

A Multimodal Literary Analysis of a Television Commercial

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ABSTRACT

Literature and advertisements are analogous in the way they mimic the surrounding culture, art and practices and in their ability to elicit various emotional responses in people. Over the years, literature has had a great influence in advertisements and much of advertisement content has used poetic verses, prose forms and dramatic elements. Television commercials largely draw inspiration from drama in the construction of the advertisers' messages. As a multimodal text, a television commercial (TVC) utilises multiple modes of meaning to employ literary elements in its content. Based on the view of TVCs as literary texts, this paper examines the literary elements of setting and character in a TVC through multimodal analysis. The multimodal elements that construct setting and character in a corporate TVC are identified and analysed. In line with multimodal analysis, the meanings of the modes are discussed by taking into account the socio-cultural context in which the TVC is produced and viewed. In doing so, the significant role of setting and character in meaning making of a TVC is revealed. This paper demonstrates the application of the multimodal approach to analysis of literary elements in a TVC and subsequently contributes to developing and promoting applications of multimodal analytical approaches in literary studies.

Keywords: television commercial; literary text; multimodality; setting; character

INTRODUCTION

Literature and advertisements share a long history that can be traced from the birth of advertisements itself. Wicke (1988 p. 1) examines “advertising as a language and literature in its own right” and claims that advertising and literature are not two separate entities or rivals even, but are in fact, “cultural kindred”. The association between advertising and literature over time is discussed in Strachan (2007) in his work on advertising in the romantic period. According to Strachan (2007 p. 5), copywriters during the Georgian period used elements appropriated from a wide range of literary styles drawn from ‘elevated’ literature as well as from less prestigious formal models.

More recently, technological advancements have enabled advertisers to incorporate literary elements in both print and electronic advertisements through multiple modes of meaning. In addition to language, colour, images, animations, movements and gestures are used to convey literary elements such as setting, character, plot, theme and tone in advertisements. The use of literary elements in advertisements has had an influence on the affectivity and effectivity of advertisements in varying degrees. Ross (2015) investigates the connection that advertisements and literary prose share while discussing the common affect both texts have on people. The aim of this paper is to use a multimodal analytic framework to deconstruct meaning behind the portrayals of the literary elements of setting and character in a TVC.

The incorporation of literary elements in advertising texts has prompted various studies that have employed different analytical methods and approaches such as discourse analysis, stylistics, literary criticism and semiotics analysis. Language has traditionally been seen as the “central semiotic and communication channel for communicating social reality” and “sociocultural beliefs, values and norms” of a society (Koo & Kell, 2006). Therefore, linguistics and literary based analyses primarily focus on language as the main source through which meaning is conveyed. However, the analysis of literary elements in a television commercial (TVC) would require an approach that can account for the all different modes that are used in meaning making in the text. Multimodal analysis is instrumental for this purpose as it enables the identification and scrutiny of multiple modes of meaning co-deployed in a TVC. Therefore, in this paper, a multimodal frame of analysis is used to investigate the different modes of meaning that simultaneously construct setting and character in a TVC.

A multimodal approach to text analysis takes into account the multiple modes of meaning including visual, linguistic, audio, gestural and technical modes that are employed for meaning construction (Periasamy 2014). The approach taken in multimodal text analysis is that meaning is created not through the isolated analysis of one mode but through the analysis of “all other modes simultaneously present and operating within a communicative context” (Kress, Jewitt & Tsatsarelis 2001, p. 43). Prominence and emphasis is given not just to language but to all modes of meaning such as images, symbols, sounds and gestures that appear in a text. The application of multimodal analysis in various disciplines has resulted in the integration of new perspectives to extend multimodal analysis including analysis of television commercials (Pennock-Speck & del Saz-Rubio 2013, Wahl 2013). Several recent studies have employed multimodal analysis for the analysis of television and advertising texts (Azirah 2006, Tan 2009, Feng & Wignell 2011) but these works do not focus on literary elements.

In multimodal analysis, there is an increasing interest in bridging literary analysis and multimodal texts analysis (McIntyre 2008, Toolan 2010, Nørgaard 2010, Page & Herman 2010, Doloughan 2011). Such works have initiated analysis adapted from analytical approaches in literary studies for the analysis of multimodal texts, such as theatre performances (McIntyre 2008) and animated movies (Zurru 2010) and web pages (Toolan 2010). The existence of literary elements such as narratives in various multimodal texts has prompted works such as Toolan (2010) that examines electronic multimodal narratives and the literary form. Zurru (2010) conducted a multimodal analysis on the element of characterisation in the animated movie series, *Shrek*. Works such as Toolan (2010) and Page (2010) pave inroads into the literary analysis of multimodal texts. In line with this current development, this paper expands literary based multimodal analyses to television texts such as TVCs. It does so by viewing TVCs as literary text.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TELEVISION COMMERCIALS AS MULTIMODAL LITERARY TEXTS

The use of various literary devices such as narrative, plot, dialogue, theme, setting and character in the construction of advertisements, TVCs in particular, has led to it being regarded as a literary text (Wicke 1988). Ross (2015) notes how much television commercials rely on narrative to fulfill their persuasive function. The use of various dramatic elements in TVCs has led to the TVC being categorised as a mini drama by Esslin (1979). This view is shared by Berger (1996) who considers television commercials more so than any other forms of advertisements to be greatly influenced by the literary genre of drama. Esslin

(1979) notes how television advertisements very much mimic drama texts by employing elements such as character and plot. Television advertisements are greatly influenced by drama because “of all the art forms only drama can communicate such an immense amount of information on so many levels simultaneously within the span of a few seconds” (Esslin 1979 p.99).

Esslin (1979) draws many parallels between the television commercial and drama in the traditional and contemporary form. Esslin (1979) compares celebrities in television advertisements with demigods and mythical heroes in society whose presence underlines the advertisement’s basic character as ritual drama. Esslin (1979) states that the “free interchangeability of real and fictional experts in this context once again underlines the essentially fictitious character even of the “real” people involved and shows clearly that we are dealing with a real form of drama” (Esslin 1979 p. 100).

Several other works that have embraced the view of TVCs as a form of drama include those by Wicke (1988), Boller (1990, 1991), Stern (1991a, 1994). Stern (1991b) adapts literary theory, including dramaturgy and narratology for the analysis of advertisements. In Stern (1991a, 1994) and Etienne and Vanbaelen (2006), TVCs are also analysed from a literary perspective. In Stern (1994), literary elements such as narration, plot, story and character are analysed in a television commercial.

The inclusion of literary and dramatic elements such as narrative structure and characterisation for the semiotic analysis of a television commercial by Berger (1996) is based on the perception of television commercials as “works of art” and “minidramas” that employ all the techniques of the theatre and the cinema” (p. 61). Boller (1990), states that “dramatic forms of advertising depend upon narrative conventions of plot and character for their import” and “contain characters—protagonists given particular physiological and psychological traits, and through who’s actions, brand-related experiences are conveyed to the viewing audience” (p. 621). These dramatised stories prompt the audiences to view the experiences on the screen as their own and invite them to participate in the experience.

Etienne and Vanbaelen (2006) outline a literary analysis of TVCs and present a description grid for the literary analysis of TVCs that includes visual mode, gestures and audio, technical and linguistic modes. Among the elements described in the grid are actors, facial expressions, costumes, gestures, interactions, activities, objects, setting, voices, including “intonations, inflections and articulation, sound effects, music, choice of instruments, lighting, colours, camera angles, discourse, including narrative voice and intertextuality and phonetics, including “rhymes, alliterations, assonances, repetitions, punctuation” (Etienne & Vanbaelen 2006 p. 91). Etienne and Vanbaelen (2006)’s description grid is a multimodal one that takes into account multiple modes and elements found in the medium of television and the genre of television commercials.

A primer on analyzing television commercials in Berger (1996) also provides a comprehensive guide for the analysis of TVCs. The primer in Berger (1996) describes six aspects that should be taken into account in analysing a TVC. These six aspects include narrative structure, dialogue and language, actors and actresses, technical matters (lighting, colour, editing and music), sound and music, and signs, symbols and intertextual devices (Berger 1996 p. 65-66). The six aspects account for multimodal elements. Dialogue and language and rhetorical techniques such as alliteration, metaphor and metonymy are elements of the linguistic mode (Berger 1996). Technical matters as described by Berger (1996) includes elements such lighting, cutting, shot selection. Element of audio mode includes, voices, sound, music, sound effects which elements of visual and gestural mode includes setting and symbols, facial expressions, body language and costume. Another set of elements highlighted by Berger (1996) are literary devices such as storyline, characterisation and symbolism. Works such as Berger (1996) and Etienne and Vanbaelen (2006) pave the way

towards applying literary approaches and devices to the multimodal analysis of an advertisement text. In the following section the method that is used to conduct the analysis in this paper will be explained.

METHODOLOGY

In line with Berger (1996) and Etienne and Vanbaelen (2006), a corporate TVC by a Malaysian oil and gas corporation entitled *Letchumi and Rokiah*, was selected because of its use of narrative conventions commonly found in dramas and films. The apparent narrative in the TVC that lent it a short film-like quality made this TVC an ideal choice for this study. The *Letchumi and Rokiah* TVC was also a suitable choice due to the limited use of the linguistic mode, both dialogue and voice-over, in its content. The absence of the vital elements of the linguistics mode such as dialogue, narration or voice-over in this TVC meant that one had to rely completely on all other modes of meaning to fully comprehend the TVC including elements of its setting, character and plot. This feature of the TVC provided further motivation for its selection as a TVC for this study.

In line with the multimodal method of videotext analysis which involves repeated viewing of data, the TVC was viewed in its entirety several times to gain a full understanding of its plot and message. The *Letchumi and Rokiah* TVC depicts the life story of two childhood friends through a series of picture-taking sessions featuring various milestones in their lives. The montage style highlights the intimate bond, friendship and sisterhood that are shared by two girls from their school days right up to when they are married and become mothers. Their close relationship, however, ruptures due to a conflict that arises and is left unresolved. After a long time, when reconciliation and reunion is sought, the death of one friend makes it too late for any resolution. A minor, insignificant conflict was allowed to ruin a beautiful, harmonious relationship that had been nurtured over decades.

At the start of every scene, taking photographic portraits is the central action. Accordingly, the actors are arranged to be photographed, or are in the process of taking a photograph. The TVC is three minutes (180 seconds) long and consists of eight scenes made up of 55 shots. There are two principal actors. The TVC does not contain any dialogue, narration or voice-over, and is presented in montage style editing with a single music track that can be heard throughout the entire clip.

Given the complexity of multimodal analysis, the work in this paper concentrates on Scene 1, the opening scene of the TVC. A multimodal analysis of more than one scene would generate analytical data that would be beyond the scope of this paper, thus the discussion in this paper is limited to Scene 1. The opening scene was chosen for the purpose of this paper because according to the traditional plot structure developed by Gustav Freytag, opening scenes contain the exposition element of the plot and provide the background information such as setting and introduce the characters of the story.

The literary elements of setting and character are the focus of this paper as these elements are the central elements that aid understanding of a scene, be it in a book, play, film, TV drama or TVC. Setting locates a scene within a specific geographical location, time period and is able to provide other information about the social, cultural or political context in which a scene is set. Identification and knowledge of an opening scene's setting is able to provide a wealth of information to a viewer about the context of the scene, its characters and what is to follow in the consequent scenes. Character is another key literary element which informs a viewer on the people that a scene revolves around. Understanding of character aids understanding of plot, as well as setting and eventually the message of the text. Setting and characterisation work together to enhance the understanding of a scene and the overall text.

Scene 1 of the TVC consists of four shots over seven seconds. All four shots in Scene 1 are presented in black and white and are set in a school compound. The characters in this scene consist of two female school children and one adult male photographer. The two girls pose for a photograph in the middle of the school field. A flagpole bearing the Malaysian flag stands at the back of the field. A diagetec text – 31st August 1957 -- appears at the bottom of the frame in shots 2, 3 and 4 of the scene. As images of the TVC were not able to be reproduced in this paper due to copyright restrictions, in the following sections, the four shots that make up Scene 1 are described in detail.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SHOTS 1-4, SCENE 1, LETCHUMI AND ROKIAH TVC

Shot 1 is the establishing scene presented in extreme long shot, seen in black and white, featuring two children standing in the centre of a school field with a photographer. The two children, clad in pinafores, stand facing each other in the middle of field, in the centre of the frame. One child is slightly taller than the other. The taller child is seen touching the face of the shorter one. The photographer, an adult male is presented at an oblique angle in the bottom left corner of the frame. Only the right side of the photographer is in the frame. The photographer is wearing a dark long sleeved shirt with the right sleeve folded up above the elbows and he is in long, dark trousers. His face is not visible as his head is bent over a camera. The camera, just barely visible, is set on a tripod and the photographer is seen manually operating it with his right hand.

At the back of the field, in the centre, background of the frame, there is a tall, main building lined with multiple pointed Gothic arches on the ground and first floor. On each side of the field (left and right side of frame), there are also shorter buildings that flank either side of the main building and extend to the foreground of the frame. These buildings form a sort of a quadrangle with the field in the centre. At the top, in the background, above the buildings, fluffy white clouds are seen in the bright sky. At the back of the field, in front of the main building is a tall flag pole from which flies the Malaysian flag.

Shot 2 is identical to shot 1 with the exception of the caption 31st August 1957 appearing in white on the centre, bottom of the frame.

Shot 3 is a medium shot that has a closer focus of only the two children in the scene and the physical attributes of the characters are more visible and clear in this shot. The photographer does not appear in this shot. The shot shows two primary school aged girls clad in identical attire which consist of dark coloured, box pleated, pinafores worn atop crisp, white, short-sleeved collared shirts. The two girls remain standing on the field, facing each other. The taller girl, who appears on the centre, left side of the frame has her hair in double braids. Both her hands are raised and the tips of her fingers rest on the forehead of the other girl. The other girl (centre, right of frame), with her hair in a ponytail, stands straight, with her arms by her side facing her friend. The Gothic arches of the building appear more clearly in the background, behind the girls. The diagetec text in the form of a caption, 31st August 1957 remains at the centre bottom of the frame.

Shot 4 is the same as Shot 1 and 2 with the exception that is in long shot instead of extreme long shot, thus the children appear bottom of the frame, closer to the front than in the extreme long shot of Shot 1. The photographer does not appear in this in this final shot of Scene 1 and therefore the setting (field, school buildings) is fully visible. The diagetec text remains in the same in Shot 4. The following sections will demonstrate the multimodal analysis of setting and character in Scene 1.

ANALYSIS

MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF SETTING

TEMPORAL SETTING

The setting is daytime which is reflected through the light sky and bright fluffy clouds seen in the background. The whiteness of the clouds is more saturated and their brightness seems to reflect the sun and indicate a sunny rather than a cloudy day. Despite the lack of colour, the balance in the saturation of black and white creates a realistic image of what looks like an ideal beautiful day weather-wise which effectuates a calm, peaceful mood in the scene.

“Colour is an important element in multimodal texts such as advertisements and TVCs and it plays an essential role in the commercial communication system and “enables viewers to explore the world through fixed meanings established via social agreement and convention and keeps readers within narrow interpretive frames (Holden 1997, p. 145). According to Holden (1997, p. 129), colour in varying elements are employed intentionally as “a tool to assist the viewer in constructing mental associations” such as a specific emotion or time period.

Throughout the *Letchumi and Rokiah* TVC, the visual element of colour plays an important role in establishing the time period and conveying the time motif of passage of time particularly in emphasizing the distinction between past and the present. The shots in Scene 1 are in black and white colour scheme which acts as period indicator of the times, transporting the viewer back at least five decades to a time before colour television. It is able to invoke a paradigm of past-ness therefore signaling to the present day viewer that the scene shown is one that is of the past (Streeter 2005). This past-ness, is achieved through the use black and white image, now more commonly associated with old or retro photographs and television and film images of the yesteryears. They provide a sharp contrast to the more highly saturated, high definition, colour media images of present times.

According to Lury (2005), the incorporation of black and white images into contemporary programmes such as this TVC, “calls on both their actual status (as real images of the past) and the way in which they can be used to refer to the past” (p.36). In the context of this TVC, these first shots in black and white is used to suggest that the shots being viewed are actual images of events that occurred at a point of time in the past. The black and white qualities of the image authenticate the event and the scene as real and true of its time of its time period.

Colour also lends authenticity to the temporal period of the scene in the TVC. Visually, the colour scheme lends a sense of historicity to the images and makes the TVC seem more like a documentary thus making it more believable and real. According to Kit-wai Ma (2005), a documentary aesthetic achieved in this TVC through the use of black and white colour scheme, “is intensively gratifying for the general public, who share an epistemological commitment to factual history” (p. 152). According to Kit-wai Ma (2005 p. 152), the black and white colour combination provides a “powerful sense of authenticity” to images depicted and reinforces the historical connections associated with the depiction.

Another visual element of prop, the camera depicted in the scene also helps establish the setting of the historical setting of the scene. The camera used by the photographer depicted in the scene is a manually operated, antiquated model that was used in during the 1950s. The hand prop, the camera, is obsolete at the current time and the use of the antique in the scene adds authenticity to the time period recreated in the scene.

In addition to the visual element of colour and prop, an element of the linguistic mode, the diagetic text found in Shots 2, 3 and 4 in Scene 1 has aids understanding of the time period in which Scene 1 located. The diagetic text which appears in Scene 1 (Shots 2, 3

and 4) is *31st August 1957*. The diagetive text, (*31st August 1957*) in Shot 2, establishes the specific temporal setting and offers up information on the scene, locating it within a specific decade and point in time. The diagetive text helps contextualise the setting from the very first scene which helps viewers stay connected with movements of time that follow in subsequent scenes in the TVC. The various elements of colour, prop and diagetive text come together to establish the temporal setting of Scene 1 in this TVC.

PHYSICAL SETTING

The TVC opening scene is set outdoors on a field in a colonial, quad style building. The design strategy employed for the set of this shot is the realistic or representational approach which is intended to represent a real or actual place or an exact recreation of place and time (Donald, Maynard & Spann 2008).

The depth of field (area in which objects are in focus) of this shot is great as objects in all sections of the shot whether foreground, middle ground or background are in focus (Zettl 2006). The sharpness and clarity of the objects add to the realistic portrayal of the field as it is shown in great depth as it would appear if a person was actually in that location. Although there is effort through use of colour to make the scene appear less real and in the past, other efforts have been taken to make sure that the scene and the events that unfold in it are real despite it being in the distant past. This is done through attention to details in the set, props and technical aspects.

A large portion of the frame is actually taken by the field which forms the outdoor set. The field is wide, uncluttered and clean. The grass on the field is well manicured and is there is no litter or overgrowth apparent indicating an orderly, organized, well maintained place. Tall leafy trees, a shade darker than the grass, dot the right side of the screen at the edge of the field in a straight line reinforcing the idea of neatness and order. The saturation of the tree colours which is a shade darker than that of the grass adds to the realistic value of the scene and makes the shot appear more real and natural despite the scene being in black and white. Shadows cast by the trees in the sunshine achieved through darker saturation on the field below the trees also add to degree of modality (realism of an image) of the scene (van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2001). According to Royce (2007), despite the absence of colour in this black and white shot, the presence of physical details and landscape features such as plants and trees adds to a higher modality of the scene, therefore making it very real and believable as an authentic image from the past.

At the back of the field, in the background of the frame, there is a tall, main building lined with multiple arches on the ground and first floor. One each side of the field there are also shorter buildings that flank either side of the main building and extend to the foreground of the frame. These buildings form a sort of a quad with the field in the centre. These quad style buildings are commonly found in European education institutes such as schools, colleges and universities. The colonial design of the building with its arches and columns further reinforces the idea that this building in the scene could be a colonial educational institute which is often associated with Christian values and ideologies. The solid straight, horizontal lines of the buildings and the field add to the sense of church-like calm and strength that seem to surround this scene. The vertical lines created by the multiple columns in the buildings add to the height of the building and create a visual reinforcement of its solid structural foundations. These physical features of the buildings in this shot help in creating a solid institutional backdrop required for the scene. The visuals elements described point to the understanding that the scene is set in an educational institutional, more specifically, in a Christian, mission school. The analysis of the physical attributes of the building and space in the set points to this conclusion. The geographical setting in which this school and the significance of the school within the context is discussed in the following section.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

In the background, top, left corner (BTL), just in front of the main building, there is a flag post almost as tall as the main building. From the flag post, flies the Jalur Gemilang, the Malaysian flag. The vertical line formed by the tall flag post reinforces the strength of the structure from which flies the symbol of a nation. There seems to be a light breeze blowing which is apparent in the way the Jalur Gemilang flaps in the air from its post. The flag fits in well in the scene in the grounds of the colonial building. It acts to contextualise the scene and provides information about the geographical location of the scene. There exists a juxtaposition of sorts between the colonial style main building and the Jalur Gemilang that flies in front of it. In the midst of the colonial influences in the architectural design of the buildings that form the set, the presence of Malaysia's Jalur Gemilang informs viewers that this, the scene the TVC is set in, is Malaysia and not a European state or colony. The use of the flag as a prop in the set plays a vital role in establishing the geographical location of the set while the colour choice of black and white helps signal the time period.

Based on the analysis of the physical setting earlier, the building in the scene is recognizable as an all-girls, Christian mission, Infant Jesus Convent school located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. The Infant Jesus Convent, now known as Convent Bukit Nanas was founded by the Catholic nuns of the Infant Jesus Sisters order in 1899. It is one of the premier all-girl schools in Malaysia and has produced many prolific Malaysians. The school is still regarded as one of the best schools in the state, known for its long standing traditions, discipline, and academic excellence and for producing all rounded ladies. Through the analysis of the visual elements above, it is established that the scene is set within a Christian, mission school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

In line with the multimodal approach of anchoring the analysis of a mode within its socio-cultural context, the identification of the physical and geographical setting of the scene as a Christian mission school in Malaysia provides further information about the setting and characters in the scene. Firstly, as most mission schools in Malaysia are located within urban areas, the identification of the school building also establishes that the scene is set in an urban setting as opposed to rural. Secondly, the setting of the mission school also aids understanding of the characters in the scene as urban, English speaking Malaysians as English is the medium of instruction used in such schools. The representations of the characters in the TVC as Malaysians from an urban and English speaking background is significant if viewed within the wider socio-cultural landscape of Malaysia as they can be considered to be representative of an elite group of Malaysians. This gives rise to questions of whether the characters represented in the TVC provide an accurate representation of the general, average Malaysian or otherwise. However, discussions pertaining to the ideological aspects in representation of setting and character that emerge from the analysis while recognised are not explored in depth in this paper. It is important to note at this point however, that among the advantages of multimodal analysis is its ability to flesh out ideological constructs in a text. This aspect of multimodal analysis however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

SOCIOPOLITICAL SETTING

The use of linguistic modes in this TVC is limited. Images are preferred over language as the rhetorical device for this TVC. The TVC is devoid of any audible verbalised linguistic mode. With the exception of two digetic texts that appear at the beginning and the end of the TVC, the TVC is devoid of any other audible or visible linguistic elements, either written or spoken.

The diagetic text in Scene 1 points to the date in which Malaysia gained independence from its British colonizers. Viewed in context, the diagetic text in Scene 1 plays an important role in establishing the sociopolitical setting of the scene as that set in newly independent Malaysia.

The date, 31st August 1957 is a significant one to Malaysians as it marks the day when independence from the British was declared in Malaysia. 31st of August every year is a national holiday and is celebrated with much pomp and fanfare by the entire nation. It is a day that marks the birth of the country as one independent of colonial powers. The diagetic text featuring the date of Malaysia's Independence juxtaposed with the presence of the Malaysian flag flying from the flag pole in Scene 1 reinforces an interpretation that the TVC is connected with the actual independence day of Malaysia and the values and emotions that go with the celebration of being a newly independent state.

The Malaysian flag is an extremely important element of the visual mode that prompts and reinforces interpretations related to the Independence and birth of Malaysia as a nation. The flag is a national symbol and its presence in the black and white scene signals the sovereignty of Malaysia which was previously ruled by the British. The image of the flag pole bearing the Malaysian flag signals the pride that Malaysians finally have to be able to fly their own national flag in their land, instead of the Union Jack.

It is significant that the Malaysian flag is placed in the middle of the Christian missionary school founded during the colonial times and that it stands surrounded by the English, Gothic inspired buildings. This image reinforces the independence that has been attained in Malaysia, signifying that the colonial rule is now in the past and that Malaysia now belongs to the Malaysians. The flag flapping freely in the wind represents the new found identity and pride of an independent nation and people, free from colonial rule. The Malaysian flag together with the diagetic text, 31st August 1957 brings on the interpretation connected to the Independence of Malaysia and the pride of being an independent and sovereign nation. Two elements, the diagetic text and the flag impart to viewers the socio-political environment of the setting showcased in Scene 1.

IMPLICATION OF SETTING ANALYSIS

The analysis of the multimodal elements in Scene 1 reveals three important aspects of the setting. Firstly, the time period (1957), secondly, the physical and geographical setting (Convent school, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) and finally, the sociopolitical context of the setting (newly independent nation). The temporal setting was reinforced through the use of the black and white colour scheme and prop (camera) element of the visual mode and the diagetic text. The physical and geographical setting was constructed through elements of the visual modes such as set design and building (colonial, gothic architecture inspired building) and props (Malaysian flag). Finally the socio-political environment of the setting was reinforced through the diagetic text (31 August 1957) and the Malaysian flag. In Scene 1, elements of the visual mode and linguistic mode play an important role in the construction and the identification and understanding of the temporal, physical and socio-political setting of the scene.

MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

CHARACTER: ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE

In this section, the three characters that appear in Scene 1 and the multimodal elements that help construct the characterisation of these characters are analysed. The analysis includes discussion of the characters' appearances, size, placements and positions, proximity and gestures and the camera angle in which they are presented.

In the foreground, at the bottom, on the extreme left corner, is an oblique view of an adult man, dressed in dark long sleeved shirt and even darker trousers. He is bent over a partially hidden camera which is balanced on a tripod placed on the ground. Only the right side of the man's head and body is visible as the rest is out of the frame. The man's head is bent over the camera, while his right arm operates the camera.

In this shot, while the photographer seems to be in the familiar foreground, bottom, left position (FBL), there is little revealed about his looks, facial expression or person suggesting that he is perhaps not prominent in the context of the scene although he could have been the father, relative or the teacher of any one of the girls in the shot. While his role, as the random photographer however, is a familiar one that most people can relate too, his position in the lower half of the frame and the sparse details on his character in this scene and the next could be an indication that he has no other role to play in the plot of the text.

The significant space between the photographer and the two other characters also suggests a lack of connection and detachment further reinforcing perhaps the insignificance of this photographer to the general context within the text. Furthermore, the angle he is presented in, the rear point of view is an angle that suggests that he is only there for the viewer to partially notice rather than engage and failure to acquire the frontal angle which is the norm of hegemonic masculinity illustrates a sense of detachment between this character and the rest (Jewitt & Oyama 2001). The analysis of the various visual and technical aspects of this character is able to reveal his lesser role and significance within the text and helps aid understanding of the TVC and its narrative.

Besides the man, there are two other people in the scene. These two people are two young school girls and they are positioned in the centre of the field and the frame in general. In terms of physical angle of the characters, as discussed earlier, the photographer was presented at an oblique angle which suggested his lack of importance. However, by being presented in the central position of the entire frame, the importance of the two young female characters in the TVC is emphasized. The centrality of their position is an indication of their importance and significance to their entire scene. According to Zettl (2006), the central position is used for characters who hold the whole text together and to show that the characters belong to the context. Despite the lack of information and access accorded to them for the viewer, the use of the central position subtly indicates that these girls are possibly the main characters which the TVC revolves around.

The centrality and the importance of the girls in the story is a contrast to the position of the photographer who is a peripheral figure marginalised to the FBL position. Although in comparison to the girls the photographer seems larger by virtue of being the closest to the camera, he remains a faceless figure who bears no significance in the TVC other than being a photographer. The two girls on the other hand, are reinforced through the positions within the frame as the central characters in the scene and the TVC.

The proximity and the gestures of the two young girls, the central characters, indicate the existence of a close bond between the two. Throughout Scene 1, the two girls stand facing each other, face to face. They are both completely focused on each other and look very comfortable to be in such close proximity to each other. The taller one, in an affectionate almost, motherly gesture, cups the face of the shorter one and the latter does not object to this. Each one seems pleased to be with the other; cocooned in the circle of each other's presence. The way physical proximity suggests that they share a very close friendship and fondness for each other. The proximity and physical gestures of the characters signals the relationship that is shared between the two central characters featured in the scene.

CHARACTER: AGE AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Attire contributes to identification of the age and status of characters in dramatic texts. The use of school uniforms by the characters in the scene plays an important role in establishing their identities as students. In shots 3 and 4 the two girls that are seen in identical attire that consists of dark coloured, box pleated, pinafores worn atop crisp, white, short-sleeved collared shirts. Elements of the setting such as the building style, field and flag post make reference to an academic institution-like setting and helps one identify the setting in Scene 1 as a school and consequently the attire worn by the characters as school uniforms.

For viewers who are familiar with past and current styles of school uniforms for girls in Malaysia, the uniforms even reveal the type of school (mission or also known as convent school) and level (primary) to which the children belong. The attire of the characters allows viewers to infer the age group (primary school) and status (students) of the characters. Additionally, by virtue identifying the students as convent school students, their socio-economic status can also be inferred as belonging to the urban, upper middle class group.

CHARACTER: ETHNICITY

The visual elements in the scene also helped in deciphering the ethnic identity of the two main characters. Other than the clues provided in the title of the TVC, where the names of the characters, Letchumi and Rokiah, can be linked to their ethnic identity, the multimodal elements in the TVC also aid the identification of the characters' ethnicities. Although clothing is an important way of expressing one's ethnic identity in Malaysia, the costume worn by the two main characters and the use of black and white colour scheme in theory, reduces their ethnic identification making it difficult to determine the ethnic identities of the characters in Shots 1 and 2.

Only on closer inspection in Shot 3 where the medium shot provides a closer focus on the characters, are the differences and distinctions pertaining to the ethnicity of the characters discernible. It is by examining the physiological attributes such as facial features, skin tone, hair style that the ethnicity identity of the characters discernible as Malay (Rokiah) and Indian (Letchumi). The taller girl, with her darker skin tone and characteristics Indian facial features and double plaits is Indian and the other girl, with a fairer skin tone can be identified as displaying the facial features of a Malay girl. The difference in skin tone is discernible even in the black and white colour scheme of the scene, therefore making it easier to identify that the characters are of different ethnicities.

IMPLICATION OF CHARACTER ANALYSIS

The multimodal elements in the scene convey information with regards to the role, significance, age and ethnicity of the represented characters in the Scene 1. The technical element of shot type, elements of visual mode, namely placement, position, angle, attire, setting, colour, facial features and hair style and elements of gestural mode including gesture and proximity play an important role in the construction of the identity of the characters represented in the TVC. Attire (school uniforms) establishes the characters are primary school aged convent girls while the placement of the characters in the frame of the shot and the angle in which they were presented aids understanding of roles in the TVC as protagonists. The element of colour and physiology of actors signaled the ethnic identities of the characters.

CONCLUSION

The analysis in this paper has demonstrated by using multimodal analysis how multimodal elements construct setting and character in a TVC. In doing so, it has shed light on the potential meanings that can be derived from these two literary elements in a TVC. The analysis has revealed the mutual information shared between setting and characters in this TVC, showing how identification of setting can in turn aid identification of characters and vice versa. Additionally, in accordance with the multimodal approach, the analysis has reinforced the importance of context in the interpretation of modes and meanings.

The multimodal analysis of the opening scene of the *Letchumi and Rokiah* TVC has revealed that setting is constructed through visual and linguistic modes. The multimodal elements impart specific information of the setting which includes the time period (temporal setting), location (physical and geographical setting) and the sociopolitical context in which the scene is set (sociopolitical setting). The analysis reveals that the opening scene of the TVC is set within the field of a Christian mission school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on the 31st of August 1957. The date of the scene marks the day on which independence from British colonial rule was declared by the first prime minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, in Kuala Lumpur. As a TVC broadcasted in the year 2002, the opening scene presented a scene set on a historical significant date in the past in the context of Malaysia.

The characters in Scene 1 are found to be constructed through visual, gestural and technical modes. The multimodal elements provide information on characters' role and significance in the scene and TVC and characters' age and ethnicity. The opening scene focused on two young Malaysian school girls of different ethnicities who seemed to share a very close friendship. The multimodal analysis of the setting and character in this TVC in addition to providing greater understanding of the TVC has also provided insights into the socio-cultural context of Malaysia. The setting and characters in the scene revealed the multicultural heritage in Malaysia through the depiction of the influence of the colonial influence evident in the school setting and the school attire of the characters and more importantly, through the different ethnicities of the characters portrayed.

This paper examined the role of literary elements in the construction of a TVC through multimodal analysis. It has demonstrated, through multimodal analysis, the link between advertisements and literature through the deconstruction of two literary elements of setting and character that is embedded in the TVC. The advantages of multimodal analysis for literary analysis in multimodal texts such as TVCs have also been demonstrated through this paper, paving the way to more applications of multimodality in literary analysis. Finally, this study contributes to a greater understanding of how setting and character is constructed through multimodal elements that can also help advertisers produce more effective and affective advertisements.

ENDNOTES

Due to copyright restrictions, the authors were unable to reproduce screen shots of the *Letchumi and Rokiah TVC* in this article. Please contact Melissa Periasamy at mel@ukm.edu.my to view TVC images.

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