A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
OF ROMANTIC COMEDY MOVIE POSTERS

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Abstract: Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) is a new and prominent approach in discourse analysis with a quite rapid pace of development. According to this approach, meaning is made not only by words but also by the integration of other semiotic resources such as images, sounds and colours. This study further supports this theory by the analysis of the posters of fifteen top grossing American romantic comedies. Based on Kress and Van Leeuwen's framework (2006), the research indicates the similarities and differences in using semiotic elements to create meaning and promote the movies. The results not only identify the patterns in designing movie posters but also examine the effectiveness of the framework in analyzing multimodal texts.

Key words: multimodal discourse analysis, romantic comedy movie posters

1. Introduction

It has been long agreed that words are not the only means of communication. Instead, the so-called modes including visuals, gestures and actions always have social meaning (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). When a text is constructed by the combination of words with other modalities, such as pictures, film, video images and sound, it becomes a multimodal text. This is the subject of research of multimodal discourse analysis (MDA). This approach of discourse analysis "considers how multimodal texts are designed and how semiotic tools such as colour, framing, focus and positioning of elements contribute to the making of meaning in these texts" (Paltridge, 2012, p. 170).

Multimodal studies originated in the early 1990s and the past three decades have witnessed numerous research fruits in this field. Multimodality has considered different modes of communication such as the visual mode of images, gesture, gaze, posture, colour, typography, composition etc. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Machin, 2007; Jewitt, 2009), claiming that these elements transfer and generate meaning. Studies have not only focused on a single mode but also the integration of different modes in multimodal texts (e.g. O'Halloran, 2008) and even in dynamic multimodal discourse such as videos and films (e.g. O'Halloran, 2004). Subjects for research are also expanding, covering a wide range of domains, from magazine covers (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003), movies (Bo, 2018),

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websites (Moran & Lee, 2013), to children's storybooks (Ton & Nguyen, 2019).

In the area of advertisement and promotion, much progress has been made with analysis of magazine advertisements (Bell & Milic, 2002), beauty product advertisements (Harrison, 2008), cosmetic surgery leaflets (Martinez & Chovanec, 2012), to name but a few. Such studies share a common purpose of examining how semiotic modes are purposefully used to have certain desired effects on the recipients. In order to achieve this aim, multimodal studies have utilized different approaches. Firstly, there is a tendency that visual analysis is combined with Critical Discourse Analysis to identify the underlying knowledge structures and ideologies that advertisements base on to attract customers. For example, Martinez and Chovanec (2012) analyzed 20 Spanish cosmetic surgery leaflets and found that the image of an idealized female body was exploited for economic goals. This revealed the application of the prevalent ideology of femininity in such leaflets. The gender ideologies can also be found in multimodal research on beauty products like Harrison (2008), Baykal (2016) or magazine advertisements in general like Bell and Milic (2002). Such research from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis tends to include both visual and linguistic analysis. However, those with emphasis on the transference of meanings of the visual elements may be based on only semiotic analysis. For example, Hu and Luo (2016) focused on visual components of the advertisement produced by Tmall for the Double Eleven Shopping Carnival to illustrate how they could attract the viewers. Despite the differences in approaches and scopes, most of the reviewed studies employ Kress and Van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar to carry out the analysis of semiotic elements.

A movie poster is a poster used to promote and advertise a film. As the face of the movie, it has a great contribution to the impact of the movie and its sales. By sparking interest around a film, it persuades customers into a theatre to see it. However, a movie poster is not just promotional material. It also provides basic information of the movie and expresses the key message and main vibe of the movie. As it is often said that "a picture is worth a thousand words", a poster can tell about the movie in more detail than a thousand words could and in a very different way than words ever could. Therefore, although being considered a sub-genre of advertisements, movie posters have their own distinctive features including the strong dependence on the movie content and the overwhelming role of images in predicting the movie's plot.

Although movie posters provide a good source for investigating how semiotic resources make meaning in communication, little research has been done on this sub-genre. Chen and Gao (2013) attempted to formulate a model for MDA of movie posters from the adaption of Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar. Although some terms have been renamed and some categories have been simplified, their model still closely followed and resembled the framework of Visual Grammar. The applicability and practicality of the proposed model was testified by the analysis of eleven posters of popular movies (Chen & Gao, 2013). Iftikhar, Shahnaz and Masroor (2019) applied Chen and Gao's (2013) framework to the linguistic and visual analysis of posters of three Academy Award winning animated movies. Employing a qualitative and interpretative approach, the study closely examined the three posters with support of screenshots from the movies and concluded that "various linguistic and visual modalities employed in movie posters converge together to give an apt representation of the theme of the movie" (Iftikhar, Shahnaz & Masroor, 2019, p. 49). As can be seen, these previous studies

mainly serve as exploratory research into the application of MDA in analyzing movie posters, thus the patterns in making meanings among the posters have not been identified. Furthermore, as posters are used to provide information of the movies, the genre of the movies may take an important role in the posters' meaning making. However, the issue of genre has not been put into consideration in previous studies.

In order to fill in the research gap, this study utilizes the framework of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to analyze romantic movie posters to indicate the similarities and differences among these posters in using multimodal modes to make meaning and promote the movies. The research serves two main purposes: (1) identify the common pattern in using the semiotic modes to make meanings among these posters and (2) examine the effectiveness of Kress and van Leeuwen's framework

(2006) in analyzing the multimodal texts.

2. Theoretical Framework – The Visual Grammar

MDA draws from Systemic functional linguistics (SFL), pioneered by Halliday. Halliday (2009) describes three types of metafunction that are drawn on simultaneously in the use of language, which are ideational (what the text is about), interpersonal (relations between participants) and textual (how the message is organized). Based on Halliday's theory, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) put forward Visual Grammar, a framework to analyze visual images. In this model, visual structures are treated as linguistic structures. They use different terms for the same subjects: representational instead of ideational; interactive instead of interpersonal; and compositional instead of textual.

Figure 1

The Equivalence Between the Three Meanings of Linguistic Texts and Visual Texts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006)

Linguistic text		Visual text
Ideational	⟷	Representational
Interpersonal	⟷	Interactive
Textual	⟷	Compositional

The representational meaning deals with the way images present aspects of the world. There are two choices of structure, which are narrative and conceptual ones. The image uses narrative structure if it represents actions, events or change. In narrative visuals, participants are connected by a vector and represented as doing something to or for each other (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Narrative representation can be further categorized into action process, reaction process and speech and mental process and conversion process, with reference to the six processes in Halliday's

Transitivity system. Meanwhile, conceptual structure represents generalized concepts, in which participants are represented "in terms of their generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 79). Conceptual representation is divided into classificatory processes, analytical process and symbolical process, with the former two resembling relational process in SFL.

The interactive meaning is concerned with the representation of social relations between the producer, the viewer and the subject being represented, which are

realized by contact, social distance, attitude and modality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). First, contact is established by the presence of gaze, with two options of offer and demand. If the subject directly looks at the viewer, an imaginary contact is created between the represented participant and the viewer. This is a "demand" gaze. In contrast, if the subject looks away from the viewers, to another object in the picture, the viewer's role is that of an invisible onlooker. This is an "offer" type of image. Second, social distance represents social relations between the producer, the viewer and the represented subject, which is realized by the size of the frame. Choices could range from extreme close-up to very long shots. Next, attitude, which includes subjectivity and objectivity, is decided by angles. While the horizontal angles are related to the involvement of the represented participants by the image-producer, vertical angles of the camera are concerned with the symbolic power relation between the represented participant and the viewer. Specifically, high angles indicate viewer power, eye levels show equality, and low angles represent power. Finally, modality is concerned with truth value and credibility, which is influenced by modality markers such as color saturation, color differentiation, illumination and brightness.

The compositional meaning works with the "textual" function, the way in which representations and communicative acts cohere into meaningful whole through three interrelated systems: information value, salience and framing (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Information value is how elements are placed that makes them relate to each other and to the viewer. Different zones of the image such as left and right, top and bottom, center and margin are endowed with different information values. Salience is how certain elements might be made to stand out by using factors such as foreground or background placement, relative sizes, contrasts in tonal value or color, sharpness.

Framing devices play a critical role in connecting or disconnecting elements in the image.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach with the assistance of quantitative tools. The qualitative method was first used to describe, analyze and interpret the collected samples; then, the data was quantitatively analyzed to identify the common pattern in using the semiotic modes to make meanings among these posters.

3.1. Data Description

15 official posters of 15 American movies were chosen for analysis. All of these movies belong to the specific genre of romantic comedy. This is to assure that the chosen posters share a great deal of similarities in terms of context, including target audience, purpose, nature of information. It also serves the purpose of the present study in identifying the patterns in choosing semiotic elements to make meaning in the specific genre of romantic comedy. Moreover, these movies are proposed as "the 15 highest-grossing rom-coms of all time" by the Entertainment weekly, a famous American entertainment magazine with concentration on entertainment media news and critical reviews. Notably, these 15 American movies were released worldwide and received great success in both domestic and international box office. The box office revenue may indicate the success of the promotional campaign in general, and to a certain extent, the success of the posters as one of the promotional materials.

In order to assure that the posters are the official ones, the information was double checked from different popular movie websites including imdb.com, rottentomatoes.com and Wikipedia. The posters and their basic information are included in the Appendix.

3.2. Data Analysis

The present study adopted an adapted version of Kress and van Leeuwen's framework (2006) in consultation with Chen and Gao (2013) to analyze the semiotic elements of the posters. The texts in the posters include the movie titles, the taglines, the release date and the names of the actors/actresses, the directors, the crew, and the producers. Due to the simplicity of these linguistic components, linguistic analysis is not of interest. Therefore, the present study only considered the semiotic aspects of the linguistic text, which was analyzed in the compositional meaning. The meaning of the text is only regarded as a clue to reinforce the interpretation of the visual images.

In representational meaning, the participants, the processes and the circumstances are analyzed to see how the characters and backgrounds are depicted and find the links among these three elements.

Regarding the processes, the study focused on the division between narrative and conceptual structures without analyzing the types of process formed by vectors. The linguistic texts of the poster, including the movie titles and the taglines, and the movie summaries were consulted to increase the accuracy of the interpretation of representational meaning.

In interactive meaning, since the posters are all presented in portrait orientation, the analysis of the horizontal perspective seems unnecessary. Furthermore, the analysis of modality with such issues as color modulation, depth, or illumination, requires high technology, thus was omitted from the scope of analysis. Regarding the size of frame, Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) proposed a seven-point scale; however, as the two extreme levels are vague in description, the present study simplified the scale into five levels as follows:

Figure 2

Adapted Scale for Size of Frame Classification

Size of frame	Description
Close-up	shows head and shoulders of the subject
Medium close shot	cuts off the subject approximately at the waist
Medium shot	cuts off the subject approximately at the knees
Medium long shot	shows the full figure
Long shot	the human figure occupies about half the height of the frame

In compositional meaning, all three elements of salience, information value and framing were examined. The linguistic words with semiotic elements were regarded as a part of the visual image and analyzed accordingly.

In short, the analytical framework in the present study is adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and summarized in figure 3.

Figure 3

The Analytical Framework of the Present Study
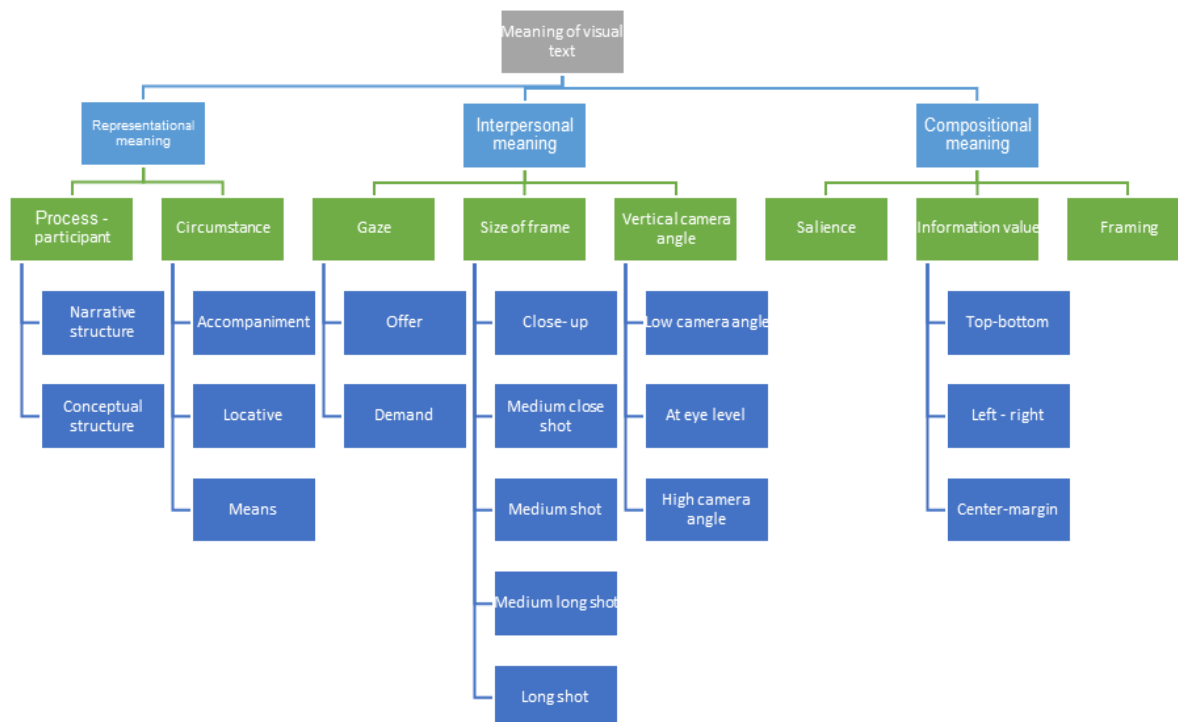
## 4. Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Romantic Movie Posters

This part mainly discusses the trends in using visual components of the movie posters for the purpose of having a clearer understanding of how the posters appeal to and be resonant with the viewers through multimodal construction. All difficulties in examining each type of meaning are also noted to serve the study's second purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of Kress and van Leeuwen's framework (2006) in analyzing multimodal texts. The posters are referred to by the names of the movies and the full images can be found in the Appendix.

4.1. Representational Meaning

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the representational meaning can be realized by three components, which are participants, process types and circumstances.

Figure 4

Number of Participants in the Posters
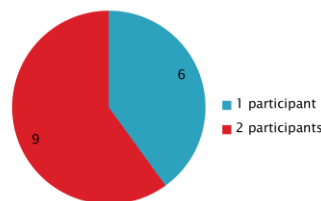
In terms of participants, the posters mostly represent the main characters of the movie with only one or two participants. When there are two participants, viewers may quickly tell that they are the main couple in the movie and consequently turn the attention to their relationship. These posters are relationship-oriented and tend to follow the tradition of romantic comedies, thus their genre is easily identified. In contrast, one-participant posters are character-oriented as they only depict one leading actor/actress without any relationship. Surprisingly, six out of 15

samples follow this pattern so this is not a minor trend. It can be said that the romantic content is not always expressed explicitly in the posters and ambiguity can be a technique to attract the audience.

Figure 5

A Comparison Between Conceptual and Narrative Structure

Conceptual   Narrative

In terms of process, both narrative and conceptual structures are employed in the samples. Conceptual structure is used in 8 out of 15 posters to represent the protagonists. Viewers may tell who the main characters are from their appearance or body language but not much about their story. For example, in *There's Something About Mary* (1998), what is depicted is an attractive and cheerful girl, not her actions of smiling or putting her hands on her knees. Meanwhile, narrative structure provides more hints about the content of the movie from the participants' actions. In *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018), what viewers can realize are the two participants' actions of hugging, smiling and looking into each other's eyes, thus the poster is classified as narrative structure. Remarkably, most of the depicted actions in seven narrative posters are related to romantic relationships such as hugging and kissing, proposing or getting married. In other words, these actions help to establish the participants' identity of a couple. In only

two posters, the action is not related to the romantic theme. Instead, the actions reveal the main characters' personality or feelings. For example, in *Bringing Down the House* (2003), the woman's action of raising hand and her facial expression is not to show her romantic relationship but to expose her identity as a loud and shocking woman who turns the male lead's life upside down.

It is noteworthy from the analysis that the distinction between narrative or conceptual structure is not clear. This is due to the nature of the image. Different from the linguistic text in which the process is simply indicated by the main verbs, visual text may show the mixture of different actions in a single image. In addition, the interpretation of image is subjective. In many cases, it is difficult to decide if the participants are represented as doing the action or they are just posing for the photo to show who they are. In these cases, the researcher had to refer to the content of the movie to categorize the posters but the result is still unavoidably based on personal judgement. More importantly, from the above result of analysis, the meanings created by two types of structure are not separated from each other. Like in the case of *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018), even when the image is categorized as narrative structure, the actions are actually used to create the participants' identity as a couple, which in turn is closely related to conceptual structure. In short, the interpretation of visual images is subjective, complex and flexible, thus cannot be easily codified into the process types.

Lastly, circumstances, consisting of setting (or locative circumstances), means and accompaniment, appear in only 7 out of 15 samples. Regarding setting, four out of five circumstances are connected to a specific location including Greek, Japan or

America to highlight the context of the story. These are the cases when the contexts are special or influential in constructing the plot. Accompaniment occurs in two posters in the form of belongings or extras. In *Sweet Home Alabama* (2002), some pieces of luggage and a dog appear as the movie talks about the character's journey to another city. In *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002), the extras play a significant role in the main couple's relationship so their appearance can be regarded as a prediction for the content of the movie. The only case with means is *The Proposal* (2009) with the ring. This object is to depict the narrative action of the proposal

so its important role is undeniable. In conclusion, circumstances only appear when they have a great influence over the content of the movie; otherwise, this element is absent from the romantic comedy posters.
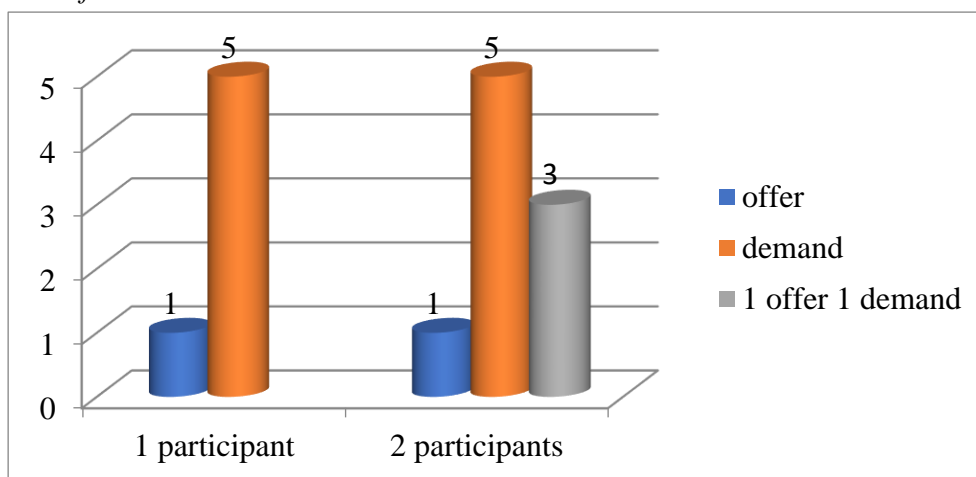
4.2. Interactive Meaning

The interactive meaning or the social relations between the viewers and the subject(s) being represented can be examined from three aspects, including the gaze, the size of frame and the vertical camera angle.

The choice of gaze is illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6

The Choice of Gaze in the Posters

As can be seen, the demand gaze appears in most posters, which means there is a certain kind of interaction between the participants and the viewers. The characters seem to tell the viewers about their stories. In three posters with one offer and one demand gaze, the participant looking directly at the viewers tends to be the "story teller" with a more prominent role in the movie. There are only two cases with no eye contact between the viewers and the participants. In *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018), the couple hug and look at each other's eyes

and seem to live in their own happy world, thus there is no interaction with viewers. Meanwhile, the case of *As Good as It Gets* (1997) may seek the explanation from the personality of the male lead, who is an obsessive-compulsive writer of romantic fiction who's rude to everyone he meets. Apart from these two exceptions, the posters tend to choose demand gaze to create interaction with viewers and based on the choice of gaze for each character, viewers may well predict the importance of each participant in the movie.

Figure 7

The Choice of Size of Frame in the Posters
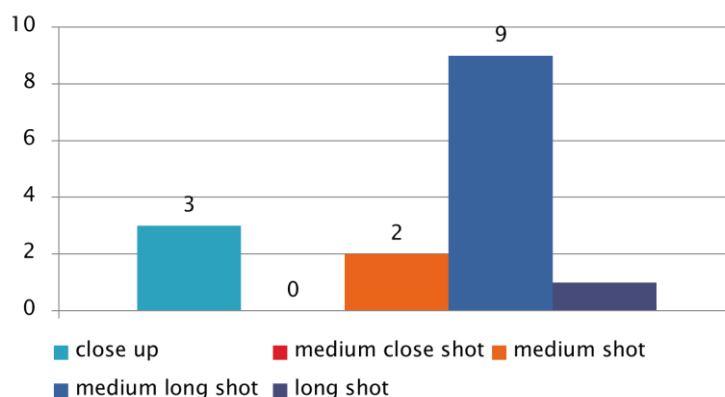
The size of frame refers to the depiction of the subject as close to or far away from the viewers. Obviously, medium shot and medium long shot are most popularly used, which follows the convention of advertisements. "The advertised product is shown in full, but from a fairly close range, and a steep angle, as if the viewer stands just in front of the table on which it is displayed" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 128). Similarly, in movie posters, these types of framing create the familiar feeling in viewers. The characters are depicted as ordinary people who are standing just in front of the viewers. These choices of frame are close enough for the viewers to realize the participants' emotions from their facial expressions and body language, but at the same time, far enough so that the viewers' feelings are not dominated by the characters. In other words, viewers are observers who follow the story of the participants, but cannot interfere into the plot, and vice versa, may not be influenced by the story.

Regarding the vertical camera angle, the popular choice is at eye level, in which "the point of view is one of equality and there is no power difference involved" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 140). The subjects are represented as equally powerful to viewers, which supports the above-mentioned findings in size of frame. The characters are represented as ordinary people in everyday life. There is only one exception of low camera angle in the case of *Coming to America* (1988), which shows the image of an extremely pampered African prince. This choice of camera angle creates the imposing and powerful image of the protagonist to emphasize his privilege in terms of wealth and social status.

4.3. Compositional Meaning

Compositional meaning is discussed in three interrelated systems, namely salience, framing and information value.

Salience refers to how certain elements might be made prominent and have the viewer's attention drawn to them. It is not surprising that the main characters stand out in all posters. The noteworthy point is in two-participant posters, the character with demand gaze tends to receive more salience. For example, in *What Women Want* (2002), the man with demand gaze receives more attention as his full face from frontal angle takes more space. The woman with only a part of the face, close eyes and from an oblique point of view seems to be less conspicuous in the poster, and also takes a less prominent role in the movie. This salience is supported by the linguistic elements of the poster with two lines "He has the power to hear everything women are thinking" and "Finally… a man is listening".

Among the linguistic words, the movie titles are always the most prominent with the biggest size and highlighted colors. The comparison in terms of salience between the titles and visual images is rather difficult and subjective. In most cases, the element that catches the viewers' eyes at the first glance is often the main characters thanks to the vivid images and the big size compared to the linguistic elements. However, when the titles are designed in hot colors (i.e. red, pink, or yellow on black background), and extremely big font size, more salience may be given to the titles, thus they may be a bit more prominent than the images.

The second system of framing is about whether the elements are connected or disconnected to each other. In movie posters, there are two groups of components: the image and the multimodal words. The linguistic text in the poster is to provide the releasing information of the movie and is often designed with semiotic factors (e.g. colour, size, font) to harmonize with other visual images in the poster. Although the words seem to spread all over the poster, the placement of the linguistic text tends to follow the convention. The names of leading actors/actresses appear at the top center of the poster while other details such as the name of the director, the crew, the producer, or the release date are often put at the bottom of the frame. Among these elements, the names of the leading actors/actresses and the release date tend to receive more salience with bigger font sizes and highlighted colors. There are only two exceptions in the samples. While in *As Good as It Gets* (1997), the names of actors and actresses are moved to the bottom, leaving the top position for the tagline, *Pretty Woman* (1990) does not provide any producing information apart from the name of the movie, the actor/actress and the tagline.

As the most prominent among the linguistic items, the movie titles appear from the middle to lower part of the posters, with 5 and 7 samples respectively. This eye-catching position makes the titles more prominent but still gives the salience to the visual images. There are only two cases with titles in the upper part in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002) and *Runaway Bride* (1999), which can be explained by the Ideal-Real pattern in the later part of Information value. *Pretty Woman* (1990) is the only exception in which the title is placed in parallel to the participants. This choice gives more salience to the title itself and the adjoining female character that it represents.

The taglines, appearing in 11 posters, have the most flexible position among the linguistic items. With a rather small font size, the taglines can be found in different zones of the posters. However, there is a tendency that the taglines are put next to the prominent elements, either be the movie titles or the salient visual images.

Regarding the images, despite one or two participants, the visual components are often strongly framed to form one single group. In multi-participant posters, the characters often harmonize with each other in terms of position, action, facial expression and color. Interestingly, in some cases, for example *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) or *What Women Want* (2002), when being put together, the characters form the heart shape, which may well predict their romantic relationship. The only exception when the couples are separated is *Bringing Down the House* (2003), which helps to highlight the gap between the two characters.

Lastly, information value is concerned with the placement of different elements that makes them related to each other and to the viewers. There are three ways of ordering different groups of information: left and right, top and bottom, and center and margin.

Figure 8

Information Value in the Posters
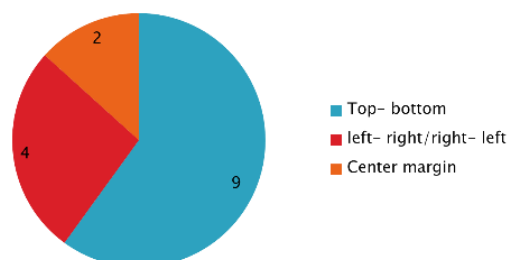
As can be seen from the pie chart, top-bottom order is most frequently used, which is also the typical order of advertisements and marketing-oriented websites (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In such texts, the upper part visualizes the 'promise of the product', or the Ideal; meanwhile, the lower section informs the viewers with factual or practical information (e.g. how to obtain the product), or the Real. The Ideal – Real pattern can also be applied to posters with top-bottom order. The top visualizes the story with the image and the bottom provides 'down to earth' information such as releasing and producing details.

The second choice of left-right is similar to the order of information in magazines. When readers open double-page spreads, their attention tends to be kept by the right page, which often provides the main information of the article. Similar to linguistic sentences with the Theme – Rheme structure, in multimodal text, the left is the side of the already known information or the Given, and the right is key message or the New (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The Given – New structure can be found in three posters but the information being put in each zone is flexible. *In Pretty Woman* (1990) and *The Proposal* (2009), the image of an ordinary couple is treated as The Given, or the starting point of the story. In these cases, the movie title and its details on the right-hand side become the key message to invite the movie goers to discover the special features of this relationship themselves. The

elements in *There is Something About Mary* (1998) are arranged in a reversed order. The names of the cast and the movie title are put on the left-hand side. The line "There is something about Mary" with the word Mary being highlighted works as a secret, which leads the viewers' attention to the image of Mary on the right. The discovery of Mary would be the main content of the movie, thus becoming The New of the poster.

The poster of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002) is the only exception that employs both horizontal and vertical structures but not in a conventional way. The left-right order is used but only to separate the protagonists from the extras. One fourth of the picture is left for the extras with different background while the majority of the space is for the main couple, which symbolizes the couple's winning over their relatives' influence. In vertical order, the positions of the image and the title have been exchanged. The title is moved to the top of the poster, or the Ideal part, while the image is put together with the movie's producing and releasing details, which belong to The Real. This may indicate that this "Greek wedding" is an ideal and romantic one.

The last structure of center-margin is found in only two posters with the same pattern in which the two characters are separated and the movie title and details are put between them. This decision may highlight a kind of "gap" in their relationship and at the same time, gives more prominence to the title of the movie.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, the framework adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) has been used to analyze 15 posters of high grossing American romantic comedies. The findings indicate that there are some conventions in designing these posters including the small number of participants and their salience, the frequent absence of

circumstances, the position and content of linguistic words, the size of frame and framing. In representational meaning, the posters can be divided into relationship-oriented and character-oriented ones. Equivalent to these two types, viewers' attention can be attracted by either the couple's romantic relationship as tradition or the ambiguity of genre by focusing on the characters' features or personality. Circumstances only appear when they have a great influence over the content of the movie. Regarding interactive meaning, the contact is often maintained between the participants and the viewers without power being involved. Moreover, the role of the characters in the movie can be predicted from such hints as their gaze or salience. The choice of size of frame is similar to other genres in the area of advertisement and promotion. Although there are several ways to arrange the elements with different purposes, the components of the posters tend to be in good harmony and connection, which creates a pleasant feeling in viewers and is suitable for the content of romantic comedies. It can be said that there are common patterns in the choice of visual elements to make meanings in these posters. Any decision of not following the majority can be explained by the content of the movie. Thus, the analysis of the three meanings of the posters may reveal some key information of the movie, thus intrigue the viewers into the story of the characters.

Regarding the theoretical framework, Visual Grammar, with its well-structured system, provides a powerful tool to break visual images into different elements and construe their meanings. However, the procedure of analysis shows that at some stages, the classification is not clear and simple as stated in the theory. The interpretation of visual images is subjective, complex and flexible, thus cannot be easily codified into technical terms. This finding suggests that there might be a need for an adjustment of the framework to make it easier to be put into practice.

The present study has, to some extent, shown the importance of movie genres in the choice of visual elements. As the posters are strongly influenced by the movie content, the application of Visual Grammar into the analysis of posters in different movie genres may result in different findings. Therefore, further studies may choose samples of different genres to examine the relationship between genres and multimodal construction.

Source of Posters

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Appendix

15 Samples of the Present Study

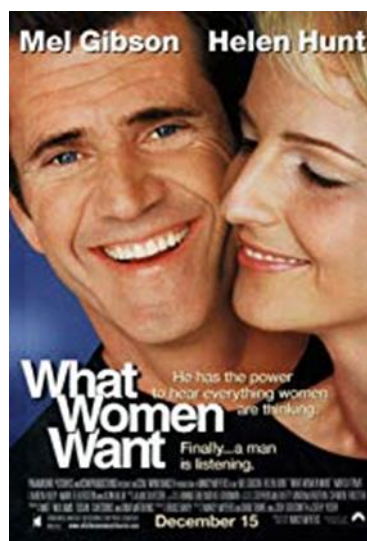Figure A1: Poster of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002)

Figure A2: Poster of *What Women Want* (2002)

Figure A3: Poster of *Hitch* (2005)

Figure A4: Poster of *Pretty Woman* (1990)

Figure A5: Poster of *There's Something About Mary* (1998)

Figure A6: Poster of *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018)

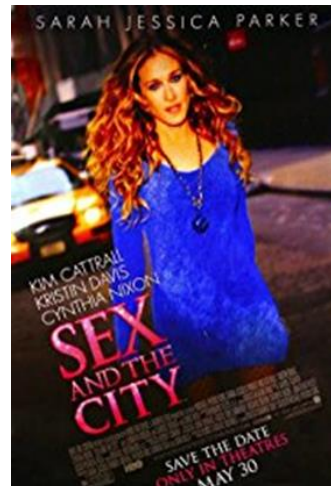Figure A7: Poster of *The Proposal* (2009)

Figure A8: Poster of *Sex and the City: The Movie* (2008)

Figure A9: Poster of *Runaway Bride* (1999)
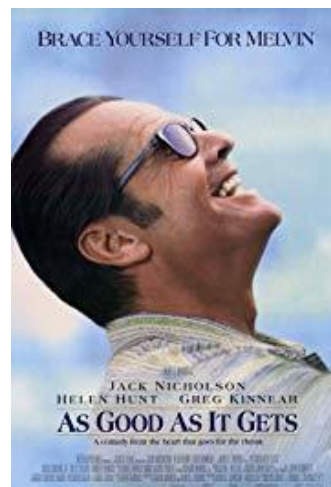
Figure A10: Poster of *Knocked up* (2007)

Figure A11: Poster of *As Good as It Gets* (1997)

Figure A12: Poster of *Bringing Down the House* (2003)

Figure A13: Poster of *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012)
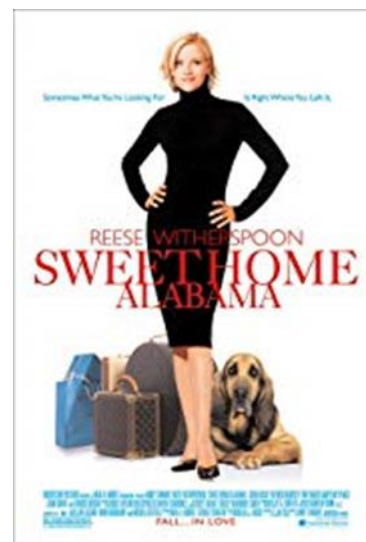
Figure A14: Poster of *Coming to America* (1988)

Figure A15: Poster of *Sweet Home Alabama* (2002)

PHÂN TÍCH HÌNH ẢNH TRONG CÁC POSTER PHIM HÀI KỊCH LÃNG MẠN SỬ DỤNG PHƯƠNG PHÁP PHÂN TÍCH ĐA THỨC

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Tóm tắt: Phương pháp phân tích đa thức (multimodal discourse analysis) là phương hướng nghiên cứu diễn ngôn mới xuất hiện trong những năm gần đây, tương đối nổi bật và phát triển với tốc độ nhanh. Theo lý luận của phương pháp này, ý nghĩa trong văn bản không chỉ giới hạn ở hệ thống ngôn ngữ mà còn phụ thuộc vào ảnh hưởng và tác dụng tương hỗ của các kí hiệu đa phương thức như tranh ảnh, âm thanh, màu sắc. Nghiên cứu này ủng hộ lý luận trên bằng việc phân tích các poster chính thức của 15 bộ phim hài kịch lãng mạn có doanh thu lớn nhất trong những năm gần đây. Dựa trên khung lý thuyết của Kress và Van Leeuwen (2006), nghiên cứu chỉ ra điểm giống và khác giữa các poster này trong cách sử dụng hình ảnh để tạo nghĩa và đạt mục đích quảng bá của poster. Kết quả nghiên cứu không chỉ tìm ra các xu hướng chung trong thiết kế poster phim mà còn kiểm chứng hiệu quả thực tế của khung lý thuyết này trong việc phân tích các văn bản đa thức.

Từ khóa: phương pháp phân tích đa thức, poster phim tình cảm