in the structural mapping of the clause, which is based on Radford’s (2009) framework in *Transformational Grammar: A First Course*, where the prepositional phrase “through individual style” serves as a modifier and the relative clause “that’s cohesive” embeds unity within individuality. As a result, the clause becomes an ambiguous but intentional expression of Western values that present unity and diversity as complimentary factors in the formation of cultural identity.

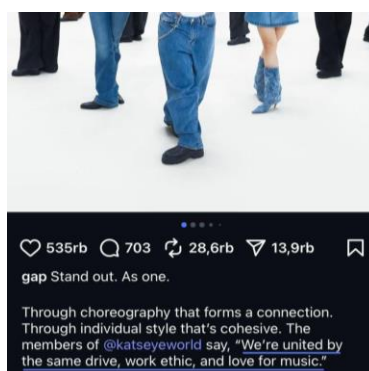


Figure 5. GAP official Instagram feed on September 1, 2025  
“...We’re united by the same drive, work ethic, and love for music” (GAP official Instagram caption, September 1, 2025)

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the use of the plural subject and the inclusive pronoun “we” indexes a social orientation toward an egalitarian community rather than a hierarchical brand consumer relationship, reinforcing the ideology of belonging and authenticity central to digital branding culture. The phrase “We’re united by” linguistically encodes solidarity through a passive construction that implies unity as a shared social value, echoing the Western cultural narrative of diversity through unity. Meanwhile, the lexical triad “drive, work ethic, and love for music” encapsulates cultural values deeply embedded in Western discourse combining personal ambition, moral industriousness, and creative passion which together frame success as both self-discipline and emotional fulfillment. Under the

*Whorfian Weak Hypothesis* of linguistic relativity, these lexical choices are not merely descriptive but shape cognitive perception: they guide audiences to conceptualize identity and belonging through the intertwined lenses of social collectivity and personal aspiration, reflecting the ambiguity between individual and communal identity within contemporary global culture. This cognitive process can be modeled at the sentence level, following Lucy's (1997) framework of linguistic relativity, which illustrates how linguistic structures mediate conceptual and cultural perception. Thus, the caption linguistically reproduces cultural ideology by embedding both collective and aspirational meanings, exemplifying how language simultaneously represents and constructs cultural reality.

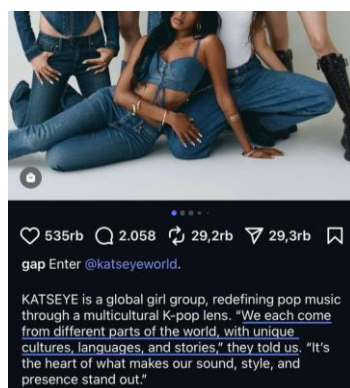


Figure 6. GAP official Instagram feed on August 28, 2025

*"We each come from different parts of the world, with unique cultures, languages, and stories," (GAP official Instagram caption, August 28, 2025)*

The sentence linguistically embodies the relativity between language and worldview as proposed by the *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis*. It reflects how linguistic expression constructs awareness of diversity by emphasizing *individual origin* and *cultural plurality* as cultural signifiers that shape how individuals perceive themselves and others within a globalized social context. Through a sociolinguistic perspective, this sentence encodes both social and personal meanings socially, it constructs inclusivity and cross-cultural unity, while personally, it affirms one's distinct heritage and narrative. Thus, the language not only describes diversity but also constructs it as shared cultural value, illustrating how linguistic choices influence collective understanding of identity and belonging. This process aligns with the conceptual model of linguistic relativity, where sentence-level structures mediate between language, cognition, and worldview (Boroditsky, 2011).

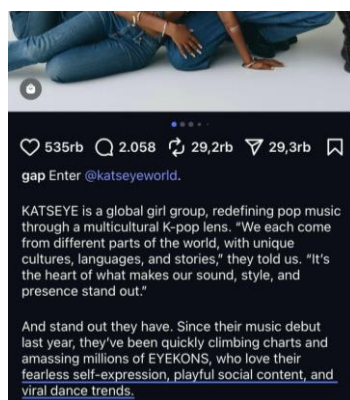


Figure 7. GAP official Instagram feed on August 19, 2025

*"...fearless self-expression, playful social content, and viral dance trends." (GAP official Instagram caption, August 19, 2025)*



The combination of phrases in this sentence show how language constructs cultural values tied to modern digital identity under the lens of the *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis* and sociolinguistic theory. The lexical choices in the sentence linguistically frame creativity and confidence as celebrated social behaviors, shaping perception of self-expression as both socially performative and personally liberating. These combining phrases embody Western cultural ideologies that associate authenticity with visibility and individuality with empowerment. Through a sociolinguistic lens, the phrase encodes the intersection of social and personal identity socially through participation in collective digital trends, and personally through unique self-display within those trends. Thus, language here constructs a worldview where social belonging is achieved through personal expression and cultural participation, aligning with the conceptual model of linguistic identity construction, where linguistic form mediates the relationship between social meaning and worldview (Gee, 2014).

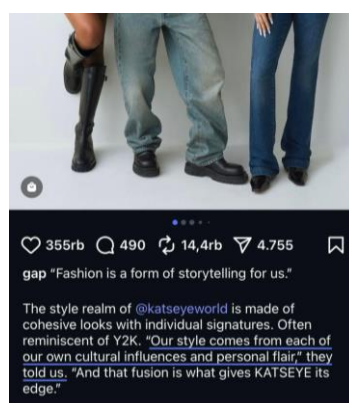


Figure 8. GAP official Instagram feed on August 27, 2025  
“Our style comes from each of our own cultural influences and personal flair,” (GAP official Instagram caption, August 27, 2025)

According to the *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis* and viewed through a sociolinguistic lens, the sentence linguistically embodies the correlation between language, culture, and identity. The lexical pattern “our style” and “each of our own” conveys both collective identity and individual distinction, shaping the perception that unity emerges through diversity. By combining “cultural influences” and “personal flair,” the sentence encodes how social background and personal creativity construct identity as both *socially grounded* and *personally expressive*. Through a cultural perspective, this linguistic structure reflects a viewpoint that celebrates multiculturalism flexibility, suggesting that style and fashion by extension, identity is described as a dialogue between inherited and the self made, not only as an aesthetic origin but also constructs a cultural ideology of inclusion and individuality, aligning with the triadic model of language, culture, and identity (Kramsch, 1998).

### 3.3. Analysis at Discourse Level (Ideological)

After understanding the word and sentence-level sections, the research will proceed to the discourse-level section. The analysis at the discourse level aims to understand how the overall text of the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement shapes ideological meaning in the minds of the audience. In this section, language in an advertisement is not only understood as individual words or sentences but as a discourse that can associate the social values it intends to convey. This section explains the relationship between the *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis* and several questions related to the discourse level, along with supporting data sourced from relevant references, which will serve as a basis to strengthen the evidence of this analysis.

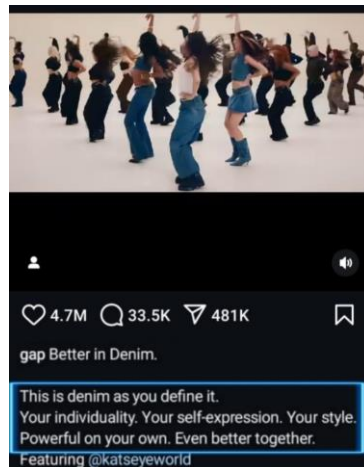


Figure 9. GAP official Instagram feed on August 19, 2025

*“This is denim as you define it. Your individuality. Your self-expression. Your style. Powerful on your own. Even better together.” (GAP official Instagram feed on August 19, 2025)*

There are a total of 3 (three) questions posed by the researcher to 30 respondents, regarding the discourse level that can be used as a tool to explore how the audience perceives the caption text of GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement on August 19, 2025.

The first question is “What do you think when you hear that caption?” The data explanation is presented in a narrative open-table. The answers have been categorized as a representation of each respondent's opinion.

Table 4. Participants' Perception of the Captions

No	Answer	Quantity (30)
1	Self/ Identity expression	12
2	Empowerment/ Confidence	6
3	Diversity/ Inclusivity	3
4	Fashion	4
5	Literal/ Not understand	3
6	Ambiguous	2

Based on the data presented above, 30 respondents believe that the discourse level of *“This is denim as you define it. Your individuality. Your self-expression. Your style. Powerful on your own. Even better together.”* gives different impressions. Six (6) categories of opinion were recorded. The majority of respondents (12 people) believe that the caption represents *“self/identity expression.”* This perception is then followed by a total of 6 respondents who believe the caption represents *“empowerment/confidence,”* 3 respondents who believe the caption represents *“diversity/inclusivity,”* 4 respondents who believe this caption represents *“fashion,”* 3 respondents who think it is *“literal/not understood,”* and 2 respondents who think this caption is *“ambiguous”* or general. Furthermore, the data will be elaborated with supporting data, in order to strengthen the respondents' arguments in understanding the meaning of the advertisement for GAP X KATSEYE 2025 on August 19, 2025.

- The Caption of GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement as a call to action and express  
The main function of an advertisement is to provide a persuasive effect on consumers to take action, such as purchasing a product. This invitation is often in the form of a directive, although at the beginning of Katseye's GAP Jeans caption, *“This is denim as you define it.”* refers more to a subtle implication of meaning, where individuals are invited to define the product/brand. This is further confirmed by the continuation of the caption *“Your individuality. Your self-expression. Your style.”* which serves as persuasive language to guide individuals toward a deeper cognitive understanding of the promoted product to enhance the purchasing intention of the individual.
- The Caption of GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement as a form of power

The perception related to “*power*” that appears in the caption “*Powerful on your own.*” is the use of language that creates a positive impression to establish a connection between the individual and the product/brand. This finding is also discussed by Yusuf & Abas (2024), regarding *Emotional and Sensory Appeal Emotional Triggers*, which discuss how positive emotions built by advertisements can trigger positive emotions to enhance purchasing power, rather than neutral advertisements. Therefore, this can be categorized as a form of association between the emotion to be built (power) and the product/brand (denim).

- c. The Caption of GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement as a form of diversity  
The form of diversity shown in the caption “*Even better together.*” represents acceptance of each individual’s “*diversity.*” Campbell et al. (2023) stated that modern advertising aims to represent fairness and equality. This can increase the interest of target consumers. Referring back to the previous caption, “*This is denim as you define it. Your individuality. Your self-expression. Your style.*” clearly promotes the product/brand by appreciating the differences of each individual. This is a form of branding that can attract buyers, as a product/brand values the diversity possessed by individuals.
- d. The Caption of GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement as a fashion icon  
Fashion is often associated with the style that emerges when individuals view, purchase, and use a product/brand they are interested in. When referring back to the caption “*This is denim as you define it. Your individuality. Your self-expression. Your style. Powerful on your own. Even better together.*” It helps create the image that GAP Denim is not just a clothing product/brand being sold, but also an object consumed by each individual, because it contains symbolic and cultural elements intended by the product/brand.
- e. The Caption of GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement as a something neutral  
The advertising language becomes “*neutral*” because overall, from the caption “*This is denim as you define it. Your individuality. Your self-expression. Your style. Powerful on your own. Even better together.*” it does not force each individual to claim that a product/brand is the best, but rather the caption focuses on individuals defining the product/brand for themselves. Instead of using *hyperbolic* language, the language used is neutral and avoids pressuring individuals to buy a product/brand.
- f. The Caption of GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement as a something ambiguous  
The language of advertising that is “*ambiguous*” is one persuasive strategy in advertising. Yusuf & Abas (2024) state that ambiguity can create memorability through various interpretations, thereby stimulating curiosity. If we look at the caption “*Powerful on your own. Even better together.*” It is very contradictory. “*Powerful on your own.*” carries an *individualistic* meaning, while “*Even better together.*” carries a *collectivist* meaning, thus creating a *polysemy* meaning, where different interpretations occur within the same message, resulting in an ambiguous feeling.

Based on the findings described, the *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis* demonstrates that the structure and word choice in a language, as seen in the captions of GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisements, has a significant influence on shaping consumers' thinking when interpreting a product/brand. The use of *familiar language* also fosters a positive relationship with individuals. Using language that emphasizes *power* also generates a very strong *emotional response* and creates broad interpretations of meaning. This, in turn, shapes perceptions in the mind regarding the identity and values contained within a product/brand.

The second question is “Which is more influential? Language in sentences, or images/visuals?” which is elaborated in a simple quantitative table from the advertisement on August 19, 2025. The breakdown of the results from each respondent's opinion is shown in the following table.

Table 5. Participants’ Perception of the Language and Visuals in the Captions

No	Answer	Quantity (30)	Percentage (%)
1	Language	3	10%
2	Picture/ Visual	17	56.7%
3	Language & Picture/ Visual	6	20%
4	Others	4	13.3%

Based on the data presented in the table above, out of a total of 30 respondents, the majority believe that "picture/ visual" ranks the highest with 17 respondents (56.7%), followed by "language & picture/visual" with 6 respondents (20%), then "language" with 3 respondents (10%), and "others" with 4 respondents (13.3%) who responded outside the provided options. Furthermore, this data will be explained with the other supporting data that strengthens the research on how respondents perceive the meaning of GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisements on August 19, 2025.

a. The Language

As many as 10% of respondents stated that "language" or *linguistics* influences the advertisement in the caption of GAP X KATSEYE 2025. In the analysis of the *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis* combined with *CDA*. Joy et al. (2024), explain how word choice and sentence structure shape and influence the way individuals think about the concepts generated by a product/brand. For the respondents, the caption used in the advertisement directly guides them on how to conceptualize their own identity through the product/brand. Through the caption "This is denim as you define it. Your individuality. Your self-expression. Your style. Powerful on your own. Even better together." It shows how language represents a particular identity. This 10% is very low, considering the present era is already dominated by media, so language alone no longer has a highly significant influence.

b. The Picture/ visuals

The dominant factor is that 56.7% of respondents chose "pictures/visuals" as the most influential element. Zhao & Djonov (2014), stated that human communication is always multimodal, and the meaning produced depends on how the selections are made across various modes and media, including visual design. Liu et al. (2025), mentioned that social media is a place of various content flows continuously, thus having a significant impact on attracting consumer interest. Katseye, in the advertisement for GAP X KATSEYE 2025, showcases the *diversity* of each group member from different national backgrounds. Therefore, the resulting visuals also convey meaning directly in a diverse manner. This leads to the formation of audience perception about the represented product/brand without having to read the advertisement caption. Therefore, as many as 56.7% of respondents consider visuals to be more influential than text-based language, because visuals are supported by popular culture, which creates strong images and stereotypes.

c. The Language & picture/ visuals

Followed by 20% of respondents who believed that "language & picture/visual" influence each other. Liu et al. (2025), explained that the marketing context on social media depends on both text and images, which were then tested using conceptual dimensions (Hekler and Childers, 1992): relevance (to what extent the information aligns with the message intended to be delivered) and expectancy (to what extent the information is known based on existing knowledge schemes). GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement demonstrates product/brand representation with each Katseye member, through diversity and individual self-expression. This is referred to as "*High-Relevancy-High-Expectancy*," also known as *HRHE*. *High Relevancy* in GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement refers to the language used in the text (captions) supported by visuals (Katseye members showcasing their uniqueness), whereas *High Expectancy* in GAP X KATSEYE 2025 advertisement involves using Katseye as an icon of popular culture to promote GAP as a major brand. It can be stated that for 20% of respondents, the combination of language with pictures/visuals can interpret the advertisement more strongly.

d. The Others

Finally, 13.3% of respondents chose "others," meaning there are factors influencing them beyond the analysis of language with images/visuals. Zhao & Djonov (2014), stated that *MDA* also includes other forms of communication, such as gestures/movements and music/sound. This indicates that respondents are more influenced by videos involving language and visuals, but they do not grasp the meaning of both, rather the gestures/sounds produced. This is explained by Liu et al. (2025), where respondents perceive advertisements from the "*Low-Relevancy-Low-Expectancy*" or *LRLE* perspective, where respondents are influenced by unexpected elements.

Based on the explanation that has been provided, even though the *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis* focuses solely on language, communication in the modern era is dominated by visuals, studies that involve multimodal interaction, and factors beyond unexpected elements of advertising.

The third question of this level is “Do you think that the choice of captions written in English affects the way you understand the product/brand?” which is presented in a quantitative table from the advertisement on August 19, 2025. Below are the detailed results from the respondents.

Table 6. Participants’ Perception of the English Language in the Captions

No	Answer	Quantity (30)	Percentage (%)	Information
1	Yes	16	53.3%	The English language gives a certain impression of a product/brand
2	Neutral	9	30%	The English language does not really give a particular impression of a product/brand
3	No	5	16.7%	The English language does not give a particular impression of the product/brand

Based on the data presented in the table above, out of a total of 30 respondents, the majority of 16 respondents (53.3%) answered “yes,” followed by 9 respondents (30%) who answered “neutral,” and 5 respondents (16.7%) who answered “no.” The details will be explained in the following points using supporting data.

- The English language gives a certain impression of a product/brand  
Using English as a means to convey a certain impression about a product/brand has become the most prominent approach, with 53.3% of respondents considering that a foreign language (in this context, English) greatly influences an advertisement, especially international ads, in conveying symbolic meanings, thus creating a linguistic fetish (Hornikx et al., 2023). International advertisements are also considered capable of generating associations with internationality, modernity, and even success for individuals who do not use English as their native language. Therefore, when viewed through the lens of the *Whorfian Weak Hypothesis*, the use of English can guide individuals to interpret a product/brand as belonging to an international and modern category. According to Hornikx & van Meurs (2017), cited in Pilar (2024), in their research examining how language use has given rise to a “linguistic fetish” that can build socio-cultural relationships through brands/products advertised in a foreign language. This phenomenon is also known as the “country-of-origin effect” as a form of distinctive brand/product originating from a particular region/location whose message is conveyed using the language of that place.
- The English language does not really give a particular impression of a product/brand  
Respondents who were on the “neutral” side (30%) believed that the use of English does not particularly give a certain impression of a product. They may have good proficiency in English. Hornikx et al. 2023, explained that these individuals are called *balanced bilinguals* because they are considered individuals with acculturation, thus focusing only on the literal meaning. They regard the use of English as something ordinary and not giving a prominent impression, so the persuasive impact of advertisements seems ordinary.
- The English language does not give a particular impression of the product/brand  
As many as 16.7% of respondents who said “no” indicate that the English language used does not affect them at all regarding understanding the product/brand. Hornikx et al. 2023, state that these individuals may have a low level of acculturation towards the use of a foreign language (English). This occurs because, in some regions, especially former colonies, English carries a negative connotation. Although the product/brand conveys English as its advertising caption, it does not create any persuasive impact on these individuals at all.

Based on findings related to the use of English in creating certain impressions of a product or brand, it shows that using a foreign language to reach a broader audience is not always associated with a positive meaning, but can also be neutral or even negative, depending on certain underlying factors. Although the previous question indicated that language had the least influence in an advertisement at



only 10%, then rose to 53% in the third question, it shows that, although language is not a dominant element, its ideological influence still exists in shaping the meaning that occurs in the minds of the audience.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that text in digital ad captions serves as a cognitive architect that successfully modifies audience perception, going beyond the function of simple images. Strategic vocabulary choices, especially those that emphasize “freedom” and “self-expression,” successfully inculcate these cultural ideas in customers’ thoughts, as demonstrated by linguistic discourse analysis. This is substantially reflected in the participant perception data. Language served as the “soul” of the GAP X KATSEYE 2025 campaign, creating a cohesive story between individual expression and a feeling of community.

Theoretically, these findings confirm the validity of the Whorfian Weak Hypothesis (linguistic relativity) within the context of contemporary digital media and advertising. The study demonstrates that careful linguistic framing, even in the brief format of an Instagram caption, is capable of influencing the audience’s cognitive interpretation of product identity and brand values. This reinforces the view that language can guide attention and interpretation without needing to dominate the entire meaning process.

Practically, this study provides strategic recommendations for modern marketing communications: that investment in careful linguistic analysis and formulation is crucial for instilling global, modern, and culturally specific brand associations. Language must be considered a primary tool, not merely a visual complement, in shaping audience identity and creating cognitively resonant engagement.

For future research, this linguistic relativity framework could be expanded into multimodal contexts (such as advertising on TikTok or Youtube), where the interaction between language, sound, and gesture may provide deeper insight into cognitive perception formation. Furthermore, subsequent research is advised to integrate visual semiotic analysis to explore the complex complementary relationship between language and imagery in constructing product imagery holistically.

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