

Words and Ways in Digital Life Coaching: An Analysis of Rhetorical Devices and Multimodal Resources in Instagram Content

Songwut Bhattarachaiyakorn

Faculty of Liberal Arts
Ubon Ratchathani University
Email: songwut.b@ubu.ac.th

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Abstract

The research aimed to investigate the rhetorical devices and multimodal resources used by the Instagram influencer ‘Jay Shetty’, particularly within the context of life coaching. Using a purposive sampling technique, the researcher gathered 36 posts from Jay Shetty’s verified Instagram account between 2022 and 2023. Moreover, Harris’s (2018) framework and the multimodal approach by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) were employed to investigate rhetorical devices and multimodal resources in his Instagram life-coaching posts. The findings revealed that Shetty predominantly employed figurative language and balancing strategies and incorporated multimodal resources in his posts. Furthermore, among the five most frequently identified categories, metaphors (24.30%) and parallelism (23.36%) were ranked as the two most frequently used rhetorical devices, followed by the integration of multimodal resources (11.21%), anaphora (10.28%), and personification (9.35%).

Keywords: rhetorical devices, Instagram, discourse analysis, multimodality

The study of rhetorical devices is the exploration of language use through word choices or expressions that have some special meaning or are beyond a literal interpretation (Mick & McQuarrie, 1996). This area has become a prominent focus in discourse analysis across text types including advertising, political discourse, and motivational speech. With respect to the field of advertising, Chetia (2015), Rakhimova (2022), and Xie (2024) confirmed that rhetorical devices played a crucial role in persuading audiences to purchase products and improving their perceptions of the products.

Similarly, Lamichhane (2021) highlighted the prominence of rhetorical devices such as hyperbole and metaphor which were used to enhance brand equity in commercial bank slogans in Nepal. In political discourse, Taping et al. (2017) asserted that the rhetorical devices in a Hillary Clinton speech were significantly used to stress key points and purposes, and to ensure the clarity of the message.

Candra and Kuntjara (2022) and Khongthana (2024) similarly emphasized the interplay between rhetorical devices (e.g., alliteration, parallelism, antithesis, and similes) and motivational or life coaching contexts.

However, there is still a gap in research on the use of rhetorical devices, particularly in Instagram life-coaching content. Thus, this study aimed to bridge this gap by examining rhetorical devices and non-rhetorical strategies like multimodal resources in life-coaching posts by an Instagram influencer, Jay Shetty, using Harris's (2018) framework of rhetorical devices supported by relevant empirical studies and multimodal discourse analysis. The research questions are twofold: (1) To what extent are rhetorical devices and multimodal resources employed in Instagram posts in respect of life-coaching content? (2) Which rhetorical devices and multimodal resources are most frequently found in this context?

Literature Review

Instagram and Rhetorical Devices

Instagram (from the words 'instant camera' and 'telegram' or IG) is an online photo-sharing platform which is used to connect with friends, express individual commitment, promote self-development and reputation or even reach out to voters as in the case of politicians (Amaral, 2015). Moreover, Instagram has become more popular with two billion monthly active users worldwide as of 2025 (Dixon, 2025). Various linguistic studies have employed Instagram as a primary data source since this platform serves as a rich source for both quantitative and qualitative research (Yang, 2021). For instance, it was found that rhetorical devices on Instagram were mainly used to strengthen relationships between celebrities and their Instagram followers as well as to reflect brand identities and values (Abban et al., 2024; Moore, 2020).

Aside from the general background of Instagram, another aspect to be discussed here is the term 'rhetoric,' which is derived from the ancient Greek term (*rhêtorikê téchnê*) and the Latin word (*rhetorica*). The term typically refers to the art of using language to influence other people (Etymonline, n.d.; Yang, 2019). In addition, Lauer (2004) mentioned Aristotle as the first person to define *rhetoric* as a *techné* which was an art involving principles and strategies that led to effective persuasive communication. Alnasser (2023) added that *rhetoric* was considered a powerful tool to clarify messages, draw the attention of target audiences and lead them toward a specific view. In terms of rhetorical devices, Jabrael and Lutfi (2024) posited that these writing or speaking techniques are used to convince receivers of the truth of messages and to boost creativity and imagination beyond words' literal meaning. Based on these views, it can be summarized that rhetorical devices are the language or techniques that individuals use in a more

systematic and artful way to arouse the imagination, to stress key messages, to reach certain communicative goals, and to foster beliefs via a form of persuasion.

Over the decades, scholars have become interested in exploring the various uses of rhetorical devices in discourse and their effectiveness in persuading audiences (Jabrael & Lutfi, 2024). For instance, Zhu et al. (2023) claimed that rhetorical devices were the richest strategies in discourses of humor, and Alnasser (2023) asserted that rhetorical devices were employed in TEDx talks to highlight key points, assert authority, strengthen connections with audiences, shape their thoughts and suggest behaviors. Similarly, Abban et al. (2024) found that rhetorical devices in speech were used to stimulate audiences' emotions, shape their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and even cultivate ideologies.

Types of Rhetorical Devices

Although numerous studies offer a plethora of device types, this study mainly employs the rhetorical devices proposed by Harris (2018), which are supported by empirical studies in this field. The reasons for choosing Harris (2018) as a core framework were its comprehensive lists of rhetorical devices, covering a wide range of writing areas such as balancing the content, emphasizing the key points, creating smooth transitions, wordplay, and so on. Not only does Harris (2018) provide a clear explanation of each device, but several examples from contemporary and modern texts are also presented, allowing the researcher and external coders to follow when it comes to data analysis. Moreover, Harris (2018) also provides recommendations, situations, and cautions about using each device for maximum effect, paving the way for deeper interpretation. Due to these strengths, several empirical studies by Lauw and Gunawan (2024), Lie and Tedjaatmadja (2024), Lee (2023), and Tikham (2022) have drawn on Harris's rhetorical framework in analyzing different text types.

Since the focus of this study is on short-form digital texts, two main dimensions of rhetorical devices were selected: 1) content organization to create rhythm and coherence and to stress key ideas such as balancing, restatement, transition, and 2) the artful use of language such as figurative language and drama strategies. These two dimensions were appropriate due to their emphasis on the arrangement and creative use of words and phrases at a sentence level. The main device types in this study are presented below.

Table 1*A Summary of Rhetorical Devices*

Devices	Descriptions	Examples
Parallelism	This is the use of recurrent syntactical similarities to emphasize the ideas and flow within a sentence, making speech more memorable (Babayev, 2023; Torresi, 2010; Umam & Laili, 2023; Zhao, 2012).	<i>“<u>To think carefully</u> and <u>to write precisely</u> are interrelated goals.”</i> (Harris, 2018, p. 5)
Chiasmus	Chiasmus is the repetition of words or expressions in reverse order to boost psycholinguistic meanings such as expressing fear, security, obedience, disobedience, excitement and intimidation (Al-Harashsheh, 2021).	<i>“<u>Man</u> is made for <u>woman</u> and <u>woman</u> for <u>man</u>.”</i> (Al-Muriby & I’jam, 2019, p. 2)
Antithesis	This is used to portray a contrast, resulting in clarity and emphasis, all of which add to memorability (Harris, 2018; Ruzibaeva, 2019).	<i>“That’s one <u>small</u> step for man, one <u>giant</u> leap for mankind.”</i> (Armstrong, as cited in Harris, 2018, p. 11)
Anaphora	Anaphora, one of the most captivating strategies in modern poetry, involves word repetition at the beginning of clauses (Babayev, 2023; Karimovna, 2021).	<i>“Slowly and grimly they advanced, <u>not knowing</u> what lay ahead, <u>not knowing</u> what they would find at the top of the hill, <u>not knowing</u> that they were so near to the outpost.”</i> (Harris, 2018, p. 125)
Epistrophe	This is an effective device to convey the writer’s vision and reinforce meanings by repeating final consecutive phrases, clauses, or sentences (Al-Muslimawi, 2024).	<i>“Do not fear <u>mistakes</u>. Wisdom is often born of such <u>mistakes</u>.” — Paul V. Galvin</i> (Harris, 2018, p. 127)
Symploce	Symploce is the repetition of words or phrases at both the beginning and the end of connected clauses or sentences.	<i>“<u>They promise</u> to balance the budget <u>eventually</u>; <u>they promise</u> to lower taxes <u>eventually</u>; <u>they promise</u> to stop driving us away <u>eventually</u>. When? When we’re all gone?”</i> (Harris, 2018, p. 129)
Metabasis	This is a short summary of what has already been discussed and simultaneously introduces what comes next.	<i>“<u>In the previous paragraphs, I have offered my analysis of the causes of this growing discontent</u>. At this point, I would like to take up the subject of what might be done to remedy it”</i> (Harris, 2018, p. 37)

Devices	Descriptions	Examples
Procatalepsis	Procatalepsis is used to answer readers' possible objections by anticipating and responding to them, giving the argument a more conversational tone and simultaneously strengthening the writer's argument. This is an effective device in writing and frequently found in political pamphlets due to its powerful rhetorical effects on audiences (Brownlees, 2006; Sameshima, 2007).	<i>"<u>It is usually argued at this point that if the government gets out of the mail delivery business, small towns like One Tree will not have any mail service...</u>" (Harris, 2018, p. 39)</i>
Hypophora	Hypophora is a question used to provoke an audience's thoughts and then a writer or a speaker immediately answers it. Fahnestock (2011) also notes that hypophora is used for guiding a further discussion of an issue, or even for reinforcing the intended idea.	<i>"<u>Where else can this growing region look to augment its water supply?</u> One possibility is the deep aquifer beneath the southeastern corner." (Harris, 2018, p. 42)</i>
Simile	A simile is a comparison of two dissimilar entities that share at least one attribute. Also, this device is one of the most widely used devices in figurative language, especially in English literature (Li et al., 2016).	<i>"After long exposure to the direct sun, the leaves of the houseplant looked <u>like</u> pieces of overcooked bacon." (Harris, 2018, p. 85)</i>
Metaphor	A metaphor is a figure of speech through which one concept is understood in terms of another. Harris (2018) and Li et al. (2016) proposed a highly implied version of a metaphor with no obvious sign of instructive words directly comparing one thing to another.	<i>"A good book is a <u>good companion</u>." (Harris, 2018, p. 91)</i> <i>"If consumers are holding back on purchases when the music is still playing, how will they behave when the music stops?" (Harris, 2018, p. 93)</i>
Personification	Personification is used to make non-human elements more human-like such as giving human traits to non-human entities (Melion & Ramakers, 2016). This is an effective tool to portray sensitive human emotions, especially a sense of loss, emptiness or sadness	<i>"The <u>ship</u> began to <u>creak</u> and <u>protest</u> as it <u>struggled</u> against the rising sea." (Harris, 2018, p. 106)</i>

Devices	Descriptions	Examples
	to animals, objects, or thoughts. Moreover, these characteristics can be different aspects of intelligence, beliefs, desires, intentions, goals, plans, psychological states, powers, and will (Turner, 1987).	
Rhetorical questions	These are used to put forward speakers' or writers' ideas by igniting similar ideas and opinions in other people. Moreover, Špago (2020) proposed three major groups of rhetorical questions, namely aggressive, friendly and sarcastic rhetorical questions.	<i><u>"So, then, do we want to continue a business model that guarantees we will lose more money next year than this year and more money than ever each coming year?"</u></i> (Harris, 2018, p. 171)
Aporia	Aporia is used to convey doubts about an idea, whether the doubt is genuine or not. Abdullah and Najim (2024) claim that this device is a powerful tool evoking the reader's sense of weakness, leaving them unsure about how to react to such difficult situations when they encounter them.	<i><u>"I cannot decide whether I approve of dress codes for middle-school children: Dress codes prevent gang clothing and conspicuous consumption, but they also produce a gray uniformity that suppresses personality and individual taste."</u></i> (Harris, 2018, p. 173)
Apophasis	This emphasizes the subject of a story by pretending not to mention it directly or drawing attention to something without delving into detail, which is regarded as a clever persuasive technique which creates a positive impression of what is being denied (Gradečak-Erdeljić & Gudurić, 2017).	<i><u>"I will not mention Houdini's books on magic, nor the tricks he invented, nor his well-known escapes, because I want to focus on the work, he did exposing swindlers and cheats."</u></i> (Harris, 2018, p. 175)

Beyond Textual Boundaries: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Since Instagram is a photo-sharing platform where visual and verbal elements work together to make meaning, multimodality is an ideal framework, paving the way to understanding the interaction between visual and verbal elements. Grounded in Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, the works of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen have been regarded as the foundations for multimodal studies since the 1980s (Hussein & Fattah, 2020). The study of multimodality attempts to further explore the process of making meaning beyond linguistic levels. In other words, it puts more emphasis on understanding how other modes are treated equally and framed as one semiotic resource (Kress & van

Leeuwen, 2001; O'Halloran, 2011). This framework has been popular among scholars interested in online media discourse due to its multimodal nature.

Several studies have been conducted to explore the use of multiple modes of communication in various contexts, ranging from advertisements to social media platforms. To understand these modes of communication, Chubaryan and Danielyan (2022) proposed five major modes: linguistic, visual, aural, gestural, and spatial. First, the linguistic or textual mode covers all kinds of verbal choices, whether words or phrases. These verbal choices should also have a communicative potential and be meaningful in their context. The second is the visual mode, which includes the use of any visual elements ranging from images, colors, typography and fonts, format and layout, and perspective. The third is the gestural mode which focuses on the overall gestures of participants in the images, such as gazing, facial expressions, and body language. The fourth is the aural mode which includes sound effects, music, and so forth. The last is the spatial mode which focuses on the placement of visual elements, such as proximity between them, boundaries, and scale. Drawing on a multimodal framework along with the nature of Instagram data, the study specifically emphasizes visual and gestural modes as well as typographical arrangements to explore how Shetty employed these strategies in his posts.

Related Studies

As previously mentioned, numerous works on rhetorical devices have been conducted, especially using online sources (e.g., websites, social media) and other genres, such as textbooks, advertisements, and inspirational speeches. Azmi et al. (2023) investigated the rhetorical devices on BBC Learning English and revealed that personification played a key role in English storytelling due to its ability to ignite the imagination, which led to a better understanding of the texts. Moreover, regarding advertising, rhetorical devices were mainly used to persuade customers to buy products (Chetia, 2015; Munthe & Lestari, 2016; Shah, 2019). Additionally, Khalid et al. (2022) found that rhetorical elements played a significant role in persuading, attracting, and engaging consumers with the support of multimodal resources, thereby contributing to a brand's ability to remain competitive in the market.

In terms of emotional impact, Prudencio et al. (2023) revealed that the language used in social media could foster emotional engagement with followers. Similarly, in political discourses and speech, Li et al. (2016) and Taping et al. (2017) investigated the impacts of rhetorical devices and their functions in politicians' speeches and found that rhetorical devices were frequently used for specific purposes, such as highlighting key points and purpose, ensuring the message's clarity to the audience, making the words more powerful and persuasive as well as creating a thought-provoking atmosphere. In addition, Candra and Kuntjara (2022) confirmed the positive effects of rhetorical devices in emphasizing

the ideas of a speaker in an inspirational speech. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) delved into other significant impacts of such rhetorical devices by proposing that metaphors had some cognitive effects as they shaped the message recipients' beliefs and thoughts which led to certain behaviors. Based on this, metaphors were not just linguistic elements, but fundamental properties of conceptual understanding. This influential view has served as a springboard for further studies such as the work by Khumruk (2024) which explored the conceptual metaphors in the English songs of Taylor Swift and found some interesting metaphors of love such as LOVE IS A JOURNEY and LOVE IS AN OBJECT in English songs which echoed universally experienced emotions.

Despite several works on rhetorical devices, only a few drew on the perspective of Jay Shetty's discourse. Elyamany (2020) explored Jay Shetty's distinct use of strategies and storytelling techniques through the lens of multimodal resources to promote his Buddhist influence on audiences. The findings revealed some notable techniques, including how Shetty portrayed himself in dynamic scenes embodying the concept of the battling self as well as his frequent use of close-up shots to highlight specific narrative elements in the foreground. Rahmah and Elisa (2023) examined types and functions of discourse markers in Jay Shetty's On Purpose program, simply indicating that the most frequently used discourse marker was the clause "*you know*." Additionally, the dominant functions of discourse markers were response or reaction markers and back-channel signals which seemed to facilitate Shetty's ability to express reactions to the prior discourse, demonstrate understanding, and maintain active engagement. Apart from this, speech errors and the use of English slang were also examined using Jay Shetty's content as a data source (Dewi, 2021; Ester, 2024). Moreover, a transcription of Shetty's YouTube video was used by Abdul-Ajid (2024) to explore various linguistic and rhetorical techniques, such as metaphors and analogies.

Although the studies above shed light on some aspects of Jay Shetty's discourse, limited scholarly attention has been paid to rhetorical devices and strategies in his Instagram posts. Thus, the researcher seeks to fill this gap by exploring the strategies used to convey his life-coaching tutelage. Moreover, the present study also hypothesized that rhetorical devices and multimodal resources are systematically integrated to support audience engagement and persuasiveness. As a result, it is worth conducting a systematic analysis to explore the potential rhetorical devices and other multimodal resources used by this social media figure.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

A purposive sampling technique was employed to obtain the most relevant data sources. With the predefined criteria closely aligned with the research objectives, the target Instagram influencer was selected according to the following criteria: 1) he or she must have life-coaching experience, 2) he or she must have produced life-coaching content mainly in English via a verified Instagram account, and 3) he or she must have over one million followers. After reviewing the top 15 Instagram life coaches from several websites, the researcher selected Jay Shetty as the main influencer due to his background as a self-help guru, a best-selling author, a well-known podcaster, and a former monk. Furthermore, he was the only one from the list whose name was listed on Forbes' Under 30 list in 2017, according to Schawbel (2017), and his podcast called 'On Purpose' has become a globally top-ranked podcast featuring famous people, including Michelle Obama. Additionally, he has been running a life-coaching business called the Jay Shetty Certification School (Simon & Schuster, 2023). Regarding the significance of Shetty's discourse, Elyamany (2020) found that with the use of the rhetoric of transcendence, Shetty could invoke culturally shared frames among millennial audiences (the target Instagram users) and thereby guide them to desired actions, especially through the Buddhist practices and values. For these reasons, Shetty is considered the most appropriate influencer in this study, and Figure 1 below shows the example of the selected Instagram account.

Figure 1
Selected Instagram Account



The data-collection criteria included posts with (1) direct quotes from Jay Shetty to ensure that the discourse reflected his style and strategies, (2) quotes related to life-coaching themes to align with the primary goals of this research, and (3) content at the discourse level to ensure its communicative potential for further analysis and interpretation. The researcher captured screenshots of the Instagram posts while unrelated posts, such as videos, captions, comments, or unquoted images, were excluded from this study. The data collection period was from June 2022 to June 2023 since this was a period marked by a growing

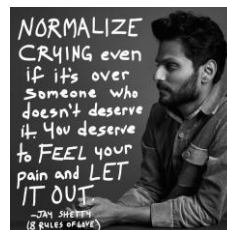
awareness of mental and emotional support via Instagram life-related content (e.g., positive life quotes, pictures, and personal narratives). This phenomenon potentially redefined Instagram as a safe space for the young generation (primary Instagram users) in response to their pressure and competition in society (Chee & Abdul Hamid, 2024; IDN Research Institute, 2024; Statista, 2024; Zhu et al., 2025). Thus, the selected time frame was considered appropriate and timely given the trend and awareness regarding life guidance on social media platforms. Over a one-year period, there were 1,188 posts, but only 134 met the criteria. Moreover, the researcher selected the three most-liked posts in each month to reflect popularity and audience engagement since the number of likes was considered a social signal on Instagram that showed the extent to which the content was of interest to target users (Bakhshi et al., 2014). Based on this process, there were 36 posts for the in-depth analysis, and the entire data collection process complied with the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) ethical standards.

Figure 2

Examples of Selected Instagram Posts

A small friend group. Nights spent at home. Good meals with good people. Authenticity and compassion. These precious things are all you need.

GENIUS
JAY SHREFF



Data Analysis

After the screenshots of 36 posts were segmented using Google Spreadsheets, coders familiarized themselves with the raw data. Then, the coding categories (e.g., parallelism, anaphora, metaphors) were developed based on Harris (2018), including a brief explanation of each rhetorical type and the multimodal resources, specifically the visual and gestural modes as well as typography. Since each post could yield more than one category of rhetorical devices and multimodal resources, the codebook provided concrete examples of sentences and linguistic features that reflected each rhetorical device, together with explanations of features determining visual elements to prevent any overlapping cases and discrepancies. Additionally, a framework training session was held for coders to ensure their mutual understanding before independent coding. Then, the two coders independently coded the data on the spreadsheet matrix across three main dimensions: content organization (e.g., balancing

strategies), artful use of language (e.g., figurative language), and visual elements (e.g., typography and multimodality).

According to reliability tests, the research followed the agreement scoring criteria set by Brezina (2018). To determine the types of rhetorical devices or visual elements, each coder recorded 1 on the online spreadsheet-based matrix to determine whether the devices or any types of visual elements were present, while the number 0 was assigned when the coders determined that it was absent. Moreover, consistent markings across coders, like 1/1 or 0/0, were classified as *agreement*, whereas any inconsistency such as 1/0 was classified as *disagreement*. In cases of uncertainty regarding classification, reflective memos were added for future discussion. Then, all cases of agreement and disagreement were finally calculated using the formula proposed by Brezina (2018) in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

The Inter-rater Agreement Formula

$$\text{Agreement score} = \frac{\text{Cases of agreement}}{\text{Total number of cases}}$$

This formula provided a percentage score reflecting the consistency between the two coders and the agreement scores indicated a high agreement rate at 95.47%. Moreover, any instances of disagreement were resolved through discussion with a third party to reach consensus. After the coding process, all identified rhetorical devices and other visual elements were categorized and presented in a table using descriptive statistical analysis. Despite the small data set, which could limit the generalizability of the study's findings, manual coding along with a textual and multimodal analysis provided in-depth views on how rhetorical devices and other multimodal strategies were employed in Shetty's posts.

Findings

This section addresses **RQ1: (1) To what extent are rhetorical devices and multimodal resources employed in Instagram posts in respect of life-coaching content?**, with a summary of all rhetorical dimensions and visual elements in Table 2 below.

Table 2*Summary of Identified Rhetorical Devices and Multimodal Resources*

Dimensions	Strategies and Types	Freq	%
Verbal: Content Organization	Balancing Strategy (i.e., Parallelism, Chiasmus, Antithesis)	33	30.84
	Restatement Strategy (i.e., Anaphora, Epistrophe, Symploce)	14	13.08
	Transition Strategy (i.e., Metabasis, Procatalepsis, Hypophora)	1	0.93
Verbal: Artful Use of Language	Figurative Language Strategy (i.e., Simile, Metaphor, Personification)	36	33.64
	Drama Strategy (i.e., Rhetorical Questions, Aporia, Apophasis)	1	0.93
Visual: Multimodal Resources	Typography and Multimodality (i.e., Capitalization, Underlining, Multimodality, Quotation marks)	22	20.56
Total		107	100

Based on Table 2, the strategy to use figurative language (33.64%) ranked as the most frequent, followed by the balancing strategy (30.84%), the inclusion of other multimodal resources (20.56%), and restatement techniques (13.08%); the least frequently used devices were found under the transition and drama strategies, accounting for around 0.93% for both. The rhetorical devices, which mainly embellished the language and structure of the discourse patterns, were prominent in the analyzed posts. The next section provides a clearer view of the occurrence of each rhetorical type, aiming to answer **RQ2: Which rhetorical devices and multimodal resources are most frequently found in this context?**

Table 3*Rhetorical Devices and Multimodal Resources Identified in the Selected Posts*

Rank	Types	Frequency	Percentage
1	Metaphor	26	24.30
2	Parallelism	25	23.36
3	Multimodality*	12	11.21
4	Anaphora	11	10.28
5	Personification	10	9.35
6	Antithesis	7	6.54
7	Capitalization*	5	4.67
8	Underlining*	3	2.80
9	Epistrophe	2	1.87

Rank	Types	Frequency	Percentage
10	Quotation marks*	2	1.87
11	Chiasmus	1	0.93
12	Symploce	1	0.93
13	Hypophora	1	0.93
14	Rhetorical Questions	1	0.93
15	Metabasis	0	0.00
16	Simile	0	0.00
17	Procatalepsis	0	0.00
18	Aporia	0	0.00
19	Apophasis	0	0.00
	Total	107	100

Note. An asterisk (*) represents multimodal resources rather than rhetorical devices.

Based on the table, the most frequently used device was metaphor, with the highest percentage of 24.30%, followed by parallelism (23.36%), multimodality (11.21%), anaphora (10.28%), personification (9.35%), and antithesis (6.54%). As for other visual elements, typography techniques such as capitalization accounted for 4.67%, followed by underlining (2.80%). By contrast, other rhetorical devices and multimodal resources like epistrophe (1.87%), the use of quotation marks (1.87%), symploce (0.93%), chiasmus (0.93%), hypophora (0.93%), and rhetorical questions (0.93%) were comparatively less prevalent. No examples of metabasis, simile, procatalepsis, aporia, or apophasis were found in this study.

Sample Analyses of Rhetorical Devices and Multimodal Resources

This section presents one representative example of each identified rhetorical device and other non-rhetorical strategies, such as multimodality, capitalization, and underlining.

Metaphors

Figure 4

Go where you are called.

As noted by Harris (2018) and Li et al. (2016), metaphors do not depend on particular words but directly compare one thing to another, and the above statement “*Go where you are called*” is a good example of this. On the surface, this statement is an imperative sentence ordering individuals to follow a particular direction, while a deeper meaning implies LIFE is understood in terms of

JOURNEY through the action verb “go,” which signifies movement. Moreover, the clause “*where you are called*,” also implies a place and a destination as an individual’s goals rather than physical locations. The passive form in ‘...*you are called*’ may suggest that an individual’s life goals are directed by external forces rather than intrinsic motivations. This aligns with Lakoff and Johnson (1980) regarding the significant role of metaphors in reflecting people’s worldviews.

Personification

Figure 5

The rules are fake. Do what you
want, listen to how you feel, and
make decisions that honor your
soul.

Personification is realized in the key phrase, “...*make decisions that honor your soul*,” since it is obvious that a ‘*decision*’ per se cannot literally perform the action of honoring others. Moreover, the abstract concept of ‘*soul*’ is also treated as a person being honored in this context. This interpretation aligned with Harris (2018), who claims that personification occurs when the writer assigns human attributes (e.g., behavior, feelings, attitudes, and motivations) to ideas.

Parallelism

Figure 6

Be open with your friends
Be private with your acquaintances
Be real with your family
Be transparent with your partner
Jay Shetty

Parallelism here is seen in the consistent use of the same syntactic pattern: the repeated verb ‘*be*’ followed by adjectival and prepositional complements. This parallel pattern is used to emphasize the key qualities individuals should possess by using the verb ‘*be*’ in imperative clauses with the adjectives *open*, *private*, *real*, and *transparent*, each of which is used with a specific level of intimacy, such as with friends and partners. Additionally, this pattern also enhances the flow of the message by creating a predictable rhythm, allowing readers to follow easily as they read along, thereby ensuring its memorability.

Chiasmus

Figure 7

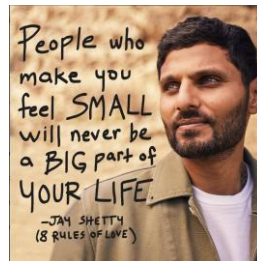
Empathy does not say, "Live like me and I will love you."

Empathy says, "I will love you no matter the way you live."

Chiasmus is evident in the repetition of words by reversing the structure as in the first clause "*Live like me and I will love you*", then in the second clause "*I will love you no matter the way you live*". Through this textual structure, Shetty emphasizes empathy as the feeling of embracing others without demanding change or control. Rather, the quote also implies that a sense of empathy is acceptance and unconditional love.

Antithesis

Figure 8



The use of antonyms "*small*" and "*big*" contrasts the emotional impact that someone has on others as well as their role in life, especially the idea that those who devalue you will not be meaningful to you in the future as seen in "*People who make you feel small will never be a big part of your life*". Shetty employs antithesis to improve clarity and to stress the emotional power of his message.

Anaphora

Figure 9

Be open with your friends
Be private with your acquaintances
Be real with your family
Be transparent with your partner

Jay Shetty

The text clearly shows the repetition of the imperative “Be” as in “*Be open. Be private. Be real. Be transparent*”. This repetition aims to direct readers’ attention toward a series of expected behaviors by emphasizing the idea of having good personal traits in maintaining relationships. Not only does the repetition of the beginning of each clause draw readers’ attention to the key ideas, but it also creates a rhythmic quality that links the lines and creates continuity. Moreover, since Harris (2018) argues that the repetitive structure of anaphora often employs parallelism in its structure, this text could also be viewed as parallelism at first glance. However, the clear boundary between anaphora and parallelism is that anaphora is the repetition of the exact same words at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses, while parallelism only involves the use of an identical syntactic pattern.

Epistrophe

Figure 10



Epistrophe is expressed through the repetition of the word “love” at the end of each clause as in “*Validation is not love. Attention is not love. Control is not love. Care is love. Consistency is love. Belief is love.*” This device creates rhythmic patterns and highlights the central ideas of the message (i.e., to help readers differentiate true love from what is not). Moreover, by ending each line with “love”, the messages are more impactful and memorable.

Symploce

Figure 11

It's ok to be happy one day and
sad the next. It's ok to feel
confident one day and be anxious
the next. You don't have to feel the
same everyday. You just have to
learn to accept and adapt to how
you feel
Jay Shetty

In the sentence “*It’s ok to be happy one day and sad the next. It’s ok to feel confident one day and be anxious the next”*, the phrase “*It’s ok*” is repeated at the beginning of each clause, while the phrase “*one day... the next*” is repeated at the end. This helps Shetty reinforce the message regarding fluctuating emotions as normal and acceptable. This repetition also creates both rhythm and emotion in the text.

Rhetorical Questions

Figure 12

If you think your life is boring, it will be boring. If you think your life is wonderful and fun, it will be wonderful and fun. Do you see the connection?

The rhetorical question in the last line, “*Do you see the connection?*” does not seek an actual response but encourages readers to agree with the idea that the power of an individual’s mindset can shape reality and the way they see the world. The two preceding conditional sentences introduce a cause–effect situation between individuals’ thoughts and the possible outcomes or experiences, guiding readers to agree with the relationships between mindset and experience. Then, the question “*Do you see the connection?*” encourages the reader to confirm the connection with the expected answer “*Yes.*” This device is linked to the conclusion, making the message more understandable and impactful. Beyond linguistic devices, the researcher also found some other techniques beyond the use of rhetorical devices including the utilization of multimodal resources which are discussed below.

Multimodality

Figure 13



Figure 14



The findings reveal that Shetty incorporated images as backgrounds, particularly in posts related to relationships. These images portrayed Shetty looking away thoughtfully, making a prayer-like gesture, symbolizing hope, or

standing next to a woman. Additionally, the word 'LOVE', as shown in Figure 14, is displayed in a stylized red font to emphasize the theme of love. These stylish fonts are associated with emotion and are commonly used to symbolize love and affection.

Capitalization and Underlining

Figure 15

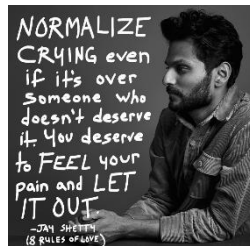


Figure 16



In Figure 15, capitalization is another technique to stress the key emotional points through words and phrases such as *NORMALIZE*, *CRYING*, *FEEL*, *LET IT OUT*. By highlighting these words, Shetty creates a strong sense of affirmation while encouraging readers to embrace their feelings without shame. In addition, underlining is also used to emphasize key ideas and thematic words as in *TOGETHER*, *DIFFERENCES*, and *SIMILARITIES* (Figure 16). This emphasis serves to guide the readers to the key ideas being compared and suggests that accepting differences rather than seeking similarities is essential for couples seeking to enjoy a romantic relationship.

Discussion and Conclusion

In response to RQ1 and RQ2, the artful use of language, specifically figurative language, is the most prominent strategy, and metaphor is ranked as the most frequently used rhetorical device, followed by parallelism, while the integration of multimodality ranks third. The discussion first considers the possible factors contributing to the prevalence of metaphors in Instagram life coaching content.

From the identified life metaphors, Shetty predominantly maps the abstract concept of LIFE onto the source domain of JOURNEY, treating his followers as 'TRAVELERS' through verbal choices like 'your next step' or 'your path.' One possible explanation is that the human conceptual system is inherently metaphorical in nature. In other words, people use metaphors in everyday life to convey not only meanings but also understanding of life and realities in the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Several scholars have found that the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is deeply entrenched in human cognition since the journey is perceived as the human life course: birth as a beginning, experiences and obstacles as the path, and death as the destination (Beknazanova et al., 2020; Katz & Taylor, 2008; Kyriakakis, 2025; Ungerer & Schmid, 2006). Aligning with

those concepts, the identified LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in Shetty's discourse consistently draws on the concrete elements of path and destination through recurrent use of words and phrases such as "*go your way*," "*this far*," "*look back*," "*on your greatest path*," and "*next step*." Another possible explanation lies in the significant impact of metaphor on defining the meaning of life, as Baldwin et al. (2018) found that individuals framing life as a journey could report a stronger sense of meaning in life and improve their ability to connect the events in their lives.

With regard to the conceptualization of LIFE AS A JOURNEY, the framing of obstacles as inevitable stages along the path that require perseverance and resilience is relevant to the study of Shetty's viral videos by Elyamany (2020) in terms of the Buddhist practices instilled in Shetty's discourse, such as the right effort and patience being the keys to overcoming adversity and leading life to peace and wisdom. Additionally, the metaphors in most of Shetty's posts are direct, casual, and conversational in style, and their simplicity could potentially improve readability for Instagram users, according to Macejová (2025). However, the pervasive JOURNEY metaphors in this study are slightly different from those of Elyamany (2020) since metaphors in Shetty's viral videos were mainly used to foster the discursive meaning of battling oneself using lexical metaphors in conjunction with unusual verb-object collocations. In addition to life metaphors, Shetty also employed LOVE IS A PLANT metaphor to communicate the concept of love, and the reason may be that such conceptual love metaphors, regardless of cultural or linguistic background, are rooted in the shared physical, mental, and emotional experiences of human beings. This finding is consistent with previous studies that identified recurring conceptual metaphors of love, such as LOVE IS AN OBJECT (Khumruk, 2024) and LOVE IS A PLANT (Lv & Zhang, 2012).

Concerning the second most prevalent device, the findings revealed three levels of parallelism, including parallel words, phrases, and clauses. Moreover, Shetty employs parallelism to balance important ideas and emphasize key words, particularly through contrast, aligning with Harris (2018), who stated that this rhetorical device puts equal emphasis and is often useful for expressing contrasts. In addition to balancing key ideas, Shetty also uses parallelism to emphasize calls to actions, as is evident in "*3 ways to be more kind: Think kind thoughts, say kind words, be kind to yourself, always*." This emphasis is related to Saidova and Tursunova (2025, p. 843), who asserted that parallelism on Instagram, as in "*Learn more. Do more. Be more*," could function as a call to action. In terms of its communicative quality, Jamil et al. (2025) claimed that parallelism may enhance clarity and emphasize the key messages—leading to engagement among audiences.

The third most frequent strategy is the integration of multimodal resources. The findings identified four multimodal resources that Shetty consistently uses in his life-coaching posts. The first recurrent feature is the use of

photographs as backgrounds in the posts, including photographs of Shetty alone or with a woman. Moreover, photographs are specifically employed in the content related to relationships. Additionally, the use of Shetty's photographs as a background exhibits a similar compositional pattern. For instance, Shetty's photograph is placed on the right-hand side of the posts in direct opposition to the quotes. A closer examination revealed that salient visual features include his gaze and pointing gestures toward the quotes on the left. This arrangement directs attention to the key message. In addition, images of Shetty praying or holding a woman's hand are systematically positioned in the posts representing the concept of love and romantic relationships, such as "*Validation is not love.... Care is love,*" and "*Creating something together is better than wanting the same thing...handling your differences is more important than finding your similarities.*"

Apart from images, three typographical strategies are identified in this study: 1) the stylized arrangement of letters (e.g., LOVE), placed independently in the four corners, 2) underlined and double-underlined words, and 3) capitalized letters, all of which are mainly used to emphasize the key attributes of healthy romantic relationships and partners. The inclusion of multimodality in the present study can be explained based on the nature of Instagram, whose original purpose is to enable creators to creatively integrate multiple communication modes (Kruk et al., 2019; Saidova & Tursunova, 2025). Moreover, Pâquet (2019) claims that an Instagram self-help influencer integrates multimodal resources into the posts to impact readers' perceptions or even to construct a form of personal branding. Thus, Shetty's recurrent use of multimodal resources seems to align with these functions, specifically to enhance central meanings and attract the target audience. This phenomenon is also evident in Abbas et al. (2026), Areej et al. (2025), Horphet and Srijongjai (2020), and Tasia and Indra (2022) whose findings show that the integration of multimodal resources can enhance communication, persuasiveness, and engagement on social media platforms.

Ultimately, the present study highlights key strategies in Shetty's Instagram life-coaching discourses, including (1) the focus on clarity via the use of metaphors, (2) the emphasis of the key ideas with parallelism, and (3) the creativity of the texts through the integration of multimodality. Saidova and Tursunova (2025) asserted that rhetorical devices are crucial for social media texts in the era of information clutter due to their functions to promote emphasis and memorability. Moreover, most Shetty's life-coaching messages in the analyzed posts are relatively concise and straightforward, which could be explained through the work by Pho-Klang (2020), stating that most Instagram users favor shorter texts in their feeds due to reading practices in a fast-paced environment of today's world. Additionally, regarding the integration of multimodal resources, the present study is consistent with Elyamany (2020), emphasizing the point that multimodal texts contribute to the ability to

disseminate complex notions in attractive and accessible ways for target audiences or followers.

While various previous works shed light on psychological impacts and audience engagement associated with rhetorical devices or multimodal resources, the present study concerns only the textual construction and multimodal arrangement of the analyzed Instagram posts. Thus, the findings could not verify any psychological effects on Shetty's Instagram followers. Nevertheless, the findings potentially contribute to the study of digital life-coaching discourse by revealing the selection of rhetorical devices and multimodal resources by an Instagram influencer to communicate complex ideas in aspects of life and relationships. Due to the small sample size (36 posts from one Instagram account) that limits generalizability, future research should adopt a broader scope and investigate various linguistic contexts, such as captions, comments, headlines, topics, data from various platforms, and the measurement of followers' perceptions and engagement. Additionally, comparative studies on different social media figures or platforms may potentially provide more insightful views on the applications of rhetorical, stylistic, multimodal, and linguistic strategies.

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