The ideal teacher: An analysis of a teacher-recruitment advertisement

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Abstract

Building on research in systemic functional approaches to multimodal discourse analysis, this paper develops macro-analytical and micro-analytical techniques for transcription and analysis of a multimodal advertisement film text. This paper proposes the usefulness of the visual semantics stratum to investigate inter-frame relations in the multimodal film text. This approach is applied to an analysis of a teacher-recruitment television advertisement commissioned by the Singapore’s Ministry of Education where the construction of an ideal teacher’s identity becomes a form of commodification within a consumerist culture. The meanings in the advertisement are also discussed in light of prevailing ideologies in Singapore’s education system.

Keywords: systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis; film; transcription; visual semantics; intersemiosis; ideology

1. Constructing the teacher in a multimodal film advertisement

The construction of the teacher’s identity in the Singapore Ministry of Education’s (MOE) commissioned teacher-recruitment film advertisement is discussed in this paper. The commodification of the teacher’s identity in the advertisement as a product to be marketed to the public is set against the backdrop of an increasingly consumerist culture in the twenty-first century. According to Fairclough (1992: 207), commodification is “the process whereby social domains and institutions, whose concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale, come nevertheless to be organized and conceptualized in terms of commodity production, distribution, and consumption.”

Here, the identity of a teacher is packaged and distributed for the general public’s consumption through a television advertisement. O’Halloran (2009)
argues for the importance of understanding how organizations formulate and market individual and group identities in the age of digital media. Machin and van Leeuwen (2008) also examine the marketing formulations of identity constructed by corporations and propagated in the media. Implicit within the marketing and promotion of the teacher and what the teacher does are certain ideologies and expectations that can possibly be unpacked through a multimodal discourse analysis of the film text.

In a bid to increase the number of teachers in Singapore and to attract talented personnel to join the teaching profession, MOE has launched a series of advertisement campaigns on television since the early 1990s. MOE commissions a new campaign theme every few years to keep the advertisements novel and relevant to the times. While the overt objective of these advertisements remains the same — recruitment of teachers — the messages propagated by each series of advertisements are arguably distinct. The theme of the teacher-recruitment advertisement discussed in this paper is “Making Lessons Come Alive.” The advertisement text is in the genre of a short film and was broadcasted over free-to-air television in 2008. It can also be viewed following links on the MOE website. As the approval of the final advertisement text involves endorsement from the top management in MOE, and as it is being constructed and presented for the general public’s consumption, the advertisement has research value because the representation of the teachers, students, and the pedagogical practices depicted in the film text can be taken as a reflection of the ideologies and values of the Ministry towards education. Given that an advertisement selectively and strategically presents the most appealing aspects of its product, in this case the identity of a teacher, to its audience, an analysis of the advertisement text could reveal the prevailing expectations and ideological positioning of MOE on teachers in Singapore. Hence, a careful analysis of this multimodal text could possibly elicit some of the dominant ideologies that are shaping Singapore’s educational landscape.

2. An analytical approach to the multimodal discourse analysis of a film text

Films are multimodal texts as visual and auditory modalities are co-deployed in the representation of the narrative (see, for example, Baldry and Thibault 2006; O’Halloran 2004a; Tan 2009). The interactions between the semiotic resources of language, dynamic images, and music and their individual functional affordances in the “multimodal ensemble” (Jewitt and Kress 2005) are also central in a multisemiotic film text. Hence, it is necessary to undertake a detailed analysis of the contributions of each semiotic resource and their interactions with each other in order to investigate the complex “multiplication of meanings” (Lemke 1998) made in a film text.
This paper investigates the ideologies underlying the semiotic choices in the teacher-recruitment advertisement campaign through a Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the film text. Systemic Functional Theory was developed by Michael Halliday (1978, 2004) in the study of language as a social semiotic. Many other researchers have since productively extended the theory to investigate other semiotic resources and multimodal phenomena. The range of semiotic resources explored include, most notably, images (O’Toole 1994; Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, 2006), music (van Leeuwen 1999), gestures (Martinec 2000, 2004), and mathematical symbolism (O’Halloran 2005, 2007, 2008). The approach used in this paper is informed by recent studies on the interaction and integration of semiotic resources in multimodal texts culminating in the development of a Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis approach (O’Halloran 2004b; Ventola, Charles, and Kaltenbacher 2005; Royce and Bowcher 2007; Baldry and Thibault 2006; Bateman 2008; Unsworth 2006; Ventola and Guijarro 2009).

Film analysis is primarily directed towards the construction of scenes through discussions of cinematography, mise-en-scene, and editing rather than an examination of the various modalities and semiotic resources (e.g., Bordwell and Thompson 2004). More recently, advances in multimodal discourse analysis of films have been made in the area of multimodal transcription and a focus on the semiosis and intersemiosis in film texts. For example, Baldry (2000, 2004), Thibault (2000), and Baldry and Thibault (2006) develop and use Phasal Analysis to transcribe and analyze the semiotic resources deployed in television advertisements. O’Halloran (2004a) demonstrates how video editing techniques and overlays may be used to create a dynamic multimodal analysis of films. Tan (2009) also introduces a transcription template, a hybridized adaptation of Baldry’s (2004) and Thibault’s (2000) templates, for the intra-semiotic and intersemiotic analysis of dynamic multimodal texts. This paper follows from the theories and frameworks developed by these researchers, and argues for the conceptualization of a visual semantics stratum to investigate inter-frame relations in the analysis of film text.

2.1. Macro-analytical transcription

Baldry and Thibault (2006: 166) describe the multimodal transcription of a television advertisement as “an entextualized artifact which the analyst extracts from the prior discourse practices in which the broadcast text is embedded at the same time that the analyst embeds it in the new discourse practices of transcription and analysis.” They argue that the transcription and analysis of multimodal texts are closely related. Baldry and Thibault (2006: xvi) also explain that “transcription is a way of revealing both the
co-deployment of semiotic resources and their dynamic unfolding in time along textually constrained and enabled pathways or trajectories . . . Transcription is itself a form of analysis.” A key limitation in the transcription of a film text, however, is the constraints of analyzing dynamic text on a static page-bound materiality using written language and static images as the only modes. As a result of this, dynamic images are segmented into frames, and categorized into phases for the purpose of analysis, such as in Baldry (2000) and Baldry and Thibault (2006). The transcription of the film into frames on a page for analysis inadvertently leads to “transduction” (Kress 2003), where a text in one form is reconstrued into another form. Iedema (2001) also describes this as “resemiotization” where the translation and displacement of one semiotic mode to another results in changes (and often loss) in meanings.

Presently, research and development collaborations are undertaken by social scientists and computer scientists in the Multimodal Analysis Lab at the National University of Singapore to develop and use “interactive digital media for analytical purposes, where the semiotic meaning potential of the tool approximates the semiotic meaning potential of the multimodal phenomena under analysis” (O’Halloran in press). Nonetheless, until digital technology and software are developed, the “transduction” of a film text through on a page-bound transcription template is necessary to enable analysis to take place. In order to preserve some of the meanings made by the dynamism of the images and to consider the inter-frame relations between the images, however, shows that it is productive to include a visual semantics stratum, first proposed by Lim (2002, 2007) and O’Halloran and Lim (2009), to investigate the meanings across frames in sequential images, as the closest approximate to the moving image possible within the printed page.

Movement in specific genres of film texts such as animations is constructed through the use of optical illusion. The illusion of movement in computer animated films is achieved when a static image is repeatedly replaced by other static images similar to the previous, but advanced slightly at a rate of twenty-four frames every second. According to Lukas (2001: 60–61), “in a very real sense, then, there are twenty-four still photographs to be framed and shot every second, and 1440 every minute. To consider only how a whole shot or scene looks ignore all the nuances of the frames in between.” While an extensive analysis of all 1440 frames in every minute of the film text may not be practical, the approach of segmenting the dynamic film text into static images in frames for analysis using the systems developed in the visual semantics stratum for sequential images is both practical and useful, as has been demonstrated in the analysis of a picture book (Lim 2002, 2004), a comic strip (Lim 2007), and a sequential print advertisement (O’Halloran and Lim 2009). The visual semantics stratum will be extended and applied to the analysis of dynamic film text in this paper.
The ideal teacher

The visual semantics stratum is based on Martin’s (1992) and Martin and Rose’s (2007) discourse semantics for language and O’Halloran’s (2005: 133–135) discourse systems for mathematical images. Martin (1992: 1) proposes a discourse semantics stratum where the cohesive organization of the text is structured metafunctionally to elicit “text-sized meaning” as opposed to “clause-size meaning.” Similarly, the conceptualization of the visual semantics stratum for sequential images, such as a comic strip or a transcribed film text segmented into sequential frames, is to bring out the meanings in sequential images that are “text-sized” rather than just focusing on meanings made in the single image itself. The semiotic and intersemiotic choices made in each frame and inter-frames thus result in a view on the “emergent narrative.” The emergent narrative represents the total meanings made in the sequential text that is greater than the sum of its parts, in this case, the individual frame or the single semiotic resource. In a sense then, the visual semantics stratum allows for analysis through the “decomposition” of the text into parts and modes and the emergent narrative provides the platform for the “composition” of these parts into a coherent whole.

Table 1. Systems for analysis of inter-frames relations in film text (adapted from Lim 2007: 200)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METAFUNCTIONS</th>
<th>SYSTEMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDEATIONAL</td>
<td>VISUAL TAXONOMY: Associating Elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOGICAL</td>
<td>VISUAL TAXIS: Transition Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Moment to Moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Scene to Scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Action to Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Subject to Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Theme to Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Aspect to Aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Non-Sequitur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERPERSONAL</td>
<td>VISUAL CONFIGURATION: Flow-Strong, Mid, Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXTUAL</td>
<td>VISUAL REFERENCE: Visual Linking Device</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Systems in the visual semantics stratum within the Ideational, Logical, Interpersonal and Textual metafunctions are proposed in Lim (2002, 2007) and O’Halloran and Lim (2009). These systems are summarized in table 1. Ideational meanings across frames are realized through choices in Associating Elements operating as part of Visual Taxonomy to create a meronymic or part-whole relationship with objects. Associating Elements serve to determine the setting in each frame. O’Toole (1994: 23) uses Gestalt theory to account for the ability in viewers to have an overall perception of forms and objects so that when their parts become the focus they are perceived in relation to the whole.
Hence, the Associating Element is “an item that is associated in part or as part of a larger specific object, or an abstract idea . . . [it] may be manifested through a pictorial part-whole relationship or even a part-part relationship, not unlike the semantics of collocation for language” (Lim 2007: 201). For instance, in figure 1, the student and the part of a building shown in the Frame serve as Associating Elements for an outdoor lesson that is taking place.

The logical meanings across frames are realized through semiotic choices in Transition Relations. Operating as Visual Taxis, these are the range of typical “conjunctions” used across frames. The types of Transition Relations are adapted from McCloud (1994: 74), who proposed these originally as transition scales in comic strips. Due to the generic nature of these transition scales, they can be productively reinterpreted as choices realizing logico-semantic meanings in sequential images. The types of Transition Relations are Moment-Moment, Action-Action, Subject-Subject, Scene-Scene, Aspect-Aspect and Non-Sequitur. A detailed discussion of these Transition Relations can be found in Lim (2007: 195–214). Figure 2 shows Moment-Moment and Scene-Scene Transition Relations that are frequently used in the teacher-recruitment advertisement text discussed in this paper.

Analogous to the discourse systems of Identification for language, the Visual Linking Device operates in the same way as the systems of Phoricity and Reference Chains for language. The Visual Linking Device “functions textually to provide coherence and cohesion to the sequential images, and the recurrence of such choices adds to the overall cohesion of the image sequence” (O’Halloran and Lim 2009: 143). The depiction of a character across sequential images is a common Visual Linking Device that is analogous to references to the character’s name in the different paragraphs of a linguistic text. For
Figure 2. Visual taxis. Moment–moment and scene–scene transition relations.
instance, in figure 3, the teacher functions as the Visual Linking Device to
provide unity and cohesion between the frames.
Interpersonal meanings are realized through the system of Flow in sequen-
tial images. Flow is “the level of the reader’s interpersonal engagement neces-
sary to comprehend the emergent narrative arising from the image sequence”
(O’Halloran and Lim 2009: 143). A strong Flow demands lesser involvement
on the part of the reader to make sense of the narrative, and vice versa. System
choices for Associating Elements, Transition Relations and Visual Linking
Devices contribute to the strength of Flow across the frames. Figures 4 and 5
illustrate the differences in Flow found in the teacher-recruitment advertise-
ment text discussed in this paper.

In a sense, investigations on the inter-frame relations on the visual semantics
stratum is part of the “macro-analytical approach to transcription” proposed by
Baldry and Thibault (2006). The macro-analytical approach “attempts to cap-
ture the meaning making processes of complete texts in terms of the links be-
tween the various subunits that make up a text: principally clusters, phases and
transitivity frames” (Baldry and Thibault 2006: 166). In an analysis of the Audi Quattro Eskimo advertisement, they describe the experiential dimension of gaze in terms of transitivity frames (Baldry and Thibault 2006: 167–173). Their approach contributes to the understanding of the inter-frame relations using the metafunctions as a “resource integration principle” to show how different modalities and semiotic resources are co-deployed across frames, analogously to the rank of a clause in language. While the focus on transitivity relations and transitivity frames are productive in demonstrating how ideational meanings are constructed, the macro-analytical approach to film texts proposed by Baldry and Thibault (2006) can be complemented with Tan’s (2009) proposal of conjunctive relations which realize logical meanings, and graphic relations realizing textual meanings in dynamic film texts.

The systems in the visual semantics stratum proposed in this paper present the perspective of each frame operating on the level of a Work (O’Toole 1994), a complete textual unit in itself, comprising the ranks of Episode, Figure, and Member within it. As such, the meanings made across frames are on the rank of discourse, that is, above the clausal rank. In this paper, the systems on the visual semantics stratum proposed will be included in the macro-analytical approach developed to investigate the metafunctional meanings made across the transcribed frames of the advertisement film text.

2.2. Micro-analytical transcription

In addition to the macro-analytical transcription, this paper also performs a micro-analytical transcription, following Baldry and Thibault (2006) and Tan (2009). The micro-analytical transcription focuses on the detailed description of the modalities and semiotic resources used in the individual frames. Semiotic choices realizing the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions in the advertisement text will be examined using the currently available frameworks in Systemic Functional Theory. Systems for the micro-analytical
transcription of images in film texts within the Systemic Functional tradition have been developed by researchers such as Baldry (2000), Iedema (2001), O’Halloran’s (2004a), Baldry and Thibault (2006), Tseng (2008), and Tan (2009) and applied to their investigations of film texts ranging from advertisements to movies. Descriptions of these systems can be found in their studies and this paper will apply the systems corresponding to the metafunctional meanings, summarized in figure 6, to analyze the image in each frame of the transcribed film text.

As part of the detailed analysis, this paper is also interested in the interaction and interplay of meanings made through the simultaneous joint co-deployment of modalities and semiotic resources in the film text. For this purpose, this paper applies the systems and theories proposed by Royce (1998; Royce and Bowcher 2007), O’Halloran (2004a, 2005, 2008a), and Unsworth (2006) to investigate intersemiosis. O’Halloran (2005: 158–188) presents intersemiotic mechanisms “where meanings are made through choices functioning as interlocking networks” (2005: 166). These are Semiotic Cohesion, Semiotic Mixing, Semiotic Adoption, Juxtaposition, and Semiotic Transition. Descriptions of these mechanisms are summarized in table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intersemiotic mechanism</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semiotic Cohesion</td>
<td>System choices function to make a text cohere across different semiotic resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiotic Mixing</td>
<td>Items consist of system choices from different semiotic resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiotic Adoption</td>
<td>System choices from one semiotic resource are incorporated as a system choice in another semiotic system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juxtaposition</td>
<td>Items and components within thoseItems are compositionally arranged to facilitate intersemiosis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiotic Transition</td>
<td>System choices result in discourse moves in the form of macro-transition, which shifts the discourse to another. Item consisting primarily of another semiotic resource, or alternatively macro-transitions within Items occur.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to describing the mechanisms responsible for intersemiosis, this paper also explores the proposals made by Unsworth (2006: 60) on intersemiotic systems operating on the “space of integration between language and image as social semiotic systems in order to provide a theoretical description of the dynamics of interaction between language and image in meaning-making” (Lim 2004). Unsworth describes the ideational meanings arising from the intersemiosis as either that of Ideational Concurrence, Complementarity or Connection. He (2006: 60) proposes that Ideational Concurrence be referred to “ideational equivalence between image and text,” citing Martinec and Salway.
Figure 6. Systems for analysis of images in frames (adapted from O’Halloran 2004; Baldry and Thibault 2006)
(2005: 350) that a possible relationship could also be that of exposition where "image and text are of the same level of generality." An example of ideational concurrence is what Unsworth (2006: 60) describes as image-text relations of instantiation, where "the image indicates one instance, adding to the meaning of the language," referring to Lim’s (2004) proposal of homospatiality where "two different semiotic modes co-occur in one spatially bonded homogenous entity" as a means by which ideational concurrence can occur.

Ideational Complementarity occurs "where what is presented in image and what is represented in language may be different but complementary and joint contributors to an overall meaning that is more than the meanings conveyed by the separate modes" (Unsworth 2006: 60). He proposes the terms augmentation and divergence to describe the "co-contextualizing and re-contextualizing relations" (O’Halloran 2005) between the meanings made by the different semiotic resources. Ideational Connection is based on Martinec and Salway’s (2005) proposal of projection where a “location” or quotation takes place. Unsworth (2006: 65) describes projections involved in Ideational Connection as either verbal or mental, and the conjunctions “in terms of causal, temporal or spatial relations.”

Unsworth (2006) and Martin (2002) argue that interpersonal meanings in multimodal texts tend to be more concerned with appraisal than with the semantics of mood or modality. As such, a key function of images is to co-articulate attitude (including Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation). Images thus function similarly to imagery in language, evoking evaluative responses. While the premises of these two authors may seem to differ from Royce (1998; Royce and Bowcher 2007), the resultant focus on attitude as the key semantic system in the interpersonal metafunction appears to be consistent. Royce (1998; Royce and Bowcher 2007) develops his intersemiotic systems for interpersonal meanings based on the systems of Mood and Modality in Systemic Functional Linguistics. Royce and Bowcher (2007: 93) state that “there is evidence to confirm the proposition that the intersemiotic complementarity between the visual and verbal modes is realised by intersemiotic reinforcement of address.” He also argues that “in language, the truth or credibility of what is represented . . . is expressed through the use of modality at the clausal level, and the polarity between the affirmation and denial of this offered information is expressed in terms of whether something is or is not, or whether it is real or unreal” (2007: 93). Hence, following the systems of Modality in language, Royce and Bowcher propose attitudinal congruence and dissonance to describe intersemiotic relations.

Royce and Bowcher (2007: 99–104) also propose a number of important visual-verbal compositional aspects that show how the semiotic resources in a multimodal text work together to produce a coherent and cohesive message. They argue that the textual meanings in a multimodal text are realized through
intersemiotic choices in information value, salience, visual framing, visual synonymy and potential reading paths. The intersemiotic systems for interpersonal and textual meanings in the present paper are adapted from Royce’s work on intersemiotic complementarity as his proposed systems have been demonstrated and applied productivity in the analysis of several multimodal texts (Royce 1998; Royce and Bowcher 2007). The intersemiotic systems for ideational meanings (Unsworth 2006) as well as interpersonal and textual meanings (Royce 1998; Royce and Bowcher 2007) are summarized in the system network in figure 7.

3. Transcriptions and mini-narratives

The segmented frames from the advertisement film text can be grouped into six discernable phases based on the semiotic and intersemiotic selections. The first four phases constitute four mini-narratives. The fifth phase depicts the slogan of the campaign and the sixth phase consists of the official MOE logo, along with another slogan. The six phases operate as a whole to present the emergent narrative, through which the message of the teacher-recruitment advertisement text is communicated.

Textual choices are made in systems of color and sound to demarcate the different phases. For instance, as seen in figure 8, the dominant colors in the frames in Phase 1 are white, black, brown, and blue. This contrasts with the colors in Phase 2, which are mainly white, black, olive, and yellow. Phase 3 has brighter colors such as orange, black, blue, and white. The contrast in colors is not just in hues but in tones as well. This can be seen in the light bluish tone in Phase 4, which is absent in the other phases. Phase 5 is marked by the choice of black; and this contrasts starkly with Phase 6, which has white as the background color.

Choices made in the soundtrack also demarcate the different phases. For instance, Phase 2 is introduced with an increase in music tempo and the introduction of drums. This is appropriate as Phase 2 depicts a National Education lesson where a battle scene is embedded within the mini-narrative. Phase 5 is also introduced by rising tempo. Again, this is appropriate as Phase 5 represents a climax in the emergent narrative, where the slogan of the campaign, “Making Lessons Come Alive” is presented. Finally, the caesura in the soundtrack just before Phase 6 is also marked by a conspicuous silence as it draws attention to the phase where the MOE crest, the symbolic institutional face of the Ministry is presented.

Visual Taxonomy through the use of Associating Element (AE) and Visual Reference through the use of Visual Linking Device (VLD) also serve to
Figure 7. Intersemiotic systems (adapted from Unsworth 2006; Royce 1998; Royce and Bowcher 2007)

distinguish the phases as represented in Figure 8. For instance, the change in the AE from the screen in the classroom of Phase 1 to the AE of a building in the outdoors of Phase 2 signals a transition in phases. The VLD of the students in white and black uniform in Phase 2 also contrasts with the VLD of the stu-
dent in blue uniform in Phase 3, indicating a transition in phases. Hence, compositional choices in color and sound as well as the logical choices made in taxonomy and reference work together with the content of the frames to distinguish the mini-narratives in each phase of the film text.

Figure 9 shows a page from the transcription template of the teacher-recruitment advertisement text as an exemplar of the detailed analysis that was carried out. Given the constraint of space, this paper will not describe the extensive analysis of the various modalities and semiotic resources in the text.
### Figure 9. Exemplar of the transcription template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image Description</th>
<th>Student looking ahead in weak light</th>
<th>Student looking up from book in weak light</th>
<th>Tracker with semi-merged student</th>
<th>Teacher explaining in weak light; Student sits in semi-weak light</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic (L)</strong></td>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>Orchestras</td>
<td>Orchestras</td>
<td>Orchestras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intensive Modulation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-occurring Orientations</td>
<td>Co-occurring Orientations: None</td>
<td>Co-occurring Orientations: None</td>
<td>Co-occurring Orientations: None</td>
<td>Co-occurring Orientations: None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonverbal (N)</strong></td>
<td>Participant: Recipient</td>
<td>Participant: Recipient</td>
<td>Participant: Recipient</td>
<td>Participant: Recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Textual Modulation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-occurring Orientations</td>
<td>Co-occurring Orientations: None</td>
<td>Co-occurring Orientations: None</td>
<td>Co-occurring Orientations: None</td>
<td>Co-occurring Orientations: None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visual Signatures</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood &amp; Modality:</strong></td>
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<td>Co-occurring Orientations: None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Previous data seems to suggest an Art Lesson*  
   *Chinese Female, Tracker*
Instead, the discussion will focus on the interesting observations that have emerged in the multimodal analysis of the teacher-recruitment advertisement text in the context of the ideologies espoused by the Ministry of Education in Singapore.

4. Discussion of analysis

In what follows, some of MOE’s ideologies behind the construction of the teacher’s identity and its values towards education, as espoused in the teacher-recruitment advertisement text, are discussed based on the analysis of the multimodal film text. It is significant that the students and teachers presented in the advertisement text do not project their individual identities but rather adopt the collective identity in their role as either a teacher or as students, functioning as archetypes. Psychologist Carl Jung (1981 [1934–1954]) defines an archetype as an idealized universal model, a prototype of a figure, object or concept. In this advertisement text, the teacher and students represent not themselves as individuals but the idealized prototypical teacher and students. Hence, regardless of the different teachers and students depicted in the four mini-narratives, the consistent focus on the construction of the teacher’s identity is maintained.

Central in this multimodal film text’s representation is constructing the teacher’s identity. This is logical as the intended target audience of the advertisement is the potential teacher recruit. As such, the depiction of the teacher’s identity, what he does and how he does them are ideologically significant. The linguistic text in the slogan points to what the teacher is expected to do rather explicitly, that is, to be focused on “making lessons come alive.” A systemic functional transitivity analysis of this slogan draws attention to the material process of “making,” the goal of “lessons,” and the manner of “come alive.” Interestingly, in this analysis, the teacher is the ellipsed actor. This, from an ergative perspective, casts the teacher into the role of the invisible agent. This “invisibility” suggests that the teacher is someone who is expected to works behind the scenes, or at least somewhat taking a backseat to the lesson or students, in his endeavor to make lessons come alive.

This interpretation is supported in the analysis of the temporal sequence of the frames. In all four mini-narratives, students are featured in the first few frames along with the effect on their imaginations of the lesson, usually represented through the diegetic sound of wind blowing, airplanes roaring or dinosaurs stamping. The teacher is only represented in the later frames of the mini-narrative, consistently performing the material/behavioural process of dramatizing, gesturing or pointing. The choice made to foreground the student with the lesson and place the teacher in the background again suggests the
notion of the teachers laboring behind the scenes to deliver lively lessons for the students. It also articulates the message that the classroom is not about the teacher but about the student and the lesson.

While the teacher is positioned in the background, the visual transitivity analysis shows that the teacher remains consistently as the actor in four mini-narratives. The teacher is also associated with the material/behavioral process in the visual analysis. Even in the linguistic text, the slogans which are directed at the teachers use the material process of “making” and the mental process of “inspire.” Hence, the teacher is never cast in the passive recipient position.

An ideology that MOE champions is Student-Centred Learning. This can be observed in the analysis of the teacher-recruitment advertisement text. Textual choices were made in the composition of the multimodal text, where students are featured in most of the frames and are presented first in the sequence of all four mini-narratives. The recurrence of the student as the common Visual Linking Device across the frames adds to the significance of the student in the emergent narrative. The focus on students also suggests a paradigm shift away from the traditional revered authority of the teacher in the classroom and has implication on the identity of the teacher in relations to the students from the perspective of the Ministry.

MOE also encourages teachers to bring about Engaged Learning in their classrooms. In this film text, a visual transitivity analysis reveals that the consistent reactional process for student is the mental process. Students are represented engaged in the mental processes of affection, perception or cognition, in order of frequency. The consistent portrayal of the students in these states through the choices made in mood and transitivity seems to suggest that Engaged Learning is being represented in the text.

Another pedagogical principle emphasized by MOE is that of Differentiated Instruction, colloquially described as “different strokes for different folks.” This refers to multi-sensory learning approaches in the classroom and the recognition of multiple intelligences in the students. One aspect of differentiated instruction is in the differentiated classroom set-up. This is evident in the teacher-recruitment advertisement text. The Visual Taxonomy analysis of the different Associating Elements suggests a variety of classroom arrangements. In the first mini-narrative, students are shown seated individually in rows. The second mini-narrative presents students outdoors on a field trip, also known as a “learning journey” in MOE’s official terminology. The third mini-narrative shows students seated in groups, engaging in some forms of collaborative learning. Finally, the fourth mini-narrative presents students sitting in pairs in the classroom. The variety of classroom arrangements implies a range of pedagogical approaches used in the classroom, which in turn demonstrates differentiated instructions taking place. The conspicuous absence of speech in the entire film text is also significant as traditionally teaching is inextricably linked
to verbalizing. The deliberate choice made not to represent speech could suggest that MOE wishes to de-emphasize the conventional chalk-and-talk style of teaching with relation to other forms of pedagogical strategies as promoted in the ideology of Differentiated Instruction.

A central tenet in Singapore’s governance is multi-racial harmony and equality. This is translated into equal representation of gender and races in most official texts produced or endorsed by the Government. This teacher-recruitment advertisement text is no exception. Despite the actual situation of an under-representation of males in teaching and the numerical dominance of the Chinese race over the other races in Singapore’s population, the ideologies of equal gender and multi-racial representation are made clear in the texts. In the four mini-narratives, two male teachers and two female teachers are represented. In a deliberate effort to communicate multi-racial equality, a Eurasian teacher, an Indian teacher, a Chinese teacher, and a Malay teacher are represented in the four mini-narratives, respectively. Hence, it is clear that careful selections have been made in the gender and racial representation of the teachers in adherence to national ideology. While this is the case, some traditional stereotypes seem to remain in the representation of gender in the texts as well. While one of the male teachers is portrayed outside the classroom conducting a learning journey as seen in Phase 2, both female teachers in the advertisement texts are featured indoors, positioning them in a more cocooned and sheltered environment. It is also interesting to note that the female teacher is represented as teaching at the lower primary school level in the third mini-narrative, suggesting perhaps that females were more suited to teach at the lower level (to younger children). The reinforcement of traditional stereotypes of females in Singapore, a self-professed Confucian and patriarchal society (Tan 2001: 106), can possibly be teased out from the gender depictions in this text.

Finally, an ideology that might not be openly espoused by MOE but surfaces nonetheless through the analysis of this multimodal text is the premium on science subjects and National Education. Out of the four mini-narratives, two deal ostensibly with science subjects. The first mini-narrative seems to be on temperature, a subject likely to be taught in Chemistry. The fourth mini-narrative, as established by the linguistic text, is a lesson on zero-gravity in physics. The third mini-narrative seems to be more ambiguous in terms of the subject of the lesson, although the intertextual references to the movie *Jurassic Park*, which focuses on science, are unmistakable. While the Associating Elements in this Phase seem to indicate an art lesson going on, the content focus of a dinosaur appears to be that of a science lesson. Even with the exception of the third mini-narrative, there is already a partiality in this advertisement text towards science-related content vis-à-vis the other subjects offered in the Singapore Education curriculum. The emphasis on science can also be seen
both in the subjects represented in the advertisement text and from the observations suggesting that the lessons were taught in an empirical and scientific manner.

The second mini-narrative represents a history lesson, although in the interpretive context of Singapore and in light of the Associating Elements in the sequence, it is likely to be a part of a National Education lesson. There is emphasis placed on National Education against the backdrop of globalization in the twenty-first century. With globalization, nations are making effort to assert their national identity and unique culture through self-definition, self-reflexivity and in creating a shared common past. Hence, we can see the careful selection of the subjects portrayed in the advertisement as also meaningful in uncovering national ideological stance.

The use of Embedded Scenes, as shown in figure 10, coupled with diegetic sound effects in the mini-narratives is also a powerful way to dramatize the lessons coming alive literally. For instance, in the second mini-narrative, a realistic battle scene was embedded to the scene of the teacher recounting the battle to his students. Similarly, in the third mini-narrative, the tail of a dinosaur can be seen outside the window as the teacher explains to the students about dinosaurs. Interestingly, the use of embedded scenes seems to be an effective technique in displaying at once both the process and product of teaching.

As much as the ideologies observed in the teacher-recruitment advertisement text are consistent to what MOE espouses, it is possible to identify a case of ideological dissonance as well. MOE values students who are active learners rather than just passive recipient of knowledge. However, in this advertisement text, the visual transitivity analysis shows the students to be “acted upon” rather than “acting.” While they are represented as mentally engaged, they are not involved in any material processes. The only exception to this is in
the fourth mini-narrative where a student is shown to be touching a floating pencil, in a sense then, interacting with the lesson. The frame is reproduced in figure 9. However, this is the only representation of student physically interacting with the “effects” of the lessons. Given MOE’s emphasis on students as active learners, it can be possibly a form of ideological dissonance to depict the students mostly as passive recipients in this text.

Figure 11. Student as an active learner

5. Conclusion

This paper has focused on the development of a multimodal discourse analysis approach to the film text. Informed by recent research in the field of Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis, this paper proposes the usefulness of a visual semantics stratum to investigate inter-frame relations on the discourse level. The systems and mechanisms recently theorized by fellow researchers working in this field, as responsible for semiotic and intersemiotic choices, are usefully extended and productively applied in the analysis of a teacher-recruitment advertisement film text. A macro-analytic and a micro-analytic approach were adopted in the transcription and analysis of the advertisement text to investigate the meanings made and the ideologies espoused.

The advertisement text was commissioned and endorsed by MOE as part of its marketing campaign to recruit more teachers into the profession. Embodied within the teacher-recruitment advertisement text is the confluence of the discourse of education with the discourse of sales and marketing. The teacher’s identity is commodified and marketed for the general public’s consumption. Following from the multimodal analysis of the advertisement text, it could
possibly be inferred that MOE’s notion of the ideal teacher is one who labors
behind the scene to produce lively lessons that are centered on the students.
This particular construction of the teacher’s identity and what he does in the
classroom might set up unrealistic expectations as well. The representation of
the teacher in the classroom teaching motivated and engaged students might
lead to teacher recruits having a romanticized version of the role of a teacher
and possibly encourage impractical beliefs of the nature of the profession. In
reality, teachers in schools do more than just teaching in the classroom. There
are seemingly endless administrative duties, event management roles, and in-
numerable committee meetings to attend. Teaching in the classroom is only a
part of the job. There are worrying numbers of teachers resigning from the
profession after the first few years, with the common refrain, that they did not
get to do what they signed up to do, that is, to teach. One question to consider
is the extent to which these disappointments can be attributed to the romantici-
ized notions of the teacher’s identity inspired by various public campaigns,
such as the teacher-recruitment advertisement text, commissioned by MOE.

It is also interesting that in this teacher-recruitment advertisement text, the
appeal to the potential teacher recruits is on what they can do for the students.
The slogan, “Making Lesson Come Alive,” places a demand on their altruism
to serve and invites them to “inspire” others by being a teacher. This cam-
paign’s slogan contrasts with the previous campaign designed in the late 1990s.
At that time, the appeal was less on altruism but more on what one could gain
from being a teacher. The slogan then was “Teach. Do Something Worthwhile
With Your Life.” The imperative was criticized by some as coming across as
rather condescending and has possibly unintended inferences that other profes-
sions were perhaps less worthwhile. Perhaps the advertisement text in each
campaign is a reflection of the ideologies and values of MOE and its percep-
tion of what will appeal to the general public at that time. As the multimodal
discourse analysis of this teacher-recruitment advertisement text suggests it is
a meaningful and worthwhile endeavor to investigate the meanings espoused
in these officially commissioned advertisement texts as a representation of the
official discourse between the Government and its people as well as a reflec-
tion of the prevailing ideologies of the time.

Notes

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The ideal teacher

References


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