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A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the Most Viewed Reggaeton Video on YouTube by the LIV Super Bowl Halftime Show

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Abstract

We are what they eat and what we listen as well. Concerning this idea, it is essential to mention that reggaeton is one of the most consumed genres in many countries. Furthermore, to the extent that people regularly listen to music on platforms and express to like reggaeton in recent years, they may want to know more about what they are consuming. However, in the related literature, there is evidence of a negative impact on the women's image and heavy load of sexual content (Gallucci, 2008; Noriega, 2014; Ramírez, 2012). Therefore, the present article analyses the discourse of “*no me conoce*” by J. Balvin, Bad Bunny, and Jhay Cortez. The lyrics and images were analyzed using systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2003) and visual semiotics (Machin, 2010). The findings suggest that this genre contributes negatively to educational stances, such as writing proficiency, vocabulary range, and reading comprehension.

Keywords: metafunctions, multimodal discourse analysis, visual semiotic analysis.

1. Introduction

The definition of discourse has been constructed since the early 80s. For instance, Brown and Yule (1983) define it as any form of language use. It means that any spoken or written speech can be treated as a discourse. Furthermore, Carter (1993) refers to discourse in three denotations: topics used in specific contexts, discourse and text as spoken and written, respectively, and used to establish significance to the sentences (as cited in Drid, 2010). In addition, discourse analysis “attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause; and therefore to study large linguistic units such as conversational exchanges or written texts” (Stubbs, 1983: 32). Moreover, Van Els (1984), states that discourse analysis is “the study of language in context will offer a deeper insight into how meaning is attached to utterances than the study of language in isolated sentences” (p. 94). Concerning these previous definitions, I will present the study of the song “*No me conoces*” through a multimodal analysis of its lyrics and images. First, in the following two sections, I provide the background on the social phenomenon and an introduction to this music genre and singers.

1.1 *Background on social phenomenon*

In its LIV presentation, the Super bowl had in the halftime show the performance of Shakira and Jennifer López as the leading voices, accompanied by Emme Muñoz J. Balvin and Bad Bunny. The presentation of the five Latino descendants was a matter of good and bad critiques. The last two mentioned singers performed their most famous reggaeton tunes in the last Super Bowl show. They also play a song with Jhay Cortez, one of the most reproduced songs on Youtube, with 1,030,846,810 views in only one year, from 17 May 2019 – 17 May 2020. In the next section, I will refer to the singers' impact on social media by mentioning the number of followers they have compared to other relevant personalities.

For instance, monthly on Spotify, J. Balvin has 50,285,038 listeners, while Bad Bunny has 41,042,519 listeners. These singers have more followers than relevant politicians, academics, and other public figures. This fact is a common trend in social media; the numbers that I state are referred to as followers. On Instagram, one of the most critical academics, an emeritus member of CONACyT and emeritus professor at the *Colegio de México*, Lorenzo Francisco Meyer Cossio does not even have an Instagram account. The richest man in Mexico, Carlos Slim has 16,700. Followed by two every day mentioned men in the Mexican news, Marcelo Ebrad with 40,900 and Hugo López-Gatell, who has 186,000. Two well-known Mexican cinematographers, Guillermo del Toro and Alfonso Cuarón, have 394,000 and 585,000, respectively. The current president of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has 665,000. The current president of the United States, Donald Trump, has 19,800,000. Obama, the ancestor president of the United States is still more popular with 28,000,000, he has more than 1 million added followers than Bad Bunny, but no one of the previous people mentioned has more followers than J. Balvin, who has 40,200,000 followers.

On Facebook, the singers have fewer followers only than Obama and Trump with 55,393,331 and 27,657,156, respectively. J. Balvin has 19,000,000, and Bad Bunny has 3,900,000. The other influential personalities, such as Andrés Manuel López Obrador has 6,820,091. Followed by Hugo López-Gatell with 867,996, there are Lorenzo Francisco Meyer Cossio with 51,456 and Guillermo del Toro with 303,597. At the end of the list, Carlos Slim, with 70,567, Marcelo Ebrad with 225,000, and Alfonso Cuarón, who has not officially personal Facebook account but in his official fans page, he has 15,297 followers.

On Twitter, Obama and Trump are on the top with 117,700,000 and 80,100,000, respectively. Followed by J. Balvin, who has 7,800,000 and Andrés Manuel López Obrador has 7,000,000, there is Guillermo del Toro with 1,900,000, Marcelo Ebrad with 1,800,000, and Hugo López-Gatell with 1,000,000. Then, there is Lorenzo Francisco Meyer Cossio with 839,400, Bad Bunny with 637,800, and Alfonso Cuarón with 327,500. Finally, Carlos Slim has not an official page, but his foundation official account has 79,700 followers. Compared to the social media of the singers with other influential personalities' accounts, it can be stated that in Spotify, they are the most played singers. On Instagram, the singers have more viewers than Obama. On Facebook and Twitter, the singers have fewer than Obama and Trump, but they still have more than several influential people. This data represents the influential importance of reggaeton singers on relevant platforms, especially from J. Balvin and Bad Bunny. Therefore, I decided to analyze their most outstanding song.

1.2 *The introduction of the singers*

Concerning the importance of the reggaeton singers, it is essential to state their music definition and their backgrounds. Reggaeton is defined by Collins dictionary (n.d.) as “a type of Puerto Rican popular music that combines reggae rhythms with hip-hop influences and includes rapping in Spanish.” It means that the origins of this music come from Latin America, especially from Puerto Rico.

J. Balvin's real name is José Álvaro Osorio Balvin; he was born in Medellín, Colombia, in 1985. He has been in the music business since 2004 and been awarded a Latin Grammy by the best urban song in 2015, 2016, and 2018 by the best urban album.

Bad Bunny's real name is Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio; he was born in Vega Baja, San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1994. He has been in the music business for five years, and he was awarded by the urban album in 2019 Latin Grammy.

Jhay Cortez's real name is Jesús Manuel Nieves Cortez; he was born in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, in 1993. He has been in the music business since 2011. These three singers represent the origins of reggaeton, and their most famous song, "*No me conoce*", will be analyzed with the following methodology.

2. Methodology

The present paper uses a multidimensional discourse analysis, which consists of a "Three-dimensional method of discourse analysis" (Fairclough, 2013) as well as a study that is composed of a three-level analysis of the text, which includes its description and analysis, its process of production and interpretation. For this last step, I claimed for the help of a Colombian friend (will be called Ivan in the study), who has lived in Puerto Rico since there are lexicon and phrases that are not easy to comprehend even if it is in Spanish. Finally, I present the social explanation of the issue that is addressed and a general view of the elements that support the three levels to provide the concluding remarks concerning the social implications that the video highlights with certain statistical information. I will start by exploring the literature of Critical Discourse Analysis.

2.1 *Critical discourse analysis*

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the "study of the relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships" (Van Dijk, 1993: 249), and it refers to the exploration of participants' role during any speech act, considering diverse variables, for example, sender, receiver, setting, code, and among other, previously mentioned. In this case, I will consider certain aspects of power and position that the singers have on social medial.

2.2 *Multimodal discourse analysis*

Regarding the multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), it is defined by O'Halloran (2011) as "the study of language per se to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, scientific symbolism, gesture, action, music and sound" (p. 120), it means that different discourse analysis framework can be combined for a better interpretation of the discourse. Therefore, I will analyze this video with systemic functional linguistics and visual semiotic frameworks, which are explained in the following sections.

2.3 *Systemic functional linguistics*

Halliday, Matthiessen, and Butt have interpreted systemic functional linguistics (SLF) framework since the 60s. This framework is also called systemic functional grammar (SFG) and is the main foundation of CDA as well as other theories in pragmatics. The main objective of this framework, according to Hu Zhuanglin (1988) is to:

“reveal that language is a means of social interaction, based on the position that language system and the forms that make it up are inescapably determined by the uses or functions which they serve. Functional grammar aims to explain the internal relations in language as a system network, or meaning potential. And this network consists of subsystems from which language users make choices.” (as cited in Wang, 2010: 255)

The previously mentioned refers to the study of grammatical features to construct a meaning for the discourse. Moreover, Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) distinguish for the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of the speech, three metafunctions: *ideational*, *interpersonal*, and *textual*, which are influenced by field, tenor, and mode, respectively.

- Ideational metafunction represents the language of current experience and considers participants, grammar, and processes.
- Interpersonal metafunction focuses on the relationships with the tenor and the audience.
- Textual metafunction evaluates the logical construction of sentences.

2.4 Visual semiotic analysis

Multimodal studies focus on “words, on a record sleeve, the contents and style, the poses of the artists, the kinds of melodies and sounds they produce, the words they choose for their lyrics all connote discourses” (Machin, 2010: 7). Therefore, in a music video, it is essential to analyze the visual semiotic features, such as postures, objects, settings, gaze, social distance, salience, and modality. Following this multimodal framework, I will present the data analysis in the following section.

3. Results

In this section, I will provide the analysis of the lyrics by the number of tokens and types (see Table 1) in the song of the music video, “*No me conoce*” by J. Balvin, Bad Bunny and Jhay Cortez.

Table 1. Tokens and types in the song’s lyrics

	No.
Tokens	804
Types	210

Note. Analysis of types and tokens

Table 1 shows the analysis of the Interpersonal metafunctions, which categorize the declarative and the imperative mood. There are only 210 types that are repeated four times. It means that in 5:06 minutes, the same lyrics are pronounced four times. It is a matter of quality, not quantity.

3.1 Metafunctions

In this section, I provide work with the SFL proposed by Halliday (1978) to evaluate the lyrics through a grammatical analysis using the three metafunctions. Moreover, it is necessary to state that certain types will be presented in Spanish since there is no literal meaning in English in several cases. However, the language distance is closed by the interpretation of the most relevant words.

3.1.1 Ideational metafunction

The first metafunction is concerned with the transitivity of the real phenomena, which includes six processes: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential. The verbs from the lyrics were obtained and classified as in Table 2.

Table 2. *Ideational processes*

Process	Function	Examples:
Material	Something is done	E.g. Se volvió (turn), have (tiene), drink, smoke
Mental	Perception reaction and cognition	E.g. Se hace (pretend), se deja ver (meet), sabe disimular (pretend)
Relational	Identifying, attributive	E.g. Estás a vapor (you are), se pone loca (get mad)
Verbal	Interaction	E.g. Me conoce 1, me sigue (follow), say, call
Behavioral	Feelings	E.g. look, want, like
Existential	Somethings exists or happens	E.g. pretend, wear, dress

Note. Samples of ideational metafunction

Table 2 illustrates the most repeated verbs: pretend, meet, fuck, and know. These words construct the image of a person with a double life; it means that this subject is someone different in private and in public scenarios. In addition to the previous idea, I provide the following sentences in the song that I discuss with Ivan:

The first sentence appears seven times in the song, and it uses three of the most repeated verbs, pretend, meet, turn:

“Se hace la que no me conoce, pero en mi cama se volvió un vicio”

This phrase means that a woman pretends to act as if she does not know a man, even when they have had intimacy. The next sentence uses two verbs and expresses an urban saying to have sex:

“Me la como entera y nadie se entera”

I discuss the previous sentence with Ivan, saying that *comer*, which could be interpreted as “eat” in English, is commonly used in Colombia to say that a person has had sex with someone else. So, this sentence states that they have sex, but nobody knows. The following sentence occupies three verbs:

“Preguntan y dice no sé de contacto tiene Jose”

It means that when any person asks about a possible relationship, she refuses and hides their relationship. Additionally, she keeps private her social media, as the following sentence mentions:

“Instagram privado para que nadie la vele”

This previous sentence uses only one verb at the end, *vele*. Ivan mentioned that it refers to the verb “discover”, which means that she tries to hide something in social media. The next phrase uses two verbs:

“Para portarse mal, se viste bien”

It means that she wears appropriately to misbehave, which refers to the idea that she changes her personality as she changes her clothes. In the last sentence, there are two verbs:

“Que si me conoce dice no, pero sabe bien que si”

This sentence refers to the fact of hiding a relationship since she rejects to know him, but she does. Ivan states that the song can be summarized in the phrase “married at home but single outside”, which means that the subject has two faces. In addition, the majority of actions direct mental, followed by behavioral and material processes, which indicates that there is attention to feelings and perceptions in short in simple sentences. I will now pronounce the second metafunction.

3.1.2 Interpersonal metafunction

The second metafunction is interpersonal; it includes an analysis of the actions of the lyrics. In this case, I present an evaluation of declarative and imperative sentences, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Interpersonal sentences

Declarative (For information)	Ella mata, yo le di, ella lo mezcla,
Imperative (Commands)	hace, volvió, sigué, sabe disimular, gusta portarse, mira, no me conoce,

Note. Samples of declaratives and imperatives

Table 3 provides examples of declarative and imperative sentences, and two facts can be stated. First, declarative clauses represent only less than 20% of all the clauses, which means that there are limited complete sentences and that 70% of declarative sentences use the pronoun *she*. On the other hand, the imperative clauses are 80% of the sentences, which means a lack of subjects and let the actions in doer anonymity. I will now proceed to outline the textual functions that were identified in the lyrics.

3.1.3 Textual metafunction

The third metafunction is textual, which refers to specific linguistic features in which the singers denote repetitive messages. Regarding this study, I will focus on modal verbs, tenses, adjectives, pronouns, and connectors. Initially, I start with an examination of modal verbs, and as a result, there was not any identified. This lack illustrates the absence of politeness in the song.

Tenses were the next feature to evaluate; I classified them into the most verbal tenses in the language, which are present perfect, simple present, present continuous, future simple and simple past, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Tenses analysis

	Examples	No.	%
Present perfect	--	--	--
Present simple	Want, like, know,	46	82%
Present continuous	--	--	--
Future simple	--	--	--
Simple past	Came back, wore, gave	10	18%

Note. Statistics of tenses evidence

Table 4 provides the analysis of five tenses in the lyrics, and it can be stated that there are used only two. There is not a sentence in present perfect, present continuous, or future simple. Moreover, the sentences in the simple past represent 18% of the lyrics and present simple 82%. It means that the song refers to actions in everyday and future episodes and that the actions will not change, and they are defined as permanent. For example, in the phrase, “*Nunca dice no, siempre dice sí*” and “*siempre después de las once o doce me tira para que yo la pruebe*”, it is taken from granted that the woman is always going to accept or to propose to meet him. In the next section I evaluate the adjectives. The adjectives were taken from the lyrics and classified into positive and negative; this classification denotes the optimistic and destructive impact of the adjectives implied, as seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Adjectives use

	Example	No.	%
Positive	Sport, small, chiquitita, grandota, buena,	5	36%
Negative	Raro, solteras, loca, olorosa, privado,	9	64%
Total:		14	100%

Note. Statistics of adjectives presence

Table 5 provides the only ten adjectives that are used in the entire song. There are five negative adjectives in the phrase, “*todas solteras siempre la velan para que ella siga*”, it means that the single women are the ones that motivate and hide a double life. There are five positive adjectives as well. For example, in the sentence, “*ella mata con traje y cuando se viste sport*”, it means that the woman looks good in casual and sport clothes or can make allusion to her absolute beauty a part from any scenario. However, negative references are repeated predominantly. I will now pronounce the use of subjects in the lyrics.

In the entire song, I took the personal pronouns, counted them, and classified them into first, second, and third person, as seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Personal pronouns use

Person	Examples	No.	%
First	I	8	32%
Second	-	-	-
Third	She	16	64%
	They	1	4%
Total:		25	100%

Note. Statistics of pronouns evidence

Table 6 shows three relevant facts that the first subject, “I” is used in limited eight times. That there is no evidence of incorporating a second person and that the personal pronouns, “she” and “they” are used sixteen and one times, respectively. Furthermore, it is interesting to see those three-man singers refer to them by using “I” only eight times while they refer to an only woman the double of times they do refer to themselves. For instance, in the solo intervention of J. Balvin, he refers to the subject “I” only once but continuously attached the actions to the woman as in “*ella se vistió, ella se pone loca, ella lo mezcla*”, which is fair not equitable. In the following section, I will proceed to illustrate the connectors in the lyrics.

The entire song was analyzed to obtain continuative and conjunction examples, which were later classified in the previously stated categories, as seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Connectors in the lyrics

Feature	Example	No.	%
Continuative	Yes, no, eh, yeh, ah, na	33	26%
Conjunctions	And, but, to, if, that, as	93	74%
Total:		126	100%

Note. Statistics of connectors' presence

Table 7 distinguishes the most outstanding continuatives, such as *eh, yeh, na*; those words mean nothing in any language and are used as connectors in 26% of the lyrics, especially at the start and at the end of the song. Conjunctions represent the 74% of connectors with words as “to” and “but” as in the following phrases, “*a portarse mal, para sentirse bien*”, “*no queria fumar, pero le dio al pen*”, “*una Barbie, pero no busca un Ken*”. The first phrase is a common saying in Colombia to get ready for a party; the second means that instead of smoking, she consumed another drug, and the last states that she is not interested in a formal relationship. Those previous sentences have two main problems; they do not even have a subject and excessively use conjunctions, which can make them challenging to interpret and wordy. I will pronounce the last multimodal facet of this study, which constitutes an evaluation of the images in the next section.

3.2 Visual semiotic analysis of the song's video

Finally, I present the visual semiotic analysis using Machin's (2010) suggested connotators for the analysis of music, images, and sound. I will describe the most relevant aspects that appeared on the video scenes, including frames from the music video that exemplified the statements of certain aspects, such as postures and objects.

3.2.1 Postures

Apart from the multiple scenes of the woman, the last scene of the video is the pose in which she changes from being inside to get out and has a transformation in her indoors and outdoors personality (see Image 1).



Image 1. The woman poses (Source: J. Balvin, Bad Bunny and Jhay Cortez “*No me conoce*”)

The same happens in Image 2, with a man's pose while he is on the street, he changes his behavior when he is inside around the other two men dancing and when he is the scene by himself.



Image 2. The man poses (Source: J. Balvin, Bad Bunny and Jhay Cortez “No me conoce”)

3.2.2 Objects

The objects that continuously change from scene to scene are clothes, especially the clothes of the woman when she is indoors, when she is on the public lights, and when she is in the dark.

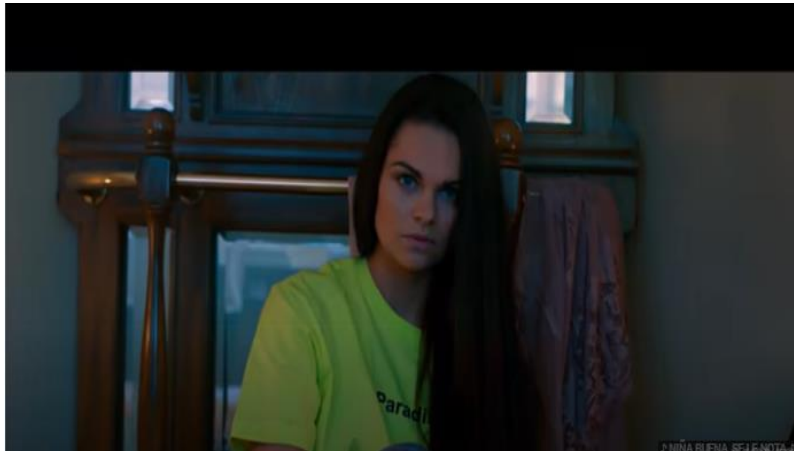


Image 3. The woman indoors (Source: J. Balvin, Bad Bunny and Jhay Cortez “No me conoce”)



Image 4. The woman clothes (Source: J. Balvin, Bad Bunny and Jhay Cortez “No me conoce”)



Image 5. The woman in lights (Source: J. Balvin, Bad Bunny and Jhay Cortez “No me conoce”)

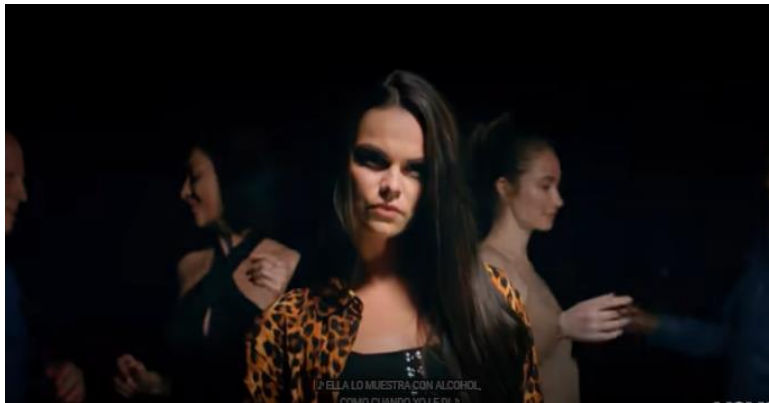


Image 6. The woman in dark (Source: J. Balvin, Bad Bunny and Jhay Cortez “No me conoce”)

Image 3 illustrates a woman with sport and bright clothes. Additionally, in the indoor scenes, there is lingerie around the top fan (see Image 4). Image 5, the woman wears a complete opaque dress with a serious personality. Finally, on Image 6, the woman wears black and animal print clothes. Through the changes of clothes her personality changes as well from quiet to angry and dominant.

4. Discussion

Through the multimodal analysis with the use of SFG (metafunctions) and visual semiotic frameworks, it is perceived that the singers refer to the woman as a double life person. For instance, the ideational metafunction, specifically the behavioral process and the semiotic analysis of the images, indicates that she pretends to turn her personality into something different depending on the context. Concerning the textual metafunction, there is evidence of lack of responsibility from the man’s claims about the woman. There is evidence of a negative reference to the woman as well as sexual connotations in the textual metafunction. For instance, the words *joder*, *comer*, *dar por el expreso*, *lo metí en cuatro*, and *tirar para probar*, denote varied ways of referring to sexual associations.

Moreover, the three metafunctions demonstrate a lack of vocabulary and syntactic accuracy since there are only 210 types represented in 804 tokens. It means that in 5:06 minutes, the same lyrics are pronounced four times. It is a matter of quality, not quantity, and this song has repetitive lexis and limited grammatical structures use. Those aspects are important to observe since reggaeton is the most consumed and popular genre in Latin America and it contributes

extensively negatively to educational stances, such as writing proficiency, lexicon knowledge, and reading comprehension.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, I presented a multimodal discourse analysis of the most viewed and influential video on Youtube, “*No me conoce*” by J. Balvin, Bad Bunny, and Jhay Cortez. I used for the study Machin (2010) Visual Semiotic Analysis and Halliday and Matthiessen’s FSL (2013), I explored the most relevant aspects that the singers use in order to offer a social critique concerned with the negative connotations of reggaeton. Certain authors (Gallucci, 2008; Noriega, 2014; Ramírez, 2012) in Latin America have stated that this genre provides a bad image of the woman and sexual associations. These ideas were validated in this study since the lyrics and images present evidence of a negative impact on the woman’s role and its relation to sexual content. However, this study also denotes the inadequate lexis and grammatical structures used in this song, which can have a negative impact on the consumers. In addition, there is evidence of misinformation and misinterpretation occur through the absence of reflective listening and analysis of music and although the musical preferences need to be respected, the music's messages need to have back sources of quality and constructive references to be more positively meaningful for listeners. For instance, educational stances, such as writing proficiency, lexicon knowledge, and reading comprehension, can be affected by the consumption and popularity of this genre since we are what we eat, but we are what we hear as well.

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“El Infierno”: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Narco Culture in a Mexican Film

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Abstract

The portrayal of narco culture in media has increased in recent years as a result of the War of Drugs in Latin America. This paper, based on critical discourse theory and Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), sheds light on the social and cultural impact of discourse found in a scene of the Mexican film “*El Infierno*” directed by Luis Estrada in 2010. Through the ideational and interpersonal processes, the dialogues of two speakers are analyzed. Additionally, the social impact of the discourse portrayed in the scene is discussed through Fairclough's (1992) social theory of discourse. Findings suggest that social reality is reflected in the film through discourse as a means to develop critical thinking and reflection in the audience.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, ideational function, interpersonal function, narco culture, film.

1. Introduction

This paper presents a critical discourse analysis (CDA). This analysis aims to (1) determine how accurate a scene from the film “*El Infierno*” reflects the reality of the current Mexican society and (2) shed light on the social and cultural impact of the speech represented in the movie scene. I open the discussion by providing a theoretical background of the narco culture in media and a brief description of the film. Then, I will explain the ideational and interpersonal function proposed by M. A. K. Halliday employed for this analysis. This will be followed by the results of the analysis and their interpretation. Finally, the social impact of the discourse will be presented through the lenses of Fairclough's (2010) sociocultural perspective.

2. Theoretical framework

Before discussing the methodological procedures implemented in this analysis, it is crucial to understand how the concept of “*narco*” emerged, and how it has become part of the media and culture of the Mexican society. To provide this understanding, I will first address the key aspects that shape narco discourse, followed by a description of the movie.

- Narco culture is present in the film “*El Infierno*” (2010) and was employed by the director Luis Estrada as a call for the viewer towards the current situation of narco and its repercussion in the Mexican society.
- By means of Halliday’s (1978) systemic functional linguistics, it was found that the discourse portrayed in the film scene comprises linguistic features employed in everyday conversation that reflect naturalness of the speech community and, thus, social reality.
- Through CDA, it became evident that the director’s intention was not that of hiding Mexico’s reality but rather to unveil and shed light on the underlying components of the war against drug trafficking.

2.1 *Narco culture in media*

The concept of *narco* emerged during the 1970s in Mexico. It is rooted in the drug trafficking cartels that initiated during that time. Haidar and Herrera (2018) claim that the concept of *narco culture* is reflected in media through songs (*narcorridos*), films, and TV series, narco-literature (Michael, 2013; Fuentes Krafczyk, 2019) and even in narco-advertisement (Campbell, 2014). In line with this, Cabañas (2014) states that:

The effects of the War on Drugs have become an everyday topic of conversation and study, appearing in newspapers, academic publications, and cultural products such as literature, film, music, *telenovelas*, blogs, online videos, performances and popular art in Latin America. A new vocabulary to describe these phenomena now punctuates journalistic discourse: *narcoculture*, *narconovelas*, *narcodemocracies*, *narcoaesthetics*, and *narco religion*. *Cultural artifacts reflect how narcotrafficking and the War on Drugs affect individuals and their communities.* (p. 4)

From this quote, the interplay between drug trafficking, society, and discourse is evident. Moreover, Cabañas (2014) further pinpoints that despite the so-called war on drugs began in 1971 it continues to shape current everyday discourse. Marez (2004) addresses this influence and argues that:

mass media representation of drug traffic and enforcement have helped to generate powerful ideas about state power, foreign policy, and transnational capitalism. And drug-war literature, music, television and films have become privileged cultural forms for reflecting upon larger political-economic power relations in the Americas. (p. 3)

From this, we can infer that media has the power not only to shed light on polemic aspects in society but also to reflect and promote power and ideologies. The controversy this generates in society has produced significant economic profits that have largely increased the popularity of *narcoculture* in media. For example, in the Mexican context, as Gómez Mayorga and García Rangel (2013) observe, “*narcoculture* has generated a whole emporium of violence with millionaire annual earnings” (p. 3).

In this regard, Sibila and Weiss (2014) indicate that narco-cinema has become a growing industry that alludes to the narco culture that has uncontestedly escalated through modern society. The authors draw special attention to the film “*El Infierno*” and describe it as “an epic satire that examined the politics surrounding the drug trade” (p. 3). A more detailed description of the film is provided in the following section.

2.2 *Film description*

The Mexican drama film “*El Infierno*” was written, produced and directed by Luis Estrada and was released on 3 September 2010. The C-rating film narrates the problematic of drug

trafficking and organized crime in Mexico and takes place during the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of Mexico's Independence. The protagonist is Benjamin García, better known throughout the film as "El Benny". The Mexican actor Damián Alcázar, who has also participated in other controversial movies that target Mexican social reality, stars him. El Benny is deported from the United States after 20 years of working as an illegal. He returns to his hometown "San Miguel Narcangel" (name given by the combination of the words narco and archangel) only to face a bleak picture of poverty and violence caused by the local business: drug trafficking. The plot presents the story and the reasons that influenced El Benny's decision to join the drug cartel, and the consequences this decision had not only for him but also for those who surrounded him.

In this paper, the dialogues from the scene that takes place from minute 23:25 to 25:55 are analyzed under CDA. The two main speakers are Cochiloco, interpreted by the actor Joaquín Cosío, and El Benny. In this scene, both speakers have a conversation after twenty years of not seeing each other and discuss what has happened during this time. The setting of the scene portrays a traditional Mexican *cantina*, as Image 1 depicts.



Image 1. Scene setting. Copyright © 2010, Bandidos Film

The setting and the dialogues presented in the scene coincide with each other and resemble an ordinary conversation between two friends that could take place practically in every place of Mexico. A more in-depth analysis of other elements that help construct Mexican reality are further discussed in section five.

3. Methodology

This section presents the methodology employed to carry out the analysis and the framework through which the dialogues of the film scene were analyzed.

3.1 Critical discourse analysis

As previously stated, this paper sets out to examine how social reality is portrayed in the film scene "*El Infierno*," as well as the way the speech employed culturally impacts society. To do so, CDA was implemented as the research methodology. CDA, as described by Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000), is a "school of discourse analysis that concerns itself with relations of power and inequality in language" (p. 1). Haratyan (2011) argues that "discourse analysis is concerned with the lexico-grammatical analysis of the language in the social, physical, cognitive, cultural, interpersonal and situational context" (p. 1). Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) further pinpoint the works of Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun van Dijk as the precursors of CDA in the late 1980s. According to Wodak (1995), CDA's aim is the analysis of "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language" (p. 204). Additionally, Wodak (1997) indicates that through the lenses of CDA, oral and written discourse is perceived as "a form of social practice" (p. 173). Due to its foundation on social

practice, discourse has a significant influence on society and vice versa. This means that both of these elements inform, construct, and shape each other (Wodak, 1997). Being the latter, the focus of the present analysis as a means to comprehend the extent to which the scene’s dialogue reflects Mexican society and the impact it has on society.

3.2 Halliday’s (1978) systemic functional linguistics

In order to uncover the underlying components of the speech in the dialogues, the discourse was analyzed through the scope of Halliday’s (1978) systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Haratyan (2011) explains SFL “is concerned with how the speakers generate utterances and texts to convey their intended meanings through the generalized metafunctions that relate language to the outside world where interactants and their social roles matter” (p. 260). This framework includes three levels of analysis: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Through the ideational function, speakers can express the way they perceive the world and how they experience and react to it. This function comprises six communicative processes: (1) material, (2) relational, (3) mental, (4) verbal, (5) behavioral, and (6) existential. Romo Linares (2018) describes these processes as follows:

The material process indicates an action with a direct object while the mental is only used for perceptions and reactions. Verbal processes are used to exchange information or describe, similarly the relational process is used to identify or attribute characteristics. We also express physiological or mental behaviors through the behavioral process. Lastly, we use the existential process to present something that exist or happens. (p. 50)

Concerning the interpersonal function, Halliday (1978) claims this language function relates to the “comments, attitudes, and evaluations in relation to the particular communication roles” (p. 333) individual speakers express. Finally, the textual functions deals with “the internal organization and communicative nature of a text” (O’Hallaran, 2006: 36). The three levels Halliday propounds work as a system in which although every level is analyzed individually, the perspective of the complete utterance and dialogue is the central criterion. For the purposes of this study, the ideational and interpersonal levels were conducted. The results obtained from these functions are provided in the following section.

4. Analysis and results

This section sets out to present the emergent results of Halliday’s (1978) SLF framework and their interpretation. The analysis is divided into two main sections. The first part is concerned with the ideational function analysis (transitivity) and the second part with the interpersonal function. Within the second, the modality analysis of verb tenses and personal pronouns are included.

4.1 Ideational function

According to Halliday (1971), “it is through this function that the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world; and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness: his reactions, cognitions, and perceptions, and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding (p. 332). Thus, through the ideational function, the hearer or audience can comprehend the way the speaker perceives the world. These ideas are transmitted through the transitivity system, which Haratyan (2011) describes as “a rich analytic tool utilized in CDA, dealing with “who or what does what to whom or what?” (p. 261). In this function, the dialogue from the scene script was classified into the six

processes the level comprises. The utterances from each speaker were analyzed individually to compare and contrast the differences in their speech. Table 1 illustrates the results, and Table 2 shows examples of the six processes from each speaker.

Table 1. Transitivity analysis

Process	Total of words: 271		Total of words: 88	
	Speaker 1: "El Cochiloco"		Speaker 2: "El Benny"	
	Count	%	Count	%
Material	19	7%	8	9%
Relational	6	2.2%	0	-
Mental	3	1.1%	2	2.2%
Verbal	5	1.8%	1	1.1%
Behavioral	14	5.1%	1	1.1%
Existential	6	2.2%	1	1.1%

Table 2. Examples of the processes

Process	Cochiloco's discourse	El Benny's discourse
Material	Go, work, kill, come, celebrate, toast, come back, do	Defend, make, listen, happen, know, put, go back
Relational	Know, Was, present, is	-
Mental	Being sad, get into,	See, believe
Verbal	Say, mention, let's go	tell
Behavioral	Leave, try, know, need	Wanted
Existential	Forms of be, there is	Form of be

The first outstanding finding was the differences in the number of utterances of each speaker. Cochiloco spoke 271 words, whereas Benny had a more passive role in the conversation since he only employed 88 words. This seems to indicate that the speaker who had a larger domain of the conversation was Cochiloco, primarily because Benny focused on making questions, which were later answered by Cochiloco. This appears logical since Benny was asking, and Cochiloco was the primary source of input. This aligns with Wang's (2010) statement, which explains that the purpose of the ideational function "is to convey new information, to communicate content that is unknown to the hearer. It reflects the events and experience in both objective and subjective worlds (p. 255). In this case, Cochiloco's knowledge derives from his closeness not only to the town "San Miguel Narcángel" but also to the local business of drug trafficking.

Concerning the six processes, the data reveals that the most implemented process by both speakers is the material. This indicates that Cochiloco and Benny's speech in this scene focuses on visible action verbs. For example, Cochiloco employs the material process to tell Benny actions that occurred before to other people both know, how his brother was killed and how Cochiloco avenged this death. Additionally, Cochiloco expresses through the material process aspects in the present tense through words such as celebrate and toast. This seems to suggest that the speaker considers the present as a time in which one should not worry about the past nor the future, but simply enjoy the present. Lastly, Cochiloco also uses this process to advise Benny not to go back to the US and work in Mexico in the drug trafficking business. On the other hand, Benny, through the material process, presents his doubts to Cochiloco as well as the intention he had of having an English school, which vanished once he observed the local situation.

The second most used process by Cochiloco is behavioral. He expresses actions triggered by behaviors to indicate what the other speakers should do, as a declarative statement. Also, he employs the behavioral process to refer to the needs that Benny could have, which could be solved by being a member of the drug trafficking business. Benny also employs this process but in a low percentage (1.1%) to refer to the above-mentioned desire to set up a language school.

In regards to the existential process, Cochiloco employs it six times (2.2%), whereas Benny only once (1.1%). Through this process, Cochiloco addresses (a) how immigration and drug trafficking are the only two choices for people in *San Miguel Narcángel*, (b) the constant struggle to defend the “*plaza*”, (c) drug trafficking as a medium to earn money in Mexico, and (d) his invitation to Benny to join him in the drug cartel. With this, Benny does not only acknowledge the real situation this town faces but the reasons why drug trafficking has become the only way to survive without having to migrate to the US. Nevertheless, in this scene, Benny implements the existential process to state that “*No mi Cochi, pues muchas gracias pero pues el business no es pa’ mi*” / “*No my Cochi, thank you very much, but the business is not for me.*” Although it is used only once, it reflects Benny’s firm position at that time towards becoming part of the drug cartel by stating drug trafficking is not for him.

Subsequently, only Cochiloco employs the relational process (2.2%). This use serves three main purposes: (1) establish how long-ago Benny and Cochiloco know each other, and (2) describe Benny’s brother “*El Diablo*”. First, Cochiloco expresses: *Pues aquí el Benny y yo nos conocemos desde chavalillos, ¿veda cabrón / Well, Benny and I know each other since kids, right cabron.* Through this utterance, Cochiloco explains that his relationship with Benny dates back to their childhood. Another interesting finding here is how this statement represents a breakdown in the phatic function of language (see Jakobson, 1960). This function is concerned with opening the channel of communication and is generally portrayed in conversation with strangers. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the dialogue, no phatic statement was employed, suggesting the close relationship between the speakers. Moreover, the phatic function breakdown additionally appears to indicate a characteristic of the closed narco society. This trait is that unless you are part of the drug cartel or a friend of someone who is a member, you may be informed about the inner aspects the business entails.

Second, utilizing the relational process, Cochiloco expresses an attribute of *El Diablo* (Benny’s brother), who gained his nickname due to his actions in the drug cartel. Cochiloco describes him as: “*era un chingón el cabrón*”, “*era un chingón*” and “*Diablo que era un vato de ley*”. Through these descriptions, not only Benny but also the audience of the movie can infer how the members of drug cartels are perceived in this society. The word “*chingón*” is a Mexican slang that refers to “a masculine sense of power” (Castellanos, 2011: 269). By describing *El Diablo* as “*chingón*”, Cochiloco reflects an attribute of narcos that remains even after their death and is continuously portrayed in media.

Finally, in Benny’s speech, the mental process was expressed (2.2%) through verbs such as see and believe, as in the following utterance: “*Pos quería poner una escuela de inglés, pero pues como veo que están las cosas yo creo que mejor me retacho para el otro lado*” / “*Well I wanted to set up an English school, but now how I see things are I believe I better go back to the US*”. In this quote, the theme of how immigrants perceive their future when they return to Mexico is evident. Benny in this case due to the English he learned while living in the US for twenty years aimed to set up a language school, nevertheless, once he noticed it was not feasible he determined it would be a good choice to simply go back to the US, rather than joining the cartel.

The remaining processes did not have a significant percentage of usage and thus the discussion on transitivity analysis concludes here. In the following section, the interpersonal function is addressed.

4.2 Interpersonal function

This section sets out to discuss the interpersonal function. According to Zhuanglin (1988), “the interpersonal function embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations” (p. 313). Shariffar and Rahimi (2015) further add that this function entails three areas:

(1) speaker/writer persona, (2) social distance, and (3) relative social status” (p. 344). It is within this function that the relationship between the speakers and how this interplay shapes their discourse choices become apparent. Moreover, the interpersonal function can be expressed through modality and mood. Modality “shows what role the speaker selects in the speech situation and what role he assigns to the addressee” (Wang, 2010: 255). Mood can help to “express the speaker’s judgement toward the topic...and to show the social role relationship, scale of formality and power relationships” (Wang, 2010: 256). In this paper, modality would be analyzed through the use of verb tenses and personal pronouns in the discourse. Each of them is discussed as follows.

4.2.1 Verb tenses

Table 3. Verb tenses modality

Verb tense	Count
Past	21
Present	33
Future	1

Table 3 shows that the present tense was the one employed the most in the dialogue. This seems to be in alignment with the purpose of the conversation, which is to inform Benny about the current state of the town. He had left twenty years ago, so, during this conversation, Cochiloco informs him about what is currently happening. The second most significant was the past tense. This tense functions as an indicator of the strong relationship between the speakers, since their friendship begun in their childhood. Also, through the past tense, Cochiloco informs Benny of what happened during the time he was not in the town, drawing particular emphasis on how Benny’s brother died and how being part of the narco cartel influenced his death being shot by a rival cartel. Moreover, the topic of narco is introduced to the conversation in the following lines:

El Benny: “Nos hicimos amigos porque me defendía de un cabrón grandote, el orejas, ¿qué se hizo de ese hombre?”

El Cochiloco: “Pues lo que todos, los que no se fueron pal’ otro lado como usted cabrón se metieron al bisne y se los cargó la chingada.”

This excerpt reflects, as previously stated, how the citizens of the town only had two options, either (1) to migrate to the US or (2) to join the “bisne” (business) and thus, eventually die. There was no need to state explicitly that the *bisnes* refers to narco because perhaps Benny already perceived this as soon as he arrived in town. In addition, by stating “*lo que todos*” / “*what everyone does*” Cochiloco informs Benny that this is a concurrent situation in *San Miguel Narcángel*.

Regarding the future tense, the only time it was employed was when Cochiloco questioned Benny about his plans in town after coming back from the US. In general, through the verb tenses modality analysis, an everyday conversation was reflected. If you have not seen someone for a while, people are likely to provide you a summary using the past tense. Thus, no unexpected results emerged from this analysis. Nevertheless, it could also be inferred that the business of drug trafficking is not recent since it has been occurring for a while. Having discussed the verb tenses modality, I now turn to the analysis of personal pronouns.

4.2.1 Personal pronouns

As previously argued, social distance in discourse can be determined through the interpersonal function. Coffin (2006) explains that social distance deals with “how close the speakers are, e.g. how the use of nicknames shows the degree to which they are intimate (pp. 22-23). This distance can be explored through the use speakers have of the personal pronouns, as table 4 shows.

Table 4. Personal pronouns modality

Personal pronouns		Count in Cochiloco’s speech	Count in Benny’s speech
First person	I	1	3
	We	9	2
Second person	You	9	1
Third person	He	4	1
	She	1	0
	It	0	0
	They	3	0

The analysis uncovers the close relationship between the speakers in the predominance of the first person singular and plural pronouns I and we. In the conversation, Cochiloco employs the personal pronoun “we” nine times to express a sense of unity with Benny and members of the cartel. This is portrayed in the following examples:

“Pues aquí el Benny y yo nos conocemos desde chavalillos, ¿veda cabrón?”

“Su carnal trabajaba para los Reyes como todos nosotros.”

“No sea pendejo Benny, a que chingados se regresa con los gringos que nomás nos tratan con la punta del pie cabrón.”

In the last excerpt, the perception Cochiloco has towards Americans is also depicted. He advises Benny not to go back to the US do to the mistreating we (either only him and Benny or perhaps all Mexicans) receive from people from the US.

An interesting finding related to the use of the pronoun you is that in the conversation, it was used as “*usted*.” In Spanish, the decision between to use you as *tú* or *usted* lies on power, meaning that people in a lower position tend to address those in a higher one with “usted” as a sign of respect or obedience. However, in this case, no issues of power were present since Benny was not an employee of Cochiloco. This seems to imply that both speakers use the pronoun *usted* as a symbol of respect grounded on friendship.

In relation to the above, the use of nicknames as a means to diminish social distance, both speakers refer to each other employing the first person possessive “mi” / “my”. This aligns with Sharififar and Rahimi (2015) argument, which mentions that a “speaker uses language to provide a relationship between himself and hearer” (p. 344). It appears that such closeness did not take place during the conversation but in the speakers’ childhood, and despite the pass of time, it prevails.

Finally, Cochiloco used the pronoun they to refer to the people who killed Benny’s brother and to those who have died for being part of the drug trafficking business. By doing so, Cochiloco is detaching himself from them.

To conclude the analysis results section, it is essential to highlight that by combining the results of the ideational and the interpersonal function it is evident that the discourse presented by the speakers reflect a natural everyday conversation. This seems to suggest that the dialogue coincides with the communities’ speech, and thus, it resembles society’s reality. Through this CDA analysis, it has been proven that the script under analysis accurately reflects the reality

of Mexican society in 2010. I will now turn to discuss the social impact of the discourse portrayed in the film in the following section.

5. Social impact

As previously mentioned, the interplay between discourse and social practice is the primary concern of CDA since one largely influences the other. According to Fairclough (2001), the process CDA follows is (1) “description of the text, (2) interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context (pp. 21-22). It is within this process that the linguistic choices of the speaker become apparent and may be potentially understood not in isolation but contextualized. In line with this, Orpin (2005) argues that language is “firmly rooted in its sociolinguistic context” (p. 37). Thus, it is of paramount importance to view discourse from a sociocultural perspective, and here is where the implementation of Fairclough’s approach is appropriate and valuable.

Fairclough’s (1992) social theory of discourse “provides a methodological blueprint for critical discourse analysis in practice” (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000: 448). The author’s framework comprises the dimensions: discourse as text, discourse as discursive practice, and discourse as a social practice. For the purposes of this analysis, the second dimension is the one carried out. Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) indicate that this dimension considers “discourse as something that is produced, circulated, distributed and consumed in society” (p. 448). Through this description, the dynamics and constituents of discourse in social settings are noticeable. In this regard, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1994) claim that:

It is an important characteristic of the economic, social and cultural changes of late modernity that they exist as discourses as well as processes that are taking place outside discourse, and that the processes that are taking place outside discourse are substantively shaped by these discourses. (p. 4)

In other words, in order to gain a broader understanding of discourse, it is not sufficient to look at the internal constituents but also those elements that coexist outside of discourse. Taking this into the CDA of the scene from the film “*El Infierno*”, it is crucial to determine and discuss the external aspects that help construct the meaning and the comprehension of its discourse. In what follows the questions of who produced the film, why was it produced, to whom and for what are addressed.

The Mexican writer, director, and producer of the film “*El Infierno*” is Luis Estrada. The movie was created as a response to the call made by Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía (IMCINE) for the 200th anniversary of Mexico’s independence. According to Gómez Mayorga and García Rangel (2013), the director Luis Estrada saw “the excuse of the official commemoration as an opportunity to display the harsh situations we live in the country” (p. 1). These authors further argue that:

the movie questions several violent actions that are so pervasive in our daily life that suggest thinking them as indicators of identity (p. 1) By producing the film, Luis Estrada completes his well-known film trilogy: “*La ley de Herodes*” (1999), “*Un Mundo Maravilloso*” (2006) and “*El Infierno*” (2010). Through this trilogy of satire films, this director approaches “diverse situations of political and social corruption, economic crisis, crime and delinquency present in the country since decades ago. (Gómez Mayorga & García Rangel, 2013: 2).

Haddu (2016) describes the film “*El Infierno*” as the most direct and devastating political criticism that has ever been seen in Mexican cinema” (p. 630). The author further states that this film “was the first movie to focus on the drug war” (p. 630) that took place in the country in 2010 by making “direct references to present and past political figures in Mexico” (p. 630).

Gómez Mayorga and García Rangel (2013) indicate “the film shows explicit visual, verbal, auditory forms, dramatic and intertextual of violent acts linked to intrigue, corruption, robberies, death, murders, vandalism, unemployment, among other devastating circumstances” (p. 2). Fernández Poncela (2018) explains that these themes do not only reflect what the protagonist endures, but also what the Mexican society faced in that time.

The film constructs a negative criticism towards the government of President Felipe Calderón, due to the social repercussion and violence of the war against drug trafficking that occurred during the president’s six-year term. Bringas (2010) addresses the violence portrayed in the film and states that:

The excessive violence used by Estrada, which might seem unnecessary, is a sign of the impudence with which things happen in real life. It is a wake-up call to the viewer, who may generate in him an awareness that things are happening that are no longer just gossip, jokes or front page newspaper articles; on the contrary, they are situations that go beyond simply hearing them mentioned “out there.” The presence of explicit violence in some sequences is precisely the way the director uses to show what everyone knows. (p. 7)

From the above, it is evident that the intention of the director Luis Estrada was not that of hiding the reality Mexico, but to uncover the consequences of what the government framed as a war against organized crime. The wake-up call to the viewer Bringas (2010) highlights is constructed by the director Luis Estrada through visuals, songs, symbols, and mainly through the dialogues present in the scenes of the film.

As it was reported through the CDA of the film scene in this paper, the fact that inside the dialogue no elements stood out is a clear indicator of the accurate reflection of how people speak and the reality they face. The way Benny and Cochiloco speak in the dialogue analyzed was written to match normal everyday interaction between people. By means of Mexican slang, idiomatic expressions, Spanish variations of language, Anglicisms, and even the recreation of the recognizable northern sound [ʃ] (<sh>) the audience who watch the film can relate to it since the community discourse is correctly portrayed. By incorporating all these elements, the dialogue’s naturalness is successfully portrayed. Through this naturalness, the allusion to reality is achieved in the film. This signals not only that the script was well written by Luis Estrada, but it also reflects the current depiction of Mexico, particularly of the North.

Furthermore, the popularity of this film and the fact that the government tried to stop its release in 2010 is also a clear indicator of the state of narco in Mexican society. Fernández Poncela (2018) reports the film was watched by more than two million spectators and raised around eighty-two millions of pesos. The author also highlights that “despite being rated C (only adults) the film positioned itself as the most successful from the films created within the celebrations of the bicentennial” (p. 3). Nevertheless, the government perceived this film as explicit criticism of Felipe Calderon’s government due to the explicit references made through the film. From this, it could be inferred that narco and all that it encompasses is in the process of being accepted by the Mexican society and its discourse but the government probably will never recognize it as such, at least not in a formal way.

6. Conclusion

As previously discussed, one of the aims of CDA is to uncover any hidden message behind discourse in order to make transparent any opaque intention. Thus, it was surprising how the scene under analysis was the opposite of opaque, it was genuinely transparent. This means that the director Luis Estrada through the implementation of visuals, songs, symbols, and representative discourse made a real emphasis and reflection on the current Mexican social reality

regarding drug trafficking and aspects such as migration, poverty, crime, and political corruption. This transparency appears to be the reason why the government tried to revoke its launch back in 2010 and perhaps why the Mexican audience seems to identify with what the film portrays. Therefore, although CDA's main objective is to shed light on the opaque intentions of discourse, this CDA has also enabled the highlight of discourse as a clear reflection of society in which narco has become a common topic in ordinary speech.

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Live Fast, Die Young: Bad Girls Do It Well – A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of M.I.A’s Music Video “Bad Girls”

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Abstract

Feminism has become part of the pop music discourse in recent years. Through M.I.A’s “Bad Girls” video, not only the image of empowered, independent, rebel women are portrayed, but also the celebration of culture and the relationship between women and men in an environment of equity is suggested. In order to propose an analysis and interpretation of “Bad Girls” video and song lyrics, a multimodal discourse analysis (Machin, 2010) is followed, as well as Halliday’s systematic functional linguistics framework. The findings from this analysis suggest a discourse of feminism and empowerment, but also inclusion and acceptance regardless of race, religion or gender.

Keywords: multimodal discourse analysis, discourse schema, lyrics, feminism, M.I.A.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I will analyze M.I.A’s music video for her song “Bad Girls”. For the purposes of this analysis, I will use a multimodal discourse analysis approach. The visuals in the video will be analyzed through the visual semiotic framework proposed by Machin (2010). Lyrics will be analyzed through Halliday’s clause relations in language (1978). I will also provide the literature that sustains this analysis, I will set context and background of the performer and I will finish with a conclusion that summarizes the most relevant findings from this analysis.

2. “Missing in Action”: About the artist

Maya Arulpragasam’s stage name is not a coincidence. Throughout her life, she has faced war and the debris of it. Born in London, at only six months she had to relocate back to northern Sri Lanka. When the civil war between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese government intensified in the 1980s, Maya’s father joined the militant Tamil Tigers. Therefore her and her family had to relocate and eventually return to London, where Maya studied visual arts and became involved in music.

Maya wanted to work with visuals and film. She became friends with Elastica’s lead singer Justine Frischman with whom she toured and directed some of Elastica’s music videos. This was crucial for Maya’s career in music, since she became familiar with the world of music and bands, “Learning what she felt and what she had gone through was helpful to me. I learnt not to

have a band because Justine had so many band issues. I thought I couldn't be in a band because bands break up – if you just rely on yourself you'll be alright" (Maya, 2018). The latter ultimately, made her realize that, if she was ever going to perform, she would go solo, and she has proven that she is not intimidated by anyone.

- Civil war and equity are some of the most relevant topics within M.I.A's music and lyrics. The latter might come from her roots and the experiences throughout her childhood back in Sri Lanka.
- M.I.A actively advocates for minorities, being herself conscious and aware of political issues, regardless of the consequences this have brought into her life and her public persona.
- M.I.A's feminism is built through her music but also in her defying attitude, not conforming to the typical pop artist image, she has questioned and confronted big enterprises and institutions, to prove once more, bad girls speak up and will not be silenced.

3. M.I.A: The ultimate bad girl

M.I.A's portrayal has been menacing to the media. "I talk talk talk," she raps, accurately, "until I piss 'em off" (Lamont, 2016). She is not your average pop idol. She talks about things no one wants to hear about. She acts in a way women in music, and in general, are not supposed to act. M.I.A seems to advocate for those who confront and question, "I think it's great that the newer generations are becoming more conscious and aware and political and opinionated. All of those things I feel like I'm a part of, and they're a part of me" (M.I.A, as cited in Rae, 2016).

M.I.A's confrontational and liberal behavior has not always been controversy-free. To serve as an example, one can Google M.I.A and multiple sensationalist headings might come pop up, such as her performance during the Super Bowl next to Madonna, in which M.I.A managed to flip a middle finger that was not rehearsed or agreed on previously. Later on, and after being sued, M.I.A claimed this gesture to be a "mudra", which refers to a hand gesture practiced in yoga positions and meditation. M.I.A (2013) stated "It's cultural! In my country, it's godly... Of course the NFL is not believing that, because the NFL does not believe in any other culture outside of the NFL" (as cited in *The Guardian*, 2013).

It is clear that, M.I.A has managed her career in her own terms and will not conform to social conventions. She talks about girls driving cars, such topic might not seem to be relevant or meaningful as one would think, but within the context of places in which women are not allowed to drive, it suggests revolution and empowerment for women.

4. Methodology

The approach I decided to follow in order to analyze the video is based on Fairclough's (2003) social practices. This framework suggests that discourse figures in three main ways within social practice: genres, discourses and styles.

Genres <i>(ways of acting)</i>
Discourses <i>(ways of representing)</i>
Styles <i>(ways of being)</i>

For genres, Fairclough (2003) considers that, writing or speaking represents ways of acting. He suggests that there are different genres, such as: interviewing, etc. In this case, lyrics and singing might serve as one way of acting, since it involves both writing and speaking.

For the second stage, representations refer “of the material world, of other social practices, reflexive self-representations of the practice in question” (Fairclough, 2003: 26). This figure suggests that, the same area can be represented from different perspectives. At this stage, language is used meaning but also as a semiosis of elements of social life. Regarding this analysis, the video might serve as the practice through which another representation of the song is made by the artist and the director.

Thirdly, Fairclough (2003) claims that the last stage is related to “discourse figures alongside bodily behavior in constituting particular ways of being, particular social or personal identities” (p. 26). Such bodily behaviors can be found within social interactions and the latter can be analyzed through genre. These social interactions might be found in different aspects of life, including arts. According to Foucault (1972) genre is used in cultural and media studies, film theory, and others. Therefore, and referring to this analysis, music video can be also analyzed through it.

Fairclough (2003) also proposes three major types of meaning: action, representation and identification. These concepts are defined by Fairclough (2003) as “Representation corresponds to Halliday’s ‘ideational’ function; Action is closest to his ‘interpersonal’ function, though it puts more emphasis on text as a way of (inter)acting in social events, and it can be seen as incorporating Relation (enacting social relations)” (p. 27).

When we analyze specific texts as part of specific events, we are doing two interconnected things: (a) looking at them in terms of the three aspects of meaning, Action, Representation and Identification, and how these are realized in the various features of texts (their vocabulary, their grammar, and so forth); (b) making a connection between the concrete social event and more abstract social practices (Fairclough, 2003: 28).

5. Critical discourse analysis

According to Wang (2010) “Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 254).

Fairclough suggests that:

CDA aims to elucidate the discursive moment of social processes, practices, and change in its dialectical relations with other moments. It develops its theory, method, and agenda (objects of research) through transdisciplinary dialogue aimed at (a) coherent integration of discourse and discourse analysis (including detailed textual analysis) within social theories and methods of research, (b) development of its own theory of discourse and methods of discourse and text analysis in ways which are consistent with a dialectical view of social reality (as cited in Wodak & Chilton, 2005: 68).

However, for the purposes of this analysis, different approaches will be considered. The latter is necessary since an intransdisciplinary approach asks “how a dialogue between two disciplines or frameworks may lead to a development of both through a process of each internally appropriating the logic of the other as a resource for its own development” (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002).

In the following sections, I will introduce and describe the different frameworks I followed for this critical discourse analysis.

6. Hallyday’s systematic functional linguistics

Halliday’s SFL suggests that, as a social phenomenon, language is “functional if it is concerned with the mechanism of text structure, function and meaning” (Haratyan, 2011: 260). Therefore, language should be treated and analysed through these concepts. For the purposes of this analysis, Halliday’s systematic functional linguistics will be followed.

As stated by Haratyan (2011):

Halliday’s systematic functional linguistics and transitivity where linguistic wording and the socio culturally constructed meaning meet in texts attempts to demonstrate that underlying ideology in the texts should be probed beyond the linguistic surface. (Fairclough, 1989, 1995; Fowler, 1977, 1986; Fowler, Hodge, Kress & Trew, 1979 as cited in Haratyan, 2011: 260)

In this multimodal analysis, elements of discourse beyond linguistics, such as video and imagery, will be explored.

According to SFL, language has three metafunctions of ideational, interpersonal, and textual reflected in a huge system network of meaning potentials.

Ideational function	Interpersonal function	Textual function
The speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world; and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness: his reactions, cognitions, and perceptions, and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding. (Halliday, as cited in Wang 1971: 332)	The speaker is using language as the means of his own intrusion into the speech event: the expression of his comments, attitudes and evaluations, and also of the relationship that he sets up between himself and the listener—in particular, the communication role that he adopts of informing, questioning, greeting, persuading, and the like. (Halliday, as cited in Wang 1971: 333)	“Language makes links between itself and the situation; and discourse becomes possible because the speaker or writer can produce a text and the listener or reader can recognize one... The textual function refers to the fact that language has mechanisms to make any stretch of spoken or written discourse into a coherent and unified text and make a living passage different from a random list of sentences.” (Halliday, as cited in Wang 1971: 334)

Based on the characteristics of each function, it is important to take into account that each represents an important element for discourse analysis. However, this analysis will focus on the textual function, since it is concerned with the recognition of the text in the lyrics and the spoken discourse in the song and video and the way in which they go from being a random list of sentences to a unified and coherent discourse. Therefore, in this analysis I will look at the different elements that make it possible to recognize a discourse. The elements I will analyze are: visual elements in the video and the lyrics of the song.

In the following section, I will discuss the approach I decided to follow in order to analyze these different elements of discourse within the video and lyrics.

7. Multimodal discourse analysis approach

For the purposes of this analysis, I considered that a multimodal discourse analysis was one method I could use to scrutinize data from video, as well as a means to study the context and participants’ communications and interactions with others (both verbal and non-verbal) (Chan, 2013). As I previously mentioned, both elements verbal (song-lyrics) and non-verbal (visuals-gestures-poses) were considered for the analysis.

In addition to the latter, I considered that a multimodal discourse analysis was one useful way to analyze the ways that sounds, images and words can have particular meanings and sum up to a broader picture or message (Machin, 2010: 6). I considered that in this particular case, video and lyrics had an important relation: one seems to complete the other. As I had previously watched the video, it was evident that the imagery, costumes, gestures and attitudes portrayed in the video had a rather explicit intention, there was an underlying sense of freedom and celebration, while still demanding for equity and showing a clear stance on feminism. However, it was important to find an approach that would allow me to look at the different elements and analyze their meaning. The multimodal analysis seemed to be the framework to approach.

Chan (2013) defines multimodal discourse analysis as:

a research methodology that involves collecting research data, usually in the form of videos of people undertaking activities, and sometimes includes the collection of research artefacts such as written materials (for example, student workbooks, worksheets, practical assessment check-sheets, written assessments), audio recordings of conversations, interviews which are recorded and transcribed, and questionnaires. (p. 71)

The main objective in the analysis to use these different tools and Halliday's systematic functional linguistics, as a way to "transcribe videos in a way that allows us to best describe and analyze the way that sound, image and word work together, *multimodally*, to show they interrelate to form a single communicative act" (Machin, 2010: 185). In the following section, I will introduce the visual semiotic analysis of the video and I will provide a description of the latter.

8. Visual semiotic analysis of the video

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen "visual semiotics can be described as the attempt to elaborate something such as a visual syntax, in analogy to, and at the same time different from, the verbal syntax...verbal and visual communication cover the same areas of creating meaning... they use the same mechanisms of meaning construction" (as cited in Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008: 84). It is important to address how both verbal and visual elements communicate meaning. In this sense, a visual semiotic analysis allows this to happen, as both mechanisms of meaning construction are taken into consideration and they are both analyzed in a way that, once they are put together, they convey meaning and back up the discourse.

In order to achieve visual semiotics, Van Leeuwen (2001) suggests two important questions: what do images represent and how? What ideas and values do people, places and things represented in images stand for? I considered that these two questions alluded to both concepts of denotation and connotation. Therefore, I decided it was important to include both concepts. In order to analyze the visuals from the video, I decided to choose the most outstanding scenes from the video, alongside with a chart in which I provide a literal description of what one can see in the video (denotation), as well as a column with the description featuring the connotation of each visual. Since lyrics were also considered in the multimodal analysis, they were also featured in the chart as an aid for the connotation of each visual. That way, the three elements together intend to analyze the discourse as a whole.

In the following section, I will explore lyrics and the importance of them for this multimodal analysis. I will also explain how lyrics will be approached through discourse schema and a brief description of the latter.

9. Lyrics analysis

It seems relevant to analyze lyrics as well, since lyrics “are one way an artist tells us how to listen to them, how to put meanings into their music. Lyrics are not only about artists telling stories but also communicating discourses of their identity” (Machin, 2010: 77). As stated towards the beginning of this paper, the identity of the artist is relevant not only for creating a persona, but because it seems highly linked to her own beliefs and ideologies. Therefore, it is worth analyzing the lyrics and the meaning the artist is trying to put out there in the world and what the artist might suggest to the listener.

For the analysis of the lyrics, rather than structure, I looked at discourse schema, which is related to culture and values. In order to approach lyrics this way, Machin (2010) suggests to:

“ask what happens in the song at the most basic level... in other words, we look for the activity or discourse schema that underlines the song. This kind of analysis not only applies to narratives but to all genres. It is not an analysis of the form of the text but the analysis of the form of the knowledge that underlines the text. Not all songs have a basic schema of activity, although many do. And while a number of songs may appear to be simply love songs, closer analysis often reveals different underlying schema and therefore differences in values, behaviors and identities. (p. 78)

Since the role of lyrics is relevant to analyze the discourse within a song, I featured a chart with the visual denotation and connotation of the most outstanding scenes in M.I.A’s video, as well as how the lyrics are linked to these visuals and how they all combined communicate meaning.

In the following section, the semiotic analysis of the video and the systematic functional linguistic analysis of the lyrics will be presented.

10. Video and lyrics analysis



Image 1. Fire burning behind M.I.A (Source: M.I.A’s “Bad Girls”)



Image 2. Horse in the middle of the desert (Source: M.I.A’s “Bad Girls”)

DENNOTATION	CONNOTATION	LYRICS
<p>As the video starts, we can see M.I.A facing the camera as some fire is going on in the background. Throughout the video, we can see a man in a horse in the middle of the desert, while in some others scenes, we see young men performing tricks with cars, better known as “Saudi drafting” which refers to “an illegal street racing phenomenon that emerged in the late 1970s that involves trying to “drift” a motor vehicle at speeds of up to 260 km/h (160 mph) across wide highways... Such thrill-seeking behavior is very alluring to young Saudi males.” (Ramisetty-Mikler & Almakadma, 2016: 2)</p>	<p>In the beginning, and also throughout the video, Arabic references are shown (for example: a man on a horse in the middle of the desert). As told by Romain Gravas, director of the video: “The idea was to compile Arabic references –fantasized or not- into a pop video. Pop videos usually show American kids in their element. Here, you got Arab kids in an insane car rodeo element” All of these elements might allude to portray what to most westerns seem to represent Arabic culture. The intention might be to show it in a way people recognize these references but also in a way people can see how war is not the only reference in this culture.</p>	<p>-</p>



Images 3 and 4. Girls riding cars (Source: M.I.A’s “Bad Girls”)

DENNOTATION	CONNOTATION	LYRICS
<p>A woman in a fancy and trendy gear sits on the car as she holds the wheel. She stares daringly to the camera.</p> <p>Two women drive a car as they both wave their arms outside the window.</p>	<p>This might be a reference to what bad girls do, in this particular context: driving. Arabic women are not supposed to drive, however, this woman seems to be in charge and not afraid to do so. As we hear in the lyrics, “suki” means “drive” in Arabic. Also, it is the imperative singular feminine, so, it has an additional subtlety of telling a <i>female</i> to drive (as cited in Genius, 2011). She might be encouraging women to empower themselves and lead a bad girl lifestyle, a free life.</p> <p>According to M.I.A, bad girls not only rebel to impositions, they also enjoy this freedom regarding of the consequences. They blast music as they drive and own their own money to get chains and fancy attire or dress the way they want to.</p> <p>Now the daring attitude also takes part within the lyrics. She warns that not every man or person would be able to take a girl like her, meaning that not everyone is fond of feminism and freedom of women, not everyone could hang with her.</p> <p>She is not going to stop. Neither is feminism. Freedom of women has started and bad girls will not stop regardless of social constraints of gender. An action such as trembling might refer to the fear or rejection empowered women might cause to people who do not agree with this ideologies.</p>	<p>“Suki, suki, I’m coming in the Cherokee, Gasoline There’s steam on the window screen Take it, take it World’s bouncing like a trampoline When I get to where I’m going, gonna have you trembling”</p> <p>“Live fast, die young, bad girls do it well My chain hits my chest when I’m banging on the dashboard My chain hits my chest when I’m banging on the radio”</p> <p>“Hold me closer if you think you can hang...”</p> <p>“When I get to where I’m going gonna have you trembling...”</p>

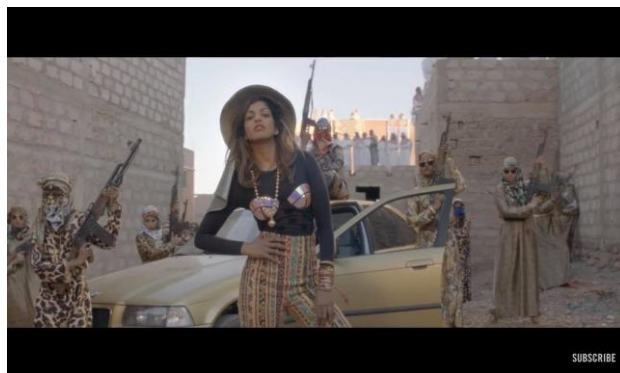


Image 5. M.I.A and women holding guns (Source: M.I.A’s “Bad Girls”)

DENNOTATION	CONNOTATION	LYRICS
We see a group of women in fancy yet traditional gear, holding guns; M.I.A is at the front, defying the audience.	Some people might find feminism and empowered women as threatening. M.I.A is up front about her stance and will blow people's minds.	"Hands up Hands tied Don't go screaming if I blow you with a bang!"



Image 6. Saudi drifting (Source: M.I.A's "Bad Girls")



Image 7. M.I.A surrounded by men (Source: M.I.A's "Bad Girls")

DENNOTATION	CONNOTATION	LYRICS
We see men playing tricks in the car as the audience salutes them. Then, we see M.I.A on top of a car surrounded by other men.	It seems that, for women and men to get along in an environment of equity is difficult; Bumps might refer to a complicated road, but in this video M.I.A celebrates bad girls and also men who ride along with them. Being a bad girl is not an easy road to follow but she is willing to take it and whoever comes along with her has to be aware of the problems or "bumps" along the road. She is changing lanes, she is not going to stay on the side society has told her to.	"Yeah, pull up to the bumper game, yeah with a signal cover me, cause I'm changing lanes..."

	<p>She broke the rules. She broke the standards by which women are taught to behave, she is among other men and she is being herself. This break, more than destruction represents the start of a life for women: the road is not easy, but she is on her way and once she arrives to her destination, people will know what she meant. This might allude to the fact that, women's voices are rising and people, whether accept it or not, are aware of it. Bad girls will not remain in silence.</p>	<p>“Had a handle on it, my life, I broke it when I get to where I'm going, gonna have you saying it”</p>
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Image 8. M.I.A on top of a racing car (Source: M.I.A's “Bad Girls”)



Image 10. M.I.A dancing and partying (Source: M.I.A's “Bad Girls”)

DENNOTATION	CONNOTATION	LYRICS
<p>M.I.A is on top of a racing car as she fixes her nails. She seems unimpressed and in control. Later on, we see M.I.A with golden chains and unique gear.</p>	<p>M.I.A shows she is on top, not only literally but metaphorically speaking: she is the boss. She has the control of her life. She is not scared of doing something so daring and dangerous in the context of a sexist society. Again, some references to cars and driving: naught to bitch, might refer going from 0 to high speed. Rather than speed, she uses the term “bitch” a word often used to</p>	<p>“Going naught to bitch, I'll see four million Accelerating fast I can do this in a second</p>

	<p>describe women who are free and not afraid to speak up. As a woman who is not afraid of speaking up or breaking the rules (metaphorically and in real life, such as the Super Bowl incident previously mentioned) she is not afraid of going fast.</p> <p>By looking in the rear view she might refer looking at things that you have left in the past or behind, in this case: boys who kill women just because culture allows it.</p> <p>Automatic in this line might refer to an easier or less complex task, such as M.I.A embracing the role of a pop star, but she is not willing to, she will not conform to the archetype of a female pop singer. No one can stop her, she will speak about and demand the things that oppress women.</p>	<p>Lookin' in the rear view, swaggin' goin' swell Leavin' boys behind 'cause it's legal just to kill</p> <p>Shift gear, automatic, damned if I do Who's gonna stop me when I'm coming through?"</p>
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11. Conclusion

In this paper, I presented a multimodal analysis of M.I.A's "Bad Girls" music video. The multimodal analysis featured Fairclough's (2003) social practices analysis framework, Halliday's systematic functional linguistics and Machin's (2010) visual semiotic analysis of the video. I explored some of the most important visual and linguistic elements used in M.I.A's political and feminist discourse in her lyrics and music video.

According to the findings from this multimodal analysis, M.I.A's stance regarding gender and gender roles becomes evident. The attitude, attire and lyrics throughout the video are consistent with a feminist and empowering discourse, however, it is also contrasted with the appearance of males alongside with women. The latter suggests a celebration in which women and men unite in an environment of peace and equity. Saudi drifting is showed as well, probably as a metaphor of one risky behavior that, despite of its dangers, in the context of the video, seem to unite people. This might refer to how the idea of both genders uniting might be still perceived as daring and threatening to some, but how M.I.A is willing to defy the limits and invite whoever is willing to ride with her such rocky road.

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