
University in the News

VII - VISUAL CONTENT PREFERENCE

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Cover photo is taken from [here](#).

1.Introduction

One of the important elements in the establishment of news language and discourse is visuals used in news articles. Nowadays, it is getting harder and harder to find news that does not contain images, especially when considering the “new” media of news. This is indeed one of the results of the visual culture that we have been experiencing for a long time and is now radicalized. Let alone encountering news without images, we are witnessing that “image gallery” journalism almost without any text has become widespread on news websites and social media accounts.

We can analyze news visuals from many perspectives: semiotic analysis focusing on the explicit and implicit meanings of the image; social semiotics, which examines the practices of symbolization in certain social, political, and cultural conditions, or visual content analysis, which sets out to explore the quantitative and qualitative characteristics and patterns of a particular set of images. Regardless of the method and approach applied, the main purpose of these efforts is to reveal and deconstruct the relations of domination and exploitation that the texts construct and obscure. And in this report, we observe the use of images in the news and what images construct or hide. Because discourse is not only constructed through what is said or pointed out, but also through those that are not mentioned, those that are hidden and ignored. In our report, we try to reflect what photos in the news “speak” or “ignore” as much as possible.

2.The Scope and the Methodology of the Research

We prepare University in the News reports by scanning the news involving students between January 4 and March 31 on *A Haber, Akşam, Yeni Şafak, Takvim, Sabah, Yeni Akit* and *Akit TV*, and applying content and discourse analyzes to these news articles.

In our first six reports, we observed the news texts in detail. We analyzed the news under six different headings, from Boğaziçi protests to LGBTI+ students, from imprisoned students to the discourse of politicians, from criminalizing to the voices of students. In the report you are reading at the moment, we examine closely the images in the news we reviewed in the previous six reports. We encountered 230 images repeating in different news. We examined who appears performing which action in the images, the contrasts established in the images, the symbols frequently used, and in addition to these, the texts that surround and support the images.

Examining the news images in the newspapers we deal with about Boğaziçi University protests, it is observed that the news images mostly include students, academics, politicians supporting them, government representatives and police. Even though the statements of the students are contained in the images, we see that the headlines demonstrate that these words are intended to be silenced, the students are portrayed as aggressive while the students and the police are positioned as confronting each other, the police violence against the students is invisible, the LGBTI+ flags in the images correspond to hate speech in the news, and negative discourse about the students proceed by means of the texts on the images.

3. Analysis of Visuals

3.1. Who are present in the visuals?

Images of students often consist of group photos taken during press statements and demonstrations. In the news targeting and criminalizing students, photographs of the moments when students confront the police or are detained as individuals rather than as a group are prominent.

Photographs featuring academics, although less so than students, accompany the news texts. Photographs of academics are usually taken from demonstrations. In the news where these photos are used, hate speech is produced by drawing attention to the LGBTI+ flags.

When politicians are the representatives of opposition parties that support the protests, their photos from the demonstrations are used, while government representatives often appear in the news with their portraits and podium photos. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Süleyman Soylu are among the politicians whose photographs are most frequently used. In particular, the photographs featuring Erdoğan include AKP and Presidency logos and the Turkish flag in the frame. These representations emphasize the strength and power of the state.

The police are among the prominent actors of the images. In almost all of the images, they are seen as crowded police groups. Again, mostly photographs of the police standing in front of the students in a row during the protests are preferred. Images of armed police officers in certain dress code are at the fore issuing the operations. In particular, the news where the language of security and threat is predominant, is reinforced with these photographic preferences. However, photographs of police officers perpetrating violence against students are rarely used.

3.2. What are the subjects in the visuals performing?

In the visuals the press statements and moments from the protests as well as the situations where the police and the students confront each other and the scenes from the police operations against the students are frequently used.

3.2.1. Press statements-protests

Some of the images are press statements and relatively positive or neutral photos from the protests. In these photographs, students are seen with their banners and placards. However, even if the images are neutral or positive, targeting and criminalizing content can be found in the news texts accompanying the images. Thus, the meaning of the image is articulated to a negative narrative.



- [‘Ciao Bella’ anthem at the rector’s protest at Boğaziçi University, Yeni Akit](#)

In the photo of the protest that took place at Kadıköy Pier, students are seen in the Pier Square with their banners and posters. The heading of the news is ***‘Ciao Bella’ anthem at the rector’s protest at Boğaziçi University, Yeni Akit**



- *It was called as rector's protest but they supported HDP, Sabah*

Another photo taken during a protest and used in the news is an example of this category. During a protest, a student wearing an apron “Bosphorus is resisting” makes a press statement, while journalists hand their microphones to them. Behind the student reading the press statements, the students hold placards with the demands of “Melih resign”, “Youth will win”, “Nor a kulliya turns out to be a campus neither a trustee becomes a rector”, “We want an election, not a trustee”.

Although the visual conveys the demands of the students, the news still targets criminalization with the title “**It was called as rector’s protest but they supported HDP**”.



- *The presidency requested a meeting: The real purpose of Boğaziçi provocateurs has been revealed!, Yeni Akit*

Photograph showing the students behind the banner “We don't want a trustee rector” signed by Boğaziçi University Students is used in the news article titled “**The Presidency has requested a meeting: The real purpose of Boğaziçi provocateurs has been revealed!**”. On the one hand, this visual publicize the statement of the students, the news heading and content do not follow up this statement and define the students as “provocateurs.”

3.2.2. Students and police

Students and police pit against each other

A great deal of the photos of the protests are about the students and the police, and in almost all of these photos, the students and the police are seen as pitting against each other. Photos of students kicking and pushing riot shields are used many times in the news stories. In these photos, the police are often observed as passive or defensive.



- *Crucial development in the provocation at Boğaziçi University! 16 people detected, Sabah*

A photograph of a student kicking a riot shield in front of police officers with helmets who laid their shields together is frequently used in news reports that describe students as “provocateurs.” In this photo, the student is seen in kicking motion as their foot on a shield, while the police are depicted passively and inactive. Since this photo is published with the title “**Crucial development in the provocation at Boğaziçi University! 16 people detected, Sabah**”, it creates the perception that “students kick the police who do not intervene in and provoke people.



- *She supported Bogazici University incidents, which HDP and CHP initiated by organizing terrorists, A haber*

In another image where students and police pit against each other, several policemen push students while others stand still. The image is from the news titled “**She supported Bogazici University incidents, which HDP and CHP initiated by organizing terrorists, A haber**”. Combined with the news content, the image propagates the impression that the police are on the defensive against the students and the students are on the “attacking” side.

Invisible police violence

Scenes depicting police violence against students are not seen in news images. In only one of the news reports we examined, it is observed that students are detained by being dragged and trapped in a police vehicle.



- *Newsflash: Flash truth about those detained in Boğaziçi University incidents, A haber*

In the news titled “**Newsflash: Flash truth about those detained in Boğaziçi University incidents, A haber**”, there are images taken at the time of detention of students.

In the background of the first photograph, in which a student is taken away by the police, who grabs both of their arms, there are other policemen bending down.



- *Newsflash: Flash truth about those detained in Boğaziçi University incidents, A Haber*

In the photograph where the police are pinning the students against the detention vehicle, although the students are not fully seen, it is inferred that the police damp down on the students and the member of parliament reacting to a police officer.

Even though these photos demonstrate that students are detained by force, the title “**Newsflash: Flash truth about those detained in Boğaziçi University incidents, A haber**” leads to legitimization of violence as well as criminalization of students.

Images taken during the police operations are about the moments displaying the police with guns while criminalizing the students. The images criminalize the situation while pursuing a goal to create a visual intimidation.



- *Operation regarding the incidents at Boğaziçi University: There are detentions, A Haber*

Photographs showing the moment when police officers in camouflage uniforms and long-barreled guns enter through the door of a one-story house appear in many news reports. One of the news reports using this photo has the headline “**Operation regarding the incidents at Boğaziçi University: There are detentions, a** ”. In this news article, there is also an image of a rear-handcuffed student, who is taken from another house by the police next to them. The visual and news content set an example for criminalization by describing students as “dangerous” and “offender.” Images of the moments when the detained students are brought to the courthouse are also used in this context. The students in rear-handcuffs are seen among the police in the visuals.

3.3. Which symbols are predominant in visual content preference?

LGBTI+ flags are one of the most emphasized symbols among the images. As we mentioned in our second report, in which we examined the news about LGBTI+ students, LGBTI+ flags and even any object carrying rainbow colors is frequently pointed out as a “criminal element” in the news stories, and hate speech is common in them. Images are also used in parallel with this approach.



- *Academics at Boğaziçi University turned their backs on the rectorate and took shelter under the LGBT flag!, Yeni Akit*

One of the examples in this regard is the photograph taken during the protest where tabarded academics turned their backs to the rectorate building on a rainy day, and where rainbow-colored umbrellas were seen.

This image is accommodated by the news article titled “**Academicians at Boğaziçi University turned their backs on the rectorate and took shelter under the LGBT flag!**” Even though there is no LGBTI+ flag, the rainbow colors on the umbrellas are accepted as a “reference”. A photo taken during a protest where rainbow-colored umbrellas on a rainy day are observed is reflected in the news text as an example of criminalization and this set an examples of hate speech against LGBTI+s.



- **Yeni Şafak Boğaziçi protest with LGBT flags: This time in Germany, Yeni Şafak**

In a photo of protest for support from Germany, there are people holding LGBTI+ flags behind the “We do not accept, we do not give up” banner. The photo is used in the article titled “**Yeni Şafak Boğaziçi protest with LGBT flags: This time in Germany**”. In the content of the news, the emphasis shifts to the LGBTI+ flag in the image, and the flag is presented as a criminal element.

3.4. Use of text in visuals

In the analyzed news, we observe that the use of text in images is quite common. In these texts, as much as the effort to “*emphasize the truth behind the images*”, the negative perception created by combining different images is prominent.



- *Newsflash: A strong reaction from the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior, Çataklı, to the provocateurs in Boğaziçi chanting 'murderer police' slogans, A Haber*

The visual consisting of two joint photos where a student kicks the police riot shield and a student in rear-handcuffs is seen between two police officers is framed with these sentences: “strong reaction to the provocateurs”, “2 out of 17 detentions are actually students! There are those who have a terrorist criminal record” and “Attack the police at Boğaziçi”.

The texts aim to create the perception that the author of the news intends to evoke in the visuals. The photo taken at the time that the student kicked the riot shield with the phrase “attack the police” and the photo of the student with the rear-handcuffs with the sentence “there are those who have a terrorist criminal record” feed the negative perception.



- *Newsflash: Important statements from President Erdoğan at the 6th Ordinary Provincial Women's Branch Congresses of AK Party, a haber*

The words of politicians are often compiled with texts highlighted on the visuals. Alongside the close-up photo of Erdoğan with an angry facial expression, his words “We will spoil this sneaky game” are also textually emphasized.

