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GE Big Boys Appliances: Towards a Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the SNL Fake Commercial

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Abstract

Nowadays, comedy shows like *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) have become popular and entertain many people around the world. For this study, a fake commercial for GE Big Boys Appliances, aired on YouTube in 2018 is analyzed to explore how discourse is used to represent gender roles and stereotypes. To conduct this multimodal discourse analysis, some elements of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) proposed by Halliday (1978), some notions of critical discourse analysis, and some features of the Machin's (2010) visual semiotic framework are employed. The findings portray that the sketch shows a change concerning gender roles through time, but it still promotes the transmission of some classical gender stereotypes. Therefore, it is valuable to study comedy sketches to understand how traditional gender roles and stereotypes are still transmitted in social media.

Keywords: multimodal discourse analysis, gender, stereotypes, transmission of gender roles.

1. Introduction

Considering the significance of humor in the United States (US) to portrait cultural, political, and social issues and the popularity of the show SNL, this paper aims to analyze the fake commercial for GE Big Boys Appliances available on YouTube since 2018. This sketch illustrates in what manner gender roles have changed through time and explains how housework is a men's job in a humorous and radical way. Contemplating that this video has more than five million visits on YouTube and that gender roles are strongly influenced by media, it is pertinent to evaluate this sketch and identify the ideas behind the discourse presented regarding gender roles and stereotypes. Additionally, this paper provides meaningful information to evaluate how classical gender stereotypes are still transmitted by mass and social media. This paper is presented as follows: first, a literature review to explore concepts related to American humor, a summary of the SNL show, and key definitions of gender roles and stereotypes in the US are delivered. Then, an overview of the methodology adopted is addressed. Finally, the main findings are discussed followed by a general conclusion of the results.

2. Literature review

Some researchers have recognized the significance of exploring gender theory including gender roles and stereotypes. In fact, most of the studies on gender, gender power

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relations and stereotypes have determined the importance of exploring gender inequalities and the influence of mass media in shaping individual's views regarding gender issues (Eagly et al. 2012; Gauntlett, 2008). Hence, in this section, fundamental topics and definitions of gender, gender roles, and stereotypes are provided to facilitate the understanding of this paper.

- This sketch emphasizes that men need to be strong and tall to take care of the household chores.
- Traditional gender stereotypes are still transmitted in comedy sketches in the United States.
- The fake commercial promotes the evolution of gender roles, but classical stereotypes are still transmitted.

2.1 *American humor: The Saturday Night Live Show*

Humor is a universal and common in our everyday lives. Martin (2007) defines it as a verbal or nonverbal behavior that could be entertaining, cheerful, and produce laughter. Some authors claim that humor can help people to reduce tension, overcome difficult times, and enhance positive relationships and emotional well-being (Britvec, 2020; Meyer, 2000). However, humor could be different in diverse contexts, situations, and nations.

American humor has become relevant in the last decades as a means to approach and overcome difficult political and social matters (Inge, 2005). For that reason, humoristic pieces have sought presence in literature, cartoons, magazines, animations, radio, films, and TV shows. Sketch comedy TV shows have gained popularity in the US since the 1970's (History website, 2020). Subsequently, comedy has been used to discuss social and political events in a humorous way. Humor usually depends on individuals' contexts, maturity, and level of education. In the case of the SNL show, it has become popular and widely accepted by American adults between 18 and 49 years old and people worldwide.

According to the History website (2020), SNL is an American comedy show created by Lorne Michaels for the NBC channel in 1975. This American comedy show is aired every Saturday from New York and each episode is hosted by a celebrity who delivers an opening and performs sketches to parody contemporary social and political events (Ramos, 2021). These comedy sketches present situations that have a high impact in the American society. It has survived in the media environment for decades by offering spectators creative episodes with a variety of cultural discourses (Marx et al. 2013). As a result, the popularity of the show has risen through the years and it has become an icon of the American culture. Regarding this, Ramos (2021) reported that this iconic sketch comedy show ranked as the number 1 among all comedies in broadcast TV and cable in 2021, despite the Covid-19 pandemic. This show has served as an ideal site to explore issues related to critical race, gender, and political science studies. For this paper, I will analyze the video GE Big Boys appliances aired by SNL in 2018 and now available on YouTube.

2.2 *Gender theory*

Considering social organization, systems of knowledge and beliefs, language and language use, education, etc. (Juschka, 2017)**.** Thus, gender has been a crucial topic of research in different areas of knowledge including the study of gender and language (Bucholtz, 2003). As a matter of fact, there is a debate regarding the biological and social construct of the term (Changxue, 2008). According to this author, the biology construct suggests that gender is stable, natural, and determined by the biological sex male or female. On the other hand, the social construct supports those individuals are not born with behaviors and features of being masculine nor feminine. In fact, they highlight that gender identity develops with exposure to culture, and

socialization (Changxue, 2008). The biological perspective perceives gender as being fixed. According to this, men and women are born with specific features and they must fulfill specific roles in society. Considering this, Veenstra (2011) argues that inequalities are promoted by combining factors of discrimination such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others. Therefore, in the following subsections, some relevant characteristics and recent perspectives concerning gender roles and stereotypes are addressed.

2.2.1 *Gender roles*

A gender role is related to the way in which a man or a woman should behave, speak, or dress so the rest of society could consider their performance as appropriate or acceptable. According to Eagly and Wood (2012) and Rudman et al. (2012), there are some of feminine and masculine roles that distinguish women and men in industrialized economies. Table 1 summarizes these roles.

Table 1. Roles of men and women

Masculine roles	Feminine roles
Males are family providers (breadwinners) and full-time workers.	Females are primary caretakers of children and in charge of nursing infants.
Men do the hard work in the house such as repairing the car and fixing the equipment and appliances that stop working	Women should do domestic chores such as cleaning and organizing the house, cooking, doing the laundry.
Men usually become doctors, engineers, mechanics, pilots or join the army.	Women tend to work as secretaries, teachers, and nurses.

Note: Summarized from: Eagly and Wood (2012) and Rudman et al. (2012).

Table 1 provides information about the different roles men and women are expected to fulfill in Western nations. However, women's roles have been shifting radically. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009) women represent 47% of the US labor market and 59% of American women work outside the home. Therefore, it is more accepted for women to have careers as directors, engineers, scientists, and other fields in which they were not accepted before. Despite this, it is interesting to evaluate how these gender roles are represented in mass media and how they impact gender stereotypes.

2.2.2 *Gender stereotypes*

Mayer and Bell (1975) define a stereotype as the general picture that individuals have in mind concerning hypothetical features that males or females should have rather than how they actually are or the roles they are able to fulfill in society. As a result, stereotypes depend on cultural characteristics and particular expectations of communities.

Gender stereotypes are constantly evolving, and the diverse ways individuals socialize are affecting people's behavior and communication styles. However, the maintenance of stereotypes is complex, and they may decay with time (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). In this order of ideas, there are some masculine and feminine features that could influence the process of stereotyping men and women. Some of these traits are presented in Table 2.

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Table 2. Masculine and feminine characteristics

Masculine features	**Feminine features**
Physically strong and athletic	Physically weak
Independent	Dependent
Hero, brave, inspire fear	Nurturing and caring.
Problem solver and leader	Follower
Competitive and ambitious	Warm and emotional

Note: Summarized from: (Eagly & Wood, 2012 & England et al., 2011).

This table offers relevant information about the core features that are used to assign roles to men and women and stereotype them. Differences between men and women are usually attributed to the physical characteristics, emotional traits, and personalities of each gender. For instance, society tends to qualify men as stronger than women. Consequently, linguistics and non-linguistics groups in society can portray stereotypes and develop specific gender roles according to these elements.

It is vital to emphasize that the representation of gender roles and stereotypes transmitted by the media might influence people consciously or unconsciously. Accordingly, these images could have a strong impact on families, children, and society because media is part of our everyday lives and can impact our way of thinking, our perceptions of the world and the things we value (Gauntlett, 2008). Because of gender stereotypes bias, it is more complicated for women to persuade others about their skills as strong leaders and competence at work. Hence, the main purpose of this paper is to evaluate how gender roles and stereotypes are represented in the SNL sketch using some approaches offered by discourse analysis.

2.3 *The transmission of gender roles and stereotypes through mass media*

From the 1970s to the 1990s, some researchers (Busby 1975; Lovdal, 1989; Ferguson et al. 1990) recognize that traditional Western stereotypes of women are transmitted through mass media and advertisements. During these decades, women are mainly represented on TV and other media as sex objects, main consumers of products and decorations as well as the individuals in charge of cleaning and maintaining their houses. In fact, McArthur and Resko (1975) state that women are presented in a relatively unfavorable manner in some selected television commercials bringing unfavorable consequences to individual and social principles. These authors indicate that television is an important area to investigate due to the higher number of hours that the average American spends in front of their TVs. Hence, considering the popularity of the sketch on YouTube and the high number of spectators, the show has broadcast on TV and cable; it is significant to analyze how language is used in the sketch to represent gender stereotypes and gender roles.

3. Methodology of the study

This paper investigates how men and women are represented in the sketch GE Big Boys Appliances. To analyze it, I consider some elements of multimodal discourse analysis (MDA). These are: (1) the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework (SFL) by Halliday (1978) to examine the language used, (2) a general overview of critical discourse analysis CDA and (3) the visual semiotic framework developed by Machin (2010).

This article considers SFL, in a global way, by using a functional model to analyze the context of the situation. It ponders three aspects: (a) the field of the text (what the text is about), (b) the tenor (the relationship between the addresser and the addressee), and (c) the mode (how the text is constructed) (Ewing, 2001: 3). Moreover, the ideational function of SFL is contemplated focusing on transitivity and its processes (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential (Halliday, 2002; Halliday & Matthissen, 2014). Likewise, CDA serves as a tool to explain relations of power and dominance regarding gender roles and stereotypes. Finally, the visual semiotic framework suggested by Machin (2010) helps us to examine discrepancies and similarities between images and discourse by considering characteristics of the visuals such as gestures, position, activities performed, colors, objects, and contexts. The idea is to present a general view of how gender roles and stereotypes are represented in the sketch by combining some approaches and exploring how they work together to effectively analyze discourse.

3.1 *Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)*

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) studies how written or spoken discourse combines language and other semiotic features such as images, photographs, diagrams, and graphics to create meaning (Machin, 2010; Machin & Mayr, 2012). This approach considers that language as well as visual communication influences and is shaped by society. For this article is relevant to take into account how language was used to portray gender roles and stereotypes but also to consider the visual semiotic features of the sketch and the meanings behind the language contemplating some aspects of CDA.

To conduct this analysis, I start by evaluating language using Halliday's (1978) SFL framework. SFL is one of the most significant theories to study language employed in the literature of linguistics and applied linguistics (Abdulrahman, 2016). This theory has its origins in the United Kingdom and later in Australia (O'Donnell 2012: 1) and it is currently used around the world in different fields such as linguistics language education (Christie & Martin 1997), media discourse (Iedema, 2003), and critical discourse analysis (Bloor & Bloor, 2007). SFL is both a theory of language and a methodology for analyzing texts and their contexts (Halliday, 1978). It establishes that words mean not only on their own but as an element of a system of meanings. It attempts to comprehend the way language is applied for diverse reasons and in different scenarios as well as it provides useful tools to analyze texts through functions and connections (Halliday, 1985). Through the implementation of SFL, discourse is analyzed contemplating four components: context, semantics, lexico-grammar, and phonology (see Figure 1). However, for this paper, the context of the situation including field, tenor and mode and transitivity are discussed.

Figure 1. The systems and subsystems the context of situation
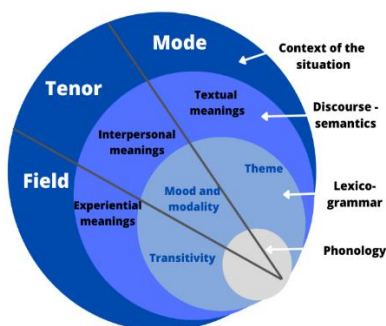
Note: Adapted from: John, 2014. Meaning as choice course, LING 5004. The University of Adelaide [image].

As presented in Figure 1, to explore the context of the analysis is central because it represents the circumstances of a setting for an event or idea. Thus, the context influences the general process of making meaning. Context should be analyzed pondering the field, the tenor, and the mode (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Additionally, as presented in Figure 1, SFL contemplates a model of language with three levels: d*iscourse-semantics (meanings), lexico-grammar (wording), and phonology or graphology (sounds and letters)* (Eggins, 2004: 19). The discourse- semantics component consists of three metafunctions. They are *interpersonal* (related to the interaction between speaker(s) and addressee(s)), *ideational* (contemplating the grammatical resources for construing our experience of the world around us and inside us), and *textual (text) (*Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Overall, in this paper, SFL is used to analyze the context of the sketch considering field, tenor, and mode. Likewise, the ideational metafunction of language, specifically transitivity processes. These processes are evaluated to explore the way language assists to accomplish specific ideologies pondering the roles and stereotypes represented in the skit.

3.2 *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)*

Deivis and Elder (2004) explain that CDA "concerns itself with issues of identity, dominance and resistance, and with seeking out evidence in text – especially (to date) media and advertising texts, and political documents and speeches – of class, gender, ethnic and other kinds of bias" (p. 140). In this sense, CDA investigates linguistic characters, cultural processes, and structures to evaluate how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse. In this order of ideas, Hart (2010) establishes that CDA addresses social problems, power relations, ideological work and social actions considering society, culture, and history. Likewise, Van Dijk (2001) describes CDA as the study of implicit and indirect meaning in texts. In other words, it aims to investigate the opaque and transparent meanings related to underlying beliefs, views, and perceptions of social inequalities and issues as they are expressed in spoken and written discourse. For this analysis, CDA is used to examine some of the utterances examining the text itself but also the context and the relationship of the characters to determine how gender roles and stereotypes are represented.

3.3 *Visual Semiotic Analysis (VSA)*

The visual semiotic features that are analyzed in this paper represent some scenes that are shown in the sketch. To evaluate them, Machin's framework (2010) provides a collection of resources to systematically evaluate images and pictures as well as the meaning they intend to communicate through visual semiotic resources. Machin (2010: 36) emphasizes that "a designer may use a particular feature or element to connote a particular discourse which communicates about kinds of persons, attitudes, values and actions". Therefore, to understand meaning represented in discourse, it is convenient to consider the additional elements presented such as visuals.

The author proposes an iconographic analysis of visuals which involves paying attention to objects, persons, settings, and poses as a way to convey and communicate meaning (Machin, 2010). The author suggests a kit of strategies that allow analysts to evaluate visuals in a systematic and organized way. This framework suggests analysts to consider the following features to evaluate visuals: (1) *iconographical elements* such as poses, gaze, social distance, objects and settings; (2) *modality* (details of elements and background, light and shadow, tone, depth of vision, modulation of colors, and saturation of colors); (3) dimensions of colors (brightness, saturation, purity, modulation, luminosity, and hue). Some of these features are considered in

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this paper to explore visual semiotic resources and their potential to mean and realize in specific contexts.

4. Analysis and discussion of the sketch

The sketch to be analyzed is GE Big Boys Appliances aired from New York in 2018. The skit is available on YouTube[1] and has more than five and a half million views this year. This fake commercial is analyzed considering an MDA approach. The spoken discourse presented in the skit is examined considering the SFL model suggested by Halliday (1978) and CDA as a standpoint. Moreover, the visual and gestures presented in the sketch are evaluated pondering the semiotic analysis proposed by Machin (2010).

4.1 *Description of the sketch*

For this language analysis the SFL framework promoted by Halliday (1978) is deemed. In this case, I contemplate the functional model to analyze the situational context. Therefore, field, tenor and mode are appraised.

Table 3. Features of the context (field and tenor)

Features of the context		
Field	A man advertises some products that are designed for doing housework and using them transforms house duties into a men's job. The man shows and uses different appliances that are designed for strong and tall men.	
Tenor	**Inside:** A man describing GE big boys appliances. **Outside:** Jason Momoa and the SNL audience (18-49 years old).	

The field describes the overall situation of the skit: a man's doing housework by using appliances for strong men. The tenor indicates the relationship between the characters. In the inside, Jason Momoa explains the main characteristics of the products. On the other hand, outside the sketch the relationship is between the actor and the audience of the show. As observed, the aim of the sketch is persuading other people (the audience) to by the fake appliances by highlighting the features of the products. As well, the sketch emphasizes the requirements that the products' users should have to utilize them. For instance, they need to be strong and tall.

After considering the field and the tenor of the context, it is significant to explore the mode and the mood chosen for the skit. Table 4 illustrates the choices between indicative (declarative or interrogative) and imperative clauses.

Table 4. Features of the context (Mode)

	Mood	Verbs used %
Mode	Declarative: 14 verbs	77.8%
	Imperative: 3 verbs	16.6%
	Interrogative: 1 verb	5.6%
	Total: 18 verbs	100%

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZRzJJcq6Rs.

Regarding the mode, 77.8 % of the verbs are in the declarative form, 16.6% imperative and only 5.6% interrogative. It means that there is lack of interaction between characters in the sketch because it aims to emphasize the features of the appliances to "advertise" the products.

Table 5. Transitivity analysis

Process Type	Category meaning	Verbs found	Frequency	Percentage
Material	Doing or happening	Give, get, climb, use, buy, annihilate, run on, keep, stand, have	12	48%
Mental	Sensing	see	2	
	feeling	like	2	20%
	thinking	mean	1	
Relational	Attributing	To be	2	
	Identifying	To be	1	12%
Verbal	Saying	Ask, tell	3	12%
Behavioral	Behaving	Ride on	2	8%
Existential			0	

As shown in Table 5, material processes account for 48% of the total number of processes in the text. These processes represent a good choice to demonstrate the useful qualities of the appliances described in the sketch because they relate to doing, happening or action. The process with the second highest percentage is the mental process and it relates to the cognitive reaction to a certain event or circumstance. The less frequent processes are the verbal and behavioral ones 12% and 8% respectively. The existential process did not occur in the discourse employed in the text.

Another aspect that should be mentioned regarding language is the repetitive use of the adjective *big* and the noun *boy* (6 times) to emphasize that men are physically stronger than women. Additionally, in the discourse the man included the word *sucker* to reflect that men are not delicate, on the contrary, they are brave and as men they could use informal language to show their strength (social stereotype). Likewise, the language used is *informal* considering the implementation of phrasal verbs (man up, run on, ride on, etc.) as well as the contracted forms (I'd, she'd, don't) are presented.

4.3 *Critical discourse analysis of the utterances of the fake commercial*

In this section, I analyze the discourse presented in a fake commercial for GE Big Boys Appliances from a CDA stance. In the next table, I introduce some utterances expressed by the man in the skit and the critical analysis of them.

Table 6. Critical discourse analysis of the utterances

Utterances	Critical Analysis
1. These days women are the primary breadwinners of 50% of American homes and that means housework is a man's job.	Traditionally, gender stereotypes state that men are the main breadwinners at home. This utterance highlights that the situation is changing and now women oversee providing food and economic support to their homes. However, even though 59% of women work outside home does not mean that they earn all the money required to fulfill all the family needs. So, this is an exaggeration.

2. Give them the tools to get the job done right with GE big boy home appliances	This suggests that if men are required to do housework, they need appliances that are big, heavy, and tall because they represent the strong sex. In other words, men are expected to be strong while women are supposed to be delicate and weak.
3. Big boy dishwasher, featuring a 70-pound steel door. I'd like to see a woman do that	The man expresses that a woman is not capable of lifting a 70-pound dishwasher highlighting that women are weak and delicate. Consequently, they cannot do hard work.
4. She may have climbed the corporate ladder, but she'll need an actual ladder to use the big boy washing machine	This means that women can get new job opportunities and higher positions in diverse professional areas. However, they are not tall enough to use this washing machine.
5. All GE Big Boy appliances have an energy star rating of half minus because they run on gas	The man indicates that men are so tough that they do not need appliances which work with electricity that is why these appliances need gas to function.
6. Man up this holiday season and ask your wife to buy you GE Big Boy household appliances.	This means that men's bravery consists of asking their wives to buy these appliances for them. Thus, the man establishes that times have changed completely, and women should spoil their men by buying them the equipment or appliances they need or want.

Through the sketch, it is observed that the man's role has changed. The skit shows that the man is in charge of taking care of the kids, cleaning and organizing the house, and preparing food. However, the products advertised are designed for men who are physically strong and tall. Therefore, the video emphasizes that gender roles have changed but gender stereotypes remain the same.

4.4 *Machin's framework: Visual semiotic analysis of the comedy sketch*

In this part of the paper, I describe the visuals shown in the fake advertisement. I will pay attention to the gestures, position, and activities performed by the characters as well as the colors, objects, and contexts of the images. I start with the photography of women in the sketch.

Image 1. Women. Source: SNL. GE Big Boy Appliances, 2018.

This photograph shows the image of successful women who got access to management positions in their jobs. The picture tries to represent how women can have jobs in fields they were not accepted in the past. They stand in a row and in their background, they have the buildings of their companies. So, it seems that they are leaders in the prestigious and modern companies where they work. The first woman looks like a businesswoman, the second one is like an executive and the third one seems to be an engineer in a factory. It is supposed that they should be confident, empowered, proud and happy because they were able to get to higher positions at work. However, if we pay attention to their posture, they are looking directly at the viewers, but their arms are crossed. In terms of body language, crossed arms express that the people are defensive and that is a feature of discomfort and insecurity. Consequently, even though women are presented as

managers of important companies, they do not seem to be confident with their positions. Likewise, women are smiling in the pictures, but they do not seem genuinely happy.

The second picture to be evaluated is a representation of men's and women's roles. The features considered in the previous picture are analyzed with this one too.

Image 2. Men's and women's roles. Source: SNL. GE Big Boy Appliances, 2018.

The family is together having breakfast in a clean, modern, comfortable, and middle-class home. The house has big windows, a large dining room, modern and attractive furniture, and nice tableware. Additionally, the breakfast consists of pancakes, orange juice and coffee. Thus, it seems that this is the home of a medium class family. The woman seems to be busy answering a call. She is wearing an executive outfit. On the contrary, the man is wearing jeans and he is serving breakfast to the children. Everybody looks happy. The picture has bright colors and good lighting. The children are happy, they are eating a common American breakfast and getting ready for their daily routine.

The third picture to be evaluated is a representation of the house and the slogan A man's job.

Image 3. A man's job. Source: SNL. GE Big Boy Appliances, 2018.

In this image, in the background, the house is dirty and disorganized. The man is standing up with his hands on his hips. This means that he is ready to start cleaning and organizing the house because that is his job as a man. Likewise, the man is adopting the superman/superhero posture or a high-power pose with broad stance, hands on hips, shoulders high and pushed back. Carney et al. (2010) claims that a high-power pose produce elevations in testosterone, decreases in cortisol, and increase feelings of power and tolerance for risk. Therefore, practicing this posture could help people to feel empower and confident about the job they do. From this, we can infer that the actor shows the audience that the task he will do is demanding and difficult, but as a superhero, he will do it better than expected because he is pure testosterone.

The fourth picture shows the characteristics of one of the appliances: The dishwasher.

Image 4. The dishwasher. Source: SNL. GE Big Boy Appliances, 2018.

The dishwasher is heavy and to make it attractive for men, it is black and yellow, big and heavy. The dishwasher is 70 pounds and its door is made of pure steel. This picture highlights the effort the man is making to close the dishwasher door. His face shows that he makes a great effort to close the machine. When he finishes, he said: I want to see a woman doing that. This means that now the women are out of the house, with these appliances' women are not able to do housework.

The fifth image shows how the men have fun and drink while they are doing housework.

Image 5. It is an easy job. Source: SNL. GE Big Boy Appliances, 2018.

This image represents that despite the fact the man has to lift a lot of weight and made a great effort to use the appliances and get the job done, he has the energy and the time to grab a beer and spend time with his friend. In the image, he does not look tired. On the contrary, he seems to be happy and energetic. They are making a toast. Maybe, celebrating that they finish they household activities. According to this picture, doing household chores with these big appliances is easy for him. There is not a job that men are not able to do. Consequently, they represent the strong gender.

5. Conclusion

This MDA intended to explore the sketch GE Big Boys Appliances aired by the comedy show SNL in 2008. The analysis was offered with three main approaches. Halliday's SFL (1978), Machin's (2010) visual framework and CDA. The combination of frameworks allowed me to offer a critical analysis to understand how gender roles and stereotypes are represented. In the last few decades, the role of women in social life has changed and a high percentage of women have assumed challenging roles in society. As represented in the sketch, gender roles have changed because women work full time, are providers at home and they have become business leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs in different fields. However, the discourse in the sketch reports that

classical stereotypes are still transmitted. Men are perceived as physically stronger and taller as well as problem solvers and leaders in what they do. Thus, considering the high number of views of SNL show and the millions of people who have watched the video on YouTube, it is interesting to see how classical stereotypes are transmitted despite the recent changes in gender roles.

The discourse that mass media and social media uses represent a device that can benefit or damage society because the way gender is represented in comedy shows does have an influence on how we perceive gender roles and stereotypes and how men and women behave in relation to each other. Therefore, the findings of this paper invite readers to be more critical when watching comedy sketches and programs offered on mass and social media, especially for educational purposes. In the local context, this work represents initial efforts to combine different approaches to analyze comedy sketches. For further research, I recommend conducting a deeper analysis considering the three metafunctions of language ideational, textual, and intrapersonal and all the semiotic features recommended in Machin's framework.

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Exploring Instances of Feminism Movement in a Reggaeton Song: A Multi-Semiotic Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This study analyses the instances of feminism in a reggaeton song consulting a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). It interprets these instances and provides a description to what they intend to present from a feminist perspective. It also attempts to find out what are the visual semiotic choices that the song presents to the audience such as the attributes, settings and salience. Finally, it aimed to explore how these elements are represented in the video. To achieve the goal of the study, I created a table where I included the visual semiotic elements previously mentioned. This table presents the three scenes that were chosen to be analyzed from the video and the semiotics elements according to the MCDA by Machin and Mayr (2012). Regarding the results of the study, they show that the visuals of the video represent instances where women have the power to stop men from abusing them. Even when the visuals show some fictional scenes, the interpretation is that women have the right and the power to make themselves be respected by men. In addition, the results showed as a reminder that there are movements which are there to help women in these injustices. Finally, in the last part of the song the final idea about the resistance of men violating women is represented as the final result of this study.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, semiotic analysis, feminism, machismo, reggaeton.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present a visual analysis of the song *Yo perreo sola* from the reggaeton singer Bad Bunny. Music is without a doubt one of the most important forms of expression in different cultures. Back in the day when the Reggaeton genre became popular, one of the strongest criticism against was that in most of their songs women appeared as an object of sex denigrating them in the emotional and physical appearance. Thus, some singers have opted for representing and defending the position of not only women, but also the LGBTQ+ community. In society, there are also movements and social programs which defend and protect the rights of these groups of people. Due to the numerous social injustices, more and more individuals are taking part in these activist actions to prevent such discriminations. This video has been classified as one which supports women in their empowerment in society. Based on this, I will start this paper by proving a conceptual framework and background on the content of the video. Subsequently, I will describe the methodology that was used to conduct the analysis which refers to multimodal multi-semiotic critical discourse analysis. Next, I will present the analysis together

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with the discussion. Finally, the conclusion and reflection to the content of the paper will be given.

2. Theoretical framework

The section approaches the relevant concepts and theory by the multidisciplinary areas of research. There is also a section which explains the phenomenon being analyzed. The structure of these sections presents a background to contextualize the main themes that are touched within the analysis. Subsequently, the concepts that emerged from the analysis are described to a better understanding of the topic and the discussion. Finally, the methodological procedures and techniques are presented.

2.1 *Background*

The roles that men and women have to adopt in society has been rejected by some people and disliked by others; "our world is deeply unequal and systematic inequalities which disadvantage women and advantage men are visible around the globe" (Flood, 2015: 1). This is due to the numerous problems that these roles imply. Nowadays, the terms feminism and *machismo* have a strong representation and cause a great impact in society. *Machismo* has an extremely negative meaning due to its consequences in women's psychological and physical appearance. Paredes (1971) explains that this term could have had its origins in the Conquest, when Hernan Cortez and his conquistadors arrived in Mexico and raped the women of the Aztecs. The author also explains that the cult of male has been in history for more than four centuries. Machismo, as Basham (1976) defines it as "sexual prowess, zest of action; including verbal 'action,' caring, and above all, absolute self-confidence" (p. 127). Complementing this idea, Basham (1976) explains that from a macho's viewpoint the place of a woman is at home. This interprets that women's role is somehow limited to being a mother, wife and a sexual servant. In addition, her role includes house chores and any other activity which serves the family.

There are feminists who defend and claim for respect for women's rights because they believe that these aspects do not define women, but rather denigrates them and puts them in an unequal spot from men. There have been several programs and movements which support women and their right to stop and/or defend them for the many injustices many of them have faced in their different spheres of life. There are also activists that work to defend women and ask for the equality of both genders in the different life environments they are involved in. Flood (2015) affirms that Women's movements and feminism have mounted a sustained challenge to local and global gender inequalities, with important successes in undermining the pervasiveness and acceptability of women's subordination" (p. 1). Therefore, there is opportunity for women to have an equal position in this world as any other gender.

2.2 *Theoretical concepts: feminism and machismo.*

As society, it has been hard to identify or to set roles for women and men, especially because it is thought that they have different positions and functions. Considering the role of women, Butler (2013) assures that "the category of women is internally fragmented by class, color, age, and ethic lines, to name a few; in this sense, honoring the diversity of the category and insisting upon its definitional reification of women's experience for the diversity that exists" (p. 327).

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Connell (2005) explains that,

> Equality between women and men has been a doctrine well recognized in international law since the adoption of the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations 1958), and as a principle it enjoys popular sup- port in many countries. The idea of gender equal rights has provided the formal basis for the inter-national discussion of the position of women since the 1975-85 UN Decade for Women, which has been a key element in the story of global feminism (Bulbeck 1988). The idea that men might have a specific role in relation to this principle has emerged only recently. (p. 1801)

Even when there might be laws and other formal actions which defend women over men, there are unfair actions against women. In some parts of the world females live deeply in oppression and there is nothing they can do because if they act to ask for rights they will be murdered or sacrificed for their corrupt behavior. Even in countries where laws protect them from these violence acts, there are people who do not respect the law and take part from themselves violating the rights women have.

Feminist activist and social movements continue asking for more rights for women, but especially for people to respect that one already established by law. Connell (2005) explains that,

> Gender inequalities are embedded in a multidimensional structure of relationships between women and men, which, as the modern sociology of gender shows, operates at every level of human experience, from economic arrangements, culture, and the state to interpersonal relation- ships and individual emotions. (p. 1801)

> The description of women's oppression, their historical situation or cultural perspective has seemed, to some, to require that women themselves will not only recognize the rightness of feminist claims made in whether their relational attitudes, in their embodied resistance to abstract bodies, their capacity for material identification or material thinking, the nonlinear directionality of their pleasures or the elliptical and plurivocal possibilities of their writing. (p. 324)

There are several reasons that concern the inequalities between men and women as the quote above presents. Sometimes women are attacked more in one sphere or their lives; however, the claim is that this should be solved in order for women to feel secure and free in the world where they live. The author also presents four ideas that categorize men as the cause for the misfortune of women (Connell, 2005: 1801-1802):

> (1) Men and boys are thus in significant ways gatekeepers for gender equality.

> (2) In every statement about women's disadvantages, there is an implied comparison with men as the advantaged group.

> (3) In the discussions of violence against women, men are implied, and sometimes named, as the perpetrators.

> (4) In discussions of women's exclusion from power and decision making, men are implicitly present as the power holders.

The author explains in her research that men have created this image due to the attitude, behaviors and acts which they have done to women. Referring back to the second point mentioned, men have been seen as one with greater force than women to perform numerous activities. In addition, the third point exhibits a reality which have murder many women around the world. The feeling of superiority has led men to use violence with women if they feel threatened by women's actions. As a result of this, point number four reveals that men have accomplished vandalism by suppressing women to the acts of violence they perform to them. Adding to this idea, Connell (2005), affirms that the position of men has not greatly changed because,

· Men remain a very large majority of corporate executives, top professionals, and holders of public office;

· Men hold nine out of ten cabinet-level posts in national governments, nearly as many of the parliamentary seats, and most top positions in inter- national agencies;

· Men, collectively, receive approximately twice the income that women receive and also receive the benefits of a great deal of unpaid household labor, not to mention emotional support, from women. (p. 1804)

These points show how the work area is one of the main where the inequality among women is shown. This is usually the case because women are perceived as the weak gender or the ones that are the most emotional. Thus, this has caused people to think that they are not able to cope with the complex roles in society or situations in the different spheres of life. However, just as men, they deserve and need the same opportunities in order to prove that they are capable of performing the same multifaceted activities as men do. As Blackstone (2003) states, gender roles are simple expectations that society has on individuals based on their sex. Thus, this does not determine facts about people and their sexes.

Over all, Connell (2005) explains that "moving toward a gender-equal society involves profound institutional change as well as change in everyday life and personal conduct" (p. 1801). From this, it is explained that the task involves the society in general. Flood (2015) affirms that the way in which men are part of the problem, they are also part of the solution. This is because "gender injustices will only cease when men join with women to put an end to it" (p. 3). The author adds that not only men's attitudes, but also their behaviors would have to change for gender equality to be achieved. Considering the consequences if these changes are not adapted, Chant and Guttman (2006) affirm that women could continue to suffer patriarchal power relations such as total responsibility for sexual health, family nutrition to mention few. On the other hand, Kaufman (2003) suggest to reflect on this participation from men since it can reinforce their existing power. As another consequence, Connell (2003) mentions that justice for women can be weakened.

2.3 *Critical discourse analysis as a research methodology*

As stated above, this paper aims to analyze the instances of feminism that the reggaeton song *Yo perreo sola* contains. This analysis is focused on a critical discourse analysis which according to Fairclough (2013) CDA has three main characteristics: (1) It is part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process. (2) It includes systematic analysis of texts and, (3) It addresses social wrongs. In order to do this, I have chosen three different scenes from the video which alludes to feminism instances.

The focus of this paper falls more precisely in to the explanation the author provides about one of the primary focus of CDA which is the effect of power relations and inequalities in producing social wrongs, and in particular on discursive aspects of power relations and inequalities: on dialectical relations between discourse and power, and their effects on other relations within the social process and their elements.

This focus leads to the consultation of ideologies which Fairclough (2013) defines as "a relation between meaning (and therefore texts) and social relations of power and domination" (p. 79). The author also explains that discourse analysis has four contributions to ideological analysis, these are:

a. Identifying discourses, and their linguistics realizations,

b. Tracing the texturing od relations between discourses,

c. Tracing the 'internal' (to semiosis) dialectic between discourses, genres and styles,

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d. Tracing the recontextualization of discourses (genres, styles) across structural and scalar boundaries.

Furthermore, the term hegemony also takes a role in this analysis by explaining that "it is a focus of constant struggle around points of greatest instability between classes and blocs, to construct or sustain or fracture alliances and relations of domination/subordination, which takes economic, political and ideological forms" (Fairclough, 2013: 61).

3. Research technique

Research question: What are the instances of feminism that the reggaeton song *Yo perreo sola* presents?

For this analysis I consulted Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). According to Machin and Mayr (2012) "is interested in showing how images, photographs, diagrams and graphics also work to create meaning, in each case describing the choices made by the author" (p. 9). This interest is presented because as the authors explain, texts will use linguistics and visual strategies to present an idea; however, these representations might not be neutral and normal. In other words, MCDA seeks to present the other modes of communication that they hide. Therefore, its job is to identify the message hidden through a description of the visuals the phenomenon presents.

More precisely, I will focus on a social semiotic theory, view and approach which is explained as one which:

· Describing and documenting the underlying resources available to those who want to communicate meaning visually and analyzing the way that they are used in settings to do particular things.

· Is concerned with the underlying available repertoire of sings and their use in context to communicate wider ideas, moods and attitudes and identities, and interested in why specific means were used to create these.

· Choices of visual elements and features do not just represent the world, but constitute it. Like language, visual communication plays its part in shaping and maintaining a society's ideologies, and can also serve to create, maintain and legitimize certain kinds of social practices.

· Is interested in the details of things like color and shape and their interrelationship in any visual design or image (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 18-19).

The authors also explain that "visual communication, by its nature, tends to be more open to interpretation, which gives the author some degree of maneuver not permitted to language use" (p. 31). Therefore, an iconographical and iconological analysis is also appropriate for this paper. This will allow us to explore and signify discourses by individual elements in images, objects and settings. More specifically, the three visual semiotic choices that this study aims to describe from the video focus on: attributes, settings and salience. Attributes correspond to the ideas and values communicated by objects, settings are used to communicate ideas, connote discourses and their values, identities and actions and salience presents the features which have the purpose to stand out and draw attention to certain meanings.

4. Results of the analysis

In this part of the paper, I present the results of the analysis based on the images that were chosen to be analyzed from the video. It is important to remember that the purpose of this song and especially the visual content of the video is to raise awareness about the sexual aggression

and the social injustices that are performed to women. From the lyrics to the visual that the song presents, these ideas about defending and respecting women are represented and symbolized. In the next analysis, the representation is deeply explained.

For this part of the analysis, there are several aspects to consider from this video. The analysis starts by considering the visual semiotic choices which Machin and Mayr (2012) explain is communication that is expressed through non-linguistic features or elements. In other words, the author states that images connote and denote ideas and messages. Then, it is through images that the singer tries to present a message to project to society. For this analysis, the visual semiotic choices that would be used for analysis are: attributes, settings and salience. For a better organization of the analysis, I have called the images to be analyzed scene 1 (Figure 1 and 2), 2 (Figure 3 and 4), and 3 (Figure 5).

In scene 1 (Figure 1 and 2), the male singer who is also the person interpreting a woman at a club wearing a bright reddish outfit, is at a higher altitude the men approaching her. In the same place, she is dancing the reggaeton song, moving around doing sensual poses. This communicates the idea that women are in total control of their decisions at the time of allowing or not a man to approach her. In this same scene, the next part is where men approach her in that high base where she is standing and since they do not stop and get close to her, she uses a magic force to stop them launching them far away from her. This scene presents how women should be in charge of who does and does not approach them. If they do not want someone to get close to them, they should have all the right to set them apart and men have to respect the decision. In other words, women have the same power to make decisions and take the same positionally than men in this world.

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

In scene 2 (Figure 3 and 4), a dark green room is the setting where two bid signs are on the wall. Each of these signs have a message that alludes to making awareness to the sexual aggression and social injustices that women have faced in society. The signs contain the phrases: *Ni una menos (Not one less)* and *La mujeres mandan* (*women rule*). The first sign reminds the audience about the social movement which helps preventing the sexual harassment on women in their work area. On the other hand, the second sign also reminds the audience that women have the power to make their authority worth the decision about what they allow to be done to them. These two signs are in the room being the greatest focus in order to identify them and their meaning. Not only do they remind the audience or show the message behind the song, but they empower women.

Figure 3.

Figure 4.

In scene 3 (Figure 5), the video presents the same singer tied with multiple chains and a dress code used by slaves back in the days. These images symbolize the resistance that men should adopt if a woman does not want to have any type of socialization with him. It also symbolizes breaking the barriers from toxic masculinity, prohibiting the man from his freedom since he is not having the right behavior in society. In other words, this presents what should happen to men since they are not able to control their desire for women. In addition, the other representation of this scene is how strong the harassment from men that the society would have to resort to treatment similar to one would use for dangerous species.

Figure 5.

The three scenes interpret the reality lived by women and the reality that they would once like to live. In general, this video tries to inform what is happening with women and men in a confrontation. It is important to also mention the role which the singers play in the video who is dressed as a woman being a man in real life. This subjectivity supports feminist and brings empowerment to women by showing support with the action of dressing as one of them. In addition, men are taking for granted that women would always want to socialize with them or approve of them having physical contact with them. The song together with the video present the real view of women and what they would do if the scenario as the video was possible for them.

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Therefore, with the message of the visual in the video, the singer pretends to show men that they should respect and resist their force or sexual desire towards women.

5. Discussion

Society has had this gender role idea about men and women for a long period of time and it might look difficult to destroy this barrier or beliefs and behaviors. Thus, as presented above, there are various activists and movements which work to accomplish the expected result which would be for women to be treated equally and with respect over men. As it was stated above and agreeing with the authors (Blackstone, 2003; Connell, 2005; Flood, 2015), this goal requires great support especially from the male population of the world. Even when it might be a difficult task, the benefits that this can bring are great for society. Women and girls would not only feel free to perform their daily activities at any time of the day, but would also feel comfortable doing any type of activity. Looking at the serious and painful side of the situation, the world would face less murders and unfair situations, especially those that involve men and women through acts of violence. A lot of these situations are acts that leave families without a daughter, cousin, sister or even a mother. These are just a few, but enough reasons to contribute to stop this inequality among female members of the society.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion with this paper, women and men should always be aware that there are people who would help them to respect their rights. It is important that singers and other forces of actions get involved in reminding and making awareness that as society we have better behaviors to adopt. This would not only help to prevent the harassment of women, but also help to prevent many unfair deaths. This paper has presented the analysis of a reggaeton song alluding to the equality for women and their respect in situations where men become perpetrators of their innocence. The analysis also suggests the importance of society adopting and supporting better behavior to help movements and programs to achieve their desired goal.

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Appendix: Analysis table

Visual semiotic choices	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3
Attributes: ideas and values communicated by objects.	Women must approve for men to approach them.	Allude to the movement *Ni una menos*.	Symbolizes the resistance to harass women and to break the barrier to toxic masculinity.
Settings: are used to communicate ideas, to connote discourse and their values, identities and actions.	The pretended setting is at a club.	Dark green room	A ring where the man is chained to prevent his harassment.
Salience: • Potent cultural symbols • Size • Color • Tone • Focus • Foregrounding • Overlapping	**Potent cultural symbols**: **Size**: the woman appeared in a higher altitude than men. **Color**: Red **Tone**: shiny dress code **Focus**: the magic force the woman uses to reject men. **Foregrounding**: **Overlapping**:	**Potent cultural symbols**: **Color**: Green **Tone**: bright lights in the sings. **Focus**: the message of the sings. **Foregrounding**: **Overlapping**:	**Potent cultural symbols**: chains **Color**: Black **Tone**: slave dress code **Focus**: the man forbidden from his freedom **Foregrounding**: **Overlapping**:

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"President-Protector": A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of a News Report Promoting the Personality Cult of the President of Turkmenistan G. Berdymukhamedov

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Abstract

The cult of personality started by the first President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Niyazov has acquired new dimensions with the present leader of the country. The cult of personality of Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov is actively constructed via mass media. This paper examines two short clips of a news report dedicated to the President's birthday celebration that was broadcasted on the Turkmen national TV on 26 June 2020. The paper analyzes a set of specific mechanisms of flattery inflation used in the report and demonstrates special linguistic choices and visual patterns applied to force a specific ideology on the audience. Due to the multimodal nature of the analyzed discourse, multimodal critical discourse analysis has been implemented, additionally informed by the systemic functional linguistics and the visual semiotic analysis.

Keywords: multimodal critical discourse analysis, personality cult, Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov.

1. Introduction

Today news reporting is actively used with the purpose of imposing the desired way of thinking on masses of people. This is the case in Turkmenistan, where national channels promote the cult of personality (the creation of an idealized, heroic, and worshipful image of a political leader by the means of various types of mass media propaganda) of the President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov. This study aims at analyzing a two-hour news report[1] dedicated to the sixty-third birthday celebration of the President that was broadcasted on one of the national channels *Altyn Asyr*. The research questions that this paper seeks to answer are the following:

RQ1: *What linguistic elements and visual patterns are utilized to produce and practice the personality cult of the President of Turkmenistan?*

RQ2: *What mechanisms of flattery inflation are used in Turkmen national news to promote the cult of personality of the President?*

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOBWLFNEIgM.

To answer these research questions, first, the literature for the study is consulted. Then, because of the multimodal nature of the analyzed discourse and in order to provide analysis of power relations in the video, multimodal critical discourse analysis is applied (MCDA). Since MCDA includes various approaches, in the paper I implement systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) to explore the linguistic choices and the intended meaning behind them. Additionally, visual semiotic analysis also carried out for the current project enabled to study the visuals appearing in the TV news report. However, it is worth mentioning that due to space constraints, this paper offers a micro analysis of the most salient aspects. Thus, a further investigation on the topic could be recommended.

- Personality cult of Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov is promoted in the national news.
- Special linguistic choices and visual patterns create manipulative discourse.
- The cult propaganda is spread via special mechanisms of flattery inflation.

1.1 Turkmenistan: A general overview of the country

A small body of research can be found on modern Turkmenistan (Denison, 2009; Klement, 2014; 2018). Denison (2009) explains that this is due to the "problems of gaining entry to the country, together with official harassment, often prove to be a deterrent for many researchers working in the region" (p. 1168). The current study aims to shed some light on the matter.

To provide an explanation of geographical location and characteristics of Turkmenistan, I will appeal to Kumar's description (2005):

> It [Turkmenistan] is located between the Caspian Sea and Amu Darya River in the Southeastern part of Central Asia, bordering Kazakhstan in the north, Uzbekistan in the northeast and Iran in the south and Afghanistan in the east. It is largely a desert country with more than 80 percent of the land mass occupied by the great Kara-Kum desert. Administratively, it has been divided into five *welayatlar* [Provinces] named Akhal, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap and Mary. (p. 193)

Figure 1. Administrative map of Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan today is considered to be one of the most hermetic countries in the world. According to Human Rights Watch[2], Turkmenistan is known as a repressive country that lacks basic human rights, has corruption, a flawed criminal justice system and a strong sense of nationalism. Furthermore, according to the same organization, the President and his relatives and

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[2] https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/turkmenistan.

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their associates control all aspects of public life. Therefore, there are no private channels in Turkmenistan. Instead, according to the official website of The State Committee of Turkmenistan for Television, Radio Broadcasting and Cinematography, there are 7 national channels: *Altyn Asyr, Miras, Ýaşlyk, Türkmenistan, Türkmen owazy, Aşgabat, and Türkmenistan sport*. They are controlled by the government of the country. The information broadcasted from the channels is highly positive, any kind of criticism is absent. The only person that is "allowed" to criticize and show discontent on national news is the president himself. Often the footage of the President firing ministers is shown on the national news. For instance, on 4 May 2017, the President first strongly criticized and then sacked Amanmyrat Khallyev (prosecutor-general) for bribery and corruption at a State Security Council session on May 4 that was broadcasted on national news. In the same news report the President announced a formal reprimand for Interior Minister Isgender Mulikov and sacked several officials from the prosecutor's office and in the Interior Ministry.

Since most of the foreign alternative news websites are blocked (as well as social media websites) in Turkmenistan, national TV is the main source of information for its citizens. Three out of seven channels are news channels: *Altyn Asyr, Türkmenistan, and Aşgabat. Altyn Asyr* (from Turkmen "Golden Century") is the first Turkmen national channel that started broadcasting in spring of 1992. The channel highlights events in the political arena.

1.2 *Cult of personality: Historical examples*

A cult of personality is a historical phenomenon when by the means of various types of mass media propaganda an idealized, heroic, and worshipful image of a political figure is created (Márquez, 2018; Pisch, 2016; Wells, 2014). According to Pisch (2016), the term "*kul't lichnosti*" (Cult of personality) was first used in the Soviet Union "in Nikita Krushchev's 1956 Secret Speech to the Twentieth Party Congress of the VKP, in which he denounced the 'cult of the individual' surrounding the then-deceased Stalin" (p. 52). Márquez (2018) states that the term "cult of personality" appears by different names, such as ruler cult, personality cult, cult of personality, and leader cult. A cult of personality was widely produced in pre-modern monarchies. However, its occurrence in modern contexts that "stress the equality of citizens and the role of the people as the only source of legitimacy for political order", is rather puzzling (Márquez, 2018: 1). Some of the most well-known examples of leaders with personality cults were Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Adolf Hitler, Napoleon Bonaparte, Hugo Chavez. Moreover, in history some of the cults received proper name. For instance, "Leniniana" (Márquez, 2018), "Staliniana" (Márquez, 2018), "Chaveziana" (Márquez, 2018), and even "Nyýazowisation"[3] (Clement, 2014).

Márquez (2018) argues that general models of the emergence and development of such phenomenon as "cult of personality" are still non-existent. Therefore, he proposes two models of political leader cults: "cult rituals" and "cult propaganda" (Márquez, 2018). Cult rituals can appear in quite open political systems, as they are "in many cases not controlled or directed by state agents, and at least some forms of cult participation are not driven by fear of social or official sanction, or by expectations of patronage in exchange for loyalty" (Márquez, 2018: 11). In opposition to "cults as rituals" there exists "cults as propaganda". Propaganda can induce people's support to the regime, however without belief in its content, generally out of fear.

1.3 *Cult as propaganda: Flattery inflation and its mechanisms*

It appears to be that only a small number of people need to believe (or pretend to believe) in the regime for the rest of the people to follow the lead. Propaganda imposes desirable

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[3] Saparmyrat Nyýazow was the first president of Turkmenistan.

signals of support for the leader on people. Márquez (2018) argues that these signals of support can be called "flattery" due to its insincere nature:

> "We should therefore expect that when power is highly personalized and intra-party competition for leadership-allocated resources is fierce, flattery will tend to become even more excessive and insincere, since the fact that everyone else is flattering the leader means that "ordinary" praise tends to be devalued as "cheap talk" and discounted accordingly." (p. 9)

Therefore, people around the leader try to show their excessive loyalty by renaming streets or cities in his or her honor, erecting statues and displaying portraits of the leader, wearing special badges with the image of the leader (e.g., Lenin in Soviet Union), and giving stormy and prolonged applause usually when welcoming the leader or after his or her speeches. Thus, more and more people start to compete in expressing their loyalty and absolute admiration of the leader.

Márquez (2020) argues that there are three main mechanisms of flattery inflation: loyalty signaling, direct production, and ritual amplification. According to Márquez (2020), "Cult-building via loyalty signaling typically emerges when there is common knowledge that there are rewards or punishments arising from credibly and publicly recognizing (or failing to recognize) the leader's exceptional qualities" (p. 7). Since there often exist some opportunities for advancement for people who recognize the exceptionalism of the qualities of the leader and sanctions for those who fail to do so, people tend to publicly praise the leader (or pretend to do so).

According to Márquez (2020) another mechanism of flattery inflation "direct cult production" is one of the simplest mechanisms of cult production. It is usually performed by bureaucratic authority of the state or other organizations, and results in production of "cult artifacts calculated to persuade audiences of the charisma of the leader" (p. 7). The role of these artifacts can be performed by statues and portraits of the leader, his enhanced autobiographies etc.

Finally, ritual amplification is participation in rituals of worship of the leader by expressing one's loyalty. These rituals of worship are mass gatherings such as concerts dedicated to the leader or his family, openings of hospitals or schools with "the help of the leader", etc.

2. Method

To explain MCDA as a method of research, it is important to provide an understanding of some major concepts involved such as multimodality and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Therefore, I will start this section by discussing the notions of multimodality and multimodal texts.

2.1 *Multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA)*

Halliday (1978) was one of the first scholars who argued that "there are many other modes of meaning, in any culture, which are outside the realm of language" (p. 4). Later, Kress and van Leewen (1996) agreeing with Halliday, introduced the term multimodality. Multimodality refers to a set of different communicational forms or modes such as spoken and written discourse, images, music and signs (to name a few). Due to the development of digital and internet technology, the number of these modes has expanded. O'Halloran (2011) states that all discourses are arguably multimodal. Baldry and Thibault (2006) claim that:

> "multimodal texts integrate selections from different semiotic resources to their principles of organization. […]. These resources are not simply juxtaposed as separate modes of meaning making but are combined and integrated to form a

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complex whole which cannot be reduced to or explained in terms of the mere sum of its separate parts." (p. 18)

Therefore, multimodality starts with the belief that multimodal texts consist of different semiotic resources that should be analyzed together rather than separately (Mayr, 2016). This belief is one of the basic principles of MCDA.

Another important concept that needs to be addressed is CDA. CDA appeared in the late 1980s and is concerned with "relations between discourse, power, dominance and social inequality" (van Dijk, 1993). CDA not only studies these relations, but also looks at how they are reproduced and maintained in discourse. According to Hall et al. (2011), critical discourse analysis studies "the ways in which social power, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts" (p. 88). Therefore, CDA is interested in how language, ideology, and power are connected. In this study I apply CDA when illustrating and explaining various linguistic choices used to refer to the President and a possible reason behind a high percentage that they comprise of the overall text. Additionally, I implement CDA when providing interpretation of specific utterances from the two clips and elaborating on how with their help the specific ideology is promoted.

Finally, MCDA is an emerging method of research that has been developed from a social semiotic approach to multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2001; Kress, 2010). According to Mayr (2016), MCDA is used not only

> "to understand the nature of non-verbal communication, […] but to carry out a critical analysis of linguistic and visual discourses in the broader tradition of CDA. MCDA can be seen as an expansion in that it provides a systematic model for the study of the interaction between the verbal and the visual, that is, the inter-semiotic relationships between modes." (p. 264)

Thus, MCDA combines various methods in order to analyze language as well as visual images in a provided discourse. Mayr (2016) states that "MCDA applies tools many of which are derived from Halliday (1978; 1985), Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2001) and van Leeuwen (1996; 2005)" (p. 265). Similarly, in this paper, I apply systemic-functional linguistics (Halliday (1978; 1985) and visual semiotic analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; 2001). Further I discuss these approaches in greater detail.

2.1.1 *Systemic-functional linguistics (SFL)*

As it has been stated above, MCDA has been greatly influenced by Halliday' SFL that examines language and its social purpose. In other words, it studies functional organization of language in contexts of everyday life. Furthermore, SFL is usually associated with Halliday's framework for describing texts and their social contexts (1978) that includes three elements: field, tenor, and mode of the discourse. Halliday and Hasan (1989) provide following definitions to the three components:

> (1) The field of discourse refers to the nature of the social action that is achieved by the text.
>
> (2) The tenor of discourse refers to the participants of the discourse, their status and roles.
>
> (3) The mode of discourse refers to the part that language plays in the discourse (e.g., spoken or written discourse, persuasive, didactic, expository, etc.).

Halliday's framework for describing texts and their social contexts (1978) is used in the present study.

2.1.2 *Visual semiotic analysis*

Besides the language used in the analyzed discourse, the visionary images are also examined with the help of visual semiotic analysis. Visuals started to be treated like language in the nineteenth century when the first systematic model for visual analysis was introduced. Semiotic analysis studies signs and their meaning in relation to social situations and processes. In this paper the visual images appearing in the news report both in the foreground and background are analyzed. Machin and Van Leeuwen (2007) argue about the importance of various semiotic elements such as one's appearance, gestures, and eye contact that provide additional information in visual images. In the paper these elements are also analyzed to give the insight of the power relations between the President and his subordinates. Furthermore, Machin and Van Leeuwen (2007) discuss other semiotic resources as setting, attributes, and colors that can also be informative regarding the general aim behind a particular image. Thus, in the current article, I explore how the elements discussed above are used in the video with a persuasive aim. Additionally, I find it important to explain the visuals from a cultural perspective, as one might find it challenging to comprehend some peculiarities of the Turkmen culture that are evident in the video clips.

3. Analysis and discussion of the results

In this section the analysis of the data and discussion of the results will be offered. I will start by providing a general overview of the analyzed news report:

The news report is two hours long and dedicated to the President's sixty-third birthday celebration. It was aired on 26 June 2020 on the main national channel *Altyn Asyr* in Turkmen language. In the paper I examine two clips from the mentioned news report. The two clips analyzed in the article are about three minutes each. The timeline of the clips is the following:

1) For the first clip: 0:57-04:22.

2) For the second clip: 01:43:16-01:46:09.

In the article I present both the manually transcribed original Turkmen text and my version of its English translation.

With the help of Halliday's framework (1978), I will further provide a description of the multimodal discourses in the two clips. Then, I will present a quantitative analysis of the linguistic elements applied to refer to the President and explain their meaning from a CDA perspective. After that, I will examine the visual images presented in the news report from a cultural viewpoint and according to Machin's (2010) framework. Finally, the CDA analysis of the utterances produced in the clips will be provided followed by comments on power relations and national ideology.

3.1 *In the Presidential Palace: CMDA of the first clip*

To provide information on the setting of the first clip, the main characters and their actions, as well as aims behind the video, Halliday's framework for describing texts and their social contexts is applied and adapted according to the multimodal nature of the discourse.

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Table 1. Description of the multimodal discourse and its social context (first clip)

Field	The production of cult of personality in two settings (news studio and the President's palace).
Tenor	Outside of the news report: Two news presenters (a man and a woman) and the audience watching the news report. Inside of the news report: The President, twenty Cabinet ministers (two of whom are women), five heads of provinces, and ten children.
Mode	The multimodal discourse (spoken, written, and visual) combines features of informative (inform the audience about the President's birthday and the way it was celebrated) and persuasive language (convince the audience to adopt the belief about the exceptional features of the President expressed by the participants of the discourse).

The information in Table 1 shows that in the first clip two settings can be observed: the news studio where the news report was aired and the Presidential Palace in Ashgabat.[4] Additionally, various participants of the discourse are described. In the first part of the clip the interaction is between the presenters and the audience watching the news report. In the second part of the video the interaction is between a number of participants: the President, Cabinet ministers, heads of the provinces, and children. Regarding the mode, it combines two functions: to inform and to force a desired ideology on the nation.

For the latter purpose, different linguistic choices are used, specifically when addressing the head of the state: adjectives, epithets, the word "President" itself, and the name of the President. The percentage of these linguistic elements can be seen in Table 2. Additionally, the total number of tokens and types present in the spoken discourse can be observed. Moreover, combined the tokens of these linguistic elements make around 10% (10.07%) of the total percentage of tokens, and the types – almost 4 % (3.73 %) of the total percentage of types. Without a doubt, 10% of the overall text to address the President is quite a significant percent for a three-minute clip. This frequent reference to the President using such adjectives as brave, dear, respectful and such epithets as the protector and grandfather (Table 2) is made to highlight the exceptional qualities of the President and impose the idea of his power and greatness.

Table 2. Analysis of the linguistic choices used to address the President (first clip)

Statistical item	Total number of words in a spoken discourse	%	№of adjectives (brave, dear, respectful) used to refer to the President	%	№of epithets (the protector, grandfather) used to refer to the President	%	№of times the word "President" was used	%	№of times the name of the President was used	%
Tokens	298	100	7	2.35	16	5.37	5	1.68	2	0.67
Types	187	100	3	1.6	2	1.07	1	0.53	1	0.53

3.1.1 *Traditional clothing*

Visual images can also tell quite a lot about the power relations in the analyzed discourse. Thus, the clothes worn by the people in the first video show the importance of the occasion. For instance, the female news presenter (Figure 2) in the video is dressed in a white national dress with a hand-made colorful decoration in a traditional Turkmen style on her chest

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[4] The capital of Turkmenistan.

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that is called *"yaka"*. Additionally, the woman is wearing a big piece of traditional Turkmen jewelry on her chest, and a traditional headscarf covers her hair. Furthermore, the white color of the dress also shows that the occasion is special. In many cultures white color symbolizes purity (Machin, 2010). In Turkmenistan white color is usually worn for festive celebrations.

Figure 2. The news studio

Children in the Presidential Palace (Figure 3) are also dressed up, each of the girls is wearing a dress of a particular color (green, red, dark blue, light blue, and yellow) with embroidered traditional symbols). The hair of the girls is braided in two braids. Boys are dressed in traditional clothing as well (white shirts with embroidered traditional symbols and black pants). Both boys and girls are wearing traditional hats called "*takhyas*". The festive traditional clothes of women and children give an impression of a major national holiday.

Figure 3. Presidential Palace

The President himself is wearing a grey suit with a grey tie and a white shirt (Figure 4). However, more importantly is that his glasses and his grey hair make his look appropriate for the epithet "Atamjan" ("Grandfather") that children use when referring to him in their poem.

Figure 4. Children receiving books written by the President

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3.1.2 *Applause*

When the President enters the room, he is welcomed by a round of loud applause. After that, the children come up to the President to tell a poem, a round of loud applause can be heard again. Then, the head of the Akhal province approaches the President to give a report regarding the agricultural state of the province. Everyone claps again. The fact that applause can be heard and seen many times (when the President enters the room or when he likes something) can be interpreted as a sign of loyalty signaling from the part of his subordinates.

3.1.3 *Eye contact*

When giving a report, the head of Akhal province (in the full video each one of the fiveheads of provinces) does not look straight in the eyes of the President (Figure 5). Instead, he bends his head and looks down. After reading the report, he hands it to the President, escaping the eye-contact with him again. It is evident that the subordinates of the head of the state realize "that there are rewards or punishments arising from credibly and publicly recognizing (or failing to recognize) the leader's exceptional qualities" Márquez (2020). This peculiarity is another clear sign of loyalty signaling.

Figure 5. The head of Akhal province giving a report

3.1.4 *President's books*

The children after telling the poem to Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov have received some presents from him. One of the gifts were books written by the President. After accepting the presents, the children put the books against their forehead three times (Figure 6), as if a President's book were a sacred object. The production with the further distribution of the President's books is an example of direct cult production (Márquez, 2020). The personality cult of the leader is promoted with the help of different artifacts, in this case it is the books of the President. Furthermore, the fact that the children treat the books as a sacred object is another clear evidence of loyalty signaling. It has been explained to them that public praise of the leader is welcomed with rewards, whereas the failure to do so, with punishments.

Figure 6. Children putting President's books against their foreheads

For the additional CMDA I also provide the analysis of the utterances produced by the two news presenters. For this purpose, I use a table that is divided into two columns (Table 3). In the first column utterances originally delivered in Turkmen are presented, whereas in the second column their English translations are provided. In the table, I refer to the male news presenter as "NP1" and to the female news presenter as "NP2". Additionally, since the children in the first clip tell a poem to the President synchronically, I refer to them both as "C".

Table 3. CDA of the utterances of the first clip

№	Utterances in Turkmen	Translation into English
1.	*NP1: Bilşimiz ýaly şu gün ýurdumyzyň we halkymyzyň durmuşynda şanly günleriň biri.*	*NP1: As we all know today for the life of the whole nation and the country is a special day.*
	The reporter's statement of the President's birthday being a "special day" for everyone in the country appears as a strong overgeneralization. This statement seems to impose on the audience the desirable feeling of worship of the leader.	
2.	*NP2: Biziň özgezegimizde mähriban Arkadagymyzy ak goýun toýy mynasyp ýetli tutuş halkymyzyň adyndan tüýs ýürekden gutlaýas.*	*NP2: On our part, on behalf of the whole nation, we sincerely congratulate dear Protector with his "white sheep" holiday [that he has reached the age of the prophet].*
	Besides the repetition of overgeneralization "on behalf of the whole nation", implicit comparison of the President to the Prophet Muhammed is made to idolize the leader of the country.	
3.	*NP2: Ýurdumyz we halkymyz galybersede tutuş adamlar üçin beýik işler bitirýar.*	*NP2: The great job performed [by the President] is for the well-being of the whole country, its people, and all mankind.*
	In this statement another overgeneralization of the greatness of the President and his power is presented, particularly that his actions affect not only all the people in Turkmenistan, but "all mankind".	
4.	*NP2: Her bir pursatda esasy daýanjy hasaplaýan halkyny bagyt yoluna ataran mähriban Arkadagymyzyň tagalasy bilen güleşür diýarymyz bagtyýarlyk mekanda, ýagşy işleriň aman bolýan ýurdyna öwürildi.*	*NP2: Through every opportunity he gets, our dear Protector strives for the happiness of the nation. Thanks to him, our sunny land turned into the center of good deeds and happiness.*
	This sentence promotes a certain image of the President: as a protector, a hard worker, the only reason behind all the good things that have happened to the nation and the country.	
5.	*C: Atamjan yhlasyndan berekete baý bugday.*	*Thanks to grandfather's efforts wheat is rich in abundance.*
	From the utterance, even the success in the agriculture sector, particularly a big harvest of wheat is due to the "efforts" of the President which is an obvious exaggeration.	
6.	*C: Alkyşdyny şöhrat bilen, Atamjan!* *Alkyşdyny şöhrat bilen, Atamjan!*	*Glory to you and applause, grandfather!* *Glory to you and applause, grandfather!*
	In these utterances an explicit worship of the President is encouraged.	

From the table it is evident that the utterances provided by the participants of the video, primarily by the news presenters are directed to praising the President, his qualities, and actions. Therefore, exaggeration and overgeneralization are common devices applied here.

3.2 *A concert dedicated to the President: CMDA of the second clip*

For the second video clip Halliday's framework is also applied in order to provide general information of the discourse (setting, main characters and their actions, purpose of the video).

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Table 4. Description of the multimodal discourse and its social context (second clip)

Field	The production of cult of personality in two settings (news studio and the square in front of the State Cultural center).
Tenor	Outside of the news report: Two news presenters (a man and a woman), a news reporter (a man), and the audience watching the news report. Inside of the news report: Singers, dancers, musicians, children, and invited audience.
Mode	The multimodal discourse (spoken and visual) combines features of informative (inform the audience about the President's birthday and the concert that was held in his honor) and persuasive language (convince the audience to adopt the belief about the exceptional features of the President expressed by the participants of the discourse).

The information presented in Table 4 shares some similar characteristics with Table 1. Thus, the number of the settings presented in the second clip is also two. However, if the first setting is the same for both clips, that is the news studio, the second setting in clip number two is different. The second setting is the square in front of the State Cultural center in the capital of the country (Ashgabat). Regarding the participants, some similarities can be also noted. Thus, in the first part of both videos, the participants of the discourse are the news presenters and the audience that is watching the report. However, in the second clip there is another participant, a news reporter, and in the second part of the second video, the number of participants is considerably higher: singers, dancers, musicians, children, and the invited audience. Regarding the aims of the discourse in the second video, it is the same as in the first one: production and practice of the personality cult of the President of Turkmenistan. However, it is worth mentioning that in the second clip it is mainly achieved through mass gathering (concert) that is a typical example of ritual amplification (a mechanism of flattery inflation).

Moving from providing a general description of the multimodal discourse in the second clip, I will now analyze the spoken language, particularly its persuasive function that is partly achieved through various linguistic elements used to refer to the President (*table 5*).

Table 5. *Analysis of the linguistic choices used to address the President (second clip)*

Statistical item	Total number of words in a spoken discourse	%	№of adjectives (national, dear, respectful) used to refer to the President	%	№of epithets (the protector, the leader) used to refer to the President	%	№of times the word " President" was used	%	№of times the name of the President was used	%
Tokens	329	100	13	3.95	13	3.95	2	0.61	2	0.61
Types	205	100	3	1.46	2	0.95	1	0.49	1	0.49

As it can be seen from Table 5, the same categories of linguistic elements as in the first video clip are observed: adjectives, epithets, the word "President" itself, and the name of the President. The percentage representing each of the mentioned groups is presented in the table alongside the total number of tokens and types in the second clip. If we combine all the tokens referring to the President, we get around 9% (9.12%) of the total percentage of tokens. Regarding the types used to refer to the leader, their numbers make up slightly more than 3% (3.39%).

In order to provide further MCDA, I will discuss visual images in the second video clip.

3.2.1 *President's portraits and songs*

Throughout the whole clip a portrait of the President on the Turkmen flag can be seen in the background on a big screen (Figure 7). Moreover, sometimes videos of the President playing on musical instruments and singing songs of his own composition are shown on the screen. These are the examples of direct cult production Márquez (2020).

Figure 7. Portrait of the President at the concert

3.2.2 *Clothing*

The singers and dancers at the concert (Figure 8) are either wearing traditional Turkmen clothes or suits (men only). The exception is made for a song about sport written by the President. During the performance of this song, the dancers are wearing sports clothes. Moreover, the people in the audience are also quite dressed up with women wearing traditional Turkmen dresses and men wearing suits (Figure 9). This shows that people treat the President's birthday as a major national holiday.

Figure 8. Singers and dancers performing at the concert

3.2.3 *Gestures*

The audience present at the concert seem to either dance or clap (Figure 9). Some of the people are even singing along. Everyone is listening to the concert standing up. Even though some tables can be noticed in the background, no chairs can be seen (Figure 9). This might be treated as another example of loyalty signaling. Since people participating in the celebration know that there are "rewards and punishments" (Márquez, 2020) for publicly recognizing the leader or failing to do so, they (in)sincerely show how much they enjoy the concert.

Figure 9. Audience clapping at the concert

For additional CMDA I provide the analysis of the utterances produced by the two news presenters. The same table as the one presented for the first video clip is used here as well. It is also divided into two columns (Table 6). In the first column utterances originally delivered in Turkmen are placed and in the second column their English translations. Similar to Table 3, to refer to the news reporter I use the abbreviation "NR".

Table 6. CDA of the utterances of the second clip

№	Utterances in Turkmen	Translation into English
1.	*NR: Çünki çeper dörejelige aýratyn gadyr goýýan mähriban Arkadagymyz medeniýetiň we sungatyn ösdürünmägine oň halkymyzyň ruhy dünýasiniň baýlaşmagyny edýan tasirene möhüm ahmet berýar.*	*Our dear protector who does all the best he can for the happiness of the nation, pays special attention to the development of art, music, and culture, as he thinks that they enrich the souls of the people.*
An apparent exaggeration of the role of the leader in the lives of the nation can be seen in the utterance. Moreover, the actions that are clearly performed by a group of people such as "development of art, music, and culture" are attributed to one person (the President). This is done to show the exceptionalism of the qualities of the leader.		
2.	*NR: Baýramçylyk dawarasynda çykyş eden meşhur aýdymçylar sungat dessantlar we ýaş ýerine ýetirjiler hoş owalyk üsti bilen, berkarar döwletimiziň bagtyýarlyk dowurüni mähriban Arkadagymyzyň ýol açalagyňyza ýurdumyzyň ýeten derejegisini, ýurdumyzyň tebigi ayratynlaklaryny we päk söýgüni wasp etdiler.*	*The famous singers, young performers, and composers praised the accomplishments of our stable state and its era of happiness, all achieved with the help of our dear protector. They also did not forget to mention the beauty of the Turkmen nature.*
The internationally known truth about modern Turkmenistan becoming a highly hermetic country under the rule of the current leader is concealed. Moreover, it is substituted with an untrue argument of the country presently experiencing the "era of happiness". However, from the Human Rights Watch organization it is known that the country undergoes quite serious challenges. Once again, the importance of the President's role in misrepresented reality in the life of modern Turkmenistan is emphasized.		
3.	*NR: Mähriban Arkadagymyzyň sözlerine döredilen ajaýyp aýdymlar konserde tomuş edýanler üçin öz bolşly baýramçylyk sowgadyna öwürildi.*	*The wonderful songs, composed with the words of our dear protector, have become a beautiful gift for those who attended the concert.*
In the statement one of the exceptional qualities of the President, such as writing songs, is highlighted.		
5.	*NR: Milli liderimiziň sözlerine döwlet baş tutamyzyň agtygy Kerimiň sazyny döredilen "Sportly Türkmenistan" atla aýdym özüniň belent ruhy, joşgunly owazly bilen tomaşaçylary ony diňleýarleri beýik ýenişler ruhlandyrýar.*	*One of the songs "Sporty Turkmenistan" written by our national leader was accompanied by the music composed by his grandson Kerim. The audience enjoyed the President's great spirit and beautiful voice.*
President's extraordinary talent of writing songs as well as his grandson's music composing abilities are emphasized in the statement. Moreover, overgeneralization of the audience appreciating the President's spirit and voice has been made.		

Similar to Table 3, in the current table exaggeration is made regarding the role of the President. Moreover, the reality of the country is misrepresented and internationally accepted facts about the country are concealed. Instead, as in Table 3, the exceptional qualities of the leader of the country are highlighted, particularly his talent to write and sing songs. Furthermore, the President's grandson is also mentioned, specifically his music composing abilities.

Throughout the first and second video clips it is observable that all three mechanisms of flattery inflation (direct cult production, loyalty signaling, and ritual amplification) are implemented to promote the cult of personality of Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov. An example of direct cult production evident in the first clip with the distribution of the books written by the President. The signs of loyalty signaling can be observed in subordinates of the President, news presenters, and even the children who told a poem to the President. Thus, the subordinates express their loyalty by applauding the President, bending their heads when greeting the head of the state and by not making eye-contact with him. The news presenters signal their loyalty primarily by means of language. It has been established in previous sections that the language used in the news report is persuasive. Its purpose is to convince the audience of the extraordinary qualities of the leader (the President) and impose the belief that all the deeds performed by him are only for the good of the country. 9% (in the second clip) to 10% (in the first clip) of the text (from clips that are only three minutes long) dedicated to addressing the President seems quite significant. Moreover, the news presenters use various linguistic elements: adjectives and epithets (brave, protector, grandfather, etc.). They even make an implicit comparison of the President to the Prophet Muhammed. Further worship of the leader of the country can be observed when the children in the first video put his books against their forehead three times, as if they were sacred. Finally, the mass gathering at the concert dedicated to the President's sixty-third birthday where his and his family's talents are praised is a clear example of ritual amplification.

4. Conclusion

The study aimed to explore how the cult of personality of the President of Turkmenistan is promoted in the context of national news reports. For this purpose, two short video clips of a two-hour news report, that was dedicated to the sixty-third birthday celebration of the President, were analyzed. Due to the multimodal nature of the selected discourse, multimodal critical discourse analysis informed by the systemic functional linguistics and the visual semiotic analysis, was adopted. The findings revealed the manipulative discourse of Turkmen national news reporting and discussed special linguistic choices and visual patterns used to impose the desired way of thinking on the masses of people. Furthermore, special mechanisms of flattery inflation such as loyalty signaling, ritual amplification, and direct production were detected in the news report. They were used to produce the cult of personality of Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov through propaganda. Therefore, the current paper offers an initial approach to investigating the promotion of the cult of personality of the Turkmen President in the discourse of national news reports. However, future research should focus on the complex analysis of news reports from different national channels and perhaps newspaper articles to argue the common tendencies in the construction of the cult of personality in Turkmenistan.

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