

Dissertação de Mestrado

***Abre Los Ojos and Vanilla Sky: a verbal and visual analysis of  
two conversations between the main characters***

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## **ABSTRACT**

### ***Abre Los Ojos* and *Vanilla Sky*: a verbal and visual analysis of two conversations between the main characters**

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2012**

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Relations of power are present in our daily lives and most of the time we take them for granted not giving them the attention we should. Therefore, based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the System of Transitivity within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), as well as Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar, the objective of this study is to analyze verbal and visual resources used in two sequences of dialogues present in the Spanish film *Abre los Ojos* and its American remake *Vanilla Sky* and to investigate the relations of power between the main characters and the socio cultural aspects involved. The criteria for data selection is established as follow: a) films should be produced in different countries; b) the sequences should share similar events (she visiting him and he visiting her); c) the sequences should be among the crucial ones in relation to the plot (when they first meet) and; d) the sequences should present a representation of a real dialogue between a couple in opposite social class. As a result the sequences were taken from the moment where the male character (protagonist) meets the female character in his birthday party and, consequently, when he visits her for the first time. Conclusions suggest that: a) the upper class male character, in their first meeting (in his house), holds the power of the conversation over the low class woman in both movies; b) the upper class male character from the Spanish film remains in a power position in the second dialogue (in her house), whereas in the American film there is a change of power between the characters and; c) the American remake depicts a strong socio-economic difference between the characters, however in the Spanish version this difference is more subtle. The present study, then, can be considered as an initial step to understand the multimodal reading/interpretation in movies'

narratives and images and how people influence and are influenced by socio-cultural aspects.

## RESUMO

### ***Abre Los Ojos* and *Vanilla Sky*: a verbal and visual analysis of two conversations between the main characters**

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Relações de poder estão presentes em nosso cotidiano e, na maioria das vezes, não nos damos conta e não damos a atenção que deveríamos. Portanto, baseado na Análise Crítica do Discurso (ACD), sistema de transitividade na Linguística Sistêmico-Funcional (LSF), bem como a Gramática Visual de Kress e van Leeuwen, o objetivo deste estudo é analisar recursos verbais e visuais usados em duas cenas de diálogos presentes nos filmes espanhol *Abre los Ojos* e sua refilmagem americana *Vanilla Sky* e investigar as relações de poder entre os personagens principais e os aspectos socioculturais envolvidos. Os critérios para a seleção de dados foram estabelecidos como seguem: a) os filmes deveriam ser produzidos em países diferentes; b) as cenas apresentar eventos similares (ela visitando ele e ele visitando ela); c) as cenas deveriam estar entre as fundamentais em relação ao enredo (quando se conhecem) e; d) as cenas deveriam apresentar uma representação de um diálogo real entre um casal de classes sociais opostas. Como resultado as cenas foram colhidas do momento em que o personagem masculino (protagonista) conhece a personagem feminina em sua festa de aniversário e, conseqüentemente, quando ele a visita pela primeira vez. As conclusões sugerem que: a) o personagem masculino de classe alta, no primeiro encontro (na casa dele), detém o poder da/na conversação com a mulher de classe baixa em ambos os filmes; b) o personagem masculino de classe alta do filme espanhol ainda é visto em posição de poder mesmo no segundo diálogo (na casa dela), o que não acontece no filme americano, que demonstra uma troca de poder entre os personagens e; c) a refilmagem americana apresenta uma grande diferença socioeconômica entre os personagens, enquanto que na versão espanhola essa diferença é mais sutil. O presente estudo,

então, pode ser considerado como um passo inicial para: a) o entendimento da leitura/interpretação multimodal em narrativas e imagens de filmes e, b) o quanto as pessoas influenciam e são influenciadas por aspectos socioculturais.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In our contemporary society we are surrounded by multimodal representations which can appear in many different forms (Machin, 2007) and, in the Western industrialized part of the globe, multimedia environment seems to be even more present and pervasive (TV, billboards, newspapers, magazines, the internet - smartphones, tablets - among many others).

Due to the pervasive aspect of different multimedia and multimodal representations in our society, it is crucial to have in mind that not only through verbal language (written or oral texts), but also through images people are able to be connected to social events. The amount of research in the area of multimedia and multimodality is growing. Works on visual analysis, for example, seek to drive or guide viewers to interpretations of images, which take into consideration issues of power, ideology and socio-cultural aspects involved.

We expect images to relay some kind of truth there are certain qualities that images possess to portray the highest level of truth. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), "Each realism has its naturalism, that is, a realism is a definition of what counts as real, a set of criteria for the real, and it will find its expression in the "right", the best, the (most) "natural" form of representing that kind of reality, be it a photograph or a diagram."(p.158)

To understand the way in which verbal and visual elements interact it is crucial to try to recognize and understand the meaning of the message. However, verbal and visual elements do not always share similar structures, but that they are strongly related in terms of how each theory sees and understands the relations between social actors, for example.

The Cinema Industry, for example, is a solid example of a multimodal way to connect to people and send messages, because it is a channel that imitates "real" life, and viewers, most of the time, recognize what they see on screens and relate the fictional images to their own lives/experiences.

Since films are more accessible nowadays than decades ago in many countries, it is crucial to recognize the power embedded in them and their effect on population who extract the information from the screens and are part of the society as active social actors. In Brazil, for example, films are broadcast daily

through TV channels and movie theaters and on many occasions in cultural places, such as theaters or even open gardens, to entertain people or celebrate a special happening.

Considering films as a strong form of influence peoples' lives the intention of this research is to analyze visual and verbal meanings in conversations between a couple in two movies, *Abre los Ojos* (Spanish, 1997) and its remake *Vanilla Sky* (American, 2001) which share similar plots. By making use of a theoretical basis available in the area of language studies and visual analysis, such as Fairclough (1989, 1995, 2003), Halliday (1984, 1985, 1989, 1994) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006), the study aims to discuss aspects of the power relation between the characters and the influence of cultural aspects.

According to O'Halloran (2006, p.109), the film medium can be seen as a parallel to our experience of the world where our senses, such as smell, taste, and touch are instigated<sup>1</sup>.

Since the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century cinema resources, such as light position and intensity, actors' display, and camera angles have advanced and have been used to entertain and call viewers' attention to a certain "reality", establishing a connection to people's lives and the world reflected on the screens.

Cinema is expected by audience to "imitate" life, and it is common to find in its dialogues and in its images, relations of power, which are socially construed.

As a media channel, cinema is a significant social institution which holds the power of reproducing ideologies and beliefs, and through it the manifestations seem to be more realistic to the viewer (Machin and van Leeuwen, 2003).

According to Julia Smith, an English soap producer, they (producers) reflect life; real life then is situated inside discourses (dialogues) and consequently recognized by audiences. (in Castelló, Dobson & O'Donnell, 2009). So, the way in which films

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of Cinema arose from the necessity to bring movement and the sense of life to static images (photographs). In 1893 the Lumière Brothers exhibited the first images and in 1895 the first "motion pictures projected on a screen." (Bordwell & Tompson, 2004, p. 466).

are made and presented is related to socio-cultural “needs”. As a result, it seems that filmmakers’ purpose is to produce them as close to “reality” as possible.

According to Willemsen (2010) “a film relates closely to the economic, social, political and cultural circumstances that presided over its making” (p.247).

Van Leeuwen (2005) refers to Halliday’s (1978) term *social semiotics* as a multimodal group of *semiotic modes* (verbal, visual, gestural), which are resources utilized as ways to communicate, also explored in the study on the way people interpret and produce meanings and texts (visual and spoken) and how this *semiotic system* influences to shape new texts.

Shaw and La Garza (2010) say that representation of cultural identity (individual and collective) in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world happens through its narrative and gains currency in specific configurations of power/knowledge and at particular spatio-temporal junctures. In films such as *Abre los Ojos* and its remake *Vanilla Sky*, according to Herbert (2006), there is repetition, variation, conscious, unconscious, and culture work together to inform subjectivity and constitute identity.

Having in mind how influential the Media can be to our societies, therefore, it becomes relevant to investigate and to analyze it in terms of the socio-cultural manifestation and the relations of power between characters. Cinema can represent socio-cultural aspects and present power relations embedded throughout their discourses (speeches) and visual aspects (images), so it becomes relevant to investigate the way these relations occur.

## **1.1 General background in Cinema**

In this section I provide a brief comment on the historical aspects of cinema worldwide and comments on the current theory of transnational films, so as to better contextualize my object of study.



Cinema history exceeds 100 years, from the industrial revolution in the 1890's up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it has gradually advanced in terms of technology (optics and lens making, the control of light, production of cellulose, precision machining) from static to motion pictures we have today, and has become one of the most important mass media channels of communication and entertainment in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, affecting people's life and behavior, because, as Bordell & Tompson (2004, p.47) state "film is not a random collection of elements".

Before World War I, France and Italy had been globally recognized as the most powerful cinema market, but with World War I, in Europe, film industries interrupted their works, opening space for the America Cinema Industry in California, more specifically, an area known as Hollywood. Hollywood has nowadays the most famous and powerful Cinema Industries, having in their stocks the majority of the movies released worldwide<sup>2</sup>.

The concept of transnational cinema (international cinema for some authors) arose in response to a change in worldwide film cultures. It aims to break traditional divisions to reflect the changing nature of global filmmaking. The term, according to Shaw and La Garza (2010), still needs a clear closure. The focus of researches on the area relate to the cultural exchange, cultural policy and, interrelationships between the local, national and the global.

## **1.2 Purpose of the analysis**

People are constantly exposed to different mass media channels such as television, the internet, billboards, and movies

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/birth-of-a-nation-opens> (The History Channel official website. Accessed on Nov. 28 2012)

among others. In this sense, films are relevant because they reach a very large audience, spread their socio-cultural representations worldwide, seem to affect audience's behavior through cultural manifestation (its semiotic system), and have a direct powerful relationship with the audience by means of stereotypical and behavioral patterns collected from each culture.

Baldry (2004) says that until quite recently TV advertisement could not be successfully studied in a multimodal way, since visual and verbal resources could not be reconstructed and captured to such analysis. With the advent of technological innovation, such as the digitalization of a video and its conversion into a sequence of stills, for example, considerable support has been given to those who seek to work with the multimodal analysis of media channels.

With these and innumerable other accessible tools, like specific software, for example, not only television advertisements, but also movies started to be available for a much more complete analysis.

From the invention of photography in 1826, to the invention of a system to project films onto a screen by the Lumière brothers and later the inclusion of sound in the classical Hollywood cinema during the mid-1920s (Bordwell & Thompson, 2004, p.465-81) numerous effort has been put in the movies by film producers to connect fiction to reality, to give viewers the sense of truth, of realism.

Such tools which allows researchers to study motion images and sounds in detail, are enough to make a complete multimodal analysis?

According to Baldry (2004), extra tools are necessary to help understand the workings of multimodal genres, for instance cultural values.

Considering several aspects involved in all media channels that we are frequently exposed to, the intention of this qualitative study is to describe and interpret the similarities and differences in the interactions between the main characters in both movies in an

attempt to identify the struggle for power between these characters.

The data will be collected from four sequences that are inserted in two movies: the Spanish *Abre los Ojos*, and its Hollywood remake *Vanilla Sky*, and analyze the relationship of the female character Sofia and her relation with the male protagonists when they first met in his house and later when they first visit her home, giving attention to the way in which those relations occur, how both characters behave in the presence of the other and, finally, its cultural relevance according to where the movies were produced in terms of cultural aspects.

The research questions I have designed to guide the thesis are: a) Which semiotic resources are available in the chosen sequences (image and speech production) of both movies in which the main characters interact?; b) What can be inferred in relation to the examination of the characters discursive-semiotic construction of social relations and the struggle for power in their speeches and in the way they are socially portrayed?

The two films, and therefore the chosen sequences, are part of this project as a way to demonstrate social and cultural aspects presented in this powerful media channel. The sequences were carefully chosen according to my interest in bringing out those sequences which could not wrongly influence the data analysis, that is, sequences in which similar aspects from both films could be put in a parallel position.

The importance of the topic is to contribute to make audiences aware of the way in which semiotic resources can be presented in the cinema and the way they are related to the socio cultural aspects of the countries which produced them: Spain and the United States of America.

### **1.3. Method**

As previously mentioned the center of this study are four sequences of the movies *Abre los Ojos* and *Vanilla Sky* which concern the moment when Sofia meets the male character

(protagonist of the film) in his fancy house celebrating his birthday and later when he meets her in her modest apartment.

For the analysis, the language used will be analyzed through Halliday's Systemic Functional Analysis (1985, 1994), where the author states that language can be used as a tool to affect reality. In his studies, Halliday presents a way to explore discourse and this is one of the proposals of my investigation, therefore, through the characters' speeches I'll analyze the power of the language used and its context (Halliday, 1989; Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Fairclough, 1989); and I will focus my attention on the representational meanings through the system of transitivity (grammatical system: processes themselves, participants and circumstances in the processes).

As for the visual data, which are eight static images captured from the films using a free online software called Screenhunter, I'll be focusing on Kress & van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design where the manifestation of visual narrative processes and representations and interaction will be present in the images (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006; Van Leeuwen, 2005).

And finally I discuss the interplay between both the language and images used and relate them to other multimodal semiotic resources that are also present (Machin, 2007; Unsworth, 2001).

### **1.3.1. The Data**

As already mentioned, the data chosen to be analyzed in this study are two sequences of two movies, one sequence of each. The two movies are *Abre los Ojos* (Open your Eyes), released in 1997, a Spanish, French and Italian production, recorded in Madrid and directed by the Chilean Alejandro Amenábar and, *Vanilla Sky* (2001), *Abre los Ojos*'s remake, directed by Cameron Crowe and produced in the United States of America.

Both movies have a very similar plot where a handsome and wealthy middle-age man - who is actually inserted in a kind of

a dream - has apparently everything required to be a happy person, yet he is not. He could have any girl he wanted, but he prefers to invest in a relationship with a girl who is dating his best friend, just because it is more challenging and “forbidden”.

The sequences belong to the first part of the film and it is when Sofia Cueto in *Abre los Ojos* and Sofia Serrano in *Vanilla Sky* (interpreted by Penelope Cruz in both movies) first meets César (interpreted by Eduardo Noriega in *Abre los Ojos*) and David Aames (interpreted by Tom Cruise in *Vanilla Sky*) in his big house, when he is celebrating his birthday and when he takes her home and finds out about her way of living.

### 1.3.2. Criteria for data selection

I found the mentioned sequences relevant due to the fact that my intention is to investigate the way language and visual aspects are involved and how relations of power between characters happen in a mass media channel like the movies.

Besides, it is interesting to investigate how they occur in a different culture, that is why I choose the Spanish movie *Abre los Ojos* and its American remake *Vanilla Sky*. Considering the fact that they are very similar, have similar plots and even the same female actress, the collected passages in both movies have comparable dialogues and deal with the same theme: the rich and beautiful guy, revealing his financial power but falling in love with an ordinary woman who seems to enjoy life from a different perspective and apparently holds the power in not giving attention to what money can buy.

The text and the static images for the analysis will be taken from passages from the first part of the movies, where Sofia (Penelope Cruz) and the protagonists (male characters) have their first impressions of each other. The first amount of data will be collected from the sequence where Sofia arrives at the protagonist's (Cesar /David) house, accompanied by his best friend (Pelajo/Brian), salutes the host for his birthday and gives him a

birthday gift. The second passage is when he (Cesar/David) first enters Sofia's house and wonders about her lifestyle.

I have chosen the data described above for two reasons: first, because they are quite similar in both movies, which allows me to do the analysis I intend to when comparing the results; and secondly, because it brings an example of the beginning of a love story, something that, as previously mentioned, imitates life experience and may influence who is watching.

### **1.3.3. Procedures for the verbal analysis**

For the verbal analysis I will use the transcription of the lines of the specific sequences (original language), and the analysis will be based on Halliday's System of transitivity at the lexicogrammatical level. Then the results will be reviewed based on Critical Discourse Analysis. The ways in which we produce and interpret language have a wider impact than just delivering a message, and they are not only related to the field of linguistics, but to what areas in which language is involved.

### **1.3.4. Procedures for visual analysis**

As for the visual analysis, I will use Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) narrative and conceptual processes;

As previously mentioned, the presence of various kinds of mediation or communication devices have started to call researchers' attention to studying and analyzing these multimodal channels, mostly the role of images and texts and their connection to the message they are trying to convey to a specific audience. Therefore, I also intend to analyze the images inserted in the chosen sequences of the movies *Abre los Ojos* and *Vanilla Sky* based on those theorists.

### **1.3.5. Procedures for the comparison analysis**

The comparison between the couples' dialogues and their images used in the sequences will be based on Halliday (1979, 1984, 1985, 1989, 1994), Halliday & Hasan (1989), Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006), Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995, 2001, 2003), as previously mentioned.

In this comparison and based on the objective of the study, which is to compare specific sequences of the two movies and analyze the social representations and power relations constructed in the films by the character of Sofia while interacting with the male character, I attempt to answer the questions I have designed and mentioned in the purpose of the thesis's section.

#### **1.4. Organization of the Thesis**

To end this first chapter, I present the organization of the thesis I intend to follow:

In **chapter one** I briefly revealed the intention of this research, the theory involved, methods and the criteria for data selection. Additionally I emphasized that Cinema is a powerful media channel to give relevance to the study. In **chapter two** I offer the theoretical framework related to my goal, based mainly on the works of the theorists previously cited. In **chapter three** I present the analysis of *Abre los Ojos*' sequences. In **chapter four** I present the analysis of *Vanilla Sky*'s sequences. In **chapter five** I present the comparison between the findings, final considerations on the analysis and the conclusion suggesting further studies on the area.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

In this chapter, as mentioned in the introductory part of the thesis, I present the basic theoretical viewpoints that I exploit to conduct my work: Critical Discourse Analysis and power relations (Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995, 2001, 2003)); Systemic Functional Linguistics ((Halliday, 1979, 1984, 1985, 1989, 1994);

(Halliday and Hasan (1989)); and Visual Grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006).

## 2.1 General Theoretical Perspectives

It is argued by Halliday and Hasan (1989) that language is the most powerful instrument for the purpose of producing values attached to human action. The context in which the discourse is located plays a significant role in the process of the construction of meaning through language.

And by *discourse* in this thesis I mean the process where meaning is derived through the readers' interaction with the text (which I consider as just the physical product, where no meaning is found) - the process.

For Fairclough (1995), language in the exercise of power is mainly in discourses where ideologies, practices, meanings, values and identities are transmitted. For him, power can be hidden behind discourse to "control over orders of discourse as a powerful mechanism for sustaining power" (2001, p.61)

Moreover, with the idea of power relations in mind, Joseph Rouse (2005) when writing about Foucault's view on power, says that a dominant agent does not hold or possess power, it is "not located in that agent's relations to those dominated, but is instead distributed throughout complex social networks" (p.11). The networks are viewed by Foucault as not static, but "something that circulates" and are "produced from one moment to the other". For him, "power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away" (p. 105), nor are power relationships imposed from the top down, but as forming a "chain of system", although he admits that there are structures of power as well. (p.107)

As previously mentioned, media is a significant social institution which holds the power of producing and reproducing ideologies and beliefs. Through the video channel (television, movies, etc) the manifestations seem more realistic to the viewer because of variables such as: "participants' roles, their activities



and reactions to the activities and/or elements involved, time and place of the practice, dress and grooming required, and tools and materials”. All those aspects are important to be considered while analyzing a discourse practice in which these elements will be transformed and represented in relation to the interests of the context (Machin and van Leuween, 2003: 498).

To give the credibility and continuity to the research, in this chapter I present a brief review of the selected theoretical perspectives, namely CDA (stands for Critical Discourse Analysis), SFL (stands for Systemic Functional Linguistics), and Visual Grammar.

These are the theoretical perspectives which serve as a basis for studies within our research group NUPDiscurso, at the post-graduate program in English Language and Applied Linguistics at the Federal University in Santa Catarina. Some of the previous studies concerned with multimodality and visual grammar include those by Bohlke (2008), Ferreira (2011), Abreu (2012), Bezerra (2012) and Nascimento (2012).

## **2.2. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

The term Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is considered relatively new and it arose in the field of sociolinguistics through one of its founders, Professor Norman Fairclough in an attempt to create a new area of study: the study of how power is inserted in and used through language. CDA does not only give attention to written texts, but also the oral use of the language.

According to the analyst, and based on Foucault’s theory on power, *discourses* (any use of oral and written texts) are shaped by practices and these intrinsic properties of the discourse can and should be analyzed as a key element of the whole interpretation. Fairclough’s interests are related to how social practices are shaped in the discourses, as discussed in his book *Language and Power* (2001) where he brings the overlapping between the language and the political and social practices used. He argues that, with the outcomes in the area of technology and the rapid

increase of media channels, such as magazines, tv advertisements and movies, such specific analysis are required and must be carefully observed. According to Heberle (1997), in Fairclough's dimensions of analysis, the social and the linguistic are taken from social theory and linguistics, and then joined together.

Magalhães (2004) explains that, according to Wodak (2001), CDA can be considered as a continuation of the 1970's Critical Linguistics (CL) and Caldas-Coulthard(2008) mentions that, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Saussure theory already worked with the idea of language as a sign system and he considered the sign as a social fact. But, regardless of what he brought up, until the 70's linguists were more concerned with the semantic aspect of language, where 'grammar' was the focus of the study. In the last three decades, according to Caldas-Coulthard, researchers started to become interested in investigating how people act and how they identify themselves through a linguistic code and a social context (p.20), and this is when CDA started to become relevant in the area. Following Fairclough (1992), Caldas-Coulthard reminds us that CDA concerns the orientation to the language studies connected with a social theory where ideological and political processes are involved. And she continues recapping other influences to CDA like Foucault, Bordieu, Althusser and Habermas and Systemic Functional Linguistics saying that, the main concern of CDA then, is to relate those textual processes suggested by Fairclough with the interpretation of the social practice (p.29), because CDA sees the discourse practices as ways of behaving that put us in a certain social group and that social group determines the discursive practices we have access to.

For Fairclough (2003) "language is an irreducible part of social life and, dialectically interconnected with other elements" (p.2), therefore worthy of analysis and research. Research that focuses on language is facilitated using some form of Discourse Analysis, which is often strongly influenced by the work of Foucault (1972) and Fairclough (1992). Fairclough says that:

There is a need to develop approaches to text analysis through a transdisciplinary dialogue with perspectives on language and discourse within social theory and research in order to develop our capacity to analyse texts as elements in social processes. (2003: p.6)

CDA studies concern a theoretical and methodological alternative allow researchers to analyze texts and events in several social practices bringing a framework to describe, interpret and explain how the language is being used in the socio-cultural context. Therefore, these extra ingredients besides text analysis: the social practice and power relations embedded in the discourse make CDA a valuable alternative in the field of sociolinguistics and are strongly related to the intention of this dissertation, which is, to study discourses inserted in a media channel: cinema. In the late 1970's, more precisely 1979, Fowler, Kress, Hodge and Trew published the book *Language and Control* that had an enormous repercussion among researchers on the area of language and the concepts of power and ideology.

Magalhães (2004) cites Fairclough in the 1980's as the person who firstly used the term CDA and reinforces that his main contributions was to develop a method of analysis allowing the study of discourses and his effort in explaining why social scientists and researchers on the media area need linguists.

She explains that what CDA particularly theorizes is the mediation between social and linguistic, that is, the relation between the social world and language. Citing Widdowson (2000), Magalhães also says that the researcher is part of the same social world and impartiality can be argued. Nowadays CDA is concerned with the linguistic approach adopted by researchers that take the text as the basic unit of discourse and communication and turns to the analysis of social conflict and struggle relations. (Wodak, 2001).

According to Foucault (Fairclough, 2007), discourse:

Constitutes the social, including “objects” and social subjects; any discursive practice is defined by its relations with others, and draws upon others in complex ways” and, according to him, three points emerge from this perspective: “the discursive nature of power, the political nature of discourse and, the discursive nature of social change (p.55-56).

Fairclough sees with good eyes the valuable insights Foucault brought into the constitutive properties of discourse, where both “objects” and “social subjects” are shaped by discursive practices. Therefore, for Fairclough, “these practices are constrained by the fact that they inevitably take place within a constituted, material reality, with preconstituted “objects” and preconstituted social subjects.” (Fairclough, 2007:60). To reinforce his argument he presents the following example:

studies of media discourse which have focused upon how particular texts are interpreted as well as how they are organized have suggested a highly complex picture in which texts may be interpreted from various more or less compliant or oppositional positions, making highly problematic any schematic view of the effect of discourse upon the constitution of, for example, social subjects (Ibid: 61).

Following this perspective and Fairclough’s suggestion that textually oriented discourse analysis (TODA) is to fortify if giving “attention to concrete instances of practice and the textual

forms and processes of interpretation associated with them”, I decided to look for resources in the texts and images I choose as the data for this thesis and try to compare them in term of the differences and similarities concerning the represented participants involved.

In a shell, CDA maintains the focus on the examination of the Discourses as something that reflects the social and helps to build it.

### 2.3 Verbal Analysis

Accordingly to what was already mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, one of my objectives is to analyze the linguistic aspects that are present in the passages I chose as my data. Having said that, in this section I present the main theoretical background of Systemic Functional Linguistics (hence for SFL), by Halliday.

Halliday (1984), while introducing his book *Language as Social Semiotics*, says that:

Language arises in the life of the individual through an ongoing exchange of meanings with significant others...and it is shared meaning potential, at once both a part of experience and an intersubjective interpretation of experience (p.1-2).

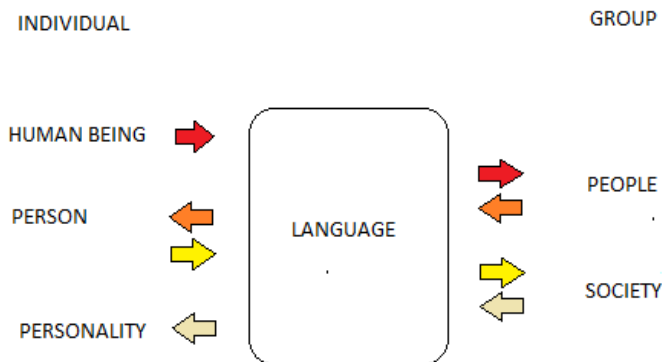
According to Halliday (1984) there are three metafunctions in the semantic system: the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual. He developed a theory of the functions of language, in which he analyses the lexicogrammar, as already mentioned, in three metafunctions: *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *textual*. The metafunctions are related to different aspects of the world: the *ideational* metafunction, for example, is about the natural world in the broadest sense,

including our own consciousness. It is concerned with clauses as representations and that is the metafunction I will focus on in the analysis. It is related to the context of culture and the use of language as a means of reflecting on things. The second metafunction “*interpersonal*” concerns the social world, especially the relationship between speaker and hearer and is related to language as a means on acting on things. The third metafunction *textual* is about the verbal world, especially the flow of information in a text and is related to the textual components, which makes the text hang together.

Having this in mind and considering the innumerable meanings (semiotic construct) of a “culture” or “social reality”, language is one of the semiotic systems that create a culture.

Continuing with Halliday’s thoughts, he says that what determines what we say, in part, is the context in which the discourse is inserted and what we say is what determines the context, so, there is no way except for looking at language as part of the social context. He adds that “any study of language involves some attention to other disciplines” (Halliday, 1984: p.11).

Halliday suggests that inside this “picture of language study” is the “language and social man”, that is, the development of language as an inter-organism (social: speaking) and the intra-organism (internal: brain) of the individual (p. 12) and that the formation of the individual’s personality is itself a social process and language plays the vital part in it (p. 15) as we can see in the table below that was copied from Halliday (1984:15, fig. 3):



**Table 2.1 – Individual’s roles defined by social relationships proposed by Halliday**

In this sense, we can relate the language produced by people to the aspects of social environment and analyze discourses focusing on what people do with language and what they can do with it.

So, “language is what a person can do or mean in the linguistic sense... language as a meaning potential” (Halliday, 1984, p.27). But this concept can be explained in a social perspective, where not only linguistic factors take place, but aspects related to the social framework: such as ideology<sup>3</sup>, for example. It is called the “context of situation”, that is “those features which are relevant to the speech that are taking place.” (p. 29). But what is also pertinent to mention is that the language we speak or write can vary according to the type of situation (p.32). Language only becomes significant when functioning in some environment, it is not isolated.

According to Halliday:

“All language functions in contexts of situation, and is relatable to those contexts...and the question to be considered is which kinds of situational factor determine which kinds of selection in the linguistic system...the question we need to ask is: what exactly do we need to know about the social context in order to make such predictions?” (ibid:32)

In this sense, text is language that has meaning or function in a context of situation, is dialogic, social and not isolated words or sentences divorced from context.

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<sup>3</sup> Ideologies are constructs of reality that are constructed in many dimensions of discursive practices that contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of the relations of domain. (Rezende & Ramalho, 2006, p.47) – My translation.

Halliday insists that the study of words/utterances alone is inadequate for its understanding, they need to be in context (physical setting, participants and other semiotic forms such as gestures, for example).

### 2.3.1 Transitivity

In Systemic Functional Linguistics, Halliday (1984) discusses crucial variables of the situation in which people are using the language and using a selected grammatical choice: the field of discourse, the tenor of discourse and the mode of discourse that, together, represent the context of situation. The first one (field) relates to the setting, to the event that is taking place, and is associated with the ideational meanings of the text; the second (tenor) refers to the relationship between the participants of the discourse and is related to the interpersonal meanings; and the third and last one (mode) refers to the channel of communication chosen and is related to the textual meanings.

The language we speak, or, the discourses we produce are determined, as previously stated, by social aspects and it includes who we are, what is our role in the society we live, and where we came from.

Besides, having a specific and lifetime dialect that we do not have a choice of something else to be considered is the variety of discourses we produce according to the necessity: we become “appropriate to the situation”<sup>4</sup> (Halliday, 1984:34).

As mentioned previously, the variables: field, tenor and mode are present in any discourse and “they are a conceptual framework for representing the social context as the semiotic environment in which people exchange meaning” (Halliday, 1984:110). Therefore when studying written or spoken texts (semantic unit) in relation to the “goings-on”, i.e., what is happening, what the actors are doing, becoming and meaning, as

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<sup>4</sup> We become social individuals, able to produce discourses differently at home, at work, at church, at parties, or any other social contexts that are created by the culture and society (Halliday, 1984)



this study intends to investigate, the central aspects to analyze are: Field, Ideational Meaning and Transitivity, as shown in the table below:

Context of Situation	Semantics	Lexicogrammar
Field	Ideational Meaning	Transitivity

**Table 2.2 – Study of the Semantic Unit in relation to the “goings-on”**

On the lexicogrammatical level, where the transitivity will be explored there is a set of processes and Halliday (1985, 2004) classifies the processes into:

**Material:** processes of doing, tangible actions, such as: write, cook, go, do and are related to the physical world. Who does the action is named *Actor* and who undergoes it is named *Goal*;

**Mental:** processes that deal with thinking or feeling meanings, such as: know, feel, believe, think and are related to the consciousness world. The person is named *Senser* and the thoughts/feelings are called *Phenomenon*;

**Relational:** processes that deal with variables of “being”, such as: have, be and describe abstract relations with the world. The participants are called *Carrier* and *Attribute*;

**Verbal:** processes that deal with activities of saying, such as: to say, to ask, to tell, to state. The participant who verbalize the process is the *Sayer*, the *Receiver* is the one who receives and the *Verbiage* is the function related to what was said;

**Existential:** processes that deal with what simply exists or happens, such as: there is/ was. *Existent* is the name of what exists or happens;

**Behavioural:** processes which do not have defined characteristics, such as: to cough, to laugh, to breathe. The participant is only one and it is called *beaver*.

## 2.4. Visual Analysis

As previously mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation one more analysis will be carried out and that refers to the visual aspect of the discourse, so, not only the verbal language of the speeches, but also the visual aspects inserted in the static images taken from the movies' frames will be analyzed in an attempt to complement or give new insides about the textual data.

Van Leeuwen (2006) explains that the term *social semiotics* refers to a multimodal group of *semiotic modes* (verbal, visual, gestural), which are resources utilized as ways to communicate, also responsible for the study of the way people interpret and produce meanings and texts (visual and spoken) and how this *semiotic system* works while shaping or getting shaped by socio-cultural aspects. Thus, social semiotics has strong relationship with the social theory and it is also an interdisciplinary field.

According to van Leeuwen (ibid), images have been objects of study in relation to what they might represent, instead of what they might do to or for people, i.e., persuade, instruct, explain, warn, and so on. The idea of text analysis of Halliday has been extended to images, because images can also “offer” or “demand”.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, similarly to Halliday’s theory, visual grammar is also culturally specific: it also depends on the cultural aspects to be studied and analyzed. But the studies developed so far in the area are concerned mostly the western culture, due to the fact that it is responsible for the majority of the visual language disseminated by the media. (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> But rather than linguistically, with the images the analysis is recognized by means of the system of the gaze (Krees and van Leeuwen, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Nascimento, Bezerra and Heberle (2010), for example, present the categories of visual grammar in relation to an advertising campaign in Brazil against sexual exploitation of children.

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002) “we know that color “means”” (p.343). The authors cite black as the color used in Europe for grief and in northern part of Portugal, as well as in elsewhere in Europe, brides use black wedding dresses. In contrast, in parts of Asia people use white as the symbol of grief. Therefore, color can be used, in culturally located contexts, as a communicational resource.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002) explore the idea of color related to the term “grammar” and on the idea that it indicates “what people do” differing from “place to place, group to group and even for individuals as they move across places and groups” (p.344). But the authors explain that there is no group (psychologists or artists, for example) which can support a “shared understanding of the meanings of color across all of society” (p.345), however, there are regularities in the resource of color in specific groups. Therefore, color is a very important resource of visual communication and can be considered as a semiotic resource as well as others already cited. For us, as analysts, the job is to try to recognize them, because color “does what people do with it” (p. 350). The authors connect Halliday’s ideational metafunction to the use of color:

Starting with the ideational function, colour clearly can be used to denote specific people, places and things as well as classes of people, places and things, and more general ideas. The colours of flags, for instance, denote specific nation states, and corporations increasingly use specific colours or colour schemes to denote their unique identities. Car manufacturers, for instance, ensure that the dark blue of a BMW is quite distinct from the dark blue of a VW or a Ford, and they legally protect ‘their’ colours, so that others will not be able to use them. (p.347). Colour is also used to convey ‘interpersonal’ meaning. Just as language allows us to realize speech acts, so colour allows us to realize ‘colour acts’. It

can be and is used to *do* things to or for each other, e.g. to impress or intimidate through ‘power dressing’, to warn against obstructions and other hazards by painting them orange, or even to subdue people – apparently the Naval Correctional Center in Seattle found that ‘pink, properly applied, relaxes hostile and aggressive individuals within 15 minutes’ (Lacy, 1996: 89). (p.348). Finally, colour can also function at the textual level. Just as, in many buildings, the different colours of doors and other features on the one hand distinguish different departments from each other, while on the other hand creating unity and coherence within these departments, so colour can also help create coherence in texts. (p.349).

O’Halloran (2004) while talking about visual grammar in electronic media and film cites O’Toole’s approach and a theory of semiotic analysis where “choices in the visual semiotic are displayed visually rather than being described linguistically, where the viewer can immediately grasp the significance of such choices.” (p.112)

Differently from O’Halloran’s approach, I intend to work with static and not immediately sequential images from the movies. So, in this section of the chapter I aim to discuss a theoretical background on the visual resources, such as: Narrative Representations, Representation and Interaction, Meaning of Composition, based mainly in Kress and Van Leuween’s Grammar of Visual Design (1996,2006).

### **2.4.1 Narrative Representations**

One point that Kress and van Leuween propose while talking about the analysis of images is that all images can be divided in two categories: *narrative* and *conceptual representations*, based on Halliday’s ideational metafunction,

which deals with the representation of experience. The former are images that have a component of action, they “present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, and transitory special arrangements” (2006, p.59); and the latter category is about those images that have a timeless and static essence. They do not engage their participants in some kind of action, they represent a static concept.

Having explained the particularity of each of the categories suggested by the authors, I will continue with a focus on the narrative representations, because the concept accomplishes the kind of image I am proposing to analyze.

Narrative representations, as just mentioned above are present in images that are not static, but demonstrate a component of action. This “action” can be seen/noticed by invisible lines that connect the participants in the image, and they are called *Vectors*. *Vectors* are “formed by depicted elements that form an oblique line, often a quite strong, diagonal line” (2006.: 59). When the connection through the vectors is realized “they (participants) represent as doing something to or for each other” (ibid.:56), so these *vectorial* patterns are called *Narrative*.

The vectors represent directions and courses concerning participants in the image and they demonstrate to the viewer an interaction between them (participants). So, the objects in the image are interacting with or acting on one another. When the participant/object is playing the active role in the image it is called the *actor*- “the participant from whom or which the vector departs” (2006.: 59) - ; and the participant/ objects being the passive or the one with the actor interacting with, it is called the *goal* - “the participant at which the vector is directed” (Ibid. :74).

All images that demonstrate through vectors some interaction/kind of action are called *narrative representations*, but inside this concept, Kress and van Leuween present the different types of narrative processes that should be considered according to the types of vectors and the number and kinds of participant involved:

**Action processes:** “the actor is the participant from which the vector emanates... or forms the vector” (2006: 63). According to Kress and van Leeuwen, when the image has just one participant, it (participant) is considered the actor and there is no goal. The authors call this a *non-transactional action*. If both the actor and the goal are present they call it a *transactional action*, but if there is only a goal with a vector and no actor they call it an *Event*.

**Reactional processes:** occur when the vector is formed solely by an eyeline and connects the participants. Therefore, the participant that does the looking action is called a *reactor* and the passive participant is called the *phenomenon*. The processes here can be *transactional reaction* and *non-transactional reaction*. (ibid.: 68)

**Mental and Verbal processes:** usually seen in comic strips, the vectors are considered “the content of an inner mental process (thought, fear, etc)” (ibid: 68)...in the case of thought bubbles (called “senser”), dialogue balloon (called “speaker”) and similar devices. In talking about the participants, the *Senser* and the *Phenomenon* are those related to Mental processes and *Sayer* and *Utterance* to the Verbal processes.

## 2.4.2 Representation and interaction

In this section I briefly discuss the theory concerning the analysis of the interaction between the image (static image/photo) used in the movies and the people who were responsible for its production and use.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen’s *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2006):

Images (and other kinds of visual) involve two kinds of participants, represented participants (the people, the places and things depicted in images) and interactive participants (the people who communicate with

each other through images, the producers and viewers of images), and three kinds of relations:

- (1) between represented participants;
- (2) interactive and represented participants, and;
- (3) interactive participants (what they do to or for each other). (ibid: 114)

The concept of *interactive participant* is that they are the real people involved in the production of the image (in putting it as close as possible to the social context desired by the social institutions who, in this case, hold the power over what should be interpreted through the image portrayed), and the viewers, who, on different levels, interpret the images. But the degree of knowledge between them differs in terms of what one can or cannot do. For example: the producer allows the “sending and the receiving of the message” and is able to “write and read messages” and, on the contrary, the viewer is only allowed to “the receiving of the message” and to “read”. (2006: 115)

So, as the producer of the image holds the power over the viewer, it is pertinent to find ways to interpret the image and come up with the ways they use to achieve a desirable interpretation of the image by the viewer. What the authors put as relevant in terms of analyzing relations between people in the pictures are: *the image and the gaze; the size of frame and the social distance; perspective and subjective image; and angles*. In the first case, *the gaze*, the authors state that people portrayed in pictures can or cannot be looking at the camera to convey specific attitudes. Kress and van Leuween characterize the gaze of a character as “demand” or “offer” to the viewer.

The previous one, *demand*, happens when the character/participant is directly looking at the camera (consequently, the viewer/reader). The vectors together with the gaze, connect the character with the viewer. The participants are making contact,

therefore “demanding” a fictional relation with the spectator. See further figures<sup>7</sup>:



Figure 2.1 – Examples of Demand

As observed in the pictures, in this type of gaze there is a contact established, it's a direct address, and it “demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him/her.” (Kress and van Leuween, 2006: 118)

The latter one, *offer*, on the other hand, happens when participants do not have a direct gaze addressed to the viewer/reader and are “offered” to the readers. So the relationship between the participant and the reader is not familiar, it does not have any intimacy. For more clarification, see images in the sequence<sup>8</sup>:

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<sup>7</sup> Image 1: DVD front cover (film: People like us, 2012); Image 2: People's magazine, front cover (Princess Diana) and; Image 3: 1914 recruitment poster depicting Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of State for War. All images were taken from Google's Images online.

<sup>8</sup> Image 1: Slim Fast advertisement; Image 2 Burger King Advertisement and; Image 3 People's magazine front cover (Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie and their daughter Shiloh, 2006). All images were taken from Google's Images online.





Figure 2.2 - Examples of Offer

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) in an attempt to clarify the term offer, cite Halliday (1985) again and say that they believe that this kind of image are offers because “they offer the represented participants to the viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation, impersonally, as though they were specimens in a display case.” (ibid: 119).

As already mentioned, other aspects related to the representation and interaction between what is depicted in the image and what is read by the viewer are the size of the frame and social distance; perspective, social distance and the angles.

As for the size of frame and social distance, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) present the characteristics of each of the choices made by the producer of the image: the close-up, the medium shot, the long shot, and so on, that can suggest, as viewed in “demand” and “offer” a different relation between the participants and the viewers.

See the table below for more details of each of the chosen shots suggested by the authors (2006: 124):

Close shot (close-up)	shows head and shoulder of the subject
Very close shot (extreme close-up / big close up)	anything less than what was mentioned in the close shot
Medium close shot	cuts off the subject approximately at the waist
Medium long shot	cuts off the subject approximately at the knees
Long shot	the human figure occupies about half the height of the frame
Very long shot	anything "wider" than what was mentioned in the long shot

Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 124

**Table 2.3 – Types of shots**

They also determine as a strong point to be analyzed the social distance between participants and the viewers, the same way as they occur in everyday interactions in which people can, in “close personal distance” or cannot, in “far personal distance”, for example, touch each other, having or not an intimate relation with each other.

There is also the “close social distance”, the “far social distance” and the “public distance”, in which the distance at which impersonal business occurs, has a more formal and impersonal character and, finally, the “distance between people who are to remain strangers”, respectively. (2006.:125) So, at this level, it is possible to determine the kind of relation the depicted individuals in the image have, for instance, their hierarchical level.

The perspective and the subjective image are also ways in which images show relations between participants and the viewers. The first one pictures a “construction which is a quasi-mechanical way of “recording” images of reality”... with socially determined viewpoints...copies of empirical reality.” (2006, p.129) and the latter allows the viewer to see “what there is to see only from a

particular point of view”. So the point of view is determined not only by participants but by viewers as well.

Finally the authors discuss the use of horizontal and vertical angles. The three types of horizontal angles can be quickly explained through the table below:

Oblique angle	"The photographer/producer is not situated in front of the individuals, but in/from an oblique angle. " (ibid: 134). So, the oblique angle says "What you see here is not part of our world, it is their world, something we are not involved in." (ibid: 136)
Horizontal angle	The photographer/producer is situated in front of the individuals. It is a frontal plane of the represented individuals.
Frontal angle	The photographer/producer is not situated in front of the individuals, but here, differently from the oblique angle, there is a level of involvement. What is seen by the viewer is part of his/her world. Something the viewer is involved in. (ibid: 136)

**Table 2.4 – Types of angles**

And, in the sequence, the vertical angles and the idea of power over participants are explored by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). According to them, while citing Martin (1968), at high angles the subject looks small and insignificant, diminishing the individual; at low angles the subject looks imposing and awesome, giving an impression of superiority. But this perspective does not mention the point of view of the viewer, so the authors explored the idea with a more complete perspective:

If a represented participant is seen from a high angle, then the relation between the interactive participants (producer/viewer) and the represented participants is depicted as one in which the interactive participant has power over the

represented one – the represented participant is seen from the point of view of power. If the represented participant is seen from a low angle then the relation between the interactive and the represented participant is depicted as one in which the represented participant has power over the interactive participant. If, finally, the picture is at eye level, then the point of view is one of equality and there is no power difference involved. (2006: 140)

So, to summarize the realizations that can occur between the social characters involved in the process of representation through the image, the authors suggest the following chart:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demand</li> <li>- Offer</li> <li>- Intimate/personal</li> <li>- Social</li> <li>- Impersonal</li> <li>- Involvement</li> <li>- Detachment</li> <li>- Viewer power</li> <li>- Equality</li> <li>- Represented participant power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- gaze at the viewer;</li> <li>- absence of gaze at the viewer;</li> <li>- close shot;</li> <li>- medium shot;</li> <li>- long shot;</li> <li>- frontal angle;</li> <li>- oblique angle;</li> <li>- high angle;</li> <li>- eye-level angle;</li> <li>- low angle.</li> </ul>
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Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 148

**Table 2.5 – Realizations between social characters**

### **2.4.3. Meaning of Composition**

What has been discussed up to this point in terms of visual analysis was related to the representations and relations between images and people, because images can contain

representational and interactional relations. But, another point to be considered while analyzing an image is its “*meaning of composition*”. That is, the “way in which the representational and interactive elements are made to relate to each other, the way they are integrated into a meaningful whole.” (ibid: 177), correlating those elements into three systems: *Information value*, *Salience* and *Framing*.

The first one, information value, concerns the placements of elements in the image according to their position: left and right, top and bottom and, centre and margin. See table below and the following example for a more effective understanding:

Left and Right	Given and New	<p>Left: the side of the "already given" - what is assumed to be known by the viewer as part of the culture</p> <p>Right: the "new" - something which is not yet known.</p> <p>(2006: 180-181)</p>
Top and Bottom	Ideal and Real	<p>Top: the upper section visualizes the glamour and tents do make some kind of emotive appeal.</p> <p>Bottom: the lower section tends to be more practical and informative.</p> <p>(Ibid:186)</p>
Centre and Margin		<p>Centre: there is a sense of permanence. It is the nucleus of the information.</p> <p>Margin: there are dependent elements presented in the margins.</p> <p>(Ibid: 196)</p>

**Table 2.6 – Information Value**



**Figure 2.3 – Burger King Advertisement**

**Table 2.7 – Information Value’s imaginary traces**

It is relevant to mention that Kress and van Leeuwen have analyzed and based their studies on images from the Western culture and, therefore being based on the same cultures.

They also mention that the layouts of modern newspapers and magazines, for example, are “generally polarized, with a *given-left*, a *new-right*, and a *centre* which bridges and mediates the two (2006:198).

The elements of the image also include degrees of salience, which can create a ladder of importance among the elements, which one will call viewers’ attention first, for example. So, the Given may be more salient than the New, or vice-versa, or they may be equally salient, and the same is applied to the Ideal and Real and Centre and Margin. (Ibid: 201)

As already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Kress and van Leeuwen’s work on the grammatical analysis of the images, based on Halliday’s SFL’s metafunctions, look for patterns to help us to understand the visual representation.

Therefore I will focus the analysis of images on Kress and van Leeuwen's theory of *Narrative Representations* (types of processes), *Representation and Interaction* (offer / demand, social distance between participants, angles) and *Meaning of Composition* (information value: left to right, top to bottom) to complement the textual analysis based on Halliday and Fairclough. It does not mean that text and image are equal, but they share similarities in their proposals and they can complement each other. It is relevant for people to become aware of studies based on the previously cited theorists to understand the discourses that transcend from the images and are daily accessed and, how they influence and are influenced by them.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Analysis of *Abre los Ojos***

According to Smith (2006) Spaniards have a massive preference for audiovisual over print media, therefore he says that "we should overcome prejudices". He defends popular culture and sees as very important the appearance of the concrete Madrid City (the Gran Vía street) in the film *Abre los Ojos* as a way to appeal to local knowledge (Perri, 2009). According to Herbert (2006), the opening sequence of the movie (where Cesar wakes up and drives his car through empty streets) may represent alienation within the contemporary city. He also sees Spanish Cinema as playing a significant role in "configuring the international perception of the nation (p. 29).

Therefore, this chapter, as previously mentioned, will be based on two sequences of the Spanish movie *Abre los Ojos*, released in 1997 and directed by Alejandro Amenabar. The intention of this chapter is to analyze and discuss text and images based on the theoretical perspectives mentioned in the previous chapter to show how struggle for power in the discourses happen.

### **3.1. *Abre los Ojos*' plot summary: the context of situation**

As already mentioned in previous chapters, media channels, such as television, magazines, internet, cinema and others, play a significant role in determining, demonstrating and changing people's beliefs and behaviors according to the socio cultural aspects they portray. Therefore, it is essential to understand the "context of situation" (Halliday, 1984) to comprehend the influence they can exert. Halliday explains that the *context of situation* refers to the "environment in which the text comes to life" (1975: 25). In this sense, the general context would be the plot summary of the chosen movie.

The film *Abre los Ojos (Open your Eyes)*, a Spanish, Italian and French production, was released in 1997 and directed by the Chilean Alejandro Amenabar. The movie was based on Hitchcock's film *Vertigo* (1958). Based on discussions by Herbert (2006), Perry (2009), Smith (2006) and after watching the film several times, I intend in this section to present briefly the plot.

The film is about a 25 year-old playboy, named Cesar (played by the actor Eduardo Noriega), who, after a drug overdose, experiences a kind of a lucid dream he has contracted, in an attempt to live the way he wants to. During the story he relates, in flashbacks, to a psychiatrist, in a psychiatric jail, what he remembers. The accusation against him is that he has murdered his former girlfriend Nuria.

A few months before his arrest, Cesar had his face disfigured in a car accident with Nuria (played by the actress Najwa Nimri), who caused the accident on purpose, because of jealousy. She died and he fractured his skull. So, at this point Cesar decides to sign a contract with a company which offers a "living dream" experience, for him not to face reality. He can choose to live any experience as if it were real.

The accident happens just after he meets and falls in love with the beautiful brunette actress Sofia Cueto (played by the Spanish actress Penelope Cruz). They first meet in Cesar's apartment, when celebrating his birthday and it became clear that they are mutually attracted to each other. Pelayo (played by the actor Fele Martinez), Cesar's best friend introduces Sofia to Cesar.



During the party Cesar and Sofia talk and he takes her to her house. He notices that her house is very modest, and, apparently, he likes it.

After spending the night in Sofia's house, the following morning he meets Nuria outside, takes a ride and the accident happens. After the car accident moments of lucidity and illusion take place and everything becomes confused to Cesar: he is not sure about what really happened and the events that follow put Cesar in tricky moments.

Finally, after he realizes that he is actually living a dream and decides to wake up and end the virtual life he contracted and chosen to experience by jumping from a high building, in this case, the Picasso tower, in Madrid. Its title, as I suppose, has relationship with the talking alarm clock that wakes Cesar with the message "Abre los Ojos, Abre los Ojos" (Open Your Eyes, Open your Eyes) which gives the idea of opening the eyes for reality.

For Perri (2009) *Abre los Ojos* "communicates a chilling glimpse into a possible posthuman era without resorting to computer-crafted special effects of so many science fiction films" (p. 96).

As already mentioned, up to the point where he meets Sofia and the car accident happens, his life seems to be a "normal", that is why I have selected sequences before the car accident, because it seems that the main characters first meetings are crucial to the development of the rest of the story.

Lawrence van Gelder, one of The New Your Times Journal's film reviewers, in an article about *Abre los Ojos* on April 16, 1999 edition praises it and says that:

"Open Your Eyes," which darts among such relative novelties as virtual reality and cryogenics, is at bottom a retelling of the story of Job for a vain, materialistic, selfish age... handsomely filmed in Madrid with an attractive cast, this Spanish feature is unlikely to satisfy those

who insist on linear storytelling and pat endings. But in its deliberately vexing way, "Open Your Eyes" is a film with enough intellectual meat on its stylish bones to give more adventurous moviegoers something to chew on afterward.

The writer reinforces the idea of a strong connection between Sofia and Cesar in the sequence where they meet saying that "Cesar's attention to the beautiful Sofia is less than innocent" and "they (Sofia and Cesar) are mutually attracted, although they do not sleep together"(yet). Once more it demonstrates how significant these first sequences are as data for my analysis where the struggle for power in the conversations will be analyzed.

### **3.2. Analysis of *Abre los Ojos***

With an informal kind of talk, the film tries to represent a real conversation to call the audience's attention and appreciation. These pieces of dialogue happen when Cesar is introduced to Sofia by his best friend Pelayo and, in the second part, when Cesar becomes familiar with Sofia's house and her way of living. As I previously mentioned, these sequences were chosen because they are crucial to what happens after the car accident, they represent the essence of the continuity of the film.

The intention of this work is to examine discursive-semiotic constructions of social relations, through a theoretical background, and to demonstrate how film creators imagine people textual (oral) and visual resources to achieve their goal, which is, the struggle for power over one another in different social contexts. This relationship between language and power is strongly developed by Fairclough in his works.

In this case, I chose to work with a conversation between Sofia, Cesar and Pelayo, in Sofia and Cesar's first meeting where the film creators of the film demonstrate what would be a

representation of a real conversation, which is a reflection of several real discourses.

### 3.2.1. Analysis of Verbal Aspects

To initiate a study of a discourse, it is necessary to keep in mind what Fairclough calls the “dimensions/ stages of discourse” in CDA, which are: the *description* (formal properties of the text); the *interpretation* (relationship between text and interaction) and; the *explanation* (relationship between interaction and social context) to try to identify relations of power between social actors.

In capitalist societies, for example, the *capitalist class* owns the means of production and has the ability/access to control the state and maintain the dominance on the *working class* which is controlled by the state and obligated to sell their power to work to the capitalists, in exchange for remuneration, in order to stay alive (Fairclough,2001).

Power then is guided by assumptions taken for granted where social groups’ practices or universal common sense, such as *ideology*, legitimizes the existence of power relations. Fairclough (2001:30) explains the importance of the term *ideology* which is related to “the way in which various social institutions contribute to sustaining the position of the dominant class”. The term itself is complicated to define in a few words, according to theorists from many different areas. Therefore, I decided to focus on CDA’s view on the term. For Wodak (1996) “ideologies are particular ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce unequal relations of power, relations of domination and exploitation” (1996: 18). Fairclough (1992: 67) offers a similar definition: ‘ideology is significations generated within power relations as a dimension of the exercise of power and struggle over power’.

Not only *class* but also *social relations* can hold power in their discourses and these power relations are always relations of struggle. In the case of the data I selected, the class relation struggle happens between an upper class man named Cesar and a lower class (worker) woman named Sofia. And in terms of social

relation, it could be extended to power in relation to gender: man (Cesar) and a woman (Sofia). However, my intention is not to focus on gender or even social status, but to analyze, through the social context, the struggle for power between the main characters.

The data I selected belongs to the part where the female character of the film, Sofia, meets the male character Cesar, introduced by his best friend Pelayo in Cesar's birthday party and in the sequence when he visits her apartment for the first time and has the first impressions. The first dialogue describes the moment when Sofia enters Cesar's apartment, is introduced to him by their common friend Pelayo, greetings him for his birthday and gives him the birthday gift.

Even though the intention of this dissertation is to analyze the relationship between Cesar and Sofia, it is necessary to include, in this first part, the lines of Pelayo, since he has introduced them.

According to Halliday (1984:108-109) text refers to whatever is said or written: it is a semantic unit and represents choice. Regarding *Abre los Ojos*, it is a particular semantic system representing the context of a wealthy man falling in love with his best friend's "girl", a poor woman. The language people use may vary according to the situation, and, at this case, it can be characterized as an informal conversation at a birthday party and informal conversation between two people who have recently met. The represented participants talk in their mother tongue, Spanish.

Halliday (1984:112), reminds us that a dialogue (text – written or spoken) belongs to a certain context at a certain time. In the case of *Abre los Ojos*, it is a sequence of a movie where not only the discourse, but the images/ movements, soundtracks and intonation are combined.

All these "things: creatures, objects, actions, events, qualities, states and relations are part, in terms of semantics, of the *Ideational Meaning* of language" (Ibid.: 1984:112). In this study, I will concentrate on the choices of processes' types inserted in the verbal group.

The analysis will concentrate on the lexicogrammatical choices made by the represented participants. In this first conversation between the three represented participants, we could say that Pelayo is flirting with Sofia and takes her to Cesar's apartment as a kind of date. It can also be inferred that Cesar starts to become interested in Sofia and in a subtle way flirts with her, and Pelayo notices this.

Let's see examples of word choices the characters make and the type of processes they use in the first sequence of the film, which is the moment when Sofia is introduced to Cesar by their common friend Pelayo. They are in Cesar's modern apartment celebrating his birthday:

Cesar: ¿Y esta chica? ¿De dónde le has sacado?

*Material Process*

Pelayo: De la biblioteca de la escuela. Estaba robando mi libro.

*Material Process*

Sofia: El libro era mío.

*Relational Process*

In this first example the male characters Cesar and Pelayo use Material Processes to make comments about Sofia. These processes, as Halliday (1985) states refer to the physical world, verbs of tangible actions, referring to experiences of the external world. In this case, Cesar and Pelayo are talking about someone new from their group of friends whereas Sofia, on the other hand, uses a Relational Process, which indicates a description regarding her possession (libro). In this first example, by the use of Material Processes, it seems that the men are in control, holding the power over her.

Right afterwards, when Pelayo introduces Sofia to Cesar, he (Cesar) addresses his comments only to Sofia. Here, as mentioned in the previous chapter, images play a crucial role in the viewers' interpretation (and mine), because they complement the textual narrative (see next section):

Sofia: Feliz Cumpleaños.

Cesar: Gracias.

Pelayo: Acá está tu regalo.

*Relational Process*

Cesar: Muchas gracias.

Sofia: Hemos comprado entre los dos.

*Material Process*

Cesar: Entonces, tengo que agradecerlo a los dos.

*Verbal Process*

In the example above Pelayo uses a Relational Process to refer to the birthday gift, and Sofia uses a Material Process to state that she is part of that, she is participating/acting and Cesar uses a Verbal Process, that is “any kind of symbolic exchange of meaning” to express or verbalize his opinion. In the last sentence of the example above, even though he is expressing the gratefulness to both Sofia and Pelayo, he looks just at her (once again the images complement and give the text a different perspective). That is why, not only in this case, it is crucial to study texts with the multidisciplinary eye. This piece of conversation portrays Sofia trying to call Cesar’s attention, trying to have the control of it, but he still holds the status.

In the next piece of conversation images are not as important as before because it is easy to identify Cesar’s interest towards Sofia through Pelayo’s line:

Pelayo: Deja de hablar con ella y ábrelo.

*Verbal Process    Material Process*

Cesar: No, prefiero abrirlo por la mañana.

*Material Process*

Pelayo: ¿Vamos por algo?

*Material Process*

Sofia: Claro

Cesar: Voy a dejar esto y ya bajo.

*Material Process*

In the first sentence Pelayo's line becomes crucial to determine that, not only through visual analysis which will be discussed in the next section, but through textual as well, it is clear that Cesar has a crush on Sofia and is flirting with her. The statement made by Pelayo to Cesar sounds almost like an order and he uses a Verbal and a Material Process to indicate that he is verbalizing something he notices and is now giving opinion. By using the Material Process: "ábrela" he breaks the communication between Cesar and Sofia and starts an indirect fight for Sofia.

Van Dijk (2000) says that the words of those in power are considered as "self-evident truths" and the lexicogramatical choices made by those not in power are usually considered irrelevant, with no substance, inappropriate. Therefore, the statement "Deja de hablar con ella y ábrela" indicates Pelayo's higher position. But right after Pelayo's comment Cesar also uses a Material Process to "disobey" the "order" and by doing that he holds the power over the discourse again. Sofia, in this piece of conversation, stays almost invisible, or at least neutral. She does not position herself as she does not use any process type. The struggle for power, up to now, seems to be between two men and a woman, but it can also be read as a struggle between power over the whole situation, where a "new" and lower class woman tries to connect herself to an upper class man, but in this case, she could not achieve the status of holding the power.

In the second dialogue, Sofia and Cesar enter Sofia's house. They do not have the company of Pelayo anymore. Cesar takes her home and she shows embarrassment in relation to her house.

Sofia: Esta es mi casa. Cuando te burles te echas.

*Relational Process      Mental Process*

Cesar: ¿Porqué me iba a burlar?

*Mental Process*

Sofia: No es nada de otro mundo. Pero el alquiler está tirado

*Relational Process*

*Relational Process*

Sofia makes use of Relational and Mental Processes to talk about her house, indicating possession (es mi casa) and involvement in a conscious process (perception) in relation to it. She demonstrates she knows that her house is very modest. Cesar uses the same Mental Process to make a question, indicating that he has not the same perception she has about her house. Differently from him, she makes her economic status clear.

In the following sequence Cesar ironizes Sofia's professions, making fun of them. First he calls the mime artists clowns and then he calls actresses false people. But at this point she also, in a very delicate way, makes fun of the way he conducts his life, calling him a "hostelero": caterer (who provides food for social events) to ironically talk about his life style as a food chain owner:

Cesar: ¿Te gustan los payasos?

*Mental Process*

Sofia: No son payasos. Son mimos. ¡Pancho! Tengo un gato.

*Relational Processes Relational Process Relational Process*

Cesar: Odio a los gatos. Son casi tan falsos como las actrices.

*Mental Process Relational Process*

Sofia: Dijo el hostelero.

*Verbal Process*

Most of the processes used in the example above are Relational and Mental. Cesar uses two Mental Processes, (gustan, odio) indicating involvement in the conscious processing (perception, cognition and affection) because he is demonstrating his thinking, his opinion about her. Sofia, on the other hand, by using Relational Processes to interact, shows him that his opinion is incorrect and that she does not have anything to say about his comments.

In the following piece of conversation, Cesar starts to demonstrate more interest about her life. He, at this point, seems to have the control, the power over what is said, but he does not receive the expected answers, Sofia makes fool of him while answering and does not provide the information he is looking for,



suggesting a mystery around her and his loss of control over the conversation. Cesar uses Material Processes (*pagas, dieron, salido, vivía*) in an attempt to make Sofia answer, but she does not respond to that and by doing so she makes him change his discourse and move from Material to Mental Process to break the heavy atmosphere around the questions he previously made. Once again, in this second dialogue, she seems to hold the power over the conversation:

Cesar: ¡Oye! ¿Y esto, cómo lo pagas?

*Material Processes*

¿Te lo dieron tus padres?

*Material Processes*

¿Te ha salido algún curro?

*Material Processes*

Sofia: Es un cotías.

*Relational Processes*

¿No es así Pancho?

*Relational Processes*

Soy traficante de armas.

*Relational Processes*

Cesar: Anda, siempre quise saber como vivía un traficante de armas.

*Mental Process (projecting clause) Material Process*

Sofia: Pues, ya lo sabes.

*Mental Process*

Their social difference here is shown in Cesar's questions, because he thinks she receives some kind of financial support or allowance and she avoids answering it directly, letting him realize that she pays her bills by working.

According to what was previously mentioned, the investigation of these dialogues is based on Halliday's transitivity system within Systemic Functional Linguistics' (SFL) model. Halliday states that the kind of processes inserted in the dialogues can define or give clues for researchers when doing such analyses.

In the dialogues chosen from these film *Abre los Ojos*, thirty-eight processes can be identified and among them most are (in terms of occurrences) *Relational Processes*, followed by *Material Processes*, *Mental Processes* and *Verbal Processes*. There were no occurrences of *Behavioral Processes* or *Existential Processes*.

As already mentioned in the second chapter, *Relational Processes* can work with two modes: attributive or identifying. In the data the majority of the occurrences are attributive modes. Examples are presented below:

<u>Esta</u> <i>Carrier</i>	<u>es</u> <i>Relational Process</i>	<u>mi casa</u> <i>attributive</i>
<u>Soy</u> <i>Relational Process</i>	<u>traficante de armas.</u> <i>attributive</i>	

The second kind of process that has a considerable number of occurrences is the *Material Process*. This process is usually used to suggest actions, such as:

<u>¿Y esto, cómo lo</u> <i>Goal</i>	<u>pagas?</u> <i>Material Process</i>	
<u>¿Te lo</u> <i>Goal</i>	<u>dieron</u> <i>Material Process</i>	<u>tus padres?</u> <i>Actor</i>

Most Relational processes and Mental processes are inserted in the second dialogue, where Cesar investigates Sofia's life, suggesting a closer / intimate conversation, because these processes types are related to the "being and having" and "feelings", consequently.

On the other hand most of the Material and Verbal processes belong to the first dialogue where Cesar conducts a public/open conversation in a party between his friend Pelayo and Sofia which may suggest practicality and objectivity. In this case Cesar controls and conducts the conversation using several questions and

statements, and Sofia does not hold any power over it, because she just answer them or complements Pelayo's answers.

In the first sequence Cesar holds the power over the dialogue with Pelayo and Sofia by making use of what Fairclough (2001:39) calls *directive speech acts* (orders and questions) as a discrete way to hold the power and conduct the discourse:

¿Y esta chica? ¿De dónde le has sacado?  
Entonces, tengo que agradecerlo a los dos.  
Voy a dejar esto y ya bajo.  
No, prefiero abrirlo por la mañana.

In the second sequence, when Cesar visits Sofia's house for the first time, he also holds the power in some moments by making use of linguistic resources, such as questions and statements:

¿Porqué me iba a burlar?  
¿Te gustan los payasos?  
Odio a los gatos. Son casi tan falsos como las actrices.  
Anda, siempre quise saber como vivía un traficante de armas.  
¡Oye! ¿Y esto, cómo lo pagas? ¿Te lo dieron tus padres? ¿Te ha salido algún curro?

Sofia is reduced to a character that only answers the questions and interacts with him in a very subtle way. But the dialogue also presents Sofia's resistance/subversion by not giving him the information requested and by not showing feelings (Mental Processes):

No es nada de otro mundo. Pero el alquiler está tirado  
No son payasos. Son mimos  
Es un cotías. ¿No es así Pancho? Soy traficante de armas  
Pues, ya lo sabes

This struggle in the discourse may suggest what Fairclough (2001) calls the *class* and *social struggle* between social classes. In the next section visual aspects will be discussed as they complement verbal texts and are part of the overall meaning of the movie.

### 3.2.2. Analysis of Visual Aspects

In this section I will present four images taken from the selected sequences from the film *Abre los Ojos*. The study of the images together with the text relies on studies in the area of multiliteracies, which claims that our perception of our everyday interactions is shaped by more than what is said and not only one, but many other resources are involved, such as: body movement (non-verbal behavior) and gaze, objects displaced and colors used, direct and indirect relations between text and image, or even what can be inferred by the lack of one of them. This kind of study brings out the significance of literacy in “reading” text and images (Unsworth, 2001:71), because there is a need to analyze the situations from different points of view.

To reinforce the importance of a multimodal analysis of our discourses and with the idea of Halliday’s SFL, Kress and van Leeuwen say that:

Visual structures realize meanings as linguistic structures do also. (...). For instance, what is expressed in language through the choice between different word classes and semantic structures is, in visual communication, expressed through the choice between, for instance, different uses of color, or different compositional structures.” (Kress; van Leeuwen, 1996, p.2)

The visual material to be discussed consists of four static images related to the sequences which belong to the textual analysis mentioned in the previous section. As mentioned above, there are several aspects to analyze, therefore, even though they are static images, the images will be viewed as part of the whole sequence of images and text.

The selected images were chosen due to the fact that they work together with the text analyzed in the previous section and portray the way the characters Cesar, Sofia and Pelayo's bodies react to each other while meeting for the first time, first in his and then in her house.

They are narrative processes that visually build what is going on, who are the participants, in which circumstance they interact and the relation that are built between the portrayed elements, in a similar way to Halliday's Processes types (ideational metafunction).

The representational metafunction, which deals with the relationship between represented elements / participants in the visual text, will be discuss more than the interactive metafunction, which deals with the interaction between the represented participant and the viewer (who receives the message in the real world).

The characters here are described as represented participants (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:48) and they will be analyzed in terms of the position of the vectors (imaginary trace which gives the idea of movement), their physical appearance, background of the image, color used, and other information displayed concerning the Given/New and Ideal/Real subdivisions of the representational metafunction.

In figure 3.5 Sofia and Cesar are being introduced by their common friend Pelayo in Cesar's apartment. Cesar is looking towards Sofia. Sofia and Pelayo are looking at Cesar. Sofia is in the centre of the image, suggesting that she is also the centre of what is happening, the nucleus of the information. Her eyes are positioned in the middle of the picture suggesting the idea of doubt in relation to what may represent the ideal and the real,

consequently the emotive appeal and glamour against the practical information, the reality.



**Figure 3.1 – Static Image collected from the sequence where Sofia and Cesar first meet, introduced by Pelajo. Pelajo and Sofia are looking at Cesar.**

The top of the image which Kress and van Leuween call “ideal” is where the represented participants’ heads are located suggesting an emotional appeal between them. The bottom part of the image, the “real”, is more informative, that is, their clothes and Cesar’s gift in Sofia’s hand (which can only be seen in the sequence of images in the movie). In this image Cesar is not shown, only his back. The left side of the image represents the already given information, what is assumed to be known by the viewer, in this case, the relation between Cesar and Sofia and, on the contrary, the right side is about something new, which is not yet known by the viewer, in this case the relation between Sofia and Pelajo. See figure 3.1.1 for more details:



**Figure 3.1.1 – Static Image** collected from the sequence where Sofia and Cesar first meet, introduced by Pelajo. Pelajo and Sofia are looking at Cesar. (image with divisions suggested by Kress and van Leuween)

As already explained in the verbal analysis, it is suggested that Pelayo is flirting/dating with Sofia when he takes her to his friend's house. It is also suggested that Sofia calls Cesar's attention, making him also flirt with her. The image shows that she is in the middle of the two, but with a probable crush on Cesar, because she is pictured more on the left side of the image, where Cesar is and she is looking at him.

According to Kress and van Leuween (2006), when talking about the representation and interaction between image and viewer, in this image we have a frontal angle, where the producer is not situated in front of the individuals but there is a level of involvement. It is almost as if we (viewers) are part of the conversation as well. The gaze, or the vectors created by the represented participants' eyes is not directed to us, but to themselves, which represents an "offer" for us as viewers.

Following Kress and van Leuween's narrative representation (2006, p.68), in this image, Sofia and Pelayo are the actors, the participants who look, and Cesar is the reactor, the phenomenon, the passive participant. This is an example of a

reactional process. Therefore, we can read through this image that Sofia and Pelayo are connected to Cesar.

In terms of colors used in the images, I will base my comments on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2002) believe that: colors do not only express or mean "calm or energy", for example, but they are used by people to "act on others", to send messages. They say that that is a possibility of extending the use of "grammar" to color as a communicational resource. The authors believe that the use of colors depends on the socio-cultural context and that it would be very difficult to understand the meanings of color "across all of society", but there is interest of small groups, for instance, decorators or paint manufacturers, with their specific and/or personal interests who make use of color to portray what would be interesting for their "market".

The colors present in the image may suggest some comments, such as: the red wall, that according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002: 348-349) relates with the idea of energy. Sofia's black dress may bring the idea of grief or sadness, according to European cultural values already mentioned in the previous chapter.

Her hairdo may also bring an idea of seduction towards Cesar because her face is open to Cesar and almost close to Pelayo's side.

Social distance is also crucial to be analyzed in an image. In this case the represented participants are viewed by a close shot where the subject is shown from head to shoulders (p.124). This kind of shot suggests that the social distance, or social relation, is that of proximity to the viewer reaffirming what has already been pointed out. Hall (1966: 110-20) says that distance is always determined in social interaction as invisible boundaries which determine the social positions participants are inserted in. The author's theory of *proxemics* suggests that people maintain different degrees of personal distance depending on the social setting and their cultural backgrounds.

The eye-level angle demonstrates that there is equality in terms of who holds the power over whom. In sum, this image



depicts a struggle of interests among the represented participants while deciding which way to take: flirt or not to flirt with the best friend's "girl", give or not give attention to the obvious flirting of the friend and, let or not let the best friend flirt with your "girl".

In the sequence we have figure 3.2 which shows Cesar while being introduced to Sofia by his best friend Pelayo. In this case we have Cesar's face as the centre of the image, he is the nucleus of the information and he depicts this moment as a happy one, by smiling:



**Figure 3.2 – Static Image collected from the sequence where Sofia and Cesar first meet. Cesar is looking at Sofia.**

The social distance is also one of proximity and the vectors connect both characters (Sofia and Cesar) going from his eyes to hers in the previous image. This picture represents to us, as viewers, an "offer", because he is not looking at us. It seems that as viewers we become involved in their seductive look in the two images presented.

The left side of the image shows what is being given, the party, and the right side what is new, the entrance hall (which can only be seen in the sequence of images in the movie) where Sofia stands. Something that may also call our attention is the color of

the wall “red” which may suggest love and passion, or even a reflection of an energized place. (Kress and van Leuween, 2002).

The bottom of the image, which shows what is real for the viewer, depicts a piece of Cesar’s beige shirt and a white t-shirt (his complete look can only be seen in the sequence of images in the movie). These colors may represent calmness and passivity (peace), according to westerns cultural values, where, for example, people wear white clothes on New Year ’s Eve to call for peace.

Following Kress and van Leuween (2006:68) this image is called a non-transactional action, because there is just one participant involved in the image and there is no goal (the goal, Sofia, is in another picture)

Again the tendency of the image is to show emotive appeal (need for proximity) concentrated in the higher part of the image where the eyes stand. And the lower part shows something more informative, what is going on, the party, and the guests. See the image with the divisions for more details:



**Figure 3.2.1:** Static Image collected from the sequence where Sofia and Cesar first meet. Cesar is looking at Sofia. (image with divisions suggested by Kress and van Leuween)

After analyzing the two images related to Sofia and Cesar’s first meeting I may say that the social distance in which

they are portrayed, the colors used in the environment, their look (gaze) suggest a propensity of both having a mutual interest in each other, but Sofia, in her sensual black dress and hair style holds the power over Cesar.

The second dialogue, where Cesar and Sofia are in her modest apartment, figure 3.3 below, Cesar is portrayed entering Sofia's apartment and looking at the place. It is when Cesar takes Sofia to her house and finds out about the place where she lives and the way she conducts her life.



**Figure 3.3 – Static Image collected from the sequence where Cesar arrives at Sofia's place. He looks around.**

His former beige shirt (from previous images) is now covered by a brown coat and this may represent the dark colors that can be seen in the suburb areas, or even the association with comfort, simplicity, nature (land) and responsibility (Kress and van Leuween, 2002). It is definitely a clear example of an offer. Social distance here is different from the previous pictures, because here he is depicted from a medium-close shot where the represented participant is cut approximately at the waist suggesting that, differently from the previous pictures, their distance is bigger and not as intimate.

The top part of the image shows his face and the attention he is giving to the place and not only to her; it also shows the kind of decorative artifacts her money can buy to decorate her house. The lamp, round and shiny as the sun and the flowers on a painting on the wall may also represent simplicity and nature in the ideal section. His eyes are now out of the centre of the image, but he is still the nucleus of the information. He looks to the left side of the picture, but it is not clear to what. This side of the image brings what is known, predictable, and as it is a dark image it may represent that for him her life is hard and difficult, because the black color usually intends to deliver this message. On the bottom part of the picture there is a piece of a table (which can be entirely seen in the sequence of images in the movie) which demonstrates through souvenirs she expose as decoration her reality, that she is a mime artist as well as an actress. Observe figure 3.3.1 with divisions suggested by Kress and van Leuween to better understand comments above:



**Figure 3.3.1 – Static Image collected from the sequence where Cesar arrives at Sofia’s place. He looks around. . (image with divisions suggested by Kress and van Leuween)**

In figure 3.4 Sofia is looking at Cesar and the picture shows the apartment’s dining room and kitchen.



**Figure 3.4 – Static Image** collected from the sequence where Cesar arrives at Sofia's place. She is looking at him.

Her body, is in the centre of the image and she is looking at him, suggesting a more sensual approach. On the left side of the image, where the given information stands we can notice the dining room and the kitchen cabinets showing that her apartment is small, modest and where the disorganization, in class terms, means she cannot afford to pay someone to clean her house, which he probably can. Figure 3.4.1 below demonstrates the image with the divisions:



**Figure 3.4.1 – Static Image collected from the sequence where Cesar arrives at Sofia’s place. She is looking at him. . (image with divisions suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen)**

While she describes her life in the sequences that follow (not the object of study in this thesis), this image portrays disorganization and may represent her busy life. On the right side of the image we can see darkness almost making the big plant disappear. It may represent the future of their relation, because this side represents the new information (something which is not yet known) and when there is no certainty about what is coming, or that what is coming may not be good, the black color is usually a representation of it.

She is looking at Cesar, but as he does not appear in the same frame, as in the last two images, it is a non-transactional image. The image brings us an offer again, because she is not looking at us (viewers). This image is depicted from a horizontal angle, a frontal plane, even though the participant is not looking towards the camera.

The four images selected all demonstrate action (looking, talking, calling, giving, observing), therefore, they are all considered *Action Processes*. In figure 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, where just one represented participant appears in the image, we have *non-transactional action* images. In figure 3.1, where actor and the goal (who is the actor being looked at) appear in the image a *transactional action image* is portrayed.

### **3.2.3. General and final remarks on the analysis of *Abre los Ojos***

These sequences together present a great variety of possibilities concerning the struggle for power between a wealthy male and a low class female, through a powerful media channel that reaches audience’s attention in its purpose of representing real life in fiction.

According to the intentions of this study the focus of the analysis is to investigate resources surrounding the textual and visual data to analyze the exchange of power associated to the main participants/objects of study.

Overall, the amount and types of processes used by each character in the textual analysis guides us, according to Halliday (1979) and Fairclough (1989), to the following interpretation:

- In the first piece of conversation, Cesar is introduced to Sofia in his birthday party, Cesar uses a great amount of process types, most of them Material, in comparison to Sofia (who almost does not talk and uses just two processes types), suggesting that he is in control by making use of questions and statements with verbs of tangible actions and by being directly involved as the *Actor*, therefore holding the control/power over the conversation in relation to her.
- In the second piece of conversation, where Cesar and Sofia are in Sofia's house, both represented participants use the same number of processes types, but Sofia is practically reduced to the use of Relational Processes (variables of "being" – in this case most are intensive and possessive ones), which demonstrate she has abstract relations with the world, whereas Cesar, who uses more Material and Mental Processes, which demonstrates *outer* (something happens – there is an action) and *inner* (something in sensed - internal world of mind - feelings) experiences, consequently, giving us the impression that he is actively and emotionally engaged with her in the conversation, therefore, holding the power again.

Therefore, it seems that in the first textual narrative Cesar is more in power due to the way he constructs the dialogues. In the second part it seems again that he holds the power through the text making use of several questions and statements. In the images she is again portrayed in a sensual way, but he is giving more attention

to her house instead. I may say that she does not hold any power at this moment. She cannot even make him look at her.

Another point to emphasize is in relation to Cesar and Sofia's social distance. In the first two images when they are introduced they are portrayed in a close-up shot, showing more intimacy to each other, whereas in the third and fourth, when they are in Sofia's house, they are portrayed in a medium shot, showing more distance.

Even finding out that, in the case of the data presented in this study, Cesar holds the power over Sofia in the two dialogues, I may suggest that the struggle for power among the represented participants can be interpreted as the contemporary struggle between the socio-economical groups (capitalists x working class) or even the western society struggle of women trying to obtain equal rights to men and/or men trying to hold the higher position they have held for centuries.

According to Trodd (2001) "the endlessly circulating commodity of postmodern cinema (American and other national, local and independent cinemas) contains signifying systems that carry with them both the values of capitalism (Spanish particularities) and the contradictory signs of the struggle produced within it" (p. 103).

In the next chapter I present the analysis on *Abre los Ojos* remake *Vanilla Sky* and see if the characteristics I have found in *Abre los Ojos* can be applicable in a different culture.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Analysis of *Vanilla Sky***

This chapter will be based on the movie *Vanilla Sky*, *Abre los Ojos*'s remake, mentioned in the previous chapter and it is intended to be analyzed and discussed in a similar way. I analyze the text and images mainly based on the selected theoretical perspectives already mentioned.



#### 4.1. *Vanilla Sky*'s plot

Based on Herbert (2006) and after watching the film several times, in this section I briefly describe the content of its plot, by summarizing what I think the most important aspects to be mentioned are.

As a remake of the Spanish film *Abre los Ojos*, *Vanilla Sky* has in its essence the same plot. It was released in 2001 and is a Hollywood production directed by Cameron Crowe. The protagonist is called David Aames (played by the actor Tom Cruise) and the antagonist Bryan Shelby (Jason Lee). The dancer Sofia Serrano is played by the actress Penélope Cruz. His best friend is Brian Shelby (Jason Lee) and his former girlfriend is Julie Gianni (Cameron Diaz).

In *Vanilla Sky* it is very clear the way David conducts his life: he lives a bachelor life sponsored by the Empire his father left when he died. David and Sofia's first meeting is at his birthday party and they are introduced by his best friend Brian. She works as a dancer and lives a modest life.

David falls in love with Sofia and after spending a night in her house. His former girlfriend convinces him to get into his car and causes an accident, killing herself and disfiguring his face. Depressed by his appearance he decides to sign a contract with L.E. (Life Extension) to live a living dream. After this he becomes very confused and starts to have moments of delusion. At the end, when he realizes that what he is experiencing is not real he decides to break the contract and wake up from the dream.

The critic Stephen Holden, from The New York Times Journal, wrote an article in December 14, 2001 about *Vanilla Sky*, mentioning that:

"Vanilla Sky" is a timely fable about male vanity...has been faithfully adapted from the Spanish filmmaker Alejandro Amenabar's 1997 romantic thriller "Abre los Ojos" ("Open Your Eyes") into a star vehicle for Mr. Cruise, its story transplanted to New York City from Spain and amplified by a blockbuster

budget... Sofia, a dancer, seems to exude a special radiance. Or as David crows, she is "the last guileless woman in New York.' Overnight, the man who had everything but true love finally has it all...the movie carries a lingering tug of sweetness.

The title of the film is, apparently, a reference to Monet's oil painting *Vanilla Sky* hung in David's apartment which also serves as basis for the way the sky is portrayed through the movie : with a vanilla color.

## **4.2. Analysis of Vanilla Sky**

As previously mentioned, the movie *Vanilla Sky* is a remake of the Spanish *Abre los Ojos* and, as a remake, Vanilla has a similar plot and even the same actress Penélope Cruz playing the character of Sofia. *Vanilla Sky* foregrounds consumer culture and both films (*Abre los Ojos* and *Vanilla Sky*) associate material culture with personal identity. However, duo to the fact that they are made by distinct Film Manufactures, differences can be noticed in their presentation, such as the places Gran Vía and Times Square (Herbert, 2006). Demonstrating how remakes are "evidence of the historically and culturally specific contexts in which they were produced and distributed" (Ibid.: p.29)

The data selected shows similarity with the one analyzed in the previous chapter: it is when Sofia meets the protagonist (in this movie called David), introduced by his best friend (in this movie called Brian) in David's birthday party and in the sequence when he (David) goes to her house.

### **4.2.1. Analysis of Verbal Aspects**

When I first watched *Vanilla Sky*, after watching *Abre los Ojos*, I noticed that even having a great deal of similarities they clearly belong to distinct cultures. It is clear that the amount of financial resources inserted in the American version is superior to

the Spanish and they make it clear through the discourse (when mentioning where the apartment is located), the images (showing sport and expensive cars and Monet canvas hanging on the apartment's wall), or even by the soundtrack (famous artists/singers).

The dialogue between the characters David, Sofia and Brian is quite the same and, in terms of representation of reality, it seems to have the same purpose in relation to the viewer : to show a wealthy young man falling in love with a "suburban" girl. However, there is a crucial difference in one of the characters: Sofia. She is played by the actress Penélope Cruz in both movies, but, in the previous one *Abre los Ojos*, she speaks her native language, Spanish, while in the American version she speaks English as a second language. It can be seen as a representation of the United States of America's multiculturalism or perhaps as a means to call attention to the pretty Latino girl type.

In terms of the differences in the language used we can relate Sofia's discourse to what Halliday (1984) calls the "speech community" which is an "idealized construct" that combines people who are: "linked by some form of social organization, talk to each other and speak alike"(p.154). It is not clear though if her accent is forced on purpose or not. Halliday (Ibid: 199) says that "no language (second, third...) even completely replaces the mother tongue". Sofia then could be seen as a girl with Latino origin, who probably lives in the out-of-town area because that is the place where immigrants usually start their lives in the pursuit of the American Dream and she talks that way because that is part of who she is. The character of David, on the other hand, lets clear that he is already living it the so-called American Dream.

Halliday (1984:3) says that the "context plays a part in determining what we say; and what we say plays a part in determining the context", therefore discourse is a continuity and change of social and cultural meanings, because:

Even realized in the lower levels of the linguistic system, lexicogrammatical and phonological, it is itself

(text/discourse) the realization of higher-level semiotic structures with their own modes of interpretation, literary, sociological, psychoanalytic and so on. (p.138)

Halliday (1979, 1984) says that language becomes significant if not isolated, that is, it has to function in some environment and for that it can vary according to the type of situation. This is called the “Context of Situation”, therefore, it is crucial to determine the “Context of Situation” we are talking about.

The first sequence concerns the characters’ (Sofia, David and Brian) first time together, when Sofia is introduced to David by their common friend Brian. Sofia and Brian arrive to David’s birthday party, in his apartment. Brian then introduced Sofia and they give David a gift.

In the sequences I to be analyzed several signs show the character of Sofia (Penélope Cruz) and David (Tom Cruise) involved in a type of emotional interest in each other since they first met. For instance, when Brian (David’s best friend), during the conversation notices the couple’s looks to each other and their interaction, he says:

Brian:	<u>Stop</u>	<u>flirting</u> and open it.
	<i>Material Process</i>	<i>Behavioral Process</i>

Halliday (1985, 1994) says that Behavioral Processes do not have defined characteristics, but he cites involuntary body actions to give examples, such as cough, laugh and breathe, so, in this sense it is David’s involuntary body responds to the presence of Sofia. At this point David and Sofia notice that their flirting moment was noticed by their common friend Pelayo.

As previously mentioned David is a wealthy and good looking guy who has most of his friends related to his money and status, and through his social position in society, he tries to call Sofia’s attention. David, in the example below confirms it, when answering his friend question:

Brian: How you doing?

*Relational Process*

David: Living the dream, baby, living the dream.

*Material / Mental Process*

*Material / Mental Process*

The “living the dream”, or “the American Dream” is known worldwide as a way to express people’s pursuit for happiness (freedom and prosperity). The idea is rooted in the American Declaration of Independence which states that: “all men are created equal” and has the right of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. It is also a reference to most of people around the world (most Asian and Hispanics) who go to America to save money and provide or support the family<sup>9</sup>. In this sense the process David uses could be analyzed in both ways: first as an action from a physical world “Material” and second, as a Mental Process, because ‘the dream’ is a phenomenon of the inner world related to his thoughts and feelings.

The next part of the chosen dialogue, when they are still at David’s birthday party we can clearly see how the basis of the conversation is on Sofia and David and how their friend Brian tries to be inserted without success. He remains aside by the couple, indicating a strong emotional connection between David and Sofia

David: To what do I owe this pleasure?

*Mental Process*

Sofia: The pleasure of Sofia Serrano.

Sofia: I m sorry about my coat. It’s too big for your closet.

*Relational Process*

*Relational Process*

David: It’s amazing. I love your coat.

*Relational Process*

*Mental Process*

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<sup>9</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country\\_profiles/1217752.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1217752.stm) (accessed on Dec 4th, 2012)

- Sofia: No, I overdressed. I mean,  
*Material Process (intransitive verb)*  
 I underdressed.  
*Material Process (intransitive verb)*
- Brian: I'll just continue like you're both actually listening.  
*Material Process* *Behavioral Process*
- David: Daniel?
- Brian: I have ceased to exist.  
*Material Process*
- David: Madison Square Garden is nearby.  
*Relational Process*  
 I think it might fit there  
*Mental Process* *Material Process (intransitive verb)*
- Sofia: Happy birthday.
- Brian: We picked it out together.  
*Material Process*
- David: Thank you.
- Brian: We picked it out together. We.  
*Material Process*
- Sofia: You're welcome.

The example demonstrates Sofia's consciousness and ironic speech about David's life when talking about her coat's size. She uses Relational Processes "I m sorry about my coat. It's too big for your closet" and Material Processes: "I overdressed. I mean, underdressed", to stress the idea of social distance between them (Halliday, 1985, 1994).

David, who conducts this first dialogue, on the other hand, clearly tries to impress her when calling for a majordomo (butler) to provide a storage place to her coat and in the sequence locating

the place where he lives in relation to a very well located and worldwide famous place in one of the most expensive cities to live in the world. For that he uses Relational, Mental and Material Process, consequently: “Madison Square Garden is nearby. I think it might fit there”, what presents a mix of word choices and may suggest that even he uses a Relational Process to give continuation to her comment he wants proximity using a Mental Process in the sequence. He also demonstrates to be very polite and intellectual in his word choices and comments when asking her name and praising her coat style, through the use of the Mental Process “owe” which also suggest the intention of proximity/feelings (Halliday (1985, 1994)

Their friend Brian stays in a co-star position in the conversation, just trying, without success, to be noticed. The lines in which it is clear are:

- Brian: I'll just continue like you're both actually listening.  
*Material Process* *Behavioral Process*
- Brian: I have ceased to exist.  
*Material Process (transformative Process)*

And when he repeats the statement:

- Brian: We picked it out together.  
*Material Process*
- Brian: We picked it out together. We.  
*Material Process*

In an attempt to call Sofia and David's attention Brian uses tangible action verbs that, according to Halliday (1985, 1994) are Material Processes, but still get no attention at all. David continues flirting with Sofia. For example: after Brian's comment: “We picked it up together”, David says: “Thank you” to Sofia and after Brian says: “We picked it up together”, and reaffirms “We”, Sofia says “you're welcome” staring at David.

In a shell, this first dialogue portrays David in a upper class group, mostly, as already mentioned, when he indicates where he

lives “Madison Square Garden is nearby” and when he calls his majordomo “Daniel?”; and portrays Sofia in a lower social position when she notices she is not well dressed for the occasion “I overdressed, I mean, underdressed”. I may conclude that, for this piece of conversations that David holds the power of the conversation, even both (Sofia and David) using similar amount and types of processes, his is in a higher social position in a capitalist society, where capitalists have the control over the working class (Fairclough, 2001).

In the second dialogue, when David visits Sofia’s house for the first time, David’s curiosity about Sofia takes place. The word choices now are more informal than in the first conversation. Here they do not have Brian’s presence anymore. Sofia presents her house and gives some indications about the way she lives, for instance, she presents her pet, she states that the cleaning is not important and how difficult it is to maintain her apartment and mentions that he could not have her life. When she says:

Sofia: I love living here and  
*Mental Process* *Material Process*  
 I refuse to clean up  
*Verbal Process (projecting clause)* *Material Process*

And

Sofia: It’s mine and you can’t have it  
*Relational Process* *Relational Process*

The word choices Sofia presents in these sentences demonstrate that, according to Halliday (1985, 1994), she uses strong, tangible action verbs (Material Processes) to state her position, and also makes clear that she is proud of her place when using the Mental Process “love”.

The following example, where she uses Relational Processes, demonstrates that she has an abstract and more distant intention towards David, she is indicating a very strong personality, someone who knows who she is. In the piece of dialogue presented below some other aspects in relation to her



personality can be noticed. David and Sofia, as already mentioned, are in her modest apartment and the focus of the dialogue is on her lifestyle.

Sofia: Hey, Paulo! Hello. I have to take you for a walk.  
*Material Process*

David: A body protection. This is a lethal canine.  
*Relational Process*

Sofia: I love living here and  
*Mental Process* *Material Process*

I refuse to clean up.  
*Verbal Process (projecting)* *Material Process*

David: No problem

Sofia: I have to work around the clock to keep this place.  
*Material Process* *Material Process*

David: You really are a dancer  
*Relational Process*

Sofia: For 14 years. But I don't dance like you dance.  
*Material Process* *Material Process*

Do you want something to drink?  
*Mental Process* *Material Process*

David: Sure. I like your life  
*Mental Process*

Sofia: It's mine and you can't have it  
*Relational Process* *Relational Process*

Now most of the processes used by Sofia are Material, which indicate concrete actions and it seems that she makes more comments than what is really necessary to answer his questions. It

may indicate that she wishes to immediately affirm her position in society as a lower class citizen who fights every day, who acts, who moves to keep paying the bills.

When she uses the material process “dance” she says: “but I don’t dance like you dance”, she is actually inferring that she dances to pay her bills and not just for fun like him. Also it suggests the idea that his “dance” is a softer one, because he does not need to worry about anything but his leisure.

This part of the second sequence puts Sofia in a higher position over David, because she conducts the conversation and says whatever she believes is necessary and significant. It is not clear what her intentions are, but it seems that she wants him to accept her, independently of her condition.

David, as previously mentioned conducts the first dialogue up to the point where he enters her house, suggesting that her position makes him lose the focus of the conversation. He demonstrates confidence in the way he conducts the first dialogue, but when taking Sofia to her house he starts to change the status quo and begins to show insecurity and inner doubts by making use of Mental Processes, such as bother, terrifies and like.

Sofia: A lot of people are scared of heights  
*Relational Process*

David: It's not the heights that bother me,  
*Mental Processes*  
it's the impact that terrifies me  
*Mental Processes*

The conversation above happens a little bit before they enter at Sofia’s house in the suburbs and it seems that they are making reference to his fancy and high floor apartment. But in between the lines it can be read as the way he faces his reality and how scared he is if he loses it, because he (David) is using Mental Processes, that is, thoughts and feelings to express himself (Halliday, 1985, 2004), suggesting a more intimate approach, whereas Sofia puts herself as low class group person, who is making a comment with

the word choice “people are scared”. She shows an abstract relation with the world, a distant reality for people like her. Another interpretation may be that he does see social reality the same way she does, because her apartment is on the first floor, she faces the difficulties in life keeping both feet on the ground and he lives in the “heights”, far from reality.

As the dialogues are face-to-face (what suggests proximity) and informal, it is not a surprise to find that most of the processes are *Material* which indicate action (tangible ones) and *Mental* which indicate feelings or thinking (consciousness world). Let’s take a look at some examples:

<u>I</u> <i>Actor</i>	<u>stay</u> <i>Material Process</i>	<u>long.</u> <i>goal</i>
<u>I’ll</u> <i>Actor</i>	<u>leave</u> <i>Material Process</i>	<u>this</u> upstairs. <i>goal</i>
<u>I</u> <i>Senser</i>	<u>love</u> <i>Mental Process</i>	<u>your coat.</u> <i>phenomenon</i>
<u>I</u> <i>Senser</i>	<u>love</u> <i>Mental process</i>	<u>living here.</u> <i>phenomenon</i>

Regarding the transitivity system in which Halliday (1985, 1994) categorizes the processes and dividing them in the first and second dialogues, what can be inferred about the couple’s relationship is that the first conversation is a representation of an informal conversation in a birthday party in which the “man” (David) holds the power over the “woman” (Sofia) while conducting the conversation through the types of processes he makes.

The second conversation portrays Sofia holding the power in the conversation and she decides what should and should not be mentioned, by using most Material Processes (to take, living, to clean up, to work, to keep, to dance, to drink), as a way to be direct and practical in her statements. Fairclough (1989) give different

attributes to the term “power”. He says that it can be physical (physical strength), or symbolic (discriminatory language). Fairclough (2001) also argues that what distinguishes CDA from other academic traditions, such as sociolinguistics, is the study of those representations of power as dialectic: a local/place of power and an affirmation of power. Therefore, even being in a lower social class Sofia is in control of the conversation.

#### **4.2.2. Analysis of Visual Aspects**

The purpose of this section is to make an analysis of four images chosen from the sequences where the dialogues are inserted. Therefore the images are static ones and they appear in the movie in the sequences where Sofia and David are introduced by his best friend Brian in David’s birthday party at home and in the sequence when he visits Sofia’s house for the first time.

The context in which the first and second images are inserted concerns an extravagant birthday party promoted by the wealthy man David Aames, in his chic and well located apartment in Manhattan (NY). As mentioned in the plot David’s life is financially supported by the money his father left when he died.

The images are similar to the ones analyzed in the previous chapter and, consequently, they all portray Action processes, because they demonstrate through vectors some kind of action.

Image 4.2 that follows portrays the moment when Sofia and Cesar are being introduced to each other. David’s friend Brian comes with Sofia, but as soon as she is introduced to David, Brian loses attention. Sofia is inserted in the centre of the image, suggesting, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:198) that she is the main represented participant; she is the main object, the nucleus of the information. But even being inserted in the centre she is closer to David than Brian. And, in addition, there is somebody else between Sofia and Brian: a waiter in white.

The colors used by the characters can also be considered as a communicational resource (Kress and van Leeuwen,2002: p.

343). So, if taking their dark clothes (black, brown and dark red) into account it may represent the sophisticated environment. I may suggest that Brian's black coat has a relation to sorrow, because he is losing his "girl", Sofia's brown coat can be related to calmness, showing that she is expecting to have a smooth relationship with Brian and David and, David's dark red shirt may represent love and "energy" (Kress and van Leuween, 2002, p. 348-349).

Following Kress and van Leuween's visual grammar, the vectors are presented in two subjects: Sofia's and Brian's looking at David, which is considered a Demand between them and David and it is an offer to us, as viewers. Sofia's distance is not as long as Brian's, suggesting a close shot and, therefore, a closer relationship with the party's host, David.



**Figure 4.1 – Static Image collected from the sequence where Sofia and David first meet, introduced by Brian. Brian and Sofia are looking at David.**

On the top of the image where the ideal stands, there are the three represented participants. On this section of the image an emotive appeal is expected to be portrayed (Kress and van Leuween, 2006) between the characters and the viewer, suggesting a romantic/emotive interest between them. On the left is David's back (he is in front of Sofia) and in this part of the image the

aspects which are assumed to be known by the viewer stands, that is, that David will probably be the represented participant involved with Sofia. And, on the contrary, the right part of the image portrays something which is not yet known by the audience, that is, if there is or not some involvement between Brian and Sofia.

On the bottom part of the image where practical and informative issues usually appear we can see the represented participants' clothes and the birthday present.

This is an example of a frontal angle, because the images are portrayed with a “level of involvement, almost as if the viewer is involved in the conversation” (2006:136). See Figure 4.1.1 for more details on the analysis:



**Figure 4.1.1 – Static Image** collected from the sequence where Sofia and David first meet, introduced by Brian. Brian and Sofia are looking at David. (image with divisions suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen)

Figure 4.3, which belongs to the images from the movie's chosen sequence portrays the moment when Sofia asks for a place to put her coat and David calls his majordomo.



**Figure 4.2 – Static Image collected from the sequence where Sofia and David first meet, introduced by Brian. David is looking at Sofia.**

In this static image David is located at the centre of the image and is the nucleus of the information. Again the image brings at the top (*ideal* sector) the idea of emotional appeal – where the characters’ heads are located. On the left side, where David’s hand is, is the *given* sector, what is supposed to be known and assumed to be part of the culture, that is: the move he makes with his hand indicates that he is in charge; he has power over his employee, not even looking at him. He is just staring at Sofia. The vector (imaginary eye line) is an “offer”, because the represented participant is not looking at us.

At the bottom of the image, the *real*, where information tends to be more practical and informative, we can see Sofia’s back and Brian. On the left side of the image a big part of Brian’s black blazer is presented and it may represent the loss of Sofia’s attention, because the color black, as already mentioned, portrays serenity, grief and death (the loss of a person). On the right side, where Sofia’s hair stands is the *new* information, what is not yet known by the viewer, that is, she remains a mystery, even for us, as audience. The two images 4.1 and 4.2 are considered to be a

close shot chosen by the producer, to give audience the impression of a “close relationship between the represented participants” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 124). See Figure 4.2.1 below for more details:



**Figure 4.2.1 – Static Image collected from the sequence where Sofia and David first meet, introduced by Brian. David is looking at Sofia. (image with divisions suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen)**

In the two pictures that belong to this first sequence, where Sofia is introduced to David it is clear, together with the textual data already mentioned, that David belongs to an upper class group and Sofia does not, therefore, he holds the power over her in this sequence. The images serve as a way to reaffirm his status and also show their (David and Sofia) connection to each other.

The next images, figure 4.3 (4.3.1) and 4.4 (4.4.1) belong to the second sequence of images, where David arrives at Sofia’s house for the first time.





**Figure 4.3 – Static Image collected from the sequence where David arrives at Sofia’s place. He looks around.**

In figure 4.3 the focus is more on Sofia’s apartment than David himself. The *centre* is the television and the *given*, or, what is supposed to be known to the viewer as part of the culture is all the mess of her house (cluttered bed, clothes on the floor) and on the other hand, on the right side, the *new*, are Sofia’s personal photos and objects as well as David himself.

Again the top of the image portrays some emotive appeal, because it is where his face and her photos are (portrayed). And on the lower section, where the practical information tends to appear, we can see her personal objects and disorganization, which reveal her lifestyle.

Differently from David’s house, this image and the next one present a different type of scenario, in terms of the distance between the represented participants which is a *Medium Long Shot* and a *Medium Close Shot*, consequently. That is, subjects are cut off approximately at the knees and the waist, suggesting, according to Kress and van Leuween (2006:124) a less personal and more social interaction between them.

The lampshades are positioned to give a viewer a sense of comfort and romanticism. The picture is also considered as an *Oblique Angle* and David (the character) is not looking at us, which means that in terms of the *gaze* it is considered an *offer*. At this moment David is not interested directly in Sofia but he looks for information about her and her lifestyle looking at the apartment. The colors used in the scenario are dark ones in David's clothes and light ones in basically the rest of the apartment. The light-blue color at the walls may suggest, according to Kress and van Leuween (2002:348-349) calmness. See figure 4.3.1 below for more details:



**Figure 4.3.1 – Static Image collected from the sequence where David arrives at Sofia's place. He looks around. (image with divisions suggested by Kress and van Leuween)**

The last image to be analyzed in this section, figure 4.4, belongs to the sequence of images when Sofia is telling David about her life.



**Figure 4.4 – Static Image collected from the sequence where David arrives at Sofia’s place. She looks at him.**

In this image we can see Sofia and her closet as the nucleus of information. She is looking directly at David and not to at us, so, it is considered an *offer* once more. On the top part of the image we can see her face as something new, that is, we, as viewers do not know what will happen in relation to Sofia, but still there is an emotional appeal revealed. On the left side, the given sector portrays on the top a piece of art and on the bottom a lampshade another time. The brown/orange color of her shirt and most of the clothes depicted in the closet could suggest a gently and encouraged person (Kress and van Leuween, 2002: 348-349).

The right side of the picture where unknown information is supposed to be positioned we can only see darkness, suggesting that what will happen in relation to the couple is not clear, not certain yet. Through her face we can presume that she is happy and expecting positive results from their relationship. See figure 4.4.1 for more details:



**Figure 4.4.1 – Static Image collected from the sequence where David arrives at Sofia’s place. She looks at him. (Image with divisions suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen)**

### **4.2.3. General and final remarks on the analysis on *Vanilla Sky***

The dialogues and static images taken from the sequences where Sofia meets David in his house and when he meets her, open our eyes to the presence of multimodal aspects and socio-cultural representations. It clearly depicts the image of a wealthy, good looking guy (David) who has a strong crush on Sofia, a pretty brunette Spanish descendent girl who lives in a suburban area in NYC.

The exchange of power between the characters is more evident in the textual data. Through the images there are also some aspects which support this standpoint, for instance, David’s hand movement while calling the butler and Sofia’s messy apartment.

According to the intentions of this study the focus of the analysis is to come up with resources surrounding the textual and visual data and try to demonstrate the exchange of power between the represented participants.

As a result, the focus is on the characters of Sofia and David. It seems that in the first textual narrative David, as the host,

is more in power due to the way he constructs the dialogues and makes use of statements and questions. Through the first two images, his social status as a capitalist is reinforced and well connected to the textual data. At this time it is also clear that David and Sofia are interested in each other, because in the conversation they do not give Brian any attention and in the images they (David and Sofia) are looking at each other.

In the second dialogue and its related images it seems that Sofia is in power, even though being part of the “working class” group, because she, as the host, guides the conversation and she shows her apartment without any embarrassment, even though she knows that it is completely different from his. All in all, it seems she is in control in this second sequence, therefore holding a higher position. David’s attention is only directed to her lifestyle, which seems for him very interesting.

Again, I may say that this exchange of power among them suggests the contemporary struggle between the socio-economical and gender groups fighting for space. So, even though capitalist societies own the means of production and seem to have control over the working classes (Fairclough, 2001), sometimes people seize control over the discourse as a way to sustain power (Fairclough, 2001), and this is something Sofia does in the second sequence.

In the next chapter I present the final thoughts about the analysis of the two movies *Abre los Ojos* and *Vanilla Sky*.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **General discussions of the Analysis of *Abre los Ojos* and *Vanilla Sky* and Final Remarks**

As previously mentioned, this thesis analyzed four dialogues and eight static images selected from the two films: the Spanish *Abre los Ojos* and its remake the American *Vanilla Sky*. Based mainly on theories such as Fairclough’s Discourse Analysis, Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics and Kress and van

Leuween's Visual Grammar, I focused on possible options of interpretation in relation to who holds the power over whom between characters from distinctive social classes and corresponding socio-cultural aspects involved.

Critical Discourse Analysis systematically explores relationships between discursive practices, texts and events, social and cultural structures, relations and processes. It aims to investigate and explore how the struggle of power in these relationships occurs and how they can change people's action as social actors. Discourses involve power and ideologies and can be interpreted differently (Fairclough, 2002; Wodak & Ludwig, 1999). After analyzing the data mentioned in the previous two chapters, through a multimodal perspective, this fifth chapter intends to compare the results, draw final remarks on the topic and provide suggestions for further research.

### **5.1. General discussion on the analysis of *Abre los Ojos* and *Vanilla Sky***

According to Herbert (2006), both movies have a transnational context, and they demonstrate the "difficulty of conceiving Spanish identity outside of transnational capitalism and point to the unstable yet powerful forces of American national identity within the global culture industry" (p.29) and he continues stating that "the transnational Hollywood remake (*Vanilla Sky*) offers a privileged site for investigating the contemporary contexts of different cinemas, specifically in relation to the forces of globalization" (p.29).

Having in mind discourses used in films, which are powerful media channels, and Fairclough's (1989, 2001) theory on the exercise of power through discourses and textually oriented discourse analysis, in this thesis I have looked for possible resources in the text and images I have chosen as data and tried to compare them and discuss the differences and similarities concerning the represented participants involved.

The two movies present a similar type of conversation between a couple (a rich guy and a working class girl) who have just been introduced by a common friend.

In both cultures, Spanish and American (two different western cultures) there is an upper class guy who falls in love with a working class girl. In both movies there is a struggle for power which may not be noticed by the viewer.

In both movies several relevant aspects were considered while analyzing and comparing them, such as the context. The character of Sofia, played by the same actress – Penélope Cruz in both films is one connection between them in relation to the analyzed characters.

In *Abre los Ojos* and in *Vanilla Sky's* first analyzed dialogues there is a tendency that the male character (Cesar/David) is in a powerful position in relation to the female character (Sofia), due to the way he conducts the conversation and the Processes types (Halliday, 1985) he uses. The connection between the textual information and the visual one reinforces the male character higher position in *Vanilla Sky*, but not in *Abre los Ojos*, where there is a tendency for Sofia to hold the power, since the way she is portrayed: a sensual one.

In both films it is clear that he (Cesar/David) has a crush on her (Sofia) despite the fact that she is “apparently” his best friend’s date, because no attention at all is given to this friend (Pelayo/Brian). Sofia also demonstrates interest in Cesar/David, according to what can be noticed through the text, but it is clearer in *Vanilla Sky's* narrative and when analyzed together with the images.

Another difference between the movies is that in *Vanilla Sky* David Aames’ higher social position is strongly portrayed not only through images but also through the narrative. For example: he mentions the area where he lives (downtown Manhattan - NYC) and that his apartment is also full of space and employees. Even its title is a demonstration of David’s social position, because the canvas “*Vanilla Sky*”, by Monet is hung in his apartment wall.

On the other hand, Sofia's clothing and hairstyle in *Abre los Ojos* suggest a more sensual and mysterious persona and a more casual one in *Vanilla Sky* as seen in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 below:



**Figure 5.1 – Sofia in Cesar's House – Abre los Ojos (1997)**



**Figure 5.2 – Sofia in David's house – Vanilla Sky (2001)**

The colors used in Cesar's house (*Abre los Ojos*) are “warmer”, which may suggest a romantic atmosphere.



In the second part of the data, when Cesar/David arrives at Sofia's house both movies depict through the static images that the focus is not Sofia anymore, but her life style. Both films depict her house as a modest and not well organized space. In the narrative of both movies the male character is interested in knowing what she does for living, but in *Abre los Ojos* it seems that Cesar conducts more the conversation than David in *Vanilla Sky*. The way Cesar conducts the conversation in *Abre los Ojos* suggests again that he is still in a higher position, but in *Vanilla Sky* the interpretation of the data leads us to conclude that he is in a lower position in relation to Sofia, because she determines through her choices of process types what is relevant to be mentioned and those comments make David become even more interested in her.

Concerning the two protagonists interaction in her house in both movies, the static images portray she looking at him and he looking at her in his house, but now he does not respond the same way, as he looks at her house instead.

Regarding Halliday's (1984) SFL and the transitivity system most of the processes in *Abre los Ojos* are Relational Processes suggesting a great amount of abstract comments, such as:

Cesar:           ¿Te gustan los payasos?

Sofia:           No son payasos. Son mimos.  
¡Pancho! Tengo un gato.

In *Vanilla Sky*, on the other hand, Material Processes occur most of the time, suggesting tangible actions, a more practical and transparent /objective dialogue :

Sofia:           I have to work around the clock to keep this place.

David:           You really are a dancer

Sofia:           For 14 years. But I don't dance like you dance.

Do you want something to drink?

In terms of visual analysis, and based on Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), it seems that the eight static images are similar in terms of angles and vectors, social distance and they are also similar in terms of the message each one portrays in relation to socio cultural aspects involved, such as social class. The pictures which differ a little are figure 3.3 comparing to figure 4.3, where the represented participant Cesar is only looking to her house and David appears also looking at Sofia and, figure 3.2 in comparison with 4.2, in which David is clearly depicted in a higher position in figure 4.2 while calling his majordomo with his right hand up, showing a strong tendency to focus on his social status, what does not occur in *Abre los Ojos* (figure 3.2)

The two movies, and most of all, the sequences I choose to analyze, try to depict a representation of a conversation between a couple, therefore, they can serve as examples of discourses released in media channels that we are exposed to and, consequently, are influenced by them the same way we influence new types of discourses.

In terms of the movies themselves even though having several similarities in their plots, differences can be noticed in the production such as the effort to place David and Sofia in opposite sides of society (wealthy/poor). Furthermore, in *Vanilla Sky* David's interest in Sofia seems to be more naïve than in *Abre los Ojos*, due to the sarcastic type of comments Cesar (*Abre los Ojos*) makes when he is in Sofia's house for the first time and types of processes he uses to hold the power over the conversation.

In *Vanilla Sky* the high-tech technologies are more present showing that one of the director's intentions is to put the film in a more contemporary environment. Another aspect that may call the viewer's attention in *Vanilla Sky* in terms of production of the film is the famous and updated soundtracks/ background music used (R.E.M., Radiohead, Jeff Buckley, John Coltrane, Chemical Brothers, Bob Dylan, U2, Rolling Stones, and others). It is clear that the amount of money each director spent was also very

different. In the Hollywood version David drives a Ferrari or a Mustang, instead of a modest “Carocha” in *Abre los Ojos*.

In spite of their original culture and opposite budgets, they present similarities in their plot, but also several differences in their production, for instance, the abundance of money David seems to have in *Vanilla Sky* and Cameron Crowe seems to have spent, what is not as clear in Alejandro Amenabar’s; and the sexual appeal *Abre los Ojos* pictures through the character of Sofia which does not happen in the American movie. Both movies follow in a romantic, science fiction and dramatic line.

To conclude my thoughts I would say that, even having some differences in their analysis, the two films portray, in a very similar way, the struggle for power between characters in different social classes.

## **5.2. Final Remarks**

Nowadays we are surrounded by several different media channels, such as television, billboards, newspapers, magazines, movies and the internet. The way in which people participate or are influenced by them as social actors is what matters. Therefore it is crucial to know the source of the object of study and in which culture each of them is inserted and become aware of its direct and indirect influences in people’s beliefs, therefore, production of new discourses and social practices.

## **5.2. Suggestions for further research**

I expect my research may contribute to call viewer’s attention to what is presented to them by the Cinema Industry. It is important to understand the influence of different media channels in society. There are an unspecified number of ways in which movies can be studied, and, having this in mind I may suggest further studies to produce worthwhile discussions:

1. To carry out a deeper analysis of the images, with more sequences. I would suggest Sigrid Norris (2004) study *Analyzing Multimodal Interaction: A Methodological Framework*, where she provides an essential guide to analyze not only the general aspects in the frame, but even small objects (furniture), for example. It will be interesting to provide further evidence in relation to the findings from my study;
2. To investigate the social impact of having a Spanish speaker in the American narrative. Halliday (1984:85) says that: “different groups of people tend to mean different things”;
3. To investigate the different aspects involved in the two movies’ DVD original front cover, and what’s behind each film’s title;
4. To investigate social aspects inserted in the movies by making an historical perspective on Cinema in US and Spain.

The present study may be seen as one of the first steps towards the understanding of multimodal analysis (textual, visual and socio-cultural aspects) regarding films produced by different Cinema Industries belonging to distinct cultures. Thus, not just as professionals of language and communication, but as social actors, it is interesting to be aware of the aspects I mentioned in this study.

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